Updated for the March 2020 AIR webinar

Bio for Alice Few

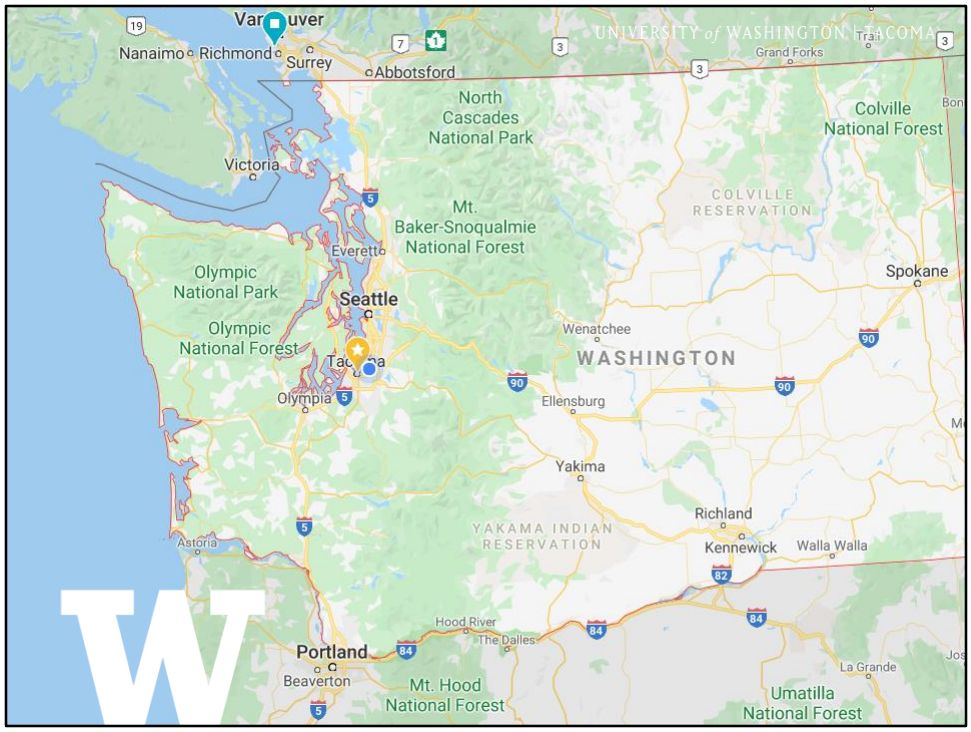
Alice has worked for the University of Washington in Educational Assessment and Institutional Research for the past 25 years. She has been fortunate to work on both the Seattle and Tacoma campuses and in collaboration with tri-campus teams in Student Data, Institutional, the Enterprise Data Warehouse project, and Data Governance.

Outside of work, you might find Alice working with older Girl Scouts on International STEM Travel projects or supporting astronomy education and outreach in the South Sound region of Washington State.

Alice is a regular attendee at her regional AIR conferences, PNAIRP (Pacific Northwest Association of Institutional Research and Planning) and this presentation is an update from her 2017 PNAIRP conference presentation which she plans to submit for the 2020 PNAIRP conference.

Notes
Websites of interest
https://www.pnairp.org/

https://www.tacoma.uw.edu/institutional-research/institutional-data



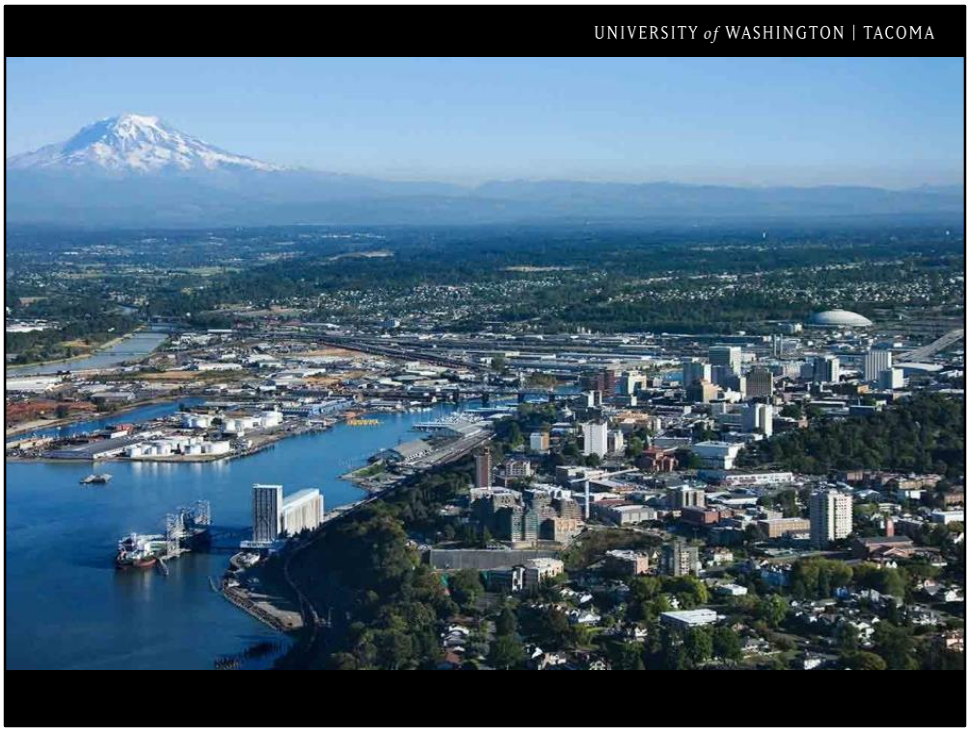
Good morning!

I would like to thank Conor and his team at AIR for reaching out last year to chat with me about our Data Fellows Program. I know the AIR team has developed support materials online and Conor will speak to that towards the end of this session.

For those of you not familiar with the University of Washington, I wanted to take just a couple of minutes to share our region and the UW Tacoma campus with you.

