Data Responsible Use & Best Practices

Using University of Maine System (UMS) data and the data specific to its institutions (known as institutional data or university data) comes with great responsibility. To guide responsible data use, the UMS Data Governance Team and the Power BI Governance Group have come together to create this webpage full of decision-making information and helpful resources about data use, publication, and distribution.

University data is defined as “information that is either wholly or partially owned by the University, has been entrusted to the University, or is generated by or for the University” (UMS Data Classification APL). Occasionally, decisions about the publication of university data are simple; the data is publicly available and there are no concerns about using or redistributing it. More often than not, however, questions abound. Employees who create, distribute, and publish university data & reports (for example, Institutional Researchers and report authors in, e.g., Power BI) are additionally responsible for decision-making regarding data selection, usage, and publication to appropriate audiences in compliance with all (external & internal) security & privacy policies and standards.

This page can help guide determining the appropriate uses of university data while adhering to all applicable (external & internal) security & privacy policies and standards.

Confidential Data Reported in Aggregate

Some institutional data is already publicly available and ready for your use. In addition to public dashboards, sometimes confidential data is aggregated into reports and shared directly with appropriate audiences. University data and reports that are shared with you directly are not intended to be further disseminated by recipients. For more information, see our UMS Data Classifications page, the APL VI-I Data Classification, and the button at right for Report Authors & Consumers.

The UMS has a few areas where institutional data are already aggregated into commonly-requested metrics; you can find an overview on the Public Institutional Research & Campus Reports webpage on the DARTS website. If you cannot find what you are looking for, follow the decision tree below which contains links to help you along the way. Those same links—and many more—can also be found as buttons on the right-hand column of this page for easy reference.

For more information on specific responsibilities, select the button below

Report Authors & Consumers Responsibilities

Resources

Click on any icon below for helpful resources. Right click to open in a new tab.

Introduction to Institutional Data Video

Administrative Practice Letters (Policy)

APL X-F FERPA Procedure

APL VI-I Data Classification

IT Accessibility

APL VI-C Employee Protection of Data

APL VI-H Acceptable Use of Information

IR & Reporting Access to Financial Aid Data
Report Author & Report Consumer Responsibilities

Report Author

The author of a data report has the responsibility of meticulously reviewing all aspects of the data and the report to ensure validity & reliability of the report prior to publication. No report should be published beyond an author’s department until the author has made every reasonable effort to validate the data and report, provide appropriate context, and check accessibility & aggregation guidelines for compliance with all publication considerations detailed in the checklist & flowchart (above).

Report Consumer

Report Authors share reports directly with Report Consumers. Report Consumers should not further disseminate reports to additional individuals or audiences unless authorized to do so.

The consumer(s) of any data report are responsible for maintaining confidentiality of data and any interpretations or findings gleaned from the author’s original, published report. Neither the author, the author’s department, nor institution may be held responsible for any misinterpretation that occurs amongst those who review and/or present the information contained in the original, published report. Derived conclusions and analyses generated from a report are the responsibility of the consumer deriving conclusions and/or deriving additional analysis.

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