Wrap-Up Guide
Telling a story with your NACM data

NATIONAL ALUMNI CAREER MOBILITY SURVEY
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The NACM Survey is an annual national benchmark report and community on Alumni Career Pathways and Mobility at the 5 and 10-year mark.

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Introduction

Congratulations on completing the NACM Survey! We designed the deliverables to help make sense of your data and jump start using it on your campus. To be most effective, NACM data should be shared widely, in various shapes or forms, to reach multiple audiences specific to your campus culture and context.

As you are preparing to use your data it may be helpful to consider your primary purpose(s) in collecting the NACM data. Did you collect alumni information to . . .

- Diagnose or clarify a problem?
- Compare courses of action for strategic transformations?
- Evaluate a decision already made?
- Share with external constituencies (prospective parents, alumni, employers, accreditation agencies, rankings, etc.)?
- Inform your daily practice?
- Use in strategic planning?
- Assist in managing meaning, culture, or motivation?
- Getting or allocated resources?

This guide was designed to provide additional resources to maximize your NACM data. It contains four sections:

1. Tools for data storytelling
2. Examples of how NACM data is being shared and used
3. Upcoming important dates in the NACM cycle

Tips For Data Storytelling

This section is designed to assist in you in using the deliverables to craft messages with the NACM data. It provides steps to follow as well as worksheet to use as a resource with your campus team.

Why is data storytelling important?

"All too often the products of assessment activity fail to undergo an important transformation... the data are not, in and of themselves, equivalent to information. Data have to be massaged, manipulated and interpreted to render them into a form of information that is readily digestible and [can be] used for planning, decision making and the allocation of resources"

- Middaugh, Planning and Assessment in Higher Education p. 173

It is important to transform NACM data into information that can be used by your primary audiences. Think of the NACM deliverables as tools you can use to get to refine and transform that data. Some audiences may appreciate reading the entire NACM report, others may prefer that you pull out the key data points and share.

What is data storytelling?

Most people love a good story. Stories provoke the interest and inspiration that lead to action in a way that a list of numbers on a page can't do by themselves. When you set data into the context of a story, you are packaging it in a way that makes it more understandable and accessible, and ultimately usable for your audience. The time invested in crafting a data-driven story will be rewarded when NACM data sees a greater reach and use across your campus community. Here are some common elements of data storytelling:

- **Connect key data points with your audience's experiences**: Think about what your audience is most interested in and most needs to know. Eliminate other data points.
- **Focus on a single idea:** Presenting one concept or idea helps keep your audience focused on your shared goal.
- **Keep it simple:** Don't overload your audience with too much data or complicated visuals.
- **Explore what you know best:** You know your context far better than anyone else, use what you know about history, resources, and politics to help inform your data choices.

- **Create a sequence in your data:** Create transitions when changing topics and think about the order of data points. Examples may be going from more general data to more specific (overall internships, internship by demographics) or from more simple ideas (career paths) to more complex (career mobility).
- **Use visuals that are clean and concise:** The report and dashboards are great sources for clean and concise visuals so grab screen shots to save time.

Step #1: Start with the why

Before crafting any messages using the NACM data, consider why you collected the data and your goals for using it with various audiences. NACM provides a lot of different data so it's important to prioritize your needs and begin with the most important purpose for using the data and build from there. Here are various reasons why data can be collected, use the worksheet to help prioritize your reasons:

- **Diagnose or clarify a problem:** Are there consistent challenges or issues your campus is facing related to student success? Can the NACM data provide insights into the challenge and/or help point towards a strategy to address it?
- **Compare courses of action for strategic transformations:** Is there a conversation on campus about making changes to large scale initiatives, programs, policies and/or structures? How can the NACM data help clarify what direction to take or which strategies to use?
- **Evaluate a decision already made:** Were changes already made to programs, services, or structures? Is it time to evaluate the impact of that change? Keep in mind timing. NACM data is alumni data so if the change was made recently (in the past 5 years) then NACM data can be used to set a baseline for watching future trends.
- **Share with external constituencies (e.g., prospective parents, alumni, employers, accreditation agencies, rankings, etc.):** Do you need stronger stories around return on investment? Alumni success? Career preparation and how that connects with success well beyond graduation? Are other offices on campus, such as admissions, ready to use NACM data to tell success stories or to help bolster an initiative?
- **Inform your daily practice:** Do you get "I was just wondering…" questions from faculty or others? Is the alumni or career team looking for feedback to make smaller tweaks to programs and services?
- **Use in strategic planning:** Peer comparison data can assist in setting targets for improvement over time. Key data points from NACM can be used as metrics to measure progress in strategic initiatives. If your campus is creating or updating a strategic plan, use NACM data to identify areas of focus.
- **Assist in managing meaning, culture, or motivation**: Data can be used to encourage culture changes on campus. Whether it is used to motivate through highlighting successes or identifying areas that still need improvement, it can provide context to the culture change process.
- **Getting or allocating resources:** Campus leadership often looks at data to make informed decisions around resource allocation. If this is your primary purpose, look for data that helps to illustrate your current status and the likely impact of resource allocations on future success.