UW has three academic campuses in Seattle, north in Bothell, and south in Tacoma. We also have a fleet of research vessels, hospitals, and remote research centers.

Some of the perks to working in the Puget sound. Lots of green (my daughter from El Paso calls it the Neon Green state), water, wildlife, mountains, year round skiing for the adventuresome and volcanoes!



The city of Tacoma, south of Seattle, is the gateway for Mt. Rainier and the Olympic Mountains.

This shows downtown Tacoma on the right along with the Thea Foss waterway and Puyallup River

From this angle UW Tacoma is on the far right edge of the image not far from the Tacoma dome

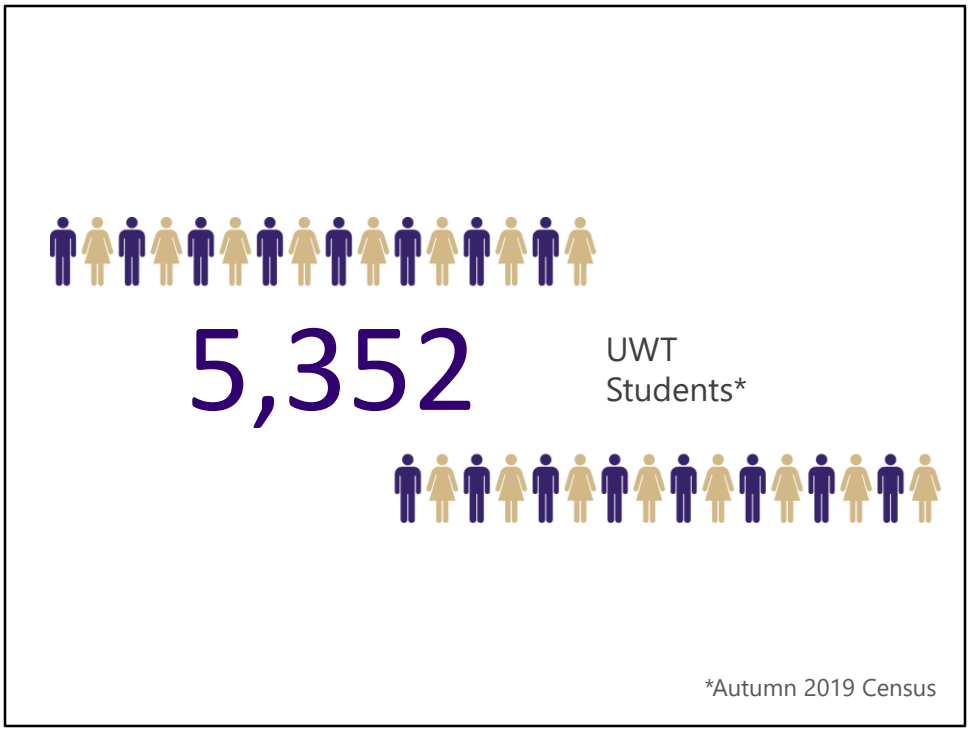
Looking back to where the previous picture was taken we are nestled right in downtown Tacoma!

I need a new image, this is from 2017, but it reflects the footprint of the campus then. We have received approval for several new buildings and programs.

UW Tacoma owes its charm to century-old, brick buildings that were built to last by businesses that depended on the railroad in the late 1880s and early 1900s.

The University of Washington system is almost 160 years old and while UW Tacoma was founded in 1990, it is home to the oldest building on any of our campuses.

This area was also historically part of the brewery district which formed even as Tacoma was becoming a city in 1884. There are 10 breweries within walking distance of our campus.

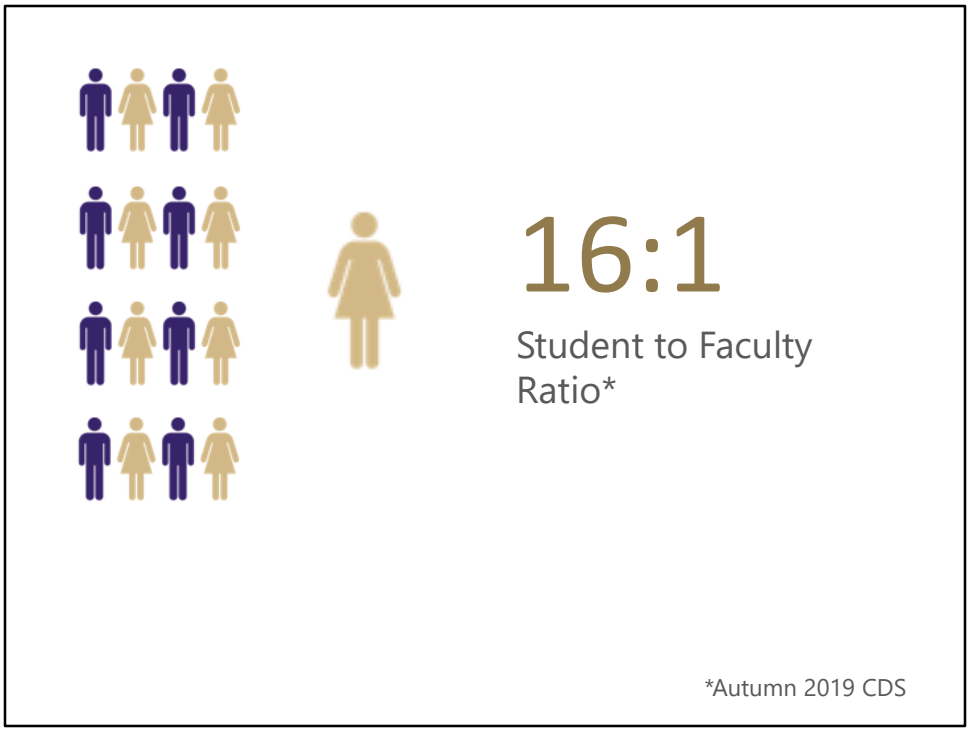


We consider the UW Tacoma as a growing, urban-serving university with a wonderful and diverse student population.

