

The Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario (HEQCO) presents
Rethinking higher ed: Beyond {the buzzwords}
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Session 2A | Creative Data: Connecting the dots
Creative ways to use data to support student outcomes

Facilitator: Mireille Duguay, Maritime Provinces Higher Education Commission
Helton M. Aldridge and Roy Smith, Finish Up Florida
Cathy O'Rourke, Loyalist College
Ross Finnie and Stephen Childs, University of Ottawa

Helton M. Aldridge and Roy Smith, Finish Up Florida

Aldridge and Smith were shocked by data that revealed how many Florida postsecondary students drop out after taking a significant number of courses and achieving high marks, or even meeting all requirements but failing to apply for graduation. With the Florida Department of Education, they launched a student completion project dubbed Finish Up Florida. They found that universities had data, but did not have the capacity to go through it and put it to use. Finish Up Florida ran from April-May 2012 to June 2013 on a \$150,000 budget. Initially, a video was created to bring college administrators to a workshop; then each institution's student data were analyzed to produce a target cohort of some 79,000 students who had dropped out within the two years prior to the project. Institutions then began communicating with the targeted students, sending letters that encouraged them to come back and complete their studies. Institutions also needed to be prepared to offer support services, because students "dropped out for a reason." The results: more than 11,000 targeted students graduated and another 19,000 re-enrolled in college.

Cathy O'Rourke, Loyalist College

Data can be used to eliminate or manage problematic behaviour on campus. The goal of a positive data assessment is to mitigate threat, determine the root cause of problematic behaviour and connect students with support services, both on and off campus.

Weekly risk assessments bring together multi-disciplinary staff to discuss incidents and students of concern, and sometimes reveal that students have had multiple touch points with different student services. Data-driven risk assessments are important because without guidelines, staff might engage in an emotionally driven assessment.

Ross Finnie and Stephen Childs, University of Ottawa

The University of Ottawa's Education Policy Research Initiative (EPRI) works with institutions to exploit data to understand and improve student outcomes. Often universities don't have the resources for proper data analysis. EPRI comes up with a work plan to analyze student retention by isolating risk factors. The data can then be used to rate students on their predictive probability of dropping out, allowing an institution to create targeted interventions to improve student success.