

SURVEY REPORT

Leading in a Complex Campus Technology Landscape

Insights from EAB's 2023 Technology Leadership Survey



Key Insights from Our Campus Technology Survey

Technology leaders in higher ed have faced an array of challenges and rapid changes, from the immediate impact of the pandemic to the progression of ongoing trends. To help leaders confront these shifts, EAB surveyed higher education Chief Information, Technology, and Data Officers (and associated job titles) in spring 2023. **In this report, we explore four significant findings from our survey and share strategies technology leaders can use to improve their data ecosystems and expand their impact on campus.**

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Introduction

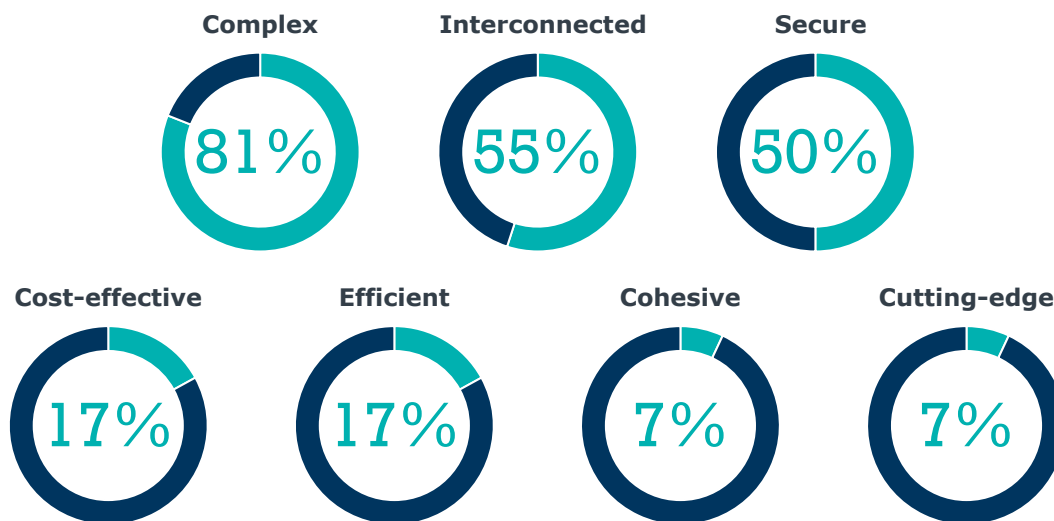
A Complicated, Interconnected Campus Technology Environment

Higher ed technology leaders face high pressure to deliver results while managing a complex—and growing—technology ecosystem. Where are higher ed technology leaders finding success, and where are they feeling the crunch? This survey sought to answer these questions and provide guidance that IT and data leaders can apply at their institutions.

We learned that higher education’s technology ecosystem is complicated and interconnected, but it is also inefficient, expensive, and lacking cohesion. Only half of leaders we surveyed described their ecosystems as “secure.” Leaders largely agreed on the state of the technology environments at their institutions, and they also shared common sentiments about challenges and hopes for the future.

Which of the following words describe your institution’s technology ecosystem?

Respondents could select all options that apply; n=42



Notable findings from our survey include:



88% of leaders said they would most like to spend more time on strategic planning or vetting, purchasing, and implementing new technologies



76% of leaders said they would like to spend less time managing the existing tech stack or coordinating staff within the IT/IS department



84% of leaders listed “a deficiency with a current technology” as a primary reason ideas to invest in new technologies typically arise



30% of leaders said their institutions have clean, standardized data

What is your top data priority for 2023?

Look for teal boxes throughout this report to see how our survey respondents answered this question.



Understaffing Slows Progress and Fuels Burnout

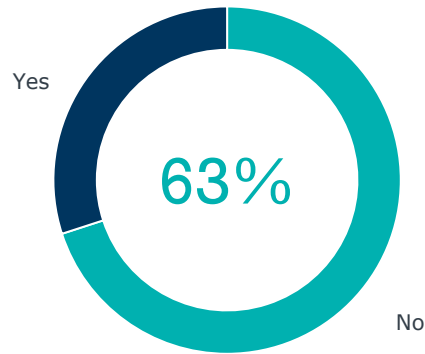
Even When Fully Staffed, IT Departments Need More Employees

While there are signs that the dire staffing crisis IT faced in 2022 is turning around, [understaffing is still a major issue for higher ed](#). In IT departments specifically, our survey found that most need more staff even when every FTE position is filled.