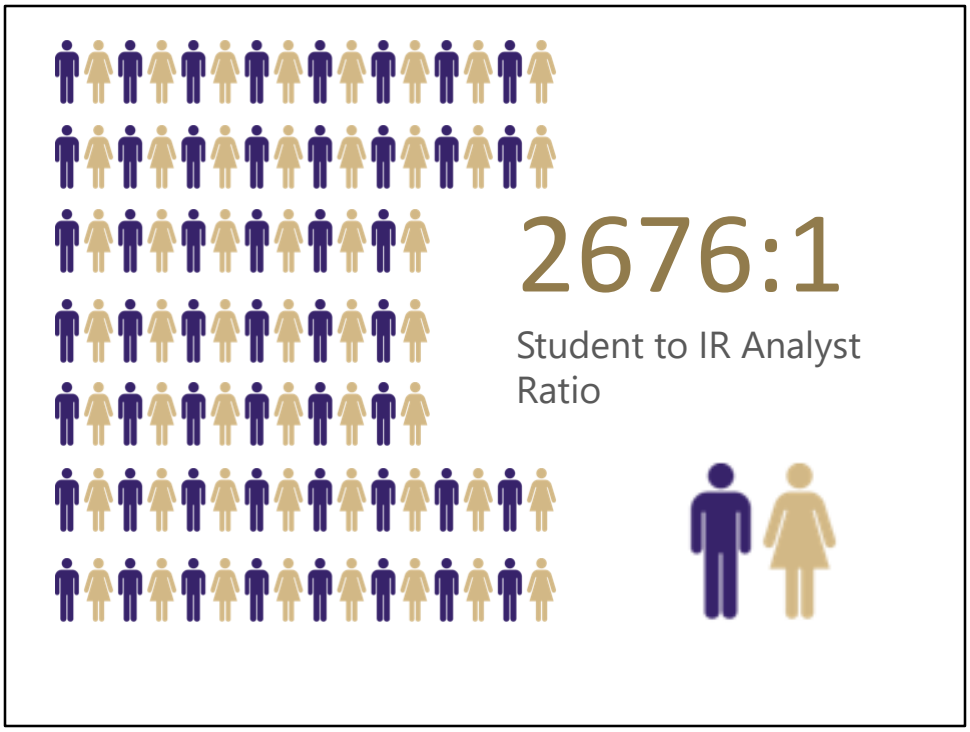
Prior to 2006 Tacoma only accepted transfer students from other universities and community colleges, so our population was primarily working, commuter, upper division students. We still see about 80% of our student transferring in from universities and community colleges in the area

Beginning in 2006 both Bothell and Tacoma began admitting freshmen students, and that demographic has been steadily growing. Our proximity to Joint Base Lewis-McCord also adds a good mix of military personnel and their families to our student body.

Last Autumn our headcount was 5352 undergraduate and graduate students



Another typical factoid to toss up is typically a ratio to show the balance between students and the resources to support students, here is a common one.



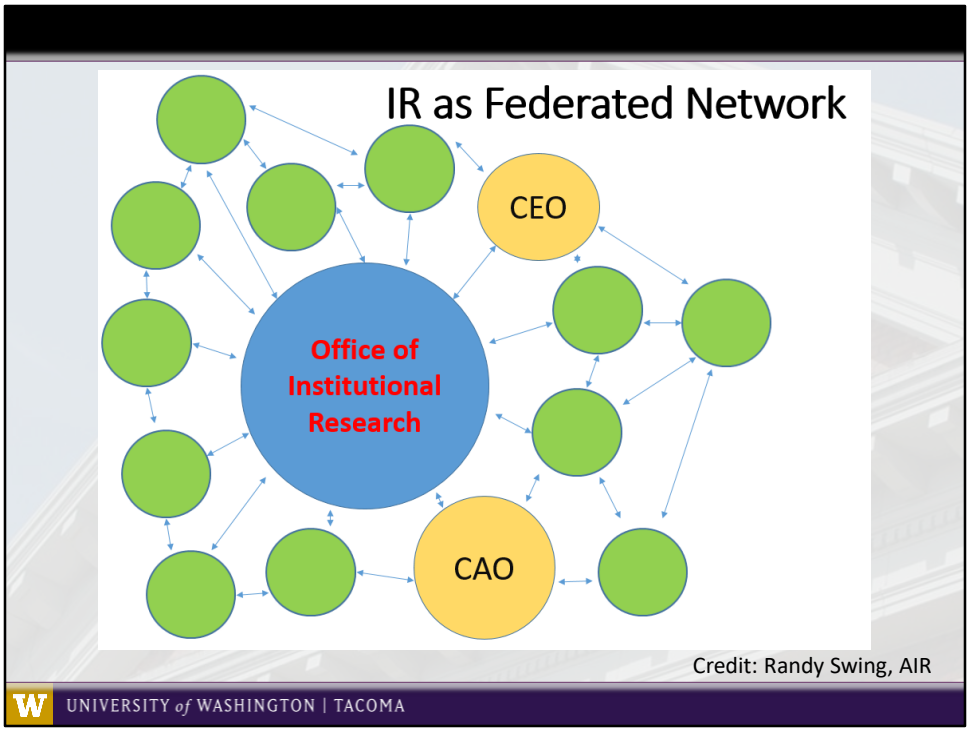
But this ratio is the one that is more meaning full to our team and probably resonates with our group here today.

Our IR team is 2 FTE strong! I bring this up for humor but also because this resource level is what drives us to work a little differently.

When talking to Conor and his team last year, the question about how the Data Fellows concept arose, if it was a mandate from the administration or a departmental goal.

At the time I believe that I answered that it was self preservation that inspired us, but really and truly it was our conviction and desire to support professional development on campus, particularly around understanding our university data the stories it could tell.

