



EAB

Academic Performance Solutions

# The Artful Conversation

Leading Change in the Academy

SACAD Annual Meeting  
SACSCOC Concurrent Session – December 3, 2017

Academic Performance Solutions



The best practices are  
the ones that work for **you**.<sup>SM</sup>

▶ **Start with best practices research**

- > Research Forums for presidents, provosts, chief business officers, and key academic and administrative leaders
- > At the core of all we do
- > Peer-tested best practices research
- > Answers to the most pressing issues

▶ **Then hardwire those insights into your organization using our technology & services**

**Enrollment Management**

Our **Royall & Company** division provides data-driven undergraduate and graduate solutions that target qualified prospective students; build relationships throughout the search, application, and yield process; and optimize financial aid resources.

**Student Success**

Members, including four- and two-year institutions, use the **Student Success Collaborative**<sup>™</sup> combination of analytics, interaction and workflow technology, and consulting to support, retain and graduate more students.

**Growth and Academic Operations**

Our **Academic Performance Solutions** group partners with university academic and business leaders to help make smart resource trade-offs, improve academic efficiency, and grow academic program revenues.

**1,200+**

College and university members

**10,000**

Research interviews per year

**250M+**

Course records in our student success analytic models

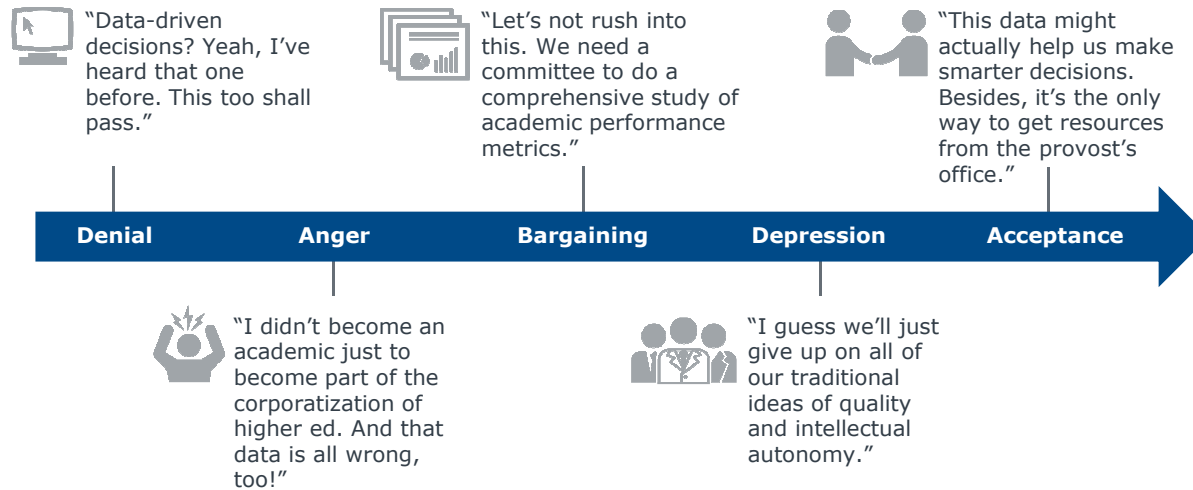
**1.2B**

Student interactions

# The Five Stages of (Data) Grief



Gaining Data Acceptance a Process, Not a One-Time Dictate

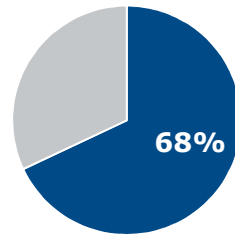


# Difficult to Size Up Our Own Performance

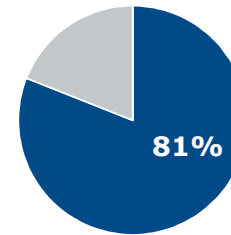


## Bias Apparent in Everyday Life

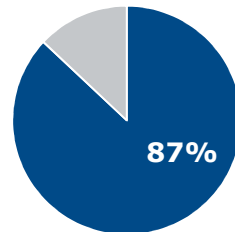
University of Nebraska Faculty Rating  
Themselves in Top Quartile **Compared to Peers**