Understaffing is not merely a result of a slow return to normal after the pandemic. It is a larger systemic issue that institutions must address on both ends: hiring more staff and making existing staff more efficient through training and the use of technology.

When fully staffed, does your IT department have enough staff?

Respondents could select only one option; n=46

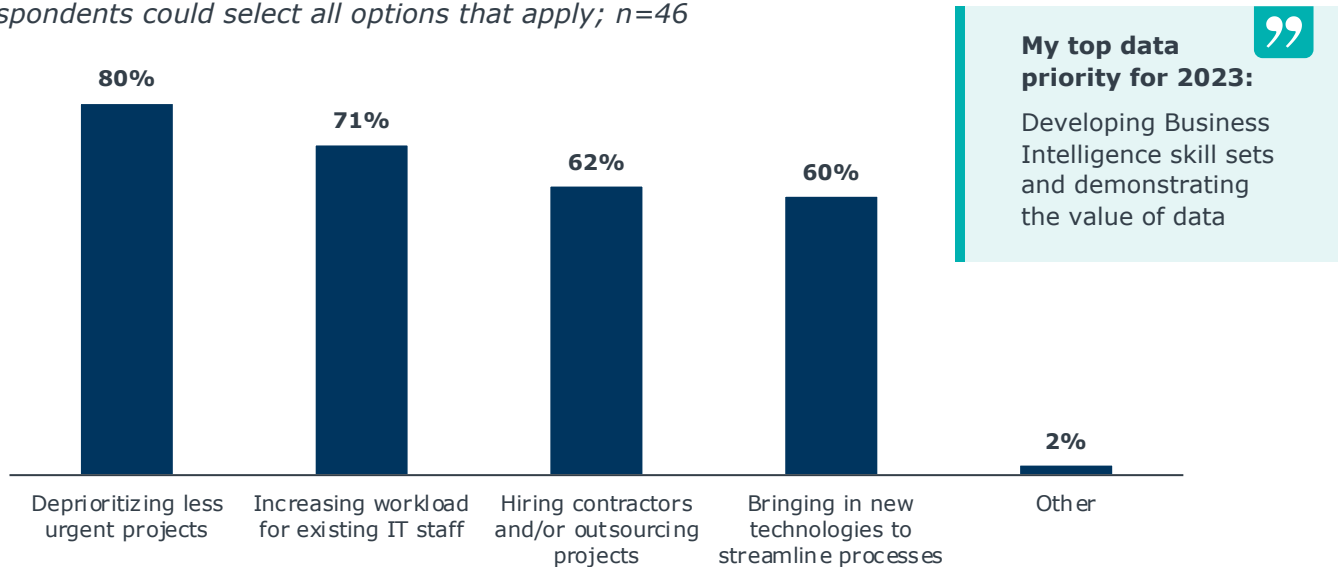


Understaffing Slows Project Completion and Stresses Existing Employees

When asked what changes survey participants made as a result of understaffing, the most common response was that institutions deprioritized less urgent projects. Unfortunately, projects with lower urgency are often critical (but time-consuming) improvements to institutional infrastructure, such as data governance work. These projects are typically the first to be set aside in favor of pressing routine objectives. The results also indicate that institutions have asked more of their existing employees as a result of understaffing. Stress on employees fuels burnout, creating a self-perpetuating cycle of overwork and resignation. Over half of institutions surveyed brought in new technologies and tapped contractors to fill in the gaps in their capacity.

Which steps has your institution taken in the last year to adapt IT operations amid staffing shortages?