We wanted to be doing more support, education, research, and story telling and less adhoc data pulls.



But even though we *wanted* to do more research and discovery we were not yet in that position.

IR departments are frequently tapped by a variety of different individuals and programs from both inside and out of your campus, but often only interested in you providing the answer to what then need at that moment.

Often Each program and department is interested in what their data says and there are usually only a few folks interested in the entire story.

We wanted to grow the capacity for analysis outside of the IR department and to build those relationships, and skills, to support that ability in other units.

We had been thinking about that at UWT and my, then, boss and I were trying to come up with a way to best serve our campus ALL of it, with the resources we had.

We had a vision of what we wanted. We just had to get there.

So our goals.

We actually had a good foundation to work with.

Over the years we had developed good self-service tools on the Tacoma campus and helped different Tri-Campus team do the same. We had 3 solid self-serving resources for university data users; our UWT Online Reports, the UW Profiles (a project between the EDW team and UW IR), and the Business Intelligence Portal (a project initially between UWB IR, UWT IR, and the Seattle Registrars office)

Locally we had an outstanding relationship with our IT departments and our key data custodian, the campus Registrar.

This IR, IT, Student Data triangle initially became the foundation for our campus Data Governance (2010).

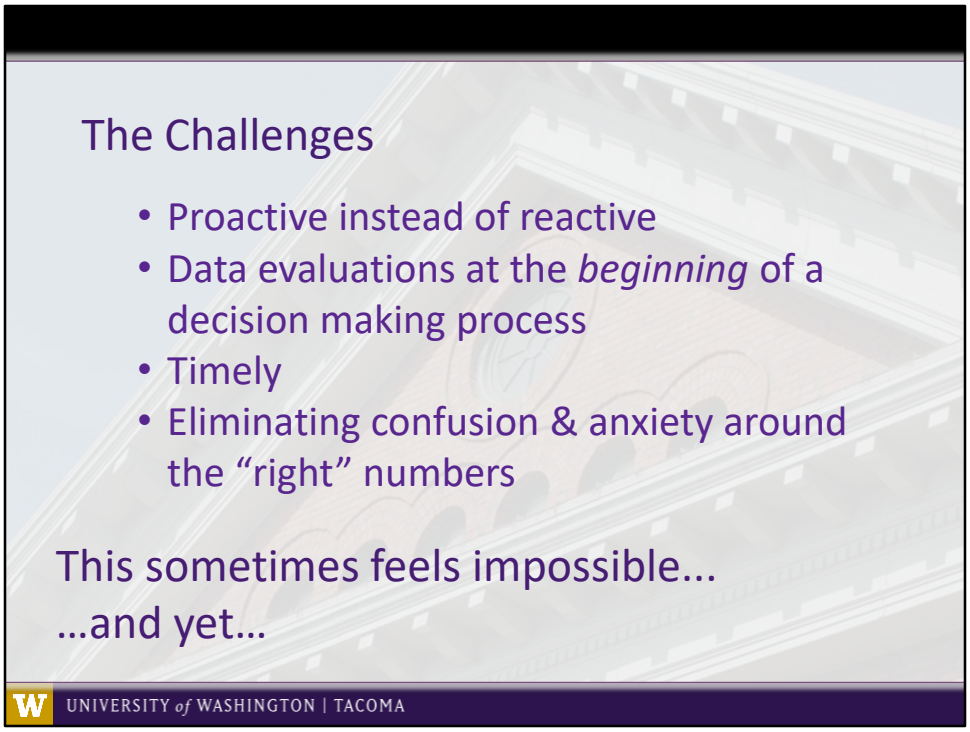
I had worked with the Tri-Campus Enterprise Data Warehouse and the development of those tools and was familiar with the training the EDW team had developed to support the EDW and Profiles

We knew that the EDW work had been the catalyst for centralizing our shared institutional knowledge and business rules. That process helped develop our

Knowledge Navigator Tool and our bi-weekly Student Term Vetting meetings which are still active.

But, we were frequently the only ones accessing the data. Either because we had the correct level of access but usually because we knew what was out there and how to get to the data.

We wanted folks to love their data!!!



So our goals and challenges were easy to itemize.

There were process and thought changes that needed to happen

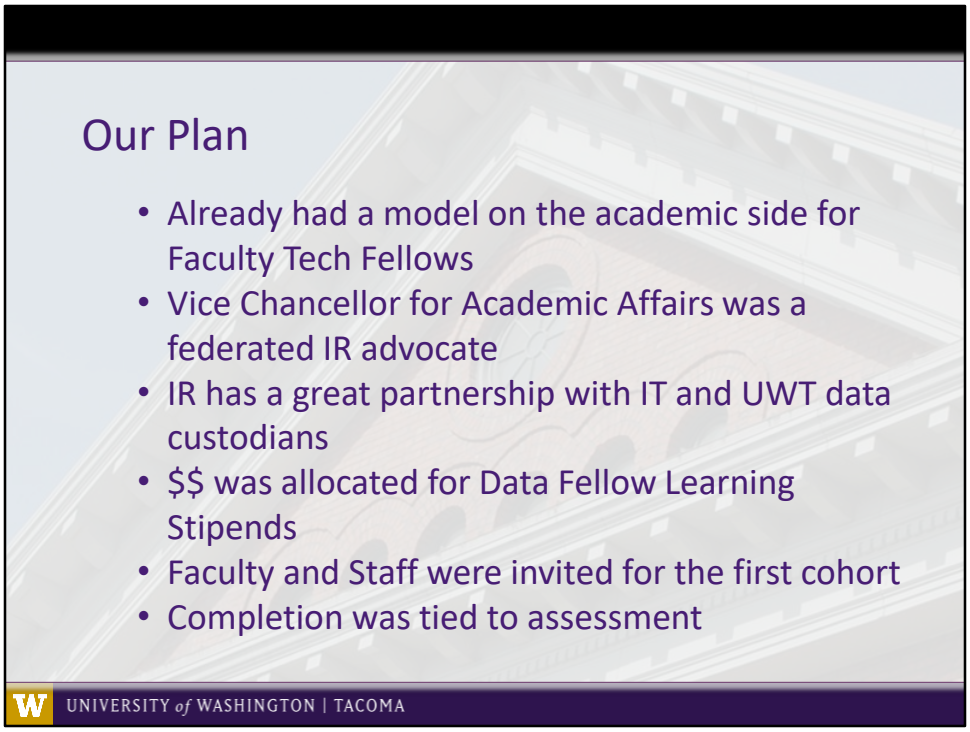
The key was to realize that….

