NOTE: This document is designed to accompany the resources and tools presented in MDRC’s Tools for Postsecondary Schools Toolkit. It builds on information and concepts presented in the Data Management for Student Success videos. **Before reviewing this document, please use the link above to visit the web-based toolkit and watch those videos.**

**BUILDING YOUR DATA TOOLKIT**

☐ Establish measurable outcomes of interest and implement a plan to make that information readily accessible to relevant staff members. Consider:

○ Communication and outreach to students (including the method of reaching them and their response rate to that outreach), attendance and engagement, enrollment, and milestone completion, etc.

○ Desired outcomes for students

○ Information needed to track progress toward those desired outcomes

○ The people involved in tracking outcomes, and the people who require access to that information

☐ Conduct an inventory of current data collection practices to identify knowledge gaps (that is, what you are not measuring) and potential efficiencies (that is, what data are not necessary).
Complete an assessment of your current management information system(s). Is it:

- Customizable?
- Updated in real time?
- Accessible and easy to use across departments?
- Able to access the right measures to evaluate your program?
- Flexible in what data can be exported and in the export format options?

When possible, integrate data used to track student outcomes and support services into an existing management information system.

Be mindful of who has access to sensitive student data.

Balance quantity and quality—more data ≠ better data!

**USING YOUR DATA TOOLKIT**

- Review real-time data on a daily/weekly basis to monitor aggregate and individual student outcomes and engagement. Use this information to inform and set priorities for your outreach to students and the support services you provide.

- Conduct monthly reports of student outcomes and engagement and compare them with previous months’ data and long-term goals. Identify inequities in outcomes and engagement and develop short-term strategies for immediate intervention.

- Reflect on student support services and outcomes for each semester. Revisit conversations on any inequities in outcomes and engagement. Refine your long-term goals and plan for targeted interventions.

- Rely on qualitative data (that is, student comments, staff anecdotes, quotes, and stories) to generate ideas for improving support services based on students’ needs.

- Make conversations about data a part of your regular routine. Set up regular meetings to discuss daily, monthly, and semesterly reports, and your progress toward long-term goals. Bring in relevant staff members based on the information being discussed.

- Ensure relevant data are accessible to appropriate staff members. Provide training in the processes for requesting and accessing data, allowing for direct access when possible.