Step #2: Identify the Who

As with most communication strategies, the clearly identifying and getting to know your audience is key. Take time to understand your primary audience and any secondary audiences.

- Who are the decision makers and influencers?
- What are their biggest challenges and concerns?
- What solutions can you offer by providing better information through the data?
- How do they easily consume information?
- How do they make decisions?
- What is their history with and attitudes to your topic?
- What are they passionate about? What do they pride themselves on?
- What are their ambitions for the campus community?
- Conversely, what do they fear for the future of their students or campus?
- Do they have knowledge gaps or blind spots that your data could address?

The University of Arizona's Student Affairs Assessment Toolkit has helpful examples. Check it out for inspiration or clarification and remember, you know your context and audience, so use the reference tool as a place to start.

Step #3: Select Key data points

Use the NACM report and/or Dashboard to determine the key data points that your audience needs to know related to each of your priorities. At this stage keep in mind these key elements:

- **Connect key data points with your audience's experiences:** Think about what your audience is most interested in and most needs to know. Eliminate other data points.
- **Focus on a single idea:** Presenting one concept or idea helps keep your audience focused on your shared goal.
- **Keep it simple:** Don't overload your audience with too much data or complicated visuals.
- **Explore what you know best:** You know your context far better than anyone else, use what you know about history, resources, and politics to help inform your data choices.

Step #4: Communication prep

With your priority, audience, and key data points identified it is now time to pull it all together into how you want to communicate to that audience. The next section shares NACM examples from various campuses as sources of inspiration. As you are working on this step, keep these tips in mind:

- **Keep it simple:** Don't overload your audience with too much data or complicated visuals.
- **Create a sequence in your data:** Create transitions when changing topics and think about the order of data points. Examples may be going from more general data to more specific (overall internships, internship by demographics) or from more simple ideas (career paths) to more complex (career mobility).
- **Use visuals that are clean and concise:** The report and dashboards are great sources for clean and concise visuals so grab screen shots to save time.

While the examples are mostly materials (e.g., reports, slide decks) remember these key opportunities to share your data:

- **Elevator pitch or movie trailer:** Have your 30-second sound bites ready especially if you are going to meetings related to the topics covered in NACM.
- **Meetings:** Capitalize on opportunities that already exist to dig deeper into the data. You can always pull the dashboards up during a meeting to take a deep look at specific questions or topic areas.
- **Retreats:** Arrange time and space for people to review NACM data together and determine the best way to utilize results throughout campus.
- **Brown Bags or Roadshows:** Start an annual tradition of presenting to the campus on FDS and NACM data.

Data Storytelling Worksheet

Step #1: Start with the why

Rank each reason for using data based on your campus priorities with #1 being your top priority. Do not rank any reason that does not apply. For the rest of the worksheet focus on the top 2 priorities. Set up a timeline to address priorities 1 & 2 and then add in the other priorities (e.g., 2022-2023 Priorities 1&2, 2023-2024 Priorities 3&4).

- Diagnose or clarify a problem
- Compare courses of action for strategic transformations
- Evaluate a decision already made
- Share with external constituencies (e.g., prospective parents, alumni, employers, accreditation agencies, rankings, etc.)
- Inform your daily practice
- Use in strategic planning
- Assist in managing meaning, culture, or motivation
- Getting or allocated resources

Once you have identified your top two priorities, describe them in the first column of the table on the next page.

Step #2: Identify the Who

List your primary and secondary audience for each of your top two priorities on the chart below.

Step #3: Select the key data points

Note on the chart the key data points that audience needs to know. It is helpful to note whether the data point is on the dashboard or in the report, question and/or page number, etc. so you can find it easily later.