There are folks all over this campus who already understand how to use data and even more who are more than capable of learning how to use data.

Now this was both and exhilarating and a terrifying idea.

Exhilarating because it was right, and would ultimately help our students dramatically, and terrifying because it seemed huge AND it could feel like you were losing control.

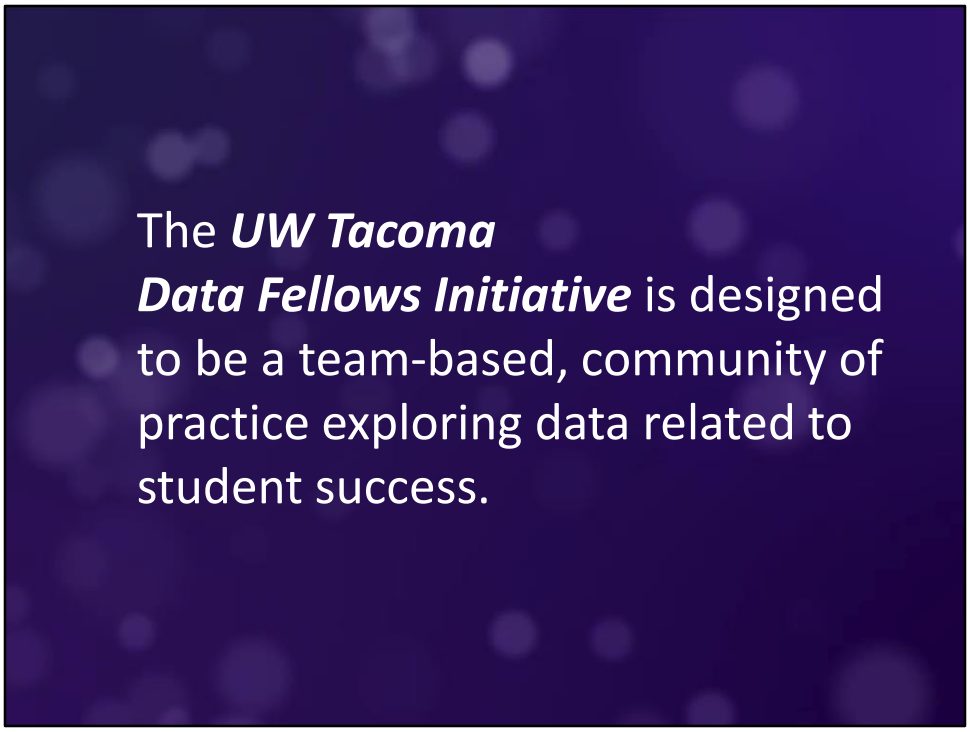
Not only that, you would be taking on a tremendous amount of responsibility.



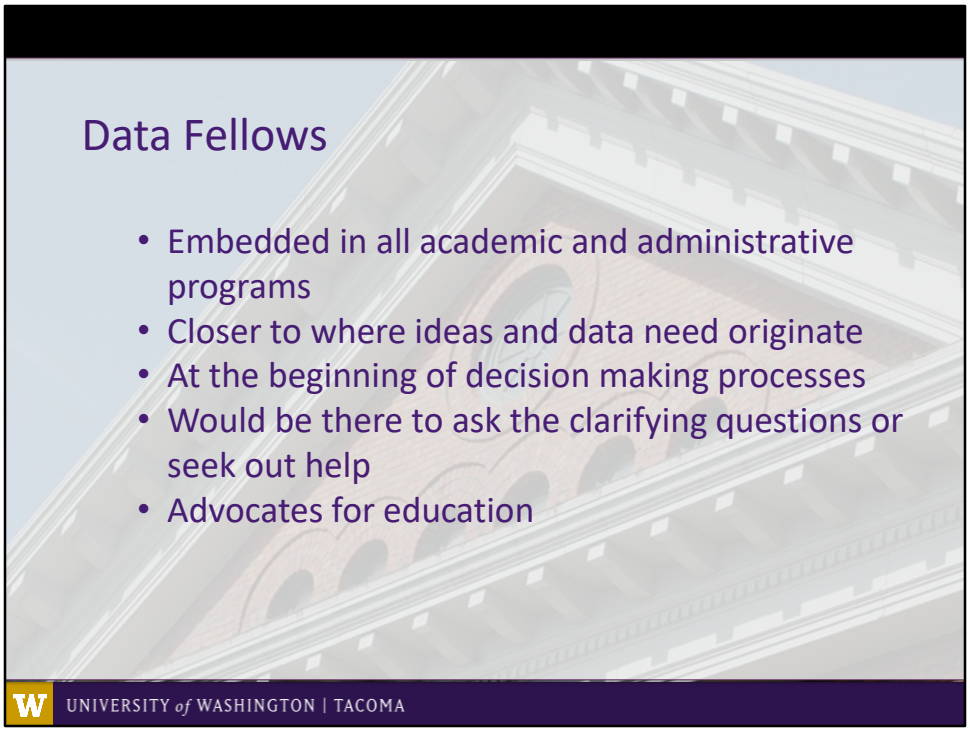
The initial plan was to use some of the ideas and structure from a recent Faculty Technology Fellows group which had met and trained around diversifying the delivery of material in courses. (Think hybrid, online, and OER topics)

