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Different Strokes: Serving Different Academic Units from a Central Data Shop

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Institutional Context

The University of Utah

- Large, public R1 university
- Diverse academic colleges (*e.g., Health, Engineering, Fine Arts, Humanities*)
- Central IR/data office supporting all units
- Wide range of data needs and maturity levels



\$734 M Research Expenditure

18 Colleges including medical and healthcare system

1,721 Tenure-line Faculty

8,926 Graduates

29,335 Undergraduates

38,261 Students





About UAIR

Team of 40+ individuals organized into 4 core teams:

1. Institutional Reporting (external focus)
2. Analytics & Reporting (internal focus)
 - i. Academic Reporting Team (student data focused)
 - ii. Administrative Reporting Team (finance, research, employee, facilities, space)
 - iii. Experience Analytics Team (internal surveys and engagement data)
3. Data Management
 - i. Architecture Team
 - ii. Engineering Team
4. Data Governance



About UAIR

We serve across data domains including:

Student, faculty/staff (employee), finance, research, facilities, space, experience and event analytics

Core Services Include:

Official external reporting (IPEDS, state compliance, ranking surveys)

Internal analytics including institution-serving dashboards

Enterprise-level data models

Large-scale internal surveys (students/faculty/staff)

Data science and advanced analytics

Data governance



The Central Challenge

One central office. Many different expectations.

- **Academic units vary dramatically in:**
 - Data literacy
 - Strategic maturity
 - Reporting expectations
 - Resource availability
 - Decision-making culture

Traditional IR models struggle to scale



The Shift We Made

We stopped asking: “How do we fulfill every request?”

And started asking: “How do we create institutional data strategy?”

UAIR evolved from:

- reactive reporting

→ to

- proactive strategic enablement

The Risk of Over-Customization

- Unsustainable analyst workload
- Competing definitions
- Redundant reports
- Strategic drift
- Stakeholder dependency

Customization scales poorly. Shared frameworks scale institutionally.



The Strategic Opportunity

What ALL colleges actually need:

- Trusted KPIs
- Consistent definitions
- Timely access
- Benchmark visibility
- Decision support
- Confidence in institutional data

This becomes the foundation for centralized strategy



Moving from Requests to Capabilities

Old model:

- *“What report would you like?”*

New model:

- *“What decisions are you trying to make?”*



Our Strategic Service Philosophy

Core principles:

1. Centralize definitions
2. Standardize where possible
3. Customize where impactful
4. Prioritize scalable delivery
5. Build institutional trust



Dashboards as Institutional Infrastructure

Position dashboards strategically:

- Not just reports
- Shared operational systems

Possible dashboard examples:

- Enrollment, retention/persistence, student credit hours, faculty workload, course success, graduation rates

The dashboard is the starting point – not the final product

Tiered Engagement Strategy

Engagement Level	Strategic Focus
Self-Service	Shared dashboards & KPIs
Collaborative	Recurring planning discussions
Strategic Partnership	High-impact institutional initiatives

Communication as Strategy

Not just sending reports

Topics:

- Data storytelling
- Executive summaries
- KPI integration
- Strategic framing
- Regular touchpoints

Data → Information → Insight → Action



Standard KPIs Across Colleges

Examples:

- Enrollment trends
- Retention
- Completion
- Time-to-degree
- SCH production
- Yield

Key point

Consistency enables:

- Cross-campus conversations
- Strategic planning
- Accountability
- Resource alignment

ACADEMIC ENTERPRISE METRICS



College of

Multiple values

STUDENT

1. BUDGET-RELATED STU CREDIT HOURS

	Lower Division	Upper Division	Basic Grad	Adv Grad	Grand Total
2022-2023	26,361	38,506	12,138	8,757	85,761
2021-2022	23,479	37,582	11,346	8,475	80,881
2020-2021	20,996	37,884	10,033	8,701	77,613

2. ENROLLED PRIMARY MAJORS

	2023-2024	2022-2023	2021-2022	2020-2021
Bachelors	1,039	4,862	4,839	4,633
Masters	124	614	557	516
Doctorate	166	790	791	768

6. RETENTION & PERSISTENCE

Student Type
All

% of fall 2021 undergraduates who are retained/graduated by the following fall term. Academic Level is determined by the students' status as of fall 2023.