Respondents could select all options that apply; n=46



My top data priority for 2023: Improving campus communication and customer service

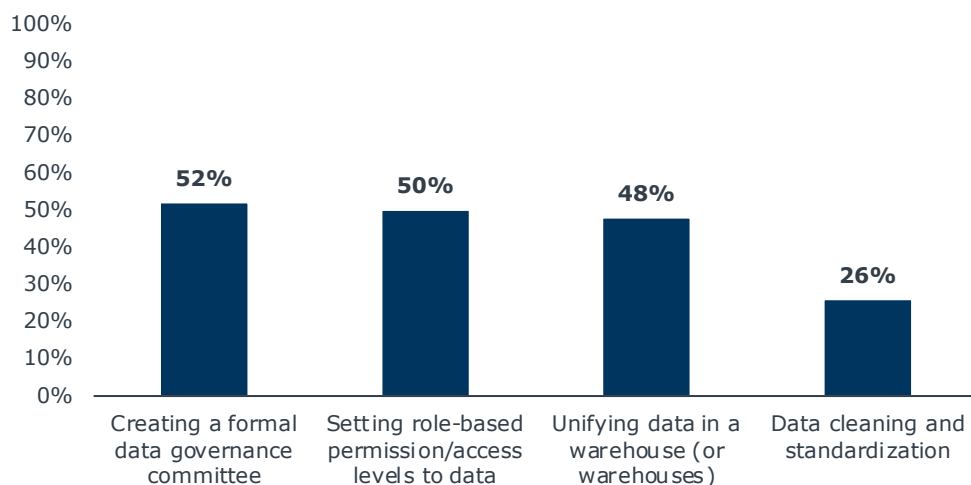
Data Governance, While Critical, Is Hard to Sustain

Only Half of Institutions Polled Have Completed Core Steps Toward Data Governance

When polled about four key steps toward establishing data governance, fewer than half of survey respondents responded affirmatively to each step. Around 50 percent of survey respondents said they had established data governance committees, built data warehouses, or set role-based permissions for data access. However, less than a quarter of respondents said they had cleaned and standardized their data, which is a crucial step toward making data trustworthy and useful.

Which of these components of data governance has your institution already implemented?

Respondents could select all options that apply; n=45



My top data priority for 2023:

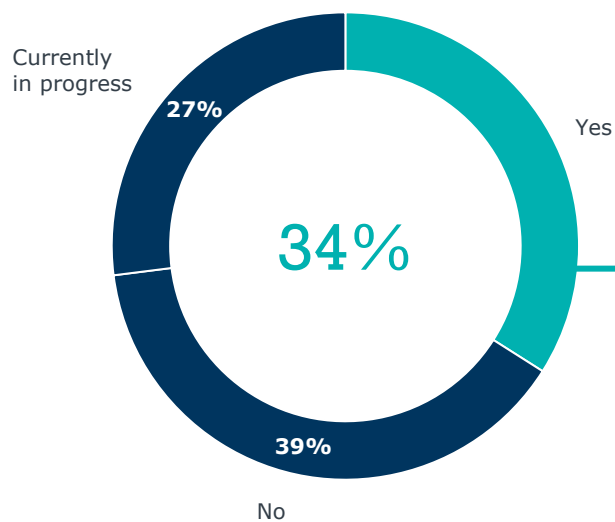
Continued data cleanup for cross-functional use, increased implementation and awareness of data best practices, and data transparency for internal and external constituents

Data Dictionaries Require Reinforcement to Provide Value

Data dictionaries compile standardized data terminology to serve as a reference for users across campus. Dictionaries are [an essential component of sustainable data governance](#). A third of survey respondents have already created a dictionary, and another 27 percent are in process. However, the survey results indicate that creating a dictionary does not mean users will adopt it to a meaningful degree.

Has your institution developed a data dictionary (or dictionaries)?

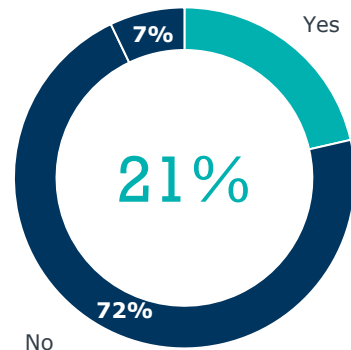
Respondents could select only one option; n=41



Is the dictionary used to the level you would hope?