We were fortunate to have the support from the VC of Academic Affairs who, along with being one of our biggest customers from a data request perspective, saw the potential for data literacy and how it could be used to have more folks looking at recruitment and retention for UWT

She funded the first two years of cohorts with stipends of up to $750 per person based on units completed

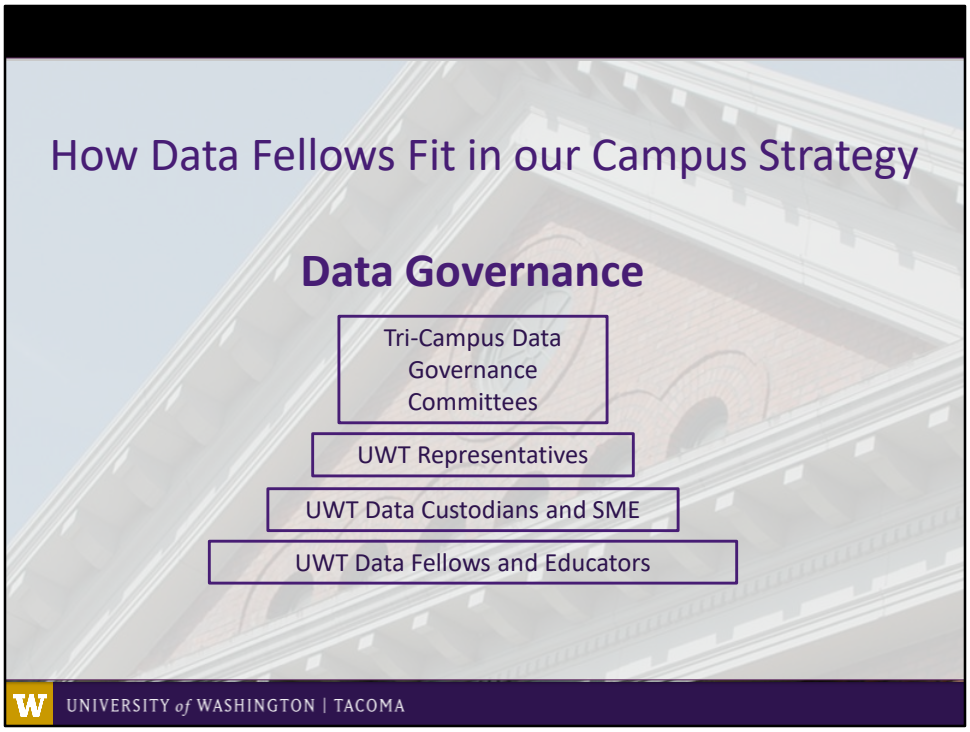


And so, Data Fellows was born

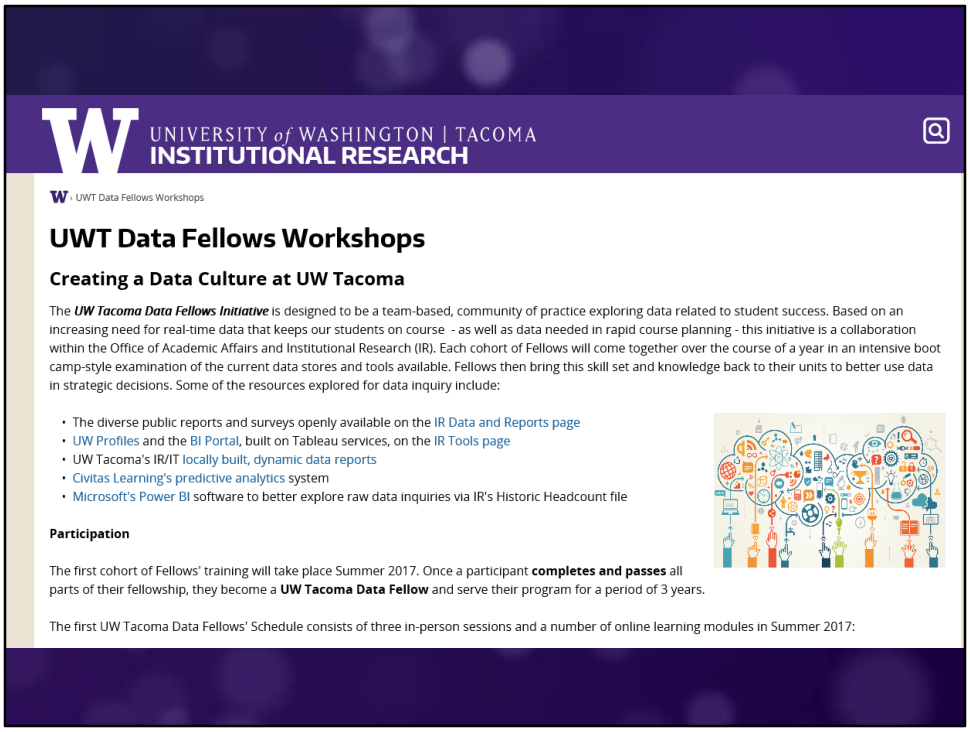


Where would they come from? Everywhere, we wanted staff and faculty in admin and academic departments.

Why? They would be closest to what was happening and would be able to ask questions early!

