

Practical Data Governance in Higher Education | 03.26.19

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Leftover Questions

Q: How do you manage the transition from strategic to tactical thinking?

Ans: This is quite possibly the most challenging thing, and an imperfect science. In our case, we set out the principles, framework, and programs of data governance in policy. When we tried to implement, there was resistance and I was a one-person show. We waited for our moment of opportunity to demonstrate the benefits of data governance – failures at mandatory reporting after a major systems transition in 2013 – with a data definitions effort. It was only partially successful, and I would say its greatest weakness was the lack of a system of record for our work, that would enable workflows and asynchronous collaboration. We had 13 people “held hostage” in weekly meetings because we didn’t have a data governance information system. To this day we have difficulty translating from strategic to tactical – comes as no surprise because of competition for scarce resources. In that sense, succeeding with DG is no different from gaining support for many initiatives. I do think gathering a ‘coalition of the willing’ is incredibly helpful – and that’s been critical here to demonstrating wins and successes.

Q: Is data ownership considered a legal issue or more internally defined?

Ans: More of an internal matter, but not exclusively. We don’t want functional/operational managers being possessive, we want them to be responsible and rigorous. Externally/legalistically, the institution does have to express its ownership of and responsibility for data, to establish boundaries on everything from media requests for data to legal contracts that have data processing implications, especially hosted services such as those offered by Blackboard or Starfish, and hundreds of other vendors.

Q: What level do you have?

Ans: UofSC has Data Cookbook’s Enterprise + Integration Edition.

Q: How frequently do you meet with your Data Stewards when creating new standards and how frequently do you bring them back together to review existing standards?

Ans: We’ve taken a couple different tacks on this. Candidly, we stopped our efforts altogether for a significant period of time for reasons too deep to cover by email – but we emerged with a different plan once we had (a) hired our Data Standards Program Manager and (b) acquired Data Cookbook. At that time we also launched an innovative model wherein we hire graduate students from our School of Library & Information Sciences (“Data geeks with social skills” is their tagline) to be paid interns in

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functional offices (Bursar, Financial Aid, Institutional Research) that were our “coalition of the willing.” The students take on primary authorship roles with data definitions, and the Steward of each area reviews their work and approves definitions and data sharing agreements – as just a couple examples. Our Data Standards Manager consults with stewards as needed – and much of the work leverages the information system’s capabilities for authorship and approval workflows. Data definitions are just one form of data standard. We’re launching our “data quality & integrity assurance program” (DQIA) shortly, and will use that to help drive development and approval of collaborative data standards – such as permissible characters in text fields, across our ERP systems. The Data Standards Program and DQIA Program will work hand in glove, and are under the same manager.

Q: Your slide said DGPR, not GDPR - was it a typo?

Ans: GDPR is the correct acronym – General Data Privacy Regulation.

Q: How accessible is your Data cookbook to the employees? How frequently do people reference it? How did you roll out it's implementation?

Ans: DC is available to 100% of employees across the entire UofSC System – but usage is still quite limited. Simple reason being, we just acquired the system last March and launched in October with content built by Bursar, Financial Aid and Institutional Research. We’re onboarding more functional areas upon request – and gently pushing them to make those requests. We’ve seen new cooperation from additional enrollment management units, and even Athletics. Our internal audit office is just now starting to raise the university’s data governance policy when they do formal reviews, and issue findings that push offices to define and classify their data elements. In time this will accelerate adoption, and we’re putting other drivers in place, while we also deploy Data Cookbook capabilities around data discovery and metadata harvesting, that will expedite such efforts, while improving accuracy and efficiency. If you’re interested in more specific roll-out info, I will be happy to put you in touch with the manager; just email me at kellymc2@mailbox.sc.edu]