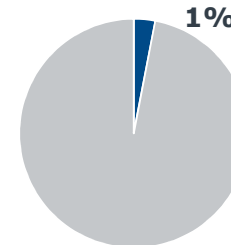
Entrepreneurs Seeing Their Odds of  
Success as **7 out of 10 or Better**



Stanford University MBA Candidates Rating  
Their Academic Performance as **Above the  
Median Among Their Peers**



Drivers Rating Themselves  
as **Below Average**

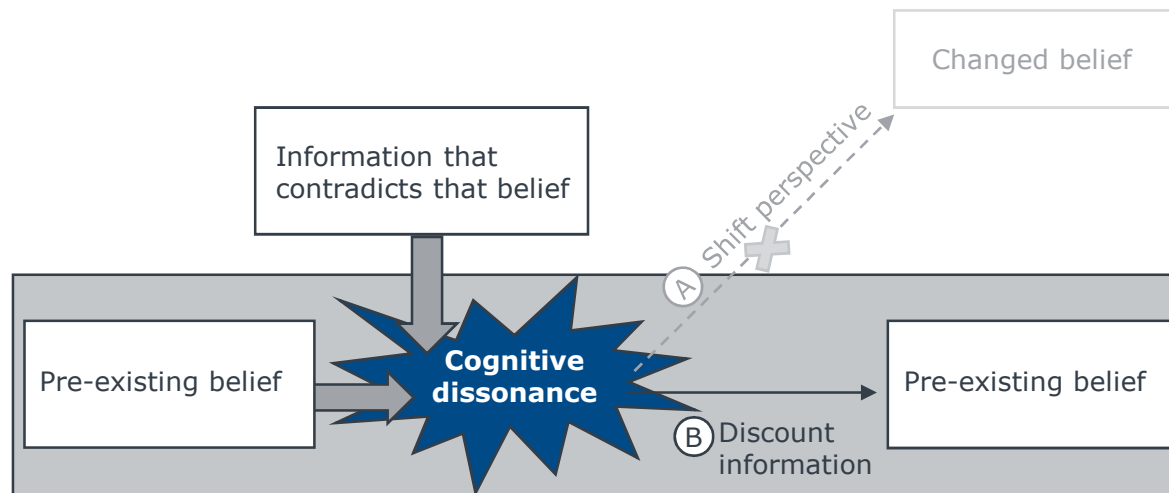


Source: Cooper A, Woo C, Dunkelberg W, "Entrepreneurs Perceived Chances for Success," *Journal of Business Venturing*, Vol. 3, Issue 2, Spring 1988; Cross P, "Not Can but Will College Teachers Be Improved?" *New Directions for Higher Education*, 1977; "It's Academic," *Stanford GBS Reporter*, April 24, 2001; McCormick I, et al., "Comparative Perceptions of Driver Ability," *Accident, Analysis and Prevention*, June 1986.

## Holding Fast to a Desired Truth



Cognitive Dissonance Makes Persistent Overconfidence a Natural Trait

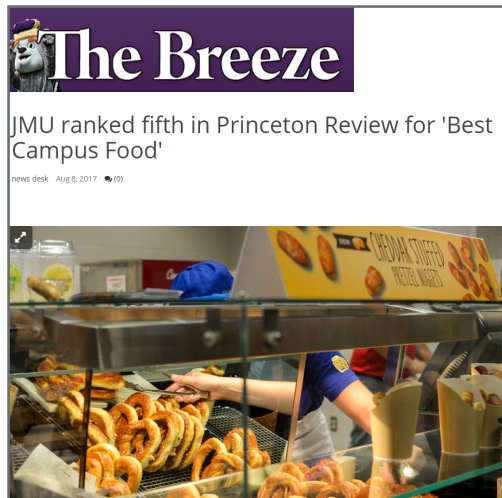


# The A is Earned...



Taking the Credit for a Job Well Done

## A Growing List of Accolades, Both In and Out of Industry



Number of colleges and universities in the Top 200



25



33

## ...While the F is Given



### Shifting the Blame When Results are Unfavorable

#### **1** “These numbers aren’t right”

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Questioning data validity as a way to disengage from the conversation

