



Office of College Planning and Institutional Effectiveness

Protocol for Examining Data

Purpose

This protocol is designed to support thoughtful, equity-minded examination of student success data. It provides a structured process for administrators, faculty, and staff to collaboratively review data, identify patterns and gaps, and reflect on how the findings can inform practice, planning, and resource allocation.

The goal is not to assign blame or draw premature conclusions, but to build shared understanding and promote data-informed decision-making.

Intended Use

This protocol may be used in: committee or workgroup meetings, department or division discussions, strategic planning, program review, professional development, or FLEX activities.

Norms for Examining Data

Before beginning, agree to the following norms: Stay focused on the data presented. Assume positive intent and shared responsibility. Avoid deficit-based language. Distinguish between observations and interpretations. Ensure multiple perspectives are heard.

Step 1: Observe the Data (What Do You Notice?)

Purpose: Identify what stands out without interpretation or judgment.

Guiding Questions: What parts of this data catch your attention? What trends, patterns, or gaps do you notice? What differences do you see across student groups, time periods, or outcomes?

Reminder: At this stage, focus only on what the data shows- not why it might be happening.

Step 2: Interpret the Data (What Does It Mean?)

Purpose: Explore possible explanations and implications of the observed data.

Guiding Questions: What does the data tell us? What does the data **not** tell us? What additional information would help deepen our understanding? What assumptions might we be making?

Encourage multiple interpretations and avoid settling too quickly on a single explanation.

Step 3: Identify Strengths and Successes (What Can We Celebrate?)

Purpose: Acknowledge progress, effective practices, and positive outcomes.

Guiding Questions: What good news is reflected in the data? Where do we see improvement or momentum? What practices or conditions may be contributing to these successes?

Recognizing strengths helps ensure a balanced and asset-based approach to data analysis.

Step 4: Reflect and Apply (How Can We Use This Data?)

Purpose: Connect insights from the data to action and practice.

Guiding Questions: How can I use this data to inform practices in my area? What questions should we continue to explore? What changes, supports, or strategies might this data suggest? Who else should be engaged in this conversation?

This step may lead to next steps, action items, or recommendations, depending on the context of the discussion.

Closing Reflection

Conclude by inviting participants to share: One insight gained from the discussion. One question they are leaving with. One way the data may influence their work moving forward

Document key takeaways and, when appropriate, identify follow-up actions or areas for further analysis.

This protocol is intended to support continuous improvement and ongoing inquiry into student success and equity outcomes.