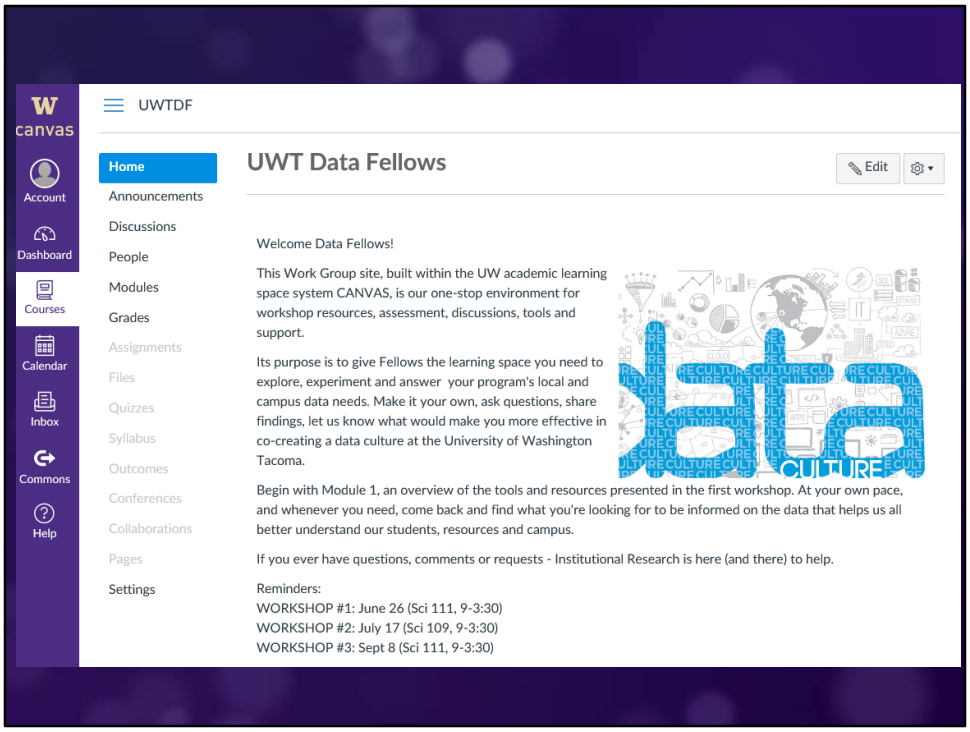


For this reason we have them in our Data Governance structure



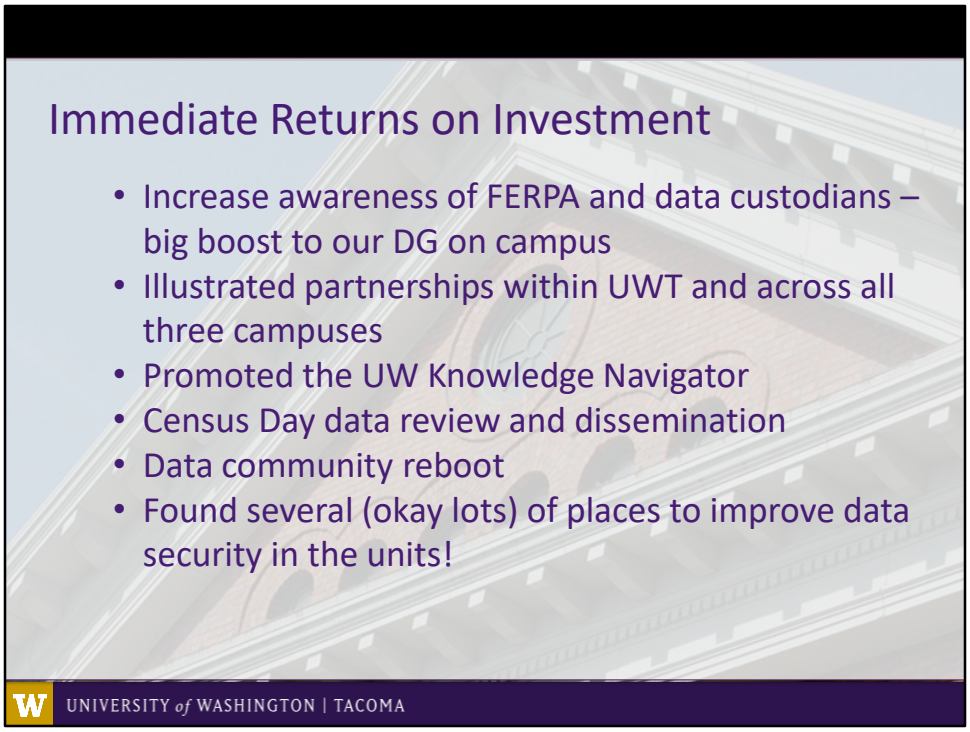
So, how we went about finding our Data Fellows and getting started.

I started by looking at who my biggest customers were (Registrar's office, Academic Affairs) and who we needed to most aware of how to use data properly (departments with accreditations and requests, Marketing, Chancellors Cabinet)

