

# Analytics at Lehman College (CUNY)

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Adapted from *The Journey from Business Intelligence to Lehman 360*

[www.ChangeWithAnalytics.com](http://www.ChangeWithAnalytics.com)

## 1. How did your institution begin its analytics journey?

Like most public institutions, Lehman is facing the challenges of reduced government funding, greater competition for students, and the need to increase retention and graduation rates. In 2011, Lehman became the first college within CUNY to pilot Business Intelligence (BI), believing that big data, BI, and analytics were poised to play a significant role in supporting student success.

The work was driven by the need for a more contemporary approach to provide descriptive data for day-to-day decision-making. AIR, EDUCAUSE, and NACUBO have given colleges and universities a vision for BI capabilities through the joint statement on analytics. Each association also facilitates information-sharing through articles and presentations from the many colleges and universities that have forged the BI path with an emphasis on improved and equitable student outcomes, and on institutional sustainability.

## 2. How has using analytics impacted your institution?

- **Empowers users:** BI dashboards became a self-service resource on the college intranet for chairs, deans, and administrators for day-to-day information in near real-time.
- **Facilitates reporting:** The dashboard enables the college to access more comprehensive information and, as a result, to be more nimble during the transition to the new system.
- **Supports student success:** The college selected a stand-alone predictive analytics modeling solution, enabling improved pattern recognition and enhancing the ability to identify actionable information in response to questions relating to retention and graduation rates.

- **Holistic information in one place:** The development of the Lehman 360 platform replaced the more traditional intranet as a means to present information that was actionable, contextual, personalized, and relevant. Lehman 360 now delivers information from multiple systems in a single, visual experience.
- **Data integration and openness:** Lessons learned from previous efforts to integrate data spanning student success, academic affairs, and budget and finance have underscored the importance of communication and collaboration and have enabled the campus to become more proactive in using data to fulfill its strategic vision.
- **Cultivates an evidence culture:** Efforts to deliver timely, accurate, relevant, and integrated data were successful when end-users were empowered to communicate needs openly and engaged in an iterative process of design and improvement. As a result, the number of data analytics champions on campus has grown because trust has been built and capabilities continue to enhance teaching, learning, and advising.

## 3. Considering the principle “Analytics is a team sport—Build your dream team,” how does Lehman College’s story show the importance of partnership and collaboration?

To successfully build and sustain a culture of evidence, Information Technology (IT) and Institutional Research (IR) units must have a relationship that models trust, collaboration, and inclusiveness for the entire campus. Doing so creates a hub for a more integrated model of analytics that is woven into the institutional fabric. Early adopters sketched out dashboards using iterative development methods. These sessions not only helped departments gain an understanding of the value of BI, but also provided IT and IR with greater insight into departmental needs. Small wins were celebrated, and key programs became champions of the BI dashboard. These collaborations became the basis for a variety of joint BI-related presentations on best practices and innovations at meetings and conferences.

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A data dictionary, developed by a cross-campus team, reinforced the need for data stewardship and helped standardize the enrollment terms used by departments. This common understanding is now consistently reflected across institutional data, enrollment snapshots, and related reports. More importantly, this shared language will help accelerate ongoing efforts to create a culture of evidence.

## 4. What advice do you have for your colleagues at other institutions?

BI and analytics suites should not be regarded simply as "tools." Their implementation and ultimate acceptance depend on the institution's level of confidence in the data and the readiness to integrate BI and analytics into decision-making practices.

Workshops served as the main vehicle to demonstrate the value and ease-of-use of the BI platform. It took time for faculty and staff to gain confidence in the new online system. Especially critical was the adjustment from legacy static reporting to a dashboard with dynamic data that was updated daily. As a result, the dashboard started an internal dialogue around issues of readiness.

## Steps to Begin Your Analytics Journey

- Develop, clarify, and gain agreement regarding the analytics roadmap. Tie analytics goals into the strategic plan, institutional effectiveness initiatives, and an evidence-based culture.
- Ensure sponsorship by senior leaders and broad participation among subject matter experts.
- Leverage existing data governance processes and ensure the ethical, responsible use of data. Take inventory of campus data assets.
- Develop a pre-launch readiness checklist that addresses the existing state of data use, data governance, and cultural acceptance.
- Start the journey with focused pilots and enthusiastic early adopters to gain experience and quick wins.
- Identify digital resources that fit with the IT ecosystem but don't make long-term commitments due to rapid market changes and developments in augmented analytics and artificial intelligence.
- Prepare for some resistance while being open to ideas and communicating the critical nature of the analytics journey.
- Embed data analytics use into specific jobs and invest in people so that they can do so well.
- Make student success, equity, and institutional sustainability pillars of the institutional data analytics strategy.