Step #4: Communication prep

Note on the chart what communication opportunities you have with your audience. This could be prepping for a strategic planning retreat, or a roadshow, or a committee meeting. Next note what materials you need to create to tell your story at that opportunity. For example, use slide deck, create a one page summary, just need a quick headline for a meeting to hook people's attention, etc.
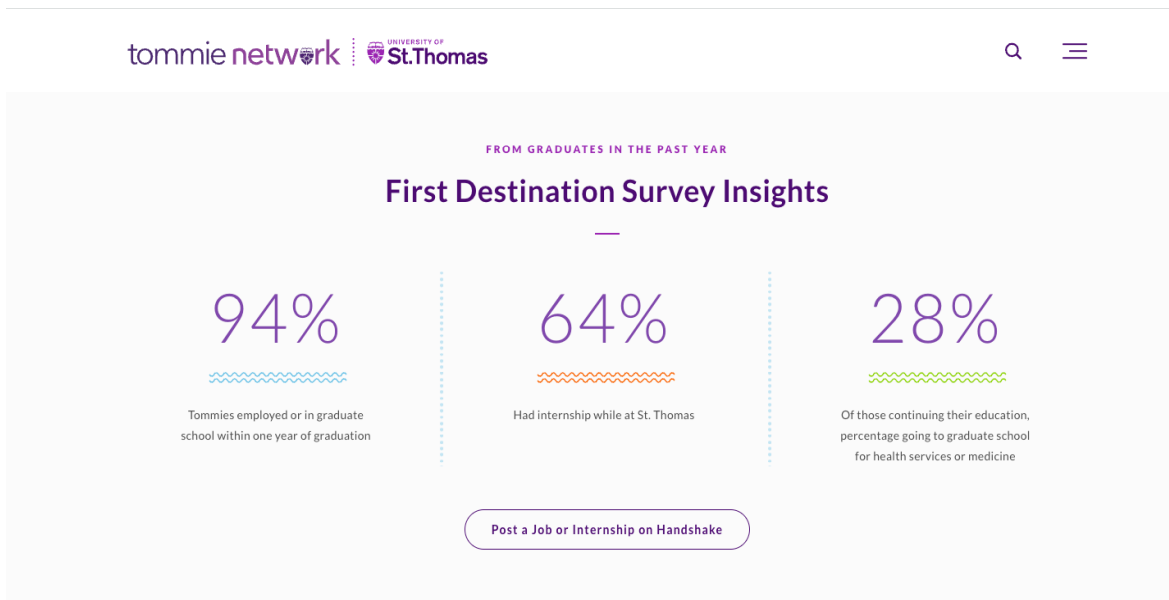
Step #1	Step #2	Step #3	Step #4	Step #4
Priority from Step #1 (may want to provide a short description to give context)	List primary and secondary audience(s)	List key data points and where to find them	What communication opportunities do you have with your audience?	What materials do you need to prep? (e.g. use Slide Deck, create a 1-page summary, just need a quick headline for a meeting to hook people's attention, etc.)
Priority #1				
Priority #2				

Campus Examples

Below are examples of visualizations created by NACM campus partners. In addition to websites and quick visual summaries, these campuses have been using NACM data in important conversations such as:

- **Rowan University** is using NACM data to inform conversations around transforming experiential education initiatives.

- **Sewanee:** The University of the South gathered their Cabinet for an overview of the data by The Collective and looked at how to use the data for strategic improvement and telling the story of success.

- **Centre College**'s President requested slides and talking points from the NACM data that are used in various settings internally and externally. NACM data was used in their Board of Trustees discussion and is visualized in their new strategic plan.

University of St. Thomas uses NACM data to tell a story on their website to Alumni about why their engagement is important to student success.

tommie network | UNIVERSITY OF St.Thomas

FROM GRADUATES IN THE PAST YEAR

First Destination Survey Insights

—

94%

Tommies employed or in graduate school within one year of graduation

64%

Had internship while at St. Thomas

28%

Of those continuing their education, percentage going to graduate school for health services or medicine

Post a Job or Internship on Handshake

University of Redlands uses their NACM data to tell a story of student success on their website after graduation.

MIT Sloan School created a briefing book to use with various audiences that tells the story of student success for their student population.

Check out the entire book here:

https://issuu.com/mitsloancdo/docs/2020nacmsurvey_spring2021?fr=sMzc5YTMzNTk1NTY

Union College's Career Dashboard provides visual immediacy and interactive data for prospective and current students.

CAREER DASHBOARD

Where does a Union College degree take U?
Anywhere you want to go!

From education to engineering and everything in between, our alumni are in the middle of it all. Focusing on the Whole U, our students' personalized experiences encourage them to explore what piques their curiosity and engage with our communities, local and global. This prepares them to thrive while at Union and throughout their careers.

Plans after graduation

97%
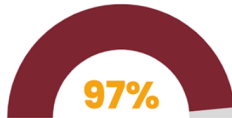
Within six months of graduating, 97% of alumni are employed full time, in graduate or professional school, or pursuing a post-graduate fellowship or public service opportunity. View latest reports.

Career readiness

Nearly 80 percent of alumni surveyed stated that their Union degree helped get them started in their career

Career satisfaction

85%

Union alumni boast more than an 85 percent career satisfaction rate, higher than other institutions.

Career mobility

Union alumni are successful in a variety of industries and achieve leadership roles early in their careers, many within the first 10 years of employment.

Top industries

Education, medicine, technology, engineering, finance and law are among the top industries of our alumni.

Esteemed employers

Our alumni are employed by some of the most well-regarded organizations in the world.

Top Graduate Schools for Union Alumni

Business
Babson College
Boston University
Columbia University
New York University
Northeastern University
University of Pennsylvania

Law
Albany Law School
Boston University
Fordham University
George Washington University
New York University
Suffolk University

Medicine
Albany Medical College
New York Medical College
New York University
SUNY Upstate Medical University
Tufts University
University of Rochester

Education
Boston College
Boston University
Fordham University
Lesley University
Harvard University
Springfield College

Engineering
Cornell University
Duke University
Johns Hopkins University
Northeastern University
Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute
Syracuse University

Music, Dance, Theater, Visual Arts
American University
New York University
Columbia University
George Washington University
SUNY Albany
Tufts University

Sciences
Boston University
Columbia University
New York University
Northeastern University
Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute
SUNY Albany

Interested in knowing where our students go immediately after graduating?

VIEW FIRST DESTINATION CLASS REPORTS

Support

Have questions or need support?

We're happy to help.

Please contact us at *survey.support@lightcast.io*

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