#### **2** “Our situation is unique”

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Justifying results with excuses and special circumstances to nullify comparisons

#### **3** “Where we are is good enough”

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Recalibrating expectations to avoid any further need to improve

# Addressing the Spectrum of Avoidance



## 1 “These numbers aren’t right”

Questioning data validity as a way to disengage from the conversation



### The Data Denier

When presented with troubling data, the data denier **attacks** the methodology, rather than seeking to **understand** it

## 2 “Our situation is unique”

Justifying results with excuses and special circumstances to nullify comparisons

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Recalibrating expectations to avoid any further need to improve



# Confronting the Data Denier



"These Numbers Aren't Right"

**A Conversation Starts...**

"I'd like to talk about the **3% decline** in enrollment."

**...but Ends Just as Quickly**

"The data is wrong! We had **548 undergrads** in 2016! Not 542."



**Resulting Damage**

- Immediately shuts down the conversation
- Absolves the "denier" from further engagement
- Fuels further mistrust and cynicism in data

# Prepare Well



Thorough Preparation Fuels Confidence Needed to Stay Firm

## When Preparing to Present Data



Get metric definitions, clarify methodology



Anticipate any questions that may arise

*Use the APS data dictionary as a resource!*



Know the time period and any other filters that have been applied



Know your audience and what they care about



***Prep the data***



***Plan for the people***

# Hold the Line



## Thorough Preparation Fuels Confidence Needed to Stay Firm

### When Communicating Data

- ✓ Define all terms and explain methodology (even if it seems tedious!)
- ✓ Present data in both absolute and relative terms
- ✓ Preclude attacks by providing answers proactively
- ✓ Be strategic about seating arrangements; pair deniers with data experts or “no nonsense” types
- ✓ Apply a discount rate – e.g. “even if we reduce this by 20%...”

*A Leadership Moment*

### **Hold. The. Line.**

Strong preparation will help counter staunch deniers, but debate beyond a certain point is futile and should be shut down.

## A Single Version of the Truth

“Everyone is entitled to their own opinion,  
but not to their own facts.”

*Daniel Patrick Moynihan*

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### The Unrelenting Unicorn

When considering a data set, the unrelenting unicorn [rationalizes](#) the data rather than attempting to truly [learn](#) from the results

## 3 “Where we are is good enough”

Recalibrating expectations to avoid any further need to improve

## Encountering the Unrelenting Unicorn



"Our Situation is Unique"...Just Like Everyone Else's

### A Conversation Starts...

"Let's look at the high percentage of underfilled music courses."

### ...but Ends Just as Quickly

"We're different! You can't compare us to other programs."



