CCCSE
INSIGHTS THAT MATTER

Data Narrative Exercise

SUPPORTING
Minds,
SUPPORTING
Learners

Addressing Student Mental Health
to Advance Academic Success

2024 NATIONAL REPORT

A Narrative Approach to Sharing Data

The data narrative exercise is designed to be conducted in small groups, followed by a facilitated discussion with the larger group. During each session, groups are presented with a series of simply stated, related data points, with each data point being shared one at a time. After each data point is revealed, groups spend time discussing what the data point means to them in terms of their own work at the college.

As group members talk about the meaning behind the data, a storyline develops, making the data more relevant and more relatable. Each data point is meant to build on the other, at times challenging members to take an honest look at their own roles in the college student experience. Instructions for conducting a data narrative exercise are outlined below and followed by example data point sets.

1 Defining the Focus

An in-depth review of your results is an essential step in preparing a data narrative exercise. After reviewing your results, what specific findings point to potential new priorities for college action?

For the various breakout findings (age, gender, race/ethnicity, etc.) within the findings, what captures your attention/concern? Where do the data demonstrate that different groups of students are having very different experiences?

Next, it is important to consider your audience — who will be attending the session, which areas of campus will be represented, and in what areas these individuals can potentially have the most positive impact. A thorough review of your results and consideration of your audience will help define the focus of the session.

2 Selecting Key Data Points

The objective in selecting key data points to share is to keep the dataset focused. Select two or three data points that speak directly to the focus of the session. Each data point should build on the previous one, enabling the group to develop a clearer understanding of the issue and to formulate meaning around the issue, making the discussion more salient and tangible.

3 Presenting the Data

The data narrative exercise is conducted first in small groups. After the audience has been split into small groups, present the data. The objective is to share each data point one at a time and to allow discussion after each data point is revealed.

Supporting Minds, Supporting Learners: Addressing Student Mental Health to Advance Academic Success presents the reader with five questions colleges should ask about their students' mental health and well-being:

1. Do our students believe their mental health and well-being is a priority at our college?

2. Do our students know where they can seek help on our campus?

3. If our students need help, how often do they seek it?

4. What barriers prevent our students from seeking help?

5. How do our students want to receive help?

*Item numbers and variable names are at end of tool.

These questions can be used as a basis for the creation of the data sets that will be shared during the activity. Any other related data from the report or college data sources can be incorporated as applicable.

EXAMPLE DATASET #1
Barriers to Students Seeking Help for Their Mental Health and Well-Being

1st Data Point: *Forty percent of our CCSSE respondents who indicated that they needed help for their mental health and emotional well-being in the past 12 months never sought it.*

▶ Groups should discuss the implications of these data. What do they mean? What questions do they raise? The first question that might be raised is "Why?"

2nd Data Point: *A third of our CCSSE respondents reported that a lack of resources (money, time, transportation) was the greatest barrier that would keep them from seeking help for their mental health and emotional well-being. One in five respondents said their greatest barrier was not knowing what kind of help they needed.*

▶ Groups should discuss the implications of these data. What do they mean? What questions do they raise?

3rd Data Point: *Women and students with another gender identity were quite a bit more likely than men to report that a lack of resources was their greatest barrier. Men were more likely to report not knowing what kind of help they needed as a barrier than were women or respondents with another gender identity.*

▶ Groups should discuss the implications of these data. What do they mean? What questions do they raise?

EXAMPLE DATASET #2
Student Perceptions of Campus Culture Around Mental Health and Well-Being

1st Data Point: *Twenty-five percent of our CCSSE respondents disagreed that their mental health and well-being is a priority at our college.*

▶ Groups should discuss the implications of these data. What do they mean? What questions do they raise? One question that might be raised is "What groups of students were more likely to report this?"

2nd Data Point: *Twice as many traditional-age students disagreed that their mental health and well-being is a priority at our college as did nontraditional-age students.*

▶ Groups should discuss the implications of these data. What do they mean? What questions do they raise? One question that might be raised is "Why are younger students more likely to report this?"

3rd Data Point: *Traditional-age students were less likely than their older peers (33% vs. 55%) to agree that they would know where to go if they needed to seek professional help for their mental or emotional health while attending our college.*

▶ Groups should discuss the implications of these data. What do they mean? What questions do they raise?

4 Large Group Discussion

After small groups have had time to discuss the data and formulate a clearer understanding of the issues, each group should share their thoughts — their version of the "story." The objective is to meld each group's story into a larger discussion on the topic. Some stories may align, while others may challenge the group to take an even closer look at the issue. The data narrative exercise is designed to encourage discussion among diverse audiences about specific issues of focus for the college. This tool, while designed for sharing results with a larger group, can be adapted for data sharing among specific areas of campus — within academic departments, student services units, student groups, etc. Selecting key data points will take time; however, if done purposefully, the data narrative exercise can yield powerful discussions that can lead to the development of actionable improvement strategies.

Next Steps

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1. **Focus area(s):** When reviewing your mental health and well-being data, what areas of concern were revealed?

2. **Strategies:** Identify three strategies that will improve results in this area.

3. **Key players:** Who are the key players who will need to be involved to implement these strategies?

4. **Resources:** What college resources (time, people, facilities, money, etc.) will need to be allocated/reallocated to implement these strategies?

5. **Challenges:** What are some challenges that may prevent progress in implementing these strategies?

6. **Measure Improvement:** How will you measure improvement in the focus area(s)?

Related Special-Focus Item Numbers and Variable Names

Supporting Minds, Supporting Learners Report Questions	*CCSSE* Items	*SENSE* Items
1. Do our students believe their mental health and well-being is a priority at our college?	**6** variable name: COLLQ8666	**1** variable name: COLLQ1132
2. Do our students know where they can seek help on our campus?	**12** variable name: COLLQ8672	**7** variable name: COLLQ1138
3. If our students need help, how often do they seek it?	**13** variable name: COLLQ8673	No corresponding *SENSE* item
4. What barriers prevent our students from seeking help?	**14** variable name: COLLQ8674	**8** variable name: COLLQ1139
5. How do our students want to receive help?	**15** variable name: COLLQ8675	**9** variable name: COLLQ1140