

Performance Metrics: Developing a Dashboard with Tools You Already Have

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Discussion Topics

- Dashboards: why or why not?
- Selecting metrics to include
- Refining metrics
- Displaying the data
- Maintaining the dashboard

Dashboards: Why or Why Not?

- Linked to strategic priorities?
- Keeping up with the Joneses?
- The medium or the message?
- Used to manage, or lost in the crowd?



Selecting Metrics

“The world is made of data. Most of it is irrelevant.”
– Roger Ebert

- From an AIR survey done in 2005 and summarized in 2012, dashboard indicators should be:
 - Easy to understand
 - Relevant to the user
 - Strategic
 - Quantitative
 - Up to date
 - Not used in isolation

Selecting Metrics

- Point is to give at-a-glance information; how much detail leads to overload?
- Need for “standard” metrics for external comparisons (IPEDS, NCCBP, etc.), or college-specific indicators?
- Poll external and internal colleagues for ideas
 - Make sure your main audience has a voice
 - Need for consultative approach; make sure that metrics are meaningful and maintainable

Selecting Metrics

Category	Example Indicators	% Institutions Including
Financial indicators	Endowment, % financial aid	80%
Admissions statistics	Average ACT, # applicants	79%
Enrollment statistics	Headcount, diversity	77%
Faculty data	Faculty FTE, diversity	77%
Student outcomes	Grad rate, persistence	73%
Student engagement	Study abroad, Honors program	58%
Academic information	Student-faculty ratio	55%
Physical plant	Space utilization, seats filled	38%
Satisfaction	Student/grad/staff satisfaction	35%
Research	Patents awarded	35%
External ratings	<i>US News</i> ranking	21%

Source: *Institutional Dashboards: Navigational Tools for Colleges and Universities* (AIR, 2012)

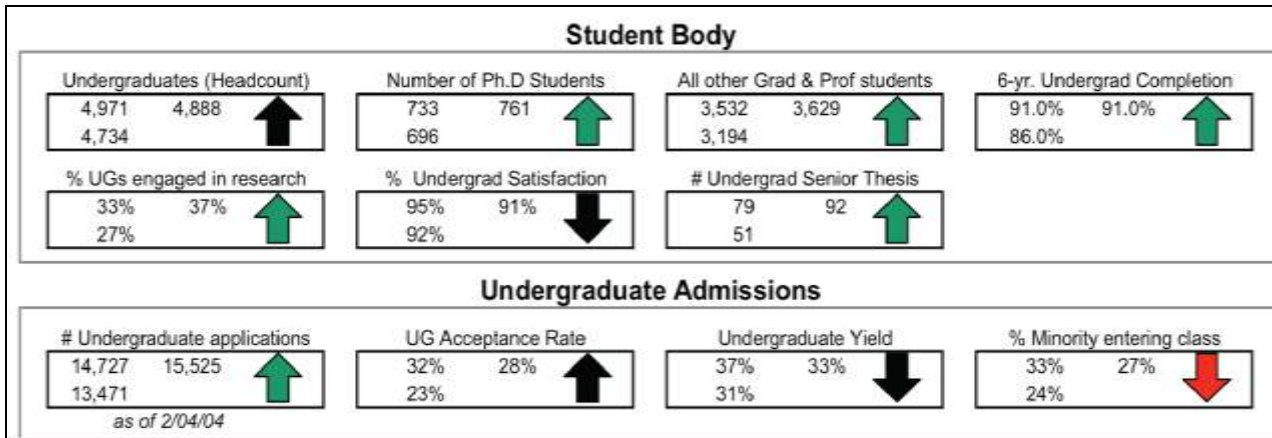
Refining Metrics

- Work with main audience in refining how metrics are defined
 - Bear in mind that metrics are indicators of a construct; don't over-refine
- Be prepared to drop some and add others
- Need to experiment with how metrics are displayed
 - Simple is better
 - If there's no clear way to display it, it may not be a good metric

Displaying Metrics

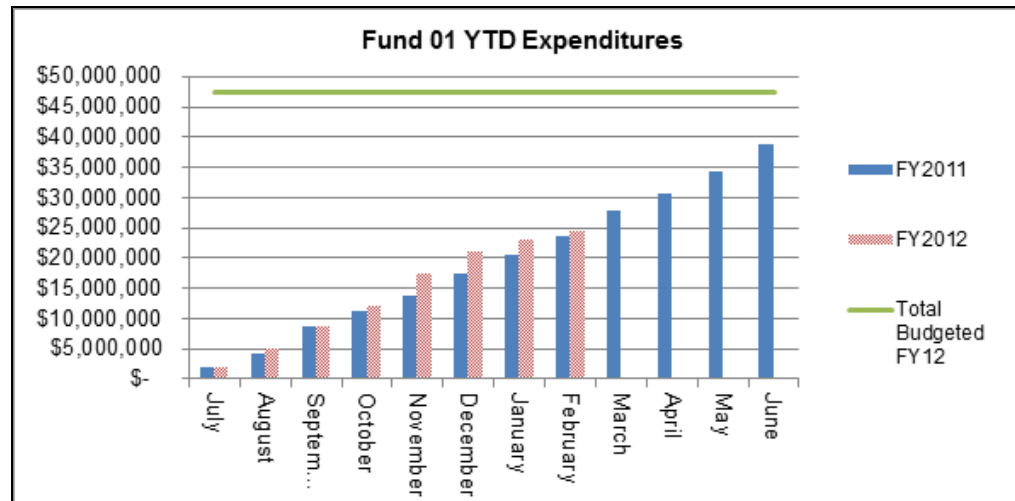
- Summary or detail?
- How much trend/historical info to show?
- How to show external comparisons?
- Work with audience
 - Remember you're more used to digesting a lot of data than they are
- Be sure to use best practices in visual display (minimize clutter, etc.)

