

CASE STUDY

Transforming Institutional Data into Actionable Information



ITHACA COLLEGE ENTERS STRATEGIC INSTITUTION-WIDE ANALYTICS PARTNERSHIP WITH HELIOCAMPUS

Ithaca College wanted to deepen their understanding of the patterns and trends that lead to better student outcomes – and ultimately student success. To do so, they needed to invest in an institution-wide analytics infrastructure that would reveal insights into the connections between curricular, co-curricular, and student life variables and help define their impact on the overall student experience. They partnered with HelioCampus to fulfill their vision.



Ithaca College, a private liberal arts college in Ithaca, N.Y., has embarked on a core strategic initiative to build the modern analytics foundation it needs to foster a smarter decision-making culture and become a more student-centered institution.

"We have all this great data," says Chief Analytics Officer, Dr. Yuko Mulugetta, who oversees the Office of Analytics and Institutional Research, **"but how do we integrate all of it in the most useful way?"** Harnessing the value of information – and using it more effectively – is high on the priority list for the 6,500-student college as it continues to map out a reliable profile of what drives the success of its students.

Choosing a Partner Who Knows the Marketplace



After a year of planning and evaluating possible vendor options, Mulugetta and her team chose higher education analytics experts HelioCampus to support a three-year plan that included a foundational data infrastructure, data visualization and data science services. Starting with a well-integrated data warehouse, HelioCampus will help Ithaca build their “House of AIR” and support their existing data governance structure and predictive analytics initiatives.

The team selected HelioCampus based on a few fundamental criteria, including:

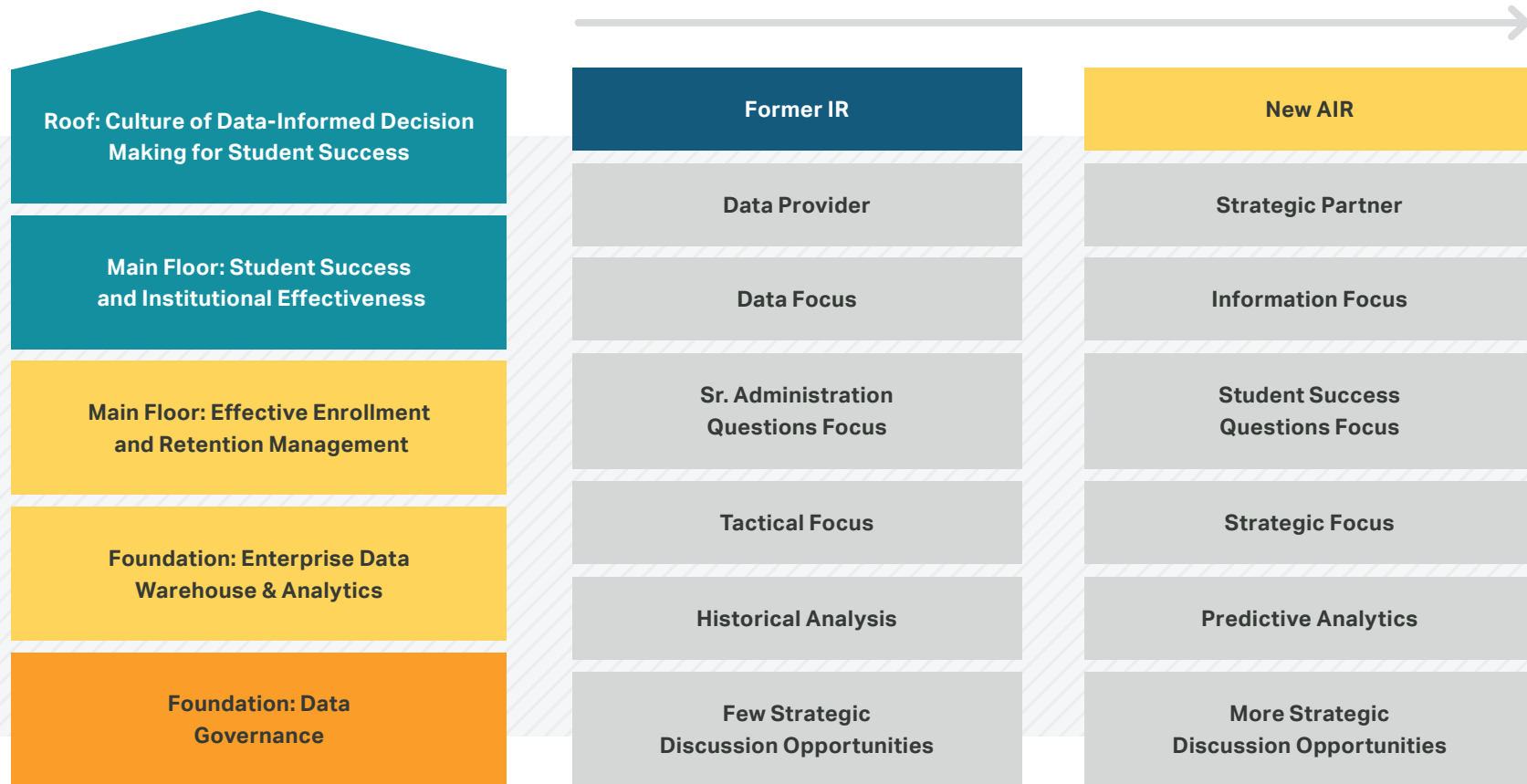
- › Cutting-edge technology, with a cloud solution;
- › Secure, private connections, and robust data solutions with operational reporting;
- › Flexible data models that can be modified for Ithaca’s specific needs; and
- › Strong knowledge of the higher-education marketplace.

