

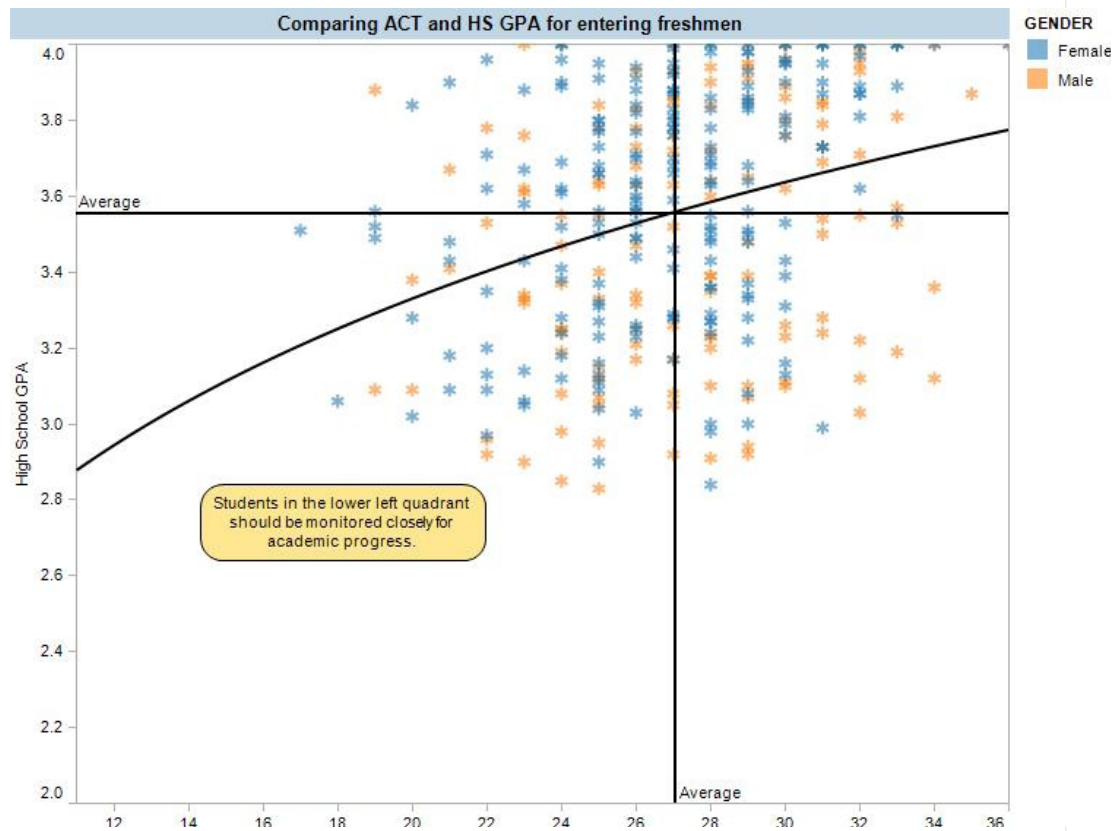
DePauw University Sorts Out Student Data Using Tableau

A few years after Bill Tobin took over as Director of Institutional Research for DePauw University in Indiana, the school went through a massive administration system upgrade. With the help of Tableau, Tobin was equal to the challenge.

DePauw's immediate need was to take the student metrics, enrollment, peer groups, and financials from their Oracle database, and visualize it all in a way that would help them make strategic plans. Tobin's other equally important challenge was to make the data available to the people who could use it. That meant the data must be "accessible to people who don't work with it all the time." Tobin used Tableau to visually analyze the data, then distributed it in reports to the different departments.

"We're now able to develop much easier, faster, and more accurate strategic indicator reports."

Bill Tobin, Director of Institutional Research
DePauw University



“Truly Strategic Planning” in Less Time

Sorting out the student demographic data was only the starting point. Once he did that, Tobin used Tableau to facilitate their beginning-of-the-year reporting needs. Tobin explains that before Tableau there was very large strategic indicator report that needed to be produced. “It took weeks, it was just a major undertaking bringing in disparate reports from the various departments and divisions!” Now DePauw is able to apply 20 very strategic indicators to give the University Board a sense of where they are with enrollment, peer groups, and financials. “The entire thing is done in Tableau,” said Tobin. The weeks-long “nightmare” is now down to half a day’s work. “We can clearly show the Board projections by switching the comparison groups, and that allows them to easily visualize changes.”

Now Tobin uses Tableau to create a “truly strategic planning document.” When looking at the data he says “it’s no longer a question of making the data accessible, now it’s more like let’s play, let’s ask questions!” He recalls the morning a senior advisor to the president came down and started asking him questions off the top of his head. Tobin opened Tableau. The senior advisor was clearly impressed: “Can we do that by gender? Ethnicity? Home state? Can we see average SAT score? This is great!”

Importantly, in addition to the immediate ROI impact of cutting out weeks of time previously invested in the STI, Tobin says he is now able to explore student data easily, and without writing code. “I’m in it every day. I’ve connected right to our Oracle tables, I’ve got live data!”

Tobin is happy to report “We’re now able to develop much easier, faster and more accurate strategic indicator reports.”

IPEDS, Grades, Class Schedules and Alumni

Today, DePauw uses Tableau for everything from student data to analyzing peak periods in class schedules. The school has also found Tableau to be an essential tool for grades, as it allows them to very quickly verify and filter data. And DePauw uses Tableau for its Integrated Postsecondary Educational Data System (IPEDS) reporting. With Tableau they can set up a report that’s exactly in the IPEDS format so it completely simplifies the reporting.

“Another thing I did”, Tobin recalls, “was an alumni map. I did this for our Alumni people, as a matter of fact they thought this was so great they ran it down to Kinko’s and had a big poster made up!”

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