

# Essential Data for Student Support and Retention



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## **Executive Summary**

This white paper presents findings from a survey conducted by Anthology among higher education professionals, highlighting the most critical data types for effective student outreach. The data categories include Academic Engagement Data, Students' Characteristics, Non-Cognitive Data, Faculty/Staff Observations and Reported Alerts, and Co-Curricular Involvement Data. We explore the importance of these data types, how advisors can leverage them for retention and student support initiatives, and the challenges faced without access to these essential insights.

# Introduction

Higher education institutions are increasingly focused on improving student retention and providing robust support systems. A major challenge in this endeavor is the need for actionable data to enhance student outreach. This white paper aims to shed light on the data considered most valuable by higher education professionals in retention and student support roles, based on a recent survey. The purpose of this white paper is to offer insights into these critical data types and provide a framework for leveraging them to enhance student success.

# Survey Outcomes

Our survey reveals key findings regarding the types of data that higher education professionals deem most important for prioritizing student outreach. The results show that Academic Engagement Data is viewed as the most crucial, with 45% of respondents highlighting its importance. Students' Characteristics follow at 39%, while Non-Cognitive Data, Faculty/Staff Observations and Reported Alerts, and Co-Curricular Involvement Data are considered important by 5%, 8%, and 3% of respondents, respectively. These findings underscore the multifaceted nature of the student data necessary for comprehensive support.

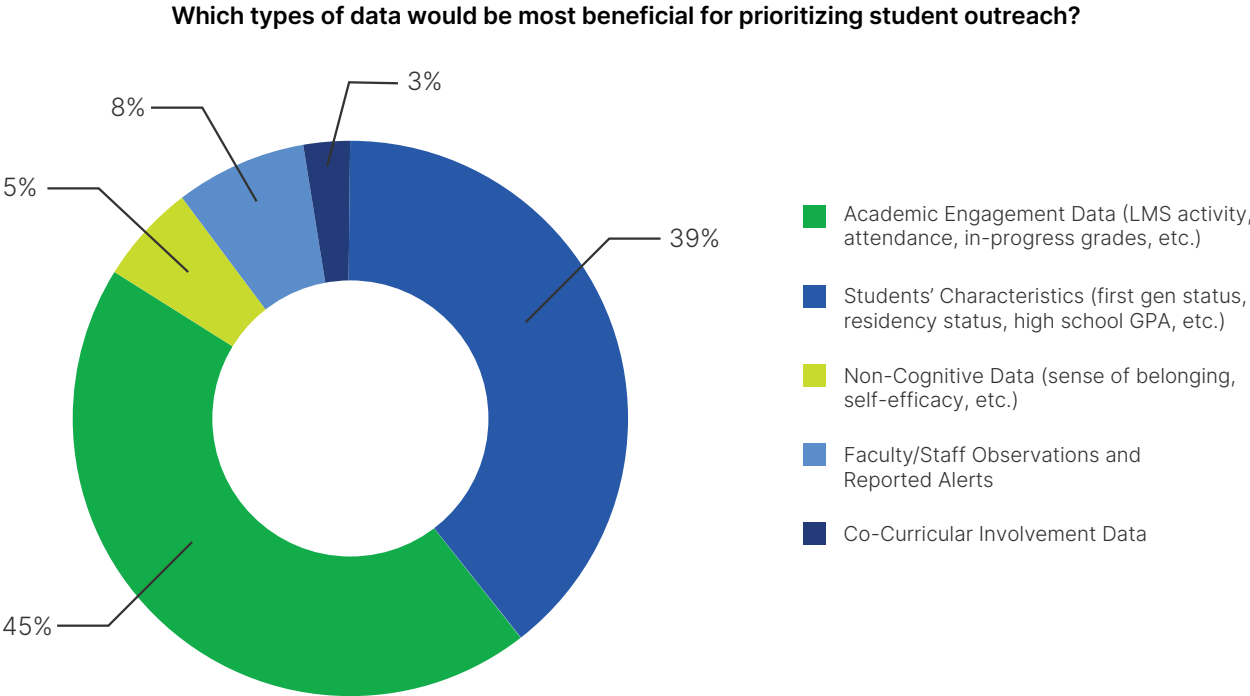


Figure 1 - Types of data most beneficial for prioritizing student outreach

# Essential Data Categories

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## Academic Engagement Data

Academic engagement data is deemed critical by 45% of respondents. This data is essential for assessing student performance, identifying at-risk students, and providing timely interventions. Advisors can monitor grades, attendance, and participation to pinpoint students who may need additional support. Without access to this data, institutions may struggle to identify academically struggling students, potentially leading to increased dropout rates.

## Students' Characteristics

Data about Students' Characteristics is highlighted by 39% of respondents as vital for understanding the demographic and socio-economic context of the student body. This information enables personalized support tailored to individual student needs. By understanding students' backgrounds, advisors can better address barriers and provide targeted resources. The absence of this data can result in a one-size-fits-all approach, failing to meet the diverse needs of the student population.