“They know the higher-education issues today’s institutions face — in and out,” Mulugetta says. “And they’re also including ongoing data analysis and data science services time even after building the platform and models. That was really impressive. They are willing to share their knowledge with us — and we have become their resource, as well. It’s really a shared investment in a mutual partnership.”

Executing on a Shared Vision: Ithaca's House of AIR

The vision for the partnership and investment in institutional analytics is best described by Mulugetta's metaphor of building a house.

House of AIR (Office of Analytics & Institutional Research)



Prior to partnering with HelioCampus, individual groups were making great advancements such as predictive modeling in Institutional Effectiveness and Enrollment Management. Simultaneously, IT and IR were working on data governance. The role of a Chief Analytics Officer was created which was a catalyst for the transformation from traditional Institutional Research to Mulugetta's new team, Analytics and Institutional Research (AIR). While great strides were made across a number of areas, they realized they still needed a foundational infrastructure to connect and support all the disparate activities.

Isolated Data Streams and Limited Capabilities Hamper Decision-Making

Under Ithaca's previous data infrastructure, isolated data streams made it difficult to understand, uncover, and see the relationships across functional units such as admissions, enrollment, student success and institutional financials. For this reason, key insights into possible causes of student behaviors weren't accessible.

For example, while the college has been paying close attention to retention and graduation rates as key measures of outcome, they also know that the outcome measure alone isn't enough. The real question is: what drives these outcomes? Ithaca has been looking for a way to enhance their analytics system to provide the answer along with other crucial insights.

In addition, Ithaca's current system couldn't time-stamp data to allow smooth longitudinal comparisons – for instance, taking the accumulated financial aid expenditures of one day and comparing them to those of previous years on that same date.



Building an Integrated System for Long-Term Data Strategy

HelioCampus' platform, including an enterprise data warehouse, directly addresses Ithaca's issues using an extensible, high-performance data platform with models and dashboards – all of which are tailored to Ithaca's needs.

Even better, Ithaca will be able to pull all the data from across the institution together – integrating admissions, enrollment, student success, advancement and financial data not only for operational reporting, but also for advanced strategic analysis.

In collaboration with Ithaca's IT team, HelioCampus has already established a secure, virtual private cloud for the College, where system data is replicated and connected with analytical models and dashboards. HelioCampus also conducted a business process review to ensure that the models and dashboards met the College's unique needs. This depth of data integration and validation laid the critical foundation for data quality and integrity at the outset, while also preparing for future analytics growth.

Informing Vital Decisions for Admissions and Student Success

Importantly, HelioCampus' solution will provide a platform for rich and valuable analysis to enable the College to discover and identify pockets of opportunity, which can then form the basis of more strategic discussions for school administration.

For example, learning at Ithaca extends beyond the classroom to encompass a broad range of residential, professional, and extracurricular opportunities. Gaining increased visibility into the connections among such curricular, co-curricular, and student life variables can help define their impact on the overall student experience. And those characteristics should create a sharper definition of the type of student most likely to take advantage of the experiential learning environment that Ithaca provides, Mulugetta says.

"This kind of learning analytics is a critical area for us," she notes. "It will deepen our understanding of the patterns and trends that lead to better student outcomes — and ultimately student success."



Connect your data dots.

If you would like more information on HelioCampus solutions,
email info@heliocampus.com.

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