n=14

I'm not sure



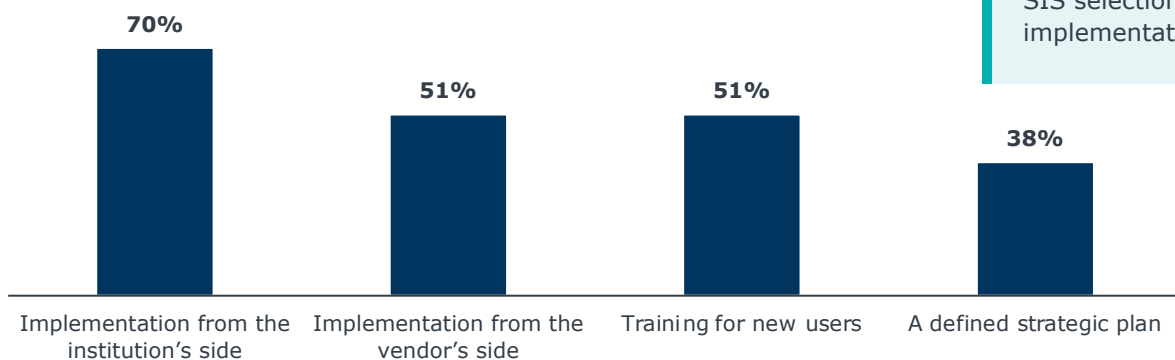
Implementation Concerns Prevent Investments

Institutions See Internal Challenges as Highest Barrier to Implementation

Implementing a new technology always comes with challenges. This is especially true with enterprise-level technologies that require wide buy-in. Survey respondents cited internal implementation as the largest stumbling block to successfully onboarding a new technology. Technology leaders recognize the need to update higher ed’s processes with new technologies but are understandably reluctant to take a leap when aware that internal implementation will be an uphill battle. CI/T/Dos are typically the “face” of technology changes, and taking ownership of a disruptive, challenging implementation is no small task.

Which of the following factors are frequent stumbling blocks when implementing a new technology?

Respondents could select all options that apply; top 4 factors shown; n=39



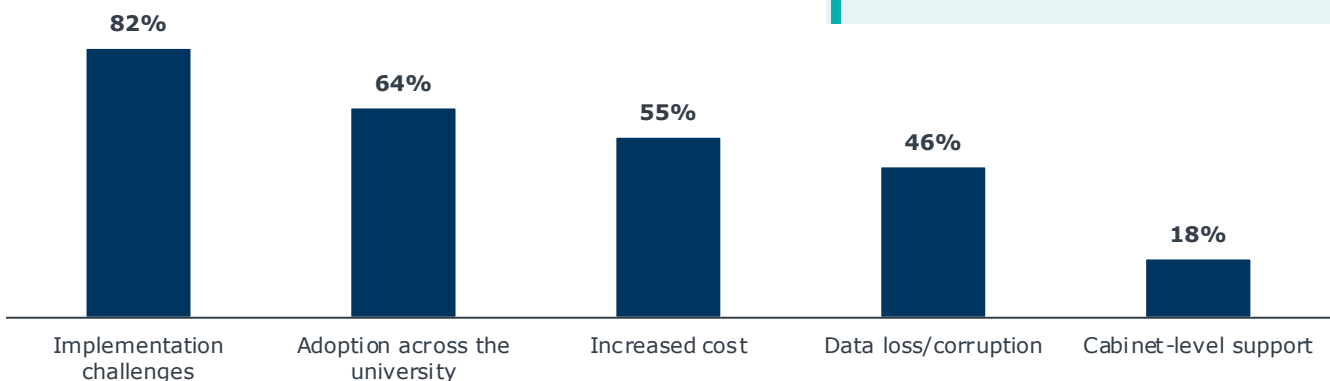
My top data priority for 2023:
SIS selection & implementation

Implementation Challenges Cited as the Most Concerning Factor When Changing ERPs

Over a quarter of respondents changed ERPs within the past five years. Among five potential concerns surrounding ERP changes, these respondents selected “implementation challenges” more often than any other factor. Respondents were less concerned about cost or data corruption than they were about implementation, which speaks to the general sentiment that enterprise-level technologies are extremely difficult and burdensome to implement. Paired with the finding above, institutions seem more concerned about their ability to implement a new ERP than they are about the vendor’s aptitude. A potential path through implementation concerns is partnering with a vendor knowledgeable about higher ed’s unique challenges, as the vendor can act as a resource in guiding the institution through implementation.

