July 24, 2014

Dear members of the UW Tableau Community:

It has been a year since our adoption of Tableau as the data visualization tool of choice at the UW. In this past year, many of you have created new tools for understanding data and trends in your areas of expertise and shared them with an internal audience.

Some of you have also expressed the desire to be able to publish visualizations to the public at large—and indeed, as a public institution that values transparency, it behooves us to inform the public about our activities. However, we must balance transparency with our obligation to protect the privacy of our students, faculty and staff, as well as the confidentiality of some of our research and advancement data. As this balancing act is no easy task, the Data Management Committee is currently developing a policy that would govern the public display of UW data. You will be advised as soon as the policy is finalized.

In the immediate term, however, UW leadership has expressed the desire to see some basic institutional information (the type often published in university “factbooks”) displayed to the public, beginning with basic enrollment, degree production and graduation data. Much of this information is already available in the public arena. In terms of student data, most elements are available from the Department of Education through IPEDS and from the Washington State Office of Financial Management through their Public 4-Year Dashboards. Consequently, the Data Management Committee has granted the Office of Planning and Budgeting the permission to publish a limited set of aggregate data using Tableau Public Premium with the approval of the relevant data custodian. This is a temporary measure intended to meet immediate needs until a more complete strategy for publishing UW data to the public is fully developed.

Please let us know should you have any questions concerning the above.

Regards,

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