## Faculty/Staff Observations and Reported Alerts

Faculty and Staff Observations and Reported Alerts, valued by 8% of respondents, provide early identification of issues through direct observations and reports from faculty and staff. This data allows for immediate intervention for students showing signs of distress or disengagement. Without this information, there can be a delayed response to emerging problems, leading to escalated issues that are harder to manage.

## Non-Cognitive Data

Though considered important by only 5% of respondents, Non-Cognitive Data captures students' attitudes, motivations, and social-emotional skills. This data is crucial for developing programs that enhance these non-cognitive skills, which are important for overall student success. Without access to non-cognitive data, institutions may overlook significant factors influencing student achievement beyond academic performance.

## Co-Curricular Involvement Data

While deemed essential by only 3% of respondents, it reflects a small, diverse sample of student support and affairs staff with varied roles and responsibilities. For many practitioners focused on academic performance, co-curricular data may seem secondary to more direct indicators like grades or attendance. However, for advisors and student support staff who work closely with students beyond the classroom, this data is invaluable. It helps them track engagement, build a fuller picture of a student's journey, and identify at-risk individuals who might be disengaged socially or struggling with belonging. By integrating co-curricular insights into the CRM, institutions can empower all users, regardless of their focus, with a more comprehensive toolkit to support student success. Without it, advisors might miss out on important signals that could guide more effective interventions.

## Implementing Data-Driven Outreach

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To effectively utilize these data types, institutions must adopt strategic approaches. Academic Engagement Data can be used to monitor student performance continuously, allowing for timely interventions. Students' Characteristics can inform the creation of personalized support plans, addressing specific needs. Non-Cognitive Data can help in developing programs that build social-emotional skills, crucial for student success. Faculty/Staff Observations and Reported Alerts require establishing systems for regular reporting and prompt action resulting from that reporting. Co-Curricular Involvement Data can be leveraged to promote and track student participation in extracurricular activities, enhancing their college experience.

Implementing these strategies effectively requires robust technological solutions, such as CRM systems, that facilitate data collection, analysis, and action. Training and development programs for advisors and staff are also essential to ensure they can effectively use the data to support students.

### Unlock Early Interventions with Predictive AI

Anthology is embedding predictive AI insights directly into the advisor's student success workspace within the CRM. By uncovering students at academic risk earlier, advisors can take timely action to prompt effective interventions. [Discover the AI-powered Student Engagement Score and its impact on student success](#)

## Case Studies

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A community college is implementing a data-driven outreach approach by integrating students' academic engagement and performance data into their CRM system. Using this data, advisors can quickly identify students at academic risk, allowing for timely, personalized support interventions that are crucial throughout the academic term. For instance, advisors can monitor individual course engagement, projected grades, and overdue assignments, and even automate CRM actions to facilitate early and effective outreach. [\[Learn more\]](#)

Marshall University partnered with Anthology's Enrollment Management Service to reverse a decline in admit-to-enroll yield, leading to growth in overall enrollment and tuition revenue. Anthology's data-driven outreach impacted the enrollment decisions of more than 7,000 students. This led to a significant boost in yield for freshmen students, growing from 27% in 2022 to 33% in 2023. For those students who received high-touch support from Anthology's enrollment coaches, this increased to a 35.7% conversion rate.

[\[Read the success story\]](#)

## Benefits and ROI

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The benefits of implementing data-driven student support systems are both quantifiable and qualitative. Institutions can see improved retention rates, higher student satisfaction, and better academic outcomes. Qualitatively, data-driven strategies strengthen advisor-student relationships, increase student engagement, and promote overall well-being. The return on investment (ROI) for these systems is significant, with long-term gains in student achievement and retention.

## Conclusion

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This white paper aims to provide a high-level overview of the importance of various data types for effective student outreach and retention in higher education. Academic Engagement Data, Students' Characteristics, Non-Cognitive Data, Faculty/Staff Observations and Reported Alerts, and Co-Curricular Involvement Data each play a critical role in supporting student success. Institutions must prioritize access to and utilization of these data types to enhance their student support efforts. By doing so, they can ensure timely interventions, personalized support, and a holistic approach to student development, ultimately leading to improved retention and overall student success.

## Appendices/Survey Methodology

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This white paper is based on insights gathered from a survey conducted during a recent roadmap webinar. While the survey's sample size may not be fully representative, it provides valuable data and perspectives from engaged higher education professionals who are actively involved in the subject matter. The responses offer a meaningful snapshot of current trends and priorities within the higher education EdTech industry. We believe this data is crucial for understanding the needs and challenges faced by professionals in this field, and it serves as a valuable foundation for our analysis and recommendations.

[Connect with an Anthologist today](#) to learn more about how Anthology's data-driven solutions can help your institution improve the student experience and achieve operational excellence.

## About Anthology

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Anthology delivers education and technology solutions so that students can reach their full potential and learning institutions thrive. Millions of students around the world are supported throughout their education journey via Anthology's ecosystem of flagship SaaS solutions and supporting services, including the award-winning Blackboard® (LMS), Anthology® Student (SIS/ERP), and Anthology® Reach (CRM). Through the Power of Together™, we are uniquely inspiring educators and institutions with innovation that is meaningful, simple, and intelligent to help customers redefine what's possible and create life-changing opportunities for people everywhere. [anthology.com](https://anthology.com)

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