**Using Collaborative, Qualitative Research**

**to Guide Campus IT Decision Making**

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**Program Objectives:**

* Understand, plan, and prepare a business case analysis.
* Understand the stakeholders, critical campus needs, resources and the variety of institutional business factors necessary to support an academic-administrative partnership.
* Apply business case analysis techniques to support institutional decision-making.
* Learn to use practical tools/methodologies to support in-house study via quantitative or qualitative methods to enhance data-driven decision making.

**Learning Outcomes and Objectives:**

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| **Outcomes** | **Application** | **Evidence of Learning** |
| 1. Explain, analyze and prepare a business case analysis unique to your department or division. | Complete sample business case study that addresses a mock scenario. Awareness of how to integrate research study with business case processes, resource allocation and alignment with institutional priority. | Business Case template analysis is created with roundtable and shared with session participants. |
| 1. Apply business case concepts to mock situation matrix for planned research study proposal. | Answer template questions through appreciative inquiry discussions with the roundtable participants. | Each business case question prompts conversation about campus process, protocol and organizational structures in place to support decision-making. |
| 1. Ability to modify the prompts to be suitable for an actual campus due-diligence process for business case analyses. | Completion of sample case study. | Awareness of template and ability to modify variables as suitable for campus application. |

**The Business Case for Academic Research Support in Technology Decisions**

* An effective business case analysis ensures that university administration and IT Leadership understand the benefits that an academic research partnership might provide to a critical information technology institutional need or purpose.
* Institutional needs are clearly linked to defining the problem or pain-point that the study will address. A problem, pain-point or information gap must be as clearly defined as possible.
* The problem statement is a key input for the IT leadership, researcher and administration that helps ensures the study will advance the institution’s decision-making ability with quantitative and/or qualitative data. The ability to link data between multiple sources further enhances the business case such as ECAR data, NSSE data, on-campus institutional research data.
* The business case should not focus on technical solutions (i.e. improving system performance, upgrading ERP software, hardware acquisition); rather the ideal scenario **supports decision-making for critical institutional needs** such as improving the ability to assess student success, faculty engagement, or teaching and learning.

**Critical Steps in Creating the Business Case Analysis**

* Know and understand the audience (i.e. who is making the decisions), who must review or approve the concepts presented, who must be consulted.
* Why is the partnership or research study beneficial? How will the institution benefit?
* Resource requirements must be clearly and accurately defined.
* An accurate estimate of the timeframe necessary to support the project must be included.

**Business Case Analysis Worksheet**

There are several critical steps to consider in developing a business case. Please review the enclosed case/scenario and include your audience in the discussion.

Who is the business case audience?

What is the campus or institutional pain-point that is being addressed?

What is your proposed approach? How does the study/partnership enhance institutional decision-making? In other words, what is the value-proposition?

What is the research question?

* What specifically will you address?
  + E.g. How faculty use the campus LMS to support course engagement with students.
  + Study specific usage of the LMS system for academic year 14-15 across the entire College of Nursing and Health Sciences.

What is the research methodology?

* How specifically will you gather data?
  + E.g. A qualitative study such as interviews, focus groups, or
  + Quantitative study such as empirical data (i.e random surveys, data gathering methods, etc.)
  + Existing surveys like NSSE or ECAR

What is the pre-planning process for engaging stakeholders?

* Who will you meet with to ensure buy-in (IT leadership, Deans, Senate subcommitee’s etc.?

Who are critical-friends that can review the business case or design of the research study?

How is the partnership and/or research in alignment with the campus strategic plan?

Define the proposed study:

1. What is the *research* question?
2. What are the *research* methods?
3. Timeframe: When will the project start and end?
4. University Resource requirements:

Please ensure your study includes the following:

* What are the academic benefits of the research study?
* What members of the university community are included in the study?
* What are the total resource requirements include all costs?

Some institutions may want a written Executive Summary or a formal presentation to present the business case.

**Case 1:**

Your institution has just embarked on an initiative to enhance student success. The Provost and Vice President for Student Affairs are challenging the Faculty Senate and IT campus leadership to better understand what services are important to student success. Most students arrive to campus with multiple technology devices (smart phone and a laptop or tablet). Your student population is 25% resident, 75% commuter. The average age of your student population is 22.6, 48% male, 52% female. The population is very diverse with growing numbers of African-Americans and Hispanics. The campus has two locations; the main campus is in the center of town and is the hub of activity. A branch campus exists 15 miles to the east in a growing suburb community. Your campus participates in various institutional studies including *National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE)* and the ECAR Study *of Undergraduate Students and Information Technology*. The new president has a culture of data-driven decision making.

A campus committee on student engagement is contemplating a study in partnership with the on-campus Center on Higher Education Leadership. If the committee agrees, a proposal will be shared with the executive committee of the faculty senate and the Provost. As an IT thought-leader you have been asked to Chair the committee and to gather data to support the recommendations. Please prepare a business case to support your approach.

**Case 2:**

Your institution has just embarked on an initiative to enhance student success. The Provost has asked what support networks faculty need to effectively improve the four and six year graduation rates for undergraduate students. 20% enter as first-time, full-time students, 45% are transfer students and 35% are non-traditional. Most students arrive to campus with multiple technology devices (smart phone and a laptop or tablet). Your campus offers 20% of its courses fully on-line and 35% are hybrid courses. Your faculty population is aging and retiring. The average age of your faculty population is 58.4, and is 51% male, 49% female. The faculty population is not very diverse but there are growing numbers of African-Americans (*N*=5%) and Hispanics (*N*=7%). 80% of the faculty actively use the campus learning management system, 10% are undergoing course redesign and experimenting with flipped classrooms, social media or e-portfolios in their course design.

The President is launching an initiative to accelerate the integration of technology into the curriculum and to renew faculty hiring. The recently hired President has a culture of data-driven decision making. The Provost recently convened a blue-ribbon panel of campus leaders to engage in faculty renewal and instructional technology engagement. As an IT thought leader you have been asked to Chair the committee and to gather data to support the recommendations. Please prepare a business case to support your approach.