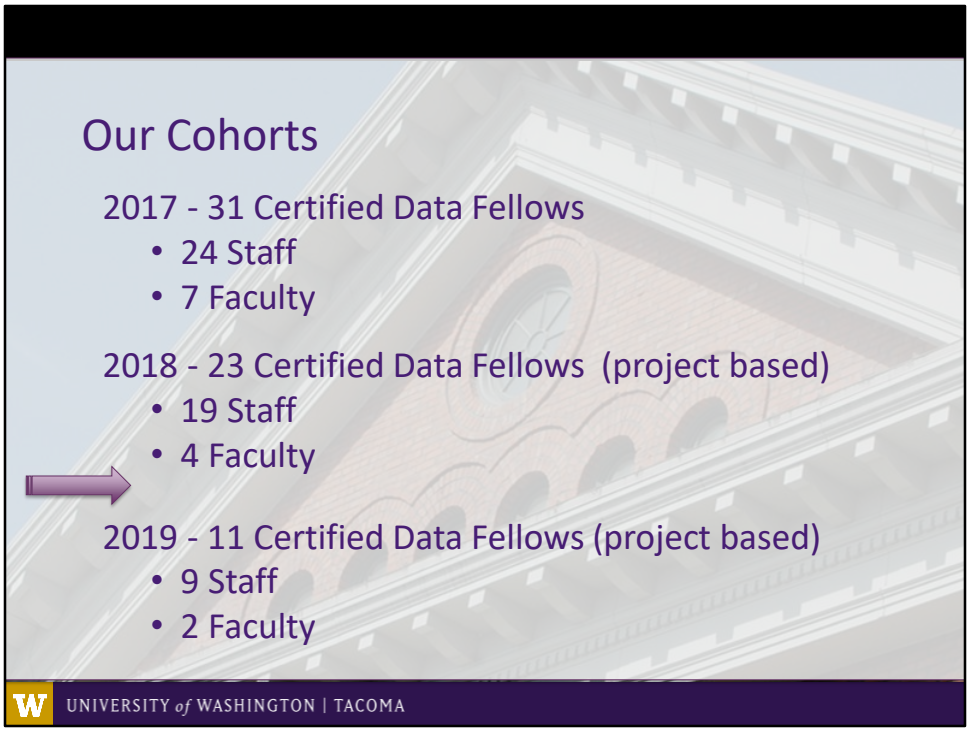


I created my list of what I thought was important to share:

Tools and recourses that were self-serving and not intimidating
How we define our data, what term mean, what are business rules and where do you find those?
FERPA rules
Data Governance and best practices
Time spend with the data. Finding the right reports, understanding what they are saying (and what they are not saying) pulling down data, and answering questions with that data.



From the end of the first hour of the very first cohort, we were seeing immediate returns on our investment.



Here is how the first 3 years have gone!

I decided to change the format slight in 2018 by introducing group projects. The 2017 cohort was skill based and their application was on answering questions they needed to answer but for this to grow we needed to find a way for people from different departments to work together with data they were NOT familiar with! For several reasons, if you already know the answer to a question (how many majors did I have autumn of 2017) how would you know if you were right or wrong if answer that question for another group?

Also, the addition of that "different ways to ask a question or see the data" can be very powerful!

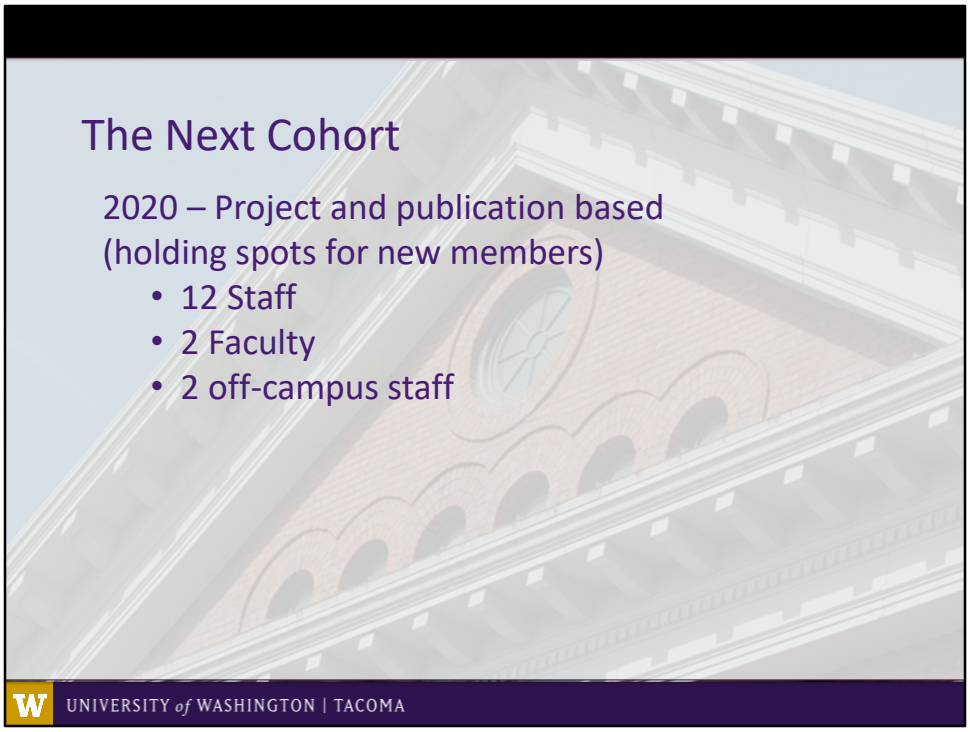
A couple of great examples:

There was one group of 3 individual from HR, Financial Aid, and an advisor from an academic program. At first they just looked at each other and then by the time they were done, they were talking about looking retention data for different programs based on participation in workstudy and other aid based programs.

My new analysts first day on the job was in the Data Fellows workshop and he was paired with the VC for strategy and one of our marketing and branding folks.

Together they decided to dive into the issue around why we have the Peer Groups we have and why. They started digging into IPEDS data and visiting with folks on campus and decided to build an algorithm based on campus facts (size, degrees, offered, location, IPEDS things) and the key elements from our strategic plan that were our 'pillars'. They put schools in the hopper and then reviewed the matches and it was great. They will be presenting their process and what came from this at our 2020 PNAIRp conference

So the project model was a success and it was invigorating!



So for our next cohort we plan to continue to build on that Project based outcome. We know what our sweet spot is for the size of the cohort and only want to tweak that just a bit.

We plan to have final project presentation open to the campus and space on the IR website to publish their projects.

The goal would be to keep that discover, analysis, and sharing model throughout the year.

Future of Data Fellows

- The 2017 cohort has just completed their 3 year commitment! We are working with them to assess their next level of data literacy roles
- The 2020 cohort kicks off in April with its first participants from other campuses
- We added two Data Fellows as representatives to our UWT Data Governance Team in 2019
- Time to consider a "Train the Trainers" program at UWT

So I am excited and proud of our program and our data fellows but there is still a lot of work to do and it has all be roses, there are some thorns!

I need to pay more attention to the Data Fellows and keep them engaged. I want to bring the 2017 cohort back for renewal and pull key individual from each group to help with the on-going professional development of our Data Fellows.

Your Turn!

- What are you doing at your institution to promote data literacy and education?
- What do you need to succeed?
  - Conor has some AIR resources to share.

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