Displaying Metrics

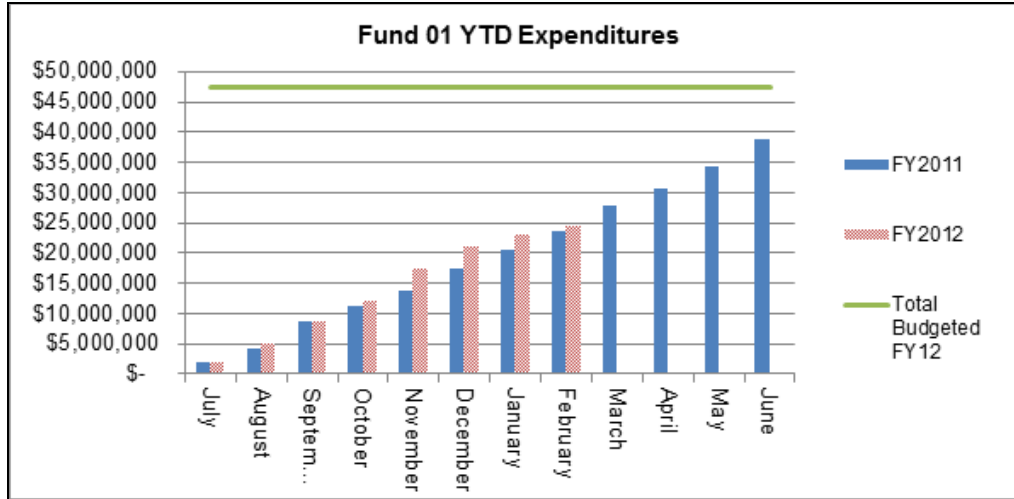


Example of Summary Metrics

Example of detailed metric with trend and two points of comparison (prior year and goal)

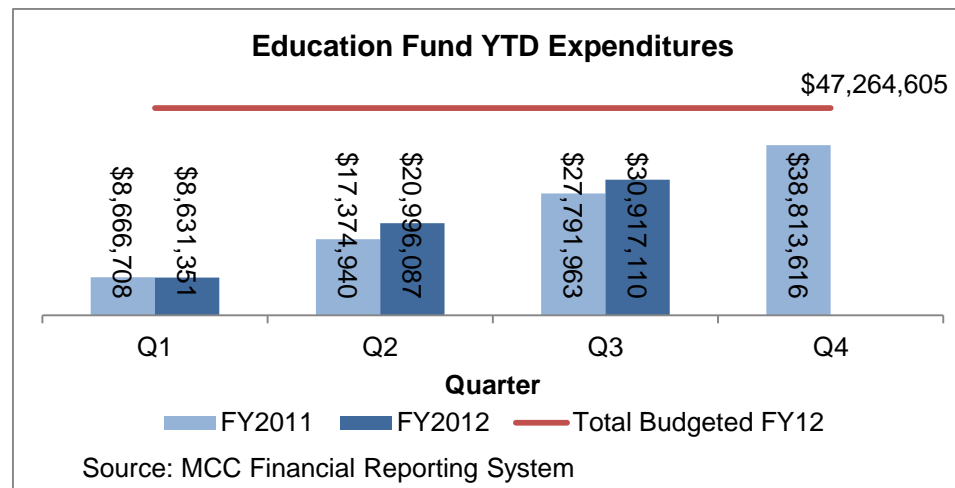


Displaying Metrics



Example of detailed metric with lot of “clutter”
– not best practice

Example of detailed metric with same information, but less clutter



Displaying Metrics

- Can use conditional formatting in MS Excel to give red/yellow/green lights
- Other tools (specialized dashboard software, some ERP reporting tools) can produce dial or thermometer type displays

Maintaining the Dashboard

- Select measurement cycle for each indicator
 - Month, quarter, semester, annual
 - Annual probably too long for many; if too many are monthly it will take a lot of resources
- Communicate to audience so they know what to expect in terms of updates

Maintaining the Dashboard

- Data in MS Excel
 - Simple to keep adding more data; update cell references for charts and tables
- Paste charts into Word doc to include explanatory/contextual text
- Save as PDF
- Post on web site or distribute to audience directly

Questions/Discussion