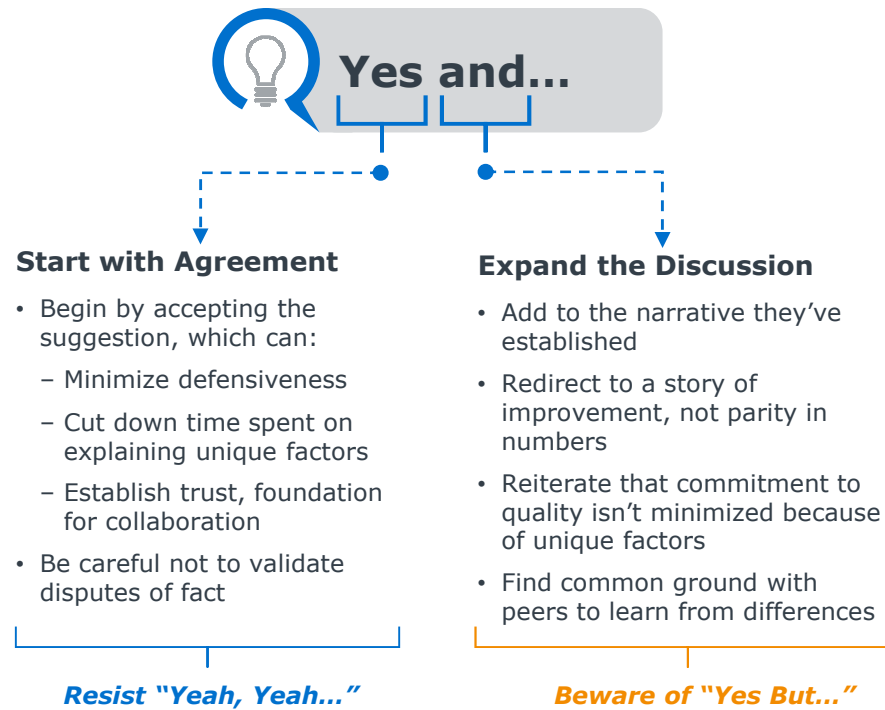
### Resulting Damage

- Narrows the pool for comparison
- Leaves status quo practices unquestioned
- No opportunities for learning

# “Yes and...” Helps Reverse the Narrative



Avoid the Parity Trap Using Affirmative Statements



# Practicing “Yes and…”



Practicing “Yes and...”

Scenario 1:  
*Teaching workload*

“Our faculty have a lot of responsibilities outside of the classroom.”

Practicing “Yes and...”

Scenario 2:  
*Class size*

“We have small courses  
because our discipline  
demands it.”

Practicing “Yes and...”

## Scenario 3: *High DFWs*

“Our course completion rates are low because our students aren’t adequately prepared for college.”

# Practice Makes Perfect

# Addressing the Spectrum of Avoidance



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### The Lounge Lizard

When thinking about outcomes, the lounge lizard opts to set a lower bar and [aim easy](#), rather than striving for the highest ceiling of success and [aiming high](#)

## Motivating the Lounge Lizard



“Where We Are is Good Enough”

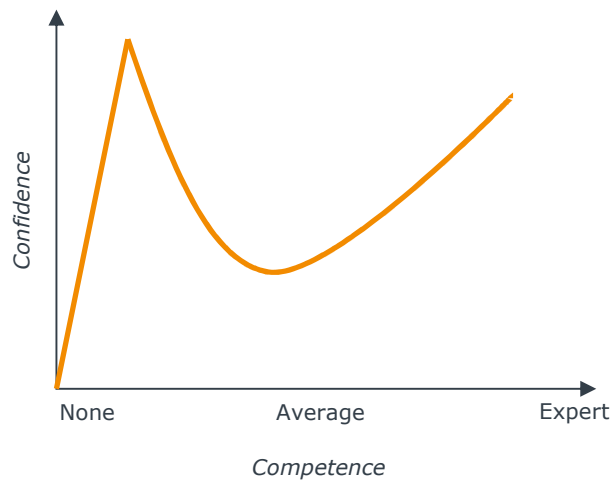


# Borrowing Lessons From Dunning & Kruger



## The Dunning-Kruger Effect

*Illusory Superiority Correlated with Low Competence*



## Is Only Skill to Blame?

Not all overconfidence stems from lack of competence. It is incumbent on leaders to provide their teams with visibility into performance and exposure to exemplars.

*Questions for consideration*

Has the person been made aware of their performance relative to others?

