

Seven Urgent Challenges Data Governance Can Help Solve



As every facet of higher ed continues to change, you need data to guide your way. Yet nearly half of colleges and universities report persistent challenges with siloed or inconsistent data.

Data governance, the practice of sharing and caring for institutional data so that it is accessible and trusted, offers benefits for every team in your institution, not only those who consider themselves “data people.” But too often, the work of establishing good data governance gets sidelined in favor of

urgent day-to-day demands. A strong data governance strategy is one of the most effective tools institutions have for addressing both immediate needs and long-term goals. How could your institution benefit from better data governance?

Explore this infographic to understand seven urgent challenges today’s colleges and universities are facing—and the role of data governance in responding to them.

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<p>AI Is Advancing Faster Than Institutional Data Foundations</p>	<p>Recruitment Is Under Pressure as Confidence in College Declines</p>	<p>Retention Efforts Lack Clear Insight into Why Students Stay or Leave</p>	<p>Slow Program Review Systems Hinder Academic Agility</p>	<p>Institutions Face Growing Pressure to Demonstrate Workforce Value</p>	<p>Campus Safety Has Become a Higher-Stakes Institutional Responsibility</p>	<p>Reporting and Accountability Expectations Are Rising</p>
<p>THE CHALLENGE</p>						
<p>Institutions are moving quickly to adopt AI, but inconsistent definitions, unclear ownership, and uneven data quality limit trust in outputs and increase operational risk.</p>	<p>As prospective students become more skeptical about the return on investment of higher education, institutions must rely on clear, credible data to demonstrate value and differentiate themselves.</p>	<p>Although colleges collect extensive student information, fragmented systems and misaligned metrics make it difficult to identify the drivers of retention and persistence.</p>	<p>Slow, data-poor program review processes delay decisions and limit institutions’ ability to adapt academic offerings to evolving student interests and pathways.</p>	<p>Stakeholders increasingly expect clear evidence that programs lead to employment and earnings, intensifying the need for institutions to align academic outcomes with labor market data.</p>	<p>Heightened expectations for campus safety require timely coordination across academic, behavioral, and operational systems, yet siloed information often prevents effective response.</p>	<p>Expanding federal, state, and accreditor requirements demand accurate, auditable data, while manual processes and unclear definitions increase the risk of errors and delays.</p>
<p>More than 85% of colleges are already using AI in some form.¹</p>	<p>Only 36% of U.S. adults report having a great deal or quite a lot of confidence in higher education.²</p>	<p>Only about 62% of students who start college complete a credential within six years.³</p>	<p>Traditional academic program reviews are too infrequent, typically taking place on a 5–10 year cycle.⁴</p>	<p>Only about 20% of colleges report having the ability to comprehensively collect and analyze workforce and labor market data, and just 17% have clear institutional policies for using that information.⁵</p>	<p>A survey by RNL found that 62% of surveyed high school seniors worried about safety on college campuses.⁶</p>	<p>The Association for Institutional Research (AIR) reports that IR/IE offices spend an average of 33% of their work output on reporting.⁷</p>
<p>WHAT YOU COULD DO WITH STRONGER DATA GOVERNANCE:</p>						
<p>Deploy AI tools with confidence, reduce risk, and unlock meaningful gains in student success and operational efficiency.</p>	<p>Produce more accurate forecasts across the enrollment funnel, align messaging, and compete more effectively in a shrinking market.</p>	<p>Move from lagging indicators to timely insight that helps prevent student attrition before it becomes an institutional risk</p>	<p>Move proactive adjustments to academic offerings rather than reacting after enrollment or outcomes decline.</p>	<p>Show students, families, and policymakers how academic programs translate into real economic opportunity.</p>	<p>Integrate safety-related data, spot warning behaviors early, and respond quickly to emergencies before risks escalate.</p>	<p>Reduce your federal reporting burden, protect staff bandwidth, keep pace with expanding requirements, and safeguard your institution’s credibility.</p>

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Explore our insight paper, *The Data Governance Imperative*, for more on how strong data governance can help your institution address critical challenges.



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