What concerns did you have about changing ERPs?

Respondents could select all options that apply; n=11 (subset of respondents who changed ERPs in previous five years)



My top data priority for 2023:
Looking at new cloud-based technologies to replace existing on-premise warehouse

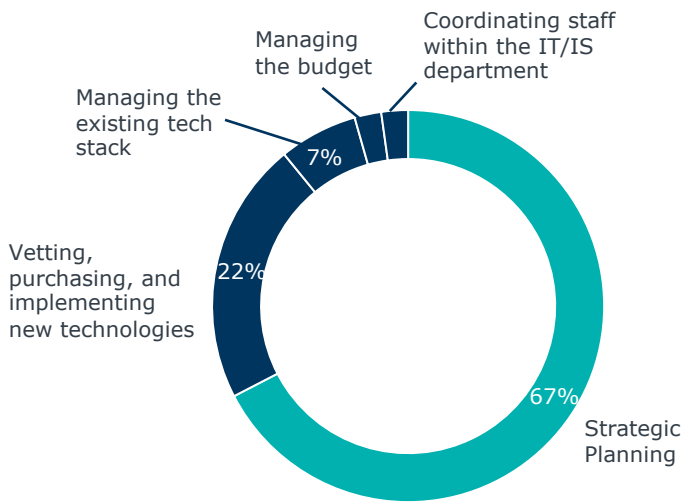
Strategy and Governance Are High Priorities

Leaders Want to Spend More Time on Forward-Looking Priorities

When asked what they would prefer to spend more time on, survey respondents overwhelmingly selected “strategic planning” from among five options. “Purchasing and implementing new technologies” was the second-most selected option. Leaders clearly have an appetite to be more strategic and forward-looking in their roles. Few survey respondents selected the responses that pertained to managing existing responsibilities. We also asked leaders what they would like to spend *less* time on. Half selected “managing the existing tech stack,” while 26 percent selected “coordinating staff.”

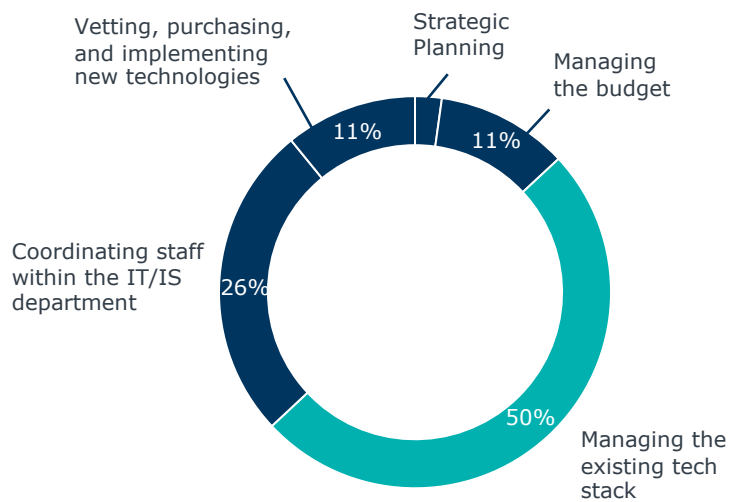
If you could spend more time on one of the following priorities, which would it be?

Respondents could select only one option; n=46



If you could spend less time on one of the following priorities, which would it be?