Retained same dept | same college | other college

Graduated same dept | same college | other college

Not retained/grad



The Role of Relationship Management

Central offices succeed when trust exists

- Dean partnerships
- Listening sessions
- Strategic check-ins
- Transparency about capacity
- Shared prioritization

Important framing: UAIR as consultative partner



When Custom Work Still Matters

Customization still exists, but strategically

Examples:

- Accreditation
- Program review
- New initiatives
- Presidential priorities

Custom work should drive institutional value, not replace standardized reporting



Early Outcomes

1. Reduced duplicate requests
2. Faster access to routine metrics
3. Improved stakeholder confidence
4. Better strategic conversations
5. Increased dashboard adoption
6. More proactive planning
7. Enabled comparison across units



Cultural Changes We Observed

1. Colleges began using shared language
2. Leaders referenced common KPIs
3. More self-service behavior
4. Better meeting preparation
5. Stronger institutional alignment

Fall 2026 Re-Enrollment Tracker

Students Not Enrolled Fall Term | Internal Use Only | Updated Daily



Data as of: 5/12/2026 7:30:08 AM

Campus	Academic Level	Current Major Level	Current College	Current Department	Current Major Group	Current Primary Major	Honors Student
(All) ▼	(All) ▼	(All) ▼	(All) ▼	(All) ▼	(All) ▼	(All) ▼	(All) ▼

Students in this Dashboard

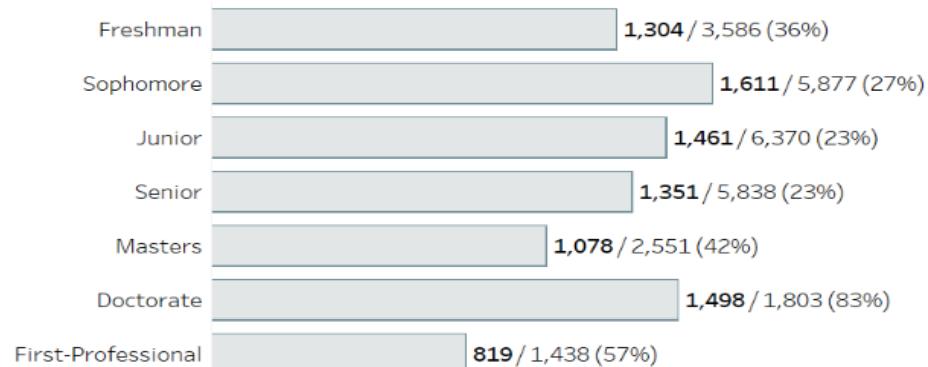
- Enrolled Spring 2026
- Degree Seeking
- Not Applied to Graduate Spring 2026 or Summer 2026
- Not Projected to be on Leave of Absence (LOA)
- Not Currently Enrolled for Fall 2026 Semester

Not Enrolled in Fall 2026 by Academic Level

Primary major only | Student's current major is subject to change day to day

View by Academic Level ▼

Not Currently Enrolled / Total Students Expected to Enroll (% Not Currently Enrolled)



9,123 (33.2%)

Students Not Currently Enrolled in Fall 2026
Out of 27,464 Total Students Expected to Enroll

What Success Actually Looks Like

Not:

- “More reports produced”

Instead:

- Fewer ad hoc requests
- More strategic decisions
- Better decision velocity
- Greater institutional trust
- Shared accountability

Before vs After

Before	After
Reactive reporting	Strategic enablement
Custom everything	Shared KPI ecosystem
Transactional relationships	Ongoing partnerships
Data confusion	Common definitions
Bottlenecks	Scalable access



Lessons Learned

1. Standardization is not rigidity
2. Governance is foundational
3. Relationships matter more than tools
4. Self-service requires training
5. Executive sponsorship is critical



Common Pitfalls

- Building too many dashboards
- Solving every request uniquely
- Lack of metric ownership
- Assuming dashboard adoption = understanding
- Under-communicating definitions



Questions Institutions Should Ask Themselves

1. What KPIs should every college see?
2. Where does customization add value?
3. What should be centralized?
4. What decisions are currently delayed by fragmented data?
5. What institutional language do we want to standardize?

Parting Sentiment



**“The goal is not to produce more data.
The goal is to create shared institutional understanding.”**

Connect With Us



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Thank you!