

Data through the Lens of Intentionality and Leadership

Staff in the Division of Student Affairs embrace [guiding principles](#) and culture of continuous improvement to leverage evidence to maximize effectiveness in learning and operations, eliminate redundancies, and minimize cost and risk in practice and projects. Quantitative or qualitative evidence or data exist in many places, systems, and applications. In addition to considering overall information security, described in university-required training, it is important to consider everyone’s role in data quality and data governance. Below are definitions to support a shared understanding of key terms:

Data	“factual information (such as measurements or statistics) used as a basis for reasoning, discussion, or calculation” (Merriam-Webster)
Data Quality	“how well data is able to serve the purposes of its intended use or uses and how well it represents the objects, events, and concepts it is created to represent” (Sebastian-Coleman, 2013)
Data Governance	“a framework for maximizing the value of institutional data assets while managing the associated risks” (Data @ Clemson)
Assessment	“any effort to gather, analyze, and interpret evidence which describes institutional, departmental, divisional, or agency effectiveness” (Upcraft & Schuh, 1996), can also include programs and initiatives (Schuh et al., 2016)

“Data is ubiquitous because it is so useful” (Ballantyne, 2017, p.1). As higher education administrators, practitioners, and educators, we have access to data in various forms. As such, we have a responsibility to ensure we approach assessment, evaluation, and research ethically. [Ballantyne \(2017\)](#) argues there are ethical values we must consider shown in the graphic.



Before giving access to data or collecting, analyzing, and disseminating data, we have a responsibility to reflect on the necessity to do so. More so, we must consider: the instruments we develop or purchase, how and where data we store data, who will have access to the raw and summarized data, how we present data, the story it tells, and the people it represents, and how data will inform future programs, services, administrative functions, etc. to ultimately support our divisional and institutional mission.

On the next page there are questions to guide staff in thoughtful reflection and discussion before acting and making swift decisions. The division’s Director of Assessment and Clemson’s Office of Institutional Assessment also serve as resources and thought partners.

Questions to Guide Reflection and Discussion

Access to Systems and Data

- What are the systems, platforms, etc. where data exists for your respective area?
- Who has access to systems containing data?
- Who determines access, for what purposes, and for how long?
- Is it appropriate and/or possible to give access to everything or data directly relevant to a role?
- Has training occurred on expectations of examining data, running reports, sharing data, etc.?
- Has training occurred related to FERPA and what data can be shared, with who, and for what purposes?
- What, if any, protocols or procedures exist to seek approval for sharing data with stakeholders?
- Do all full-time and student employees, interns, or practicum students understand who to seek out if there are any questions related to data?

Before Developing Surveys or Other Instruments to Assess

- What's the purpose of gathering data?
- How does data allow us to determine if we are meeting outlined core functions, goals, objectives, or outcomes identified by the department, division, or institution?
- How do you establish guidelines and procedures for developing tools or protocols?
- Are there consistent questions that could be asked to allow staff to gain a larger perspective?
- What's the expected timeline for data collection?
- If doing surveys, focus groups, interviews, etc.... who are the intended participants?
- How are participants determined?
- Do participants align with what is intended to be measured or determined or is the sample representative of the group or population?
- Does a project overlap with other surveys your department is conducting or other large-scale surveys?
- Should there be a pilot to ensure the instrument is effective, clear, concise, and inclusive?
- Who vets the tool and has one final look before it's loaded into the Baseline system (unless otherwise approved by the Director of Assessment for the Division of Student Affairs)?
- What is the expectation when having access to run reports or share data?

Reflecting on Previous Instruments and Planning for the Future

- Were there any stakeholders directly or indirectly involved with a previous survey/review of data?
- What were lessons learned throughout the process that can inform the next administration?
- What did data reveal in the past?
- How was data shared with individuals or groups and who identified these individuals and groups? (do copies of summaries, presentations, etc.... exist)
- How did data inform practice, programs, policies, resource allocation, etc.?
- Were there any areas identified as points of concentration to focus efforts and resources (human and financial) in student affairs or other departments/divisions at Clemson?
- Was there a plan to identify what strategic adjustments would be made to achieve any targets and was anyone identified as the point person on monitoring these adjustments or "owning" that area?
- What, if any, data exists to support efforts made at working towards the identified targets?
- Are there any informal hypotheses on what the future data may reveal?
- Who are stakeholders who should be directly or indirectly involved with the next administration?
- What use will data have moving forward, and are there opportunities to connect to department, divisional or institutional priorities and goals?