Respondents could select only one option; n=46

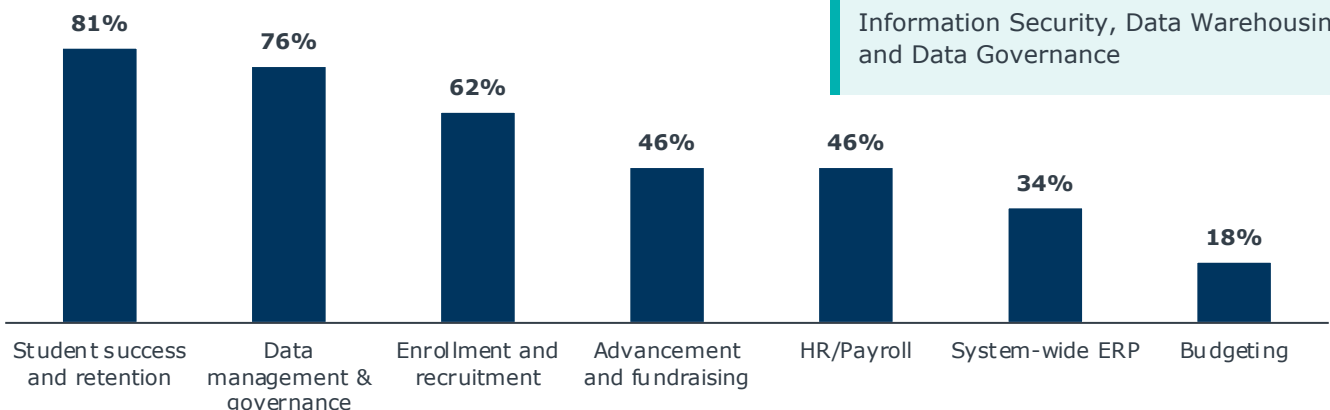


Data Governance and Management Rank Among Highest Investment Priorities

It is no surprise that “student success and retention” ranked highest among future investment priorities. What may be surprising is that “data management and governance” placed second, outranking “enrollment and recruitment.” Leaders clearly recognize the critical need to manage and govern data, as well-executed data management fuels progress toward the other priorities listed, bringing benefits to every department. Staff and leadership experience these benefits directly, and technology leaders can leverage this visibility to increase their impact on campus.

In which areas of need does your institution plan to focus new technology investment in the next five years?

Respondents could select all options that apply; n=39



My top data priority for 2023: Information Security, Data Warehousing, and Data Governance

Strategies for More Effective Technology Leadership

Today's technology leaders face significant challenges and areas of opportunity. Here we provide steps any institution can implement to work toward a more strategic, efficient, secure approach to technology and data ecosystem improvement.



Strategy #1: Leverage Data Management Wins to Increase Visibility

Although appreciation for data and technology grows every year among institutional leadership, only half of surveyed leaders sit at the table for Cabinet meetings. There is room for growth, and providing useful, reliable data access through effective data management is a path toward expanding your impact. Start with a focus on visible, tangible steps in the data governance process, such as a user-friendly data dictionary, to leverage your improvements and gain visibility for your team.

Learn about the [tangible outcomes of higher education data management](#) in action with this infographic.



Strategy #2: Adopt an Agile Approach to Data Governance

Many institutions believe they must have governance "locked in" before they expand their data management and access efforts. However, governance is best implemented alongside access expansion and management improvements. Governance requires field testing and experience. You likely won't know what terms must be defined in a business glossary until you draft and distribute it for use. You won't know who needs access to specific data until you ask. Start small, keep security top of mind, and expand.

Watch an [on-demand webinar](#) about creating a collaborative campus culture through effective data governance.



Strategy #3: Use Technology Designed Specifically for Higher Education

With survey results indicating a hesitance around implementation, finding a true partner in your technology efforts is key to success. Technology designed to work with the systems and processes your institution already uses will lead to a smoother implementation and a higher likelihood of adoption. Work with vendors who have proven track records of direct experience in higher ed. An experienced vendor will supplement your existing staff and assist in implementing and sustaining your technology priorities.

[Read case studies](#) to learn more about the types of projects your institution can accomplish in partnership with EAB.

Other Resources

For additional insights, explore the following resources:

- [Creating a Data-Informed Campus \(Part 1 of 3\)](#)
- [Toolkit—Translate Your Data Aspirations into Action Steps](#)
- [Toolkit—Edify Accelerators: Custom Dashboards for Your Campus](#)

Survey Methodology

▶ About the Survey

In May 2023, EAB surveyed higher education technology leaders, including Chief Technology, Information, and Data Officers, as well as Associate and Assistant CT/I/DOs. In total, EAB collected 46 responses.

