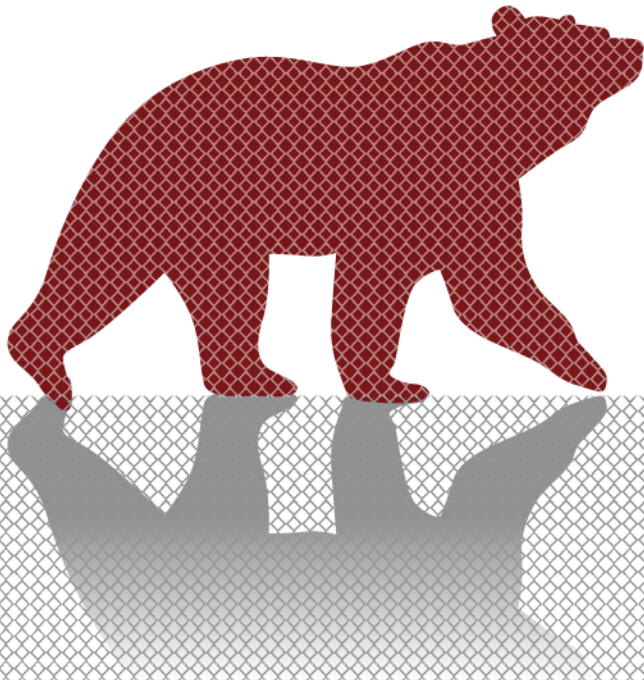


Known Knowns: Interpreting and Sharing Data on the “Typical” First-Generation Student

Office of Assessment



Missouri State
U N I V E R S I T Y



Introduction





Outcomes

- Non-specialists will be introduced to useful tenets of data interpretation (and its limits) in the context of designing practical interventions.
- Participants will share in our experiences regarding what works and doesn't in sharing this information with the goal of building momentum and action.



Who's in the Room



A Known Known—Or Is It?

What does the average first gen student look like at your university?



Spoiler Alert

The myth of the average student.

There is no one data point that can explain the needs of a first generation student---a lot of information/data needs to be brought together.



Data Analysis

The “average” MSU first-generation student (NSSE ‘16): Frequencies & Descriptives

- 75% female, 23% male
- 80% Caucasian, 4% African-American, etc.
- 21.8 years old
- Majoring in 13 fields





Data Analysis

Comparisons with non-first generation students (NSSE '16): Correlations and Cross-tabulations

- Similar educational aspirations
- Similar race/ethnicity composition
- Less likely to live on campus
- More likely to have started school elsewhere



Common Pitfalls

- Too much data. Too many questions.
- Data is a guide, not a solution
- Risky Inferences
 - LGBTQ students
 - Single data point
- Sometimes no news is good news
 - Adverse impact
 - Assessment for Improvement? Assessment for Accountability
 - Program Evaluation or Assessing Student Learning Outcomes





So, what's the proper angle?

“Begin with the end in mind.”

Figure out what you REALLY want to know.

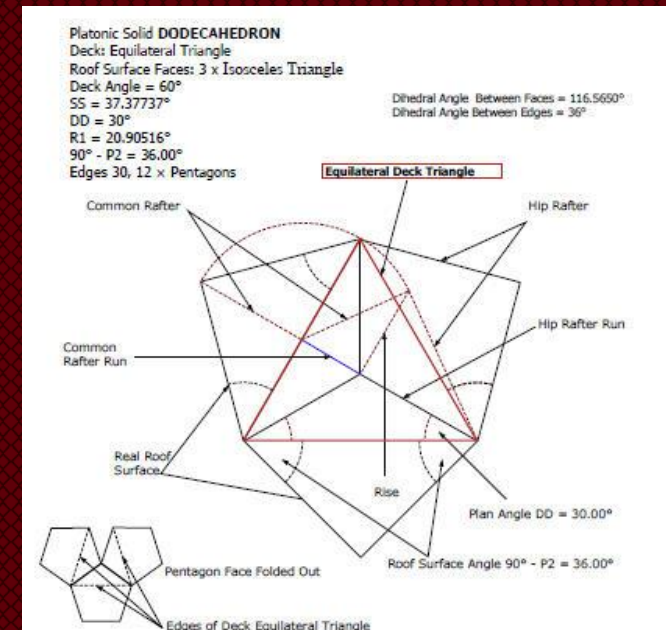
- What % of students are first-generation?
- Are first-generation students as academically engaged as their peers?

Know Where to Go:

Academics
Registrar

Student Government
Student Life

Context is the key to interpretation
Who can use the findings?
How do we convey the significance?





Principles That Guide Us

- Never consult alone.
- Emphasize consultative, face-to-face interactions with individuals, departments, programs, and colleges throughout the university, rather than using reports or web content as the primary means of communicating with and supporting the MSU community.



Sharing with Non-Technical Audiences

- Extremely difficult.
- We keep a high level of awareness and try to improve each day.
- Think about your audience. It has to be a snapshot many times and it has taken us days to come up with a snapshot—a ½ page or one page handout.
- Run it by a team—internal team, but we've also invited faculty and staff to help analyze.
- Coffee Breaks and Informal Opportunities—set up informal times for interested folks to look at data and discuss.



Closure



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