



CIT Faculty Dashboard

This institutional approach...

...is based in Cork Institute of Technology.

...was developed in-house.

...involved the creation of a dashboard which continuously gathers a range of data to inform institutional decision making.

...has been shown to have considerable strategic value.

Identified Need

CIT has long recognised the importance of evidence-based decision making. In the past, however, it was often the case that when there was a requirement to perform significant levels of data analysis, 'one-off' projects would need to be established. This, coupled with the fact that data could only be accessed through information gatekeepers, made strategic, data-informed, real-time decision making a challenge. The need was identified for a data dashboard that would be available to key decision makers as needs arose and would provide access based on their specific information requirements. There was also a desire to better understand the nuances of student success, experience and engagement, as distinct from basic progression/non-completion data.

Solution

Recognising the abundance of available but under-utilised raw data, the Head of Faculty of Engineering & Science (a former software engineer) decided to explore whether this data could be exploited to provide useful, timely insights for key decision makers. He built a successful proof-of-concept dashboard using readily available MS Office applications. This prototype was subsequently developed into a production-quality solution by CIT's IT Department. The dashboard is now used across the institution to support annual programme status review and five-yearly programmatic reviews, to produce retention analyses for both internal and external stakeholders, and to inform academic and financial planning.



Enablers and Challenges

The fact that the pilot initiative was developed by a senior member of academic staff and that many of CIT's senior management team have significant IT experience were key factors in achieving support from senior management. It meant that there was access to the required expertise within the institution, as well as the resources to support the project. In addition to a small number of technical complications, challenges included getting the project on the approved list of IT projects in the face of competition from a wide range of areas. Another challenge involved scaling up engagement with the dashboard across the institutional community. These challenges were overcome through senior management leadership, persistence, and working with the CIT student engagement and success team to improve outcomes for students.

Advice

The advice from the project team to make a success of a project like this is, firstly, to identify and obtain the support of an appropriate advocate within senior management. Ensuring the availability of adequate funding and resources is also critical. It may be helpful to begin development on 'quick win' areas which will deliver maximum impact for modest levels of investment, supported by a technical approach which will deliver a scalable solution. Such an approach maximises the potential for obtaining staff support across the campus by iteratively proving the benefits of engagement with the dashboard.

Further Information

Michael Loftus (michael.loftus@cit.ie)

Head of Faculty of Engineering & Science

Jonathan McCarthy (jonathan.mccarthy@cit.ie)

Head of IT Services