Profile of Survey Respondents

Institution Type	Percentage
Public	76%
Private	24%

Central IT Dept. Size	Percentage
More than 30 FTEs	71%
21–30 FTEs	10%
11–20 FTEs	8%
1–10 FTEs	8%
Uncertain	3%

Job Title	Percentage
Chief Information/Technology Officer	62%
Director and Deputy IT Roles	26%
Assistant/Associate CIO/CTO	10%
Chief Data Officer	2%

Primary Degree Conferred	Percentage
Chief Information/Technology Officer	62%
Director and Deputy IT Roles	26%
Assistant/Associate CIO/CTO	10%
Chief Data Officer	2%

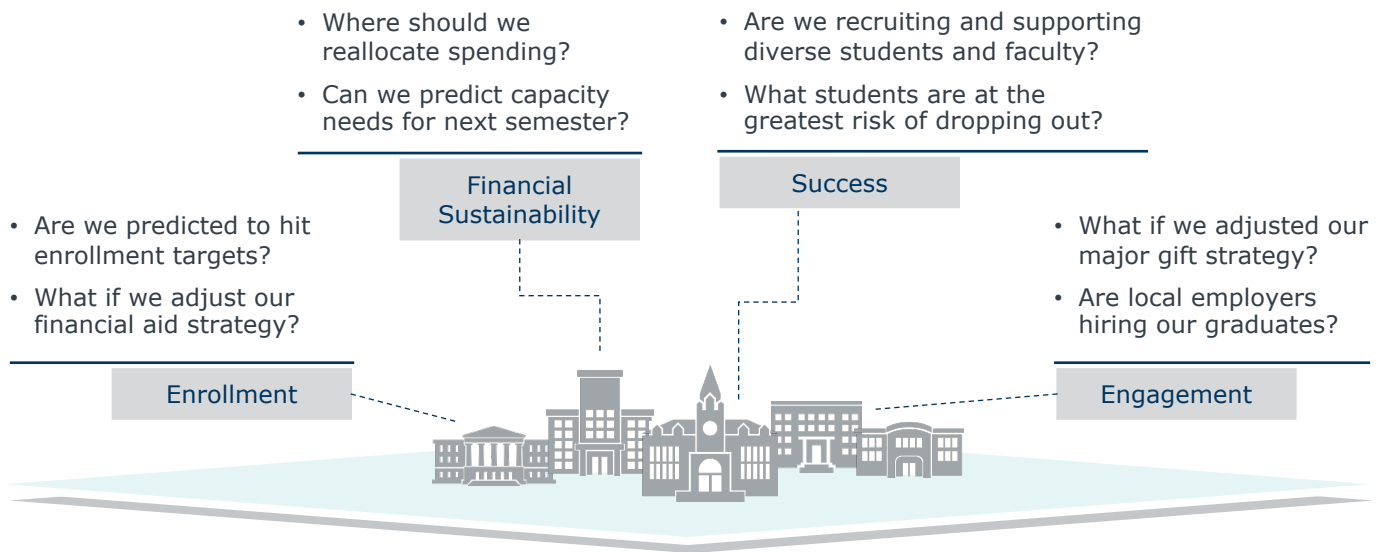
Edify: A Data and Analytics Solution for Higher Ed

Get Insight into Your Most Critical Priorities

Today's complex decisions require increasingly nuanced data and analysis. Mounting pressures highlight the need for data and technology to deliver value and drive change.

But too often, data is stored in disparate systems, and questions pile up faster than you can answer them.

How could you accelerate progress on your most important initiatives if your data was ready to answer questions as they arose?



OUR SOLUTION

Edify pairs powerful data warehousing technology with direct-to-user analytics tools in one single solution to activate your data for the decisions that matter.

Bring your data together

DATA ACCESS & WAREHOUSING

Cloud-native, secure, infinitely scalable data lake and warehouse to support critical institutional use cases

Empower your team with insight

REPORTING & ANALYTICS

Self-service, custom, and pre-built analytics to drive efficiency and/or support decision-making

Build a culture of data confidence

DATA GOVERNANCE

Higher ed best practice rules and validations to ensure a single source of truth

Extend your team's capacity

PROFESSIONAL SERVICE HOURS

Support to meet you where you are: your use of Edify can be self-service, or partially or fully managed by EAB

Learn more at eab.com/Edify or email Edify@eab.com.

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