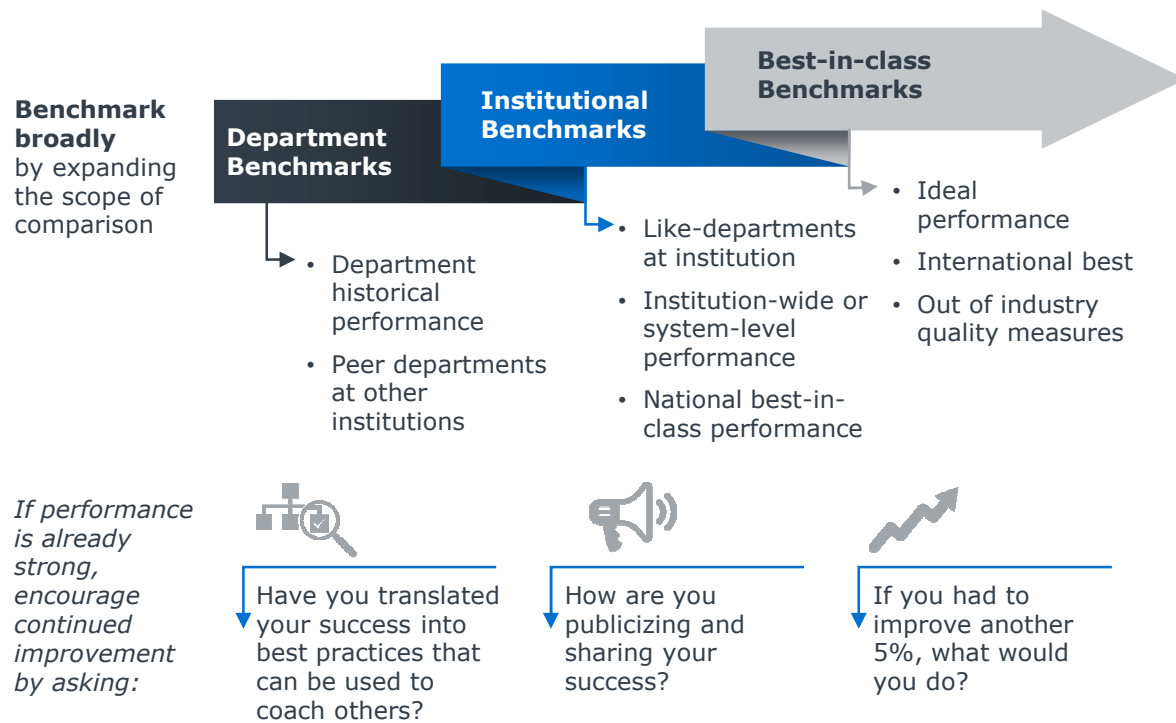
Has the person been shown what great performance looks like?

Source: Murphy M, "The Dunning-Kruger Effect Shows Why Some People Think They're Great Even When Their Work Is Terrible," Forbes, January 24, 2017.

# Benchmark Broadly



## Building Up to Best-in-Class Performance





# Tactfully Rebuffing Unproductive Responses



## “These numbers aren’t right”

Questioning data validity as a way to disengage from the conversation



### 1 Prepare Well and Hold the Line

Do your due diligence in preparing for the conversation. Remain firm throughout and stay on message.

## “Our situation is unique”

Justifying results with excuses and special circumstances to nullify comparisons



### 2 “Yes and...”

Start with agreement but then expand the conversation to a story of needed improvement.

## “Where we are is good enough”

Recalibrating expectations to avoid any further need to improve



### 3 Benchmark Broadly

Choose increasingly diverse sources for comparison to bring new ideas and innovation to bear.

# Hardwiring a Data-Embracing Culture



## Three Components Necessary to Align Vision With Culture



### Infrastructure

- Technology and physical environment
- Work design and processes
- Organizational structure

*Do the environment and workflows on your campus support the use of data and analytics?*



### Talent Management

- Hiring and onboarding
- Rewards and recognition
- Assessment and evaluation

*Are deans and chairs trained, rewarded and assessed on their incorporation of data in decisions?*



### Leadership Commitment

- Priority setting
- Role modeling
- Communication and storytelling

*Are you and other senior leaders visibly committed to the use of data for academic planning?*



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