



Scheduling for Completion Project Evaluation

Prepared for the Ohio Association of Community Colleges by The Ada Center

June 2019

Scheduling for Completion Project Overview

In 2016, the OACC received Ohio Department of Higher Education Innovation Grant funding to focus on the comprehensive use of data analytics in support of course scheduling and resource allocation. Eighteen community colleges elected to participate in this grant initiative, implementing Ad Astra’s Platinum Analytics software to support resource allocation decisions.

Evaluation Purpose and Methodology

From January – June 2019, The Ada Center conducted a qualitative assessment of the Scheduling for Completion Project. At the guidance of the OACC, The Ada Center examined factors related to successful implementation and barriers to implementation of Ad Astra-supported course scheduling decisions. The goal of the qualitative evaluation is to support OACC member colleges in preparing for future software initiatives and to inform future statewide efforts. As a result, the qualitative evaluation focuses on capturing relevant lessons from the Scheduling for Completion project experience across the 18 participating community colleges.

The Ada Center conducted interviews with Provosts, Associate Provosts, Directors of Institutional Research, IT leaders, Deans, Department Chairs, Advisors, Registrars, and Faculty from 12 of the 18 institutions that participated in the Scheduling for Completion project. The Ada Center also conducted an in-depth review of project documentation from all 18 participating institutions. In addition, The Ada Center conducted interviews with representatives from OACC and Ad Astra. The qualitative evaluation would not have been possible without the generous time and thought of the OACC staff, member colleges, and Ad Astra leadership. OACC institutions that participated in the Scheduling for Completion project are listed below. Those that shared their perspectives on the project are denoted with an asterisk.

Participating OACC Institutions	
Belmont College	Northwest State Community College*
Central Ohio Technical College*	Owens Community College*
Clark State Community College	Rio Grande Community College*
Edison State Community College*	Sinclair Community College*
Hocking College	Southern State Community College
Lakeland Community College	Stark State College*
Lorain County Community College District*	Terra State Community College
Marion Technical College*	Washington State Community College*
North Central State College*	Zane State College*

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Overview of College Experiences

The Scheduling for Completion project took place amid a backdrop of changing college enrollments and a statewide focus on guided pathways. All community college leaders interviewed expressed an eagerness to develop more student-centric scheduling practices and course offerings aligned with program enrollment needs. Many viewed the Scheduling for Completion project as one piece of a broader focus on student success initiatives. Of the 12 institutions interviewed as part of the evaluation, 8 felt that the Scheduling for Completion project meaningfully helped their college develop practices that improved student outcomes. For example, reducing the number of last-minute course cancellations due to under-filled courses, offering courses at times that better meet student needs, and adding courses critical to on-time student graduation.

Quantitative results data from the Scheduling for Completion project produced by OACC shows an estimated \$686,140 cost savings across 17 of the participating colleges between Spring 2017 and Spring 2018. The cost savings estimate was derived by looking at college course elimination decisions due to improved data on course enrollments. In addition, the quantitative analysis suggests between \$150,000 - \$200,000 additional revenue earned at those same 17 institutions due to data-informed course additions in Spring 2018.

Despite these gains, only three of the participating 18 community colleges have chosen to continue with the Ad Astra Platinum Analytics software. Many college leaders shared their challenges with implementing the Ad Astra software tool, a theme that will be discussed in more depth throughout this report. However, for most project participants—including those that elected not to continue with the Ad Astra Platinum Analytics software—the software implementation was an impetus for changes to college scheduling processes. Through scrutinizing the data within the Ad Astra reports, faculty and administrators saw the value in data-driven scheduling and were able to discern which types of data would be helpful to their institutions. Further, the Ad Astra implementation shed light on who at the college should be involved in strategic scheduling decisions. At many OACC colleges, what was once an informal course scheduling process has transitioned into a formal process involving representatives from Institutional Research and Advising.

Owens Community College is one example of an OACC institution that leveraged the Scheduling for Completion project to make meaningful changes to college scheduling processes, but elected to do so independently from the Ad Astra Platinum Analytics software. Before the Scheduling for Completion project, like most institutions in Ohio, Owens Community College rolled over the schedule from the previous term—fall to fall and spring to spring. Deans had unique processes for adjusting department course offerings, with some using more data than others. In several departments, under-filled classes were cancelled just three to four days before the start of term.

Now, in 2019, the Director of Institutional Research at Owens Community College has partnered with the Deans to create course enrollment reports that guide department scheduling decisions. Academic leaders also receive weekly updates from Institutional Research on course fill rates once registration has opened. As part of this effort, Owens Community College has been able to push back the last day to cancel classes, reducing the number of students negatively impacted by scheduling changes. While today the reports generated by Institutional Research are created in excel, across 2019 Owens plans to leverage the reporting tool Argos to automate the reports.

The impact of the Scheduling for Completion project will be fully realized as colleges solidify their data-driven processes for course scheduling, community colleges continuing with Ad Astra have time to reach scale with their implementations, and lessons from the Ad Astra software implementation are put into practice with future investments around the state. While a handful of college leaders expressed frustration with the challenging and time-consuming nature of their institution's Ad Astra Platinum Analytics software implementation, most of the project participants reflected positively on the learning experience. All institutions are eager for continued support from OACC as they continue guided pathways redesign.

Top Lessons from Scheduling for Completion

The Ada Center's evaluation examined which factors were most critical for successful implementation of the Ad Astra Platinum Analytics tool across the 18 participating Ohio community colleges, focusing especially on factors with relevance for future software implementations, student success projects, and state-level initiatives. That research lens resulted in the emergence of five major factors that contributed to the success (or lack thereof) of the Ad Astra Platinum Analytics software implementation across the participating OACC colleges. For teaching purposes, The Ada Center frames these factors as five lessons for future projects, each of which will be explored in-depth across the coming pages:



Ensure Significant Staff Capacity Over Multi-Year Period—Including Senior Leadership—to Undertake Tech-Mediated Initiative



Audit Software Vendor Data Protocol, Engaging in Data Clean-up Before Finalizing Procurement



Advocate for a Vendor Implementation Consultant that Can Work Through Hurdles



Shield End Users from Tool Until its Ready for Prime Time, Then Launch Utilization Campaign



Set, Routinely Evaluate, and Communicate Realistic Goals for the Project

Ensure Significant Staff Capacity Over Multi-Year Period—Including Senior Leadership—to Undertake Tech-Mediated Initiative

Early feedback on the Scheduling for Completion project indicated that smaller institutions were less likely to benefit from the Ad Astra Platinum Analytics reports. As The Ada Center probed more deeply on this hypothesis, it became clear that leadership at colleges with enrollments of less than 5,000 especially valued the idea of Ad Astra's course enrollment reports given the limited data and reporting capacities at their institutions. The challenge for many of these smaller institutions, however, was staff capacity to deeply manage the Scheduling for Completion project implementation. At colleges with enrollments of less than 5,000, it's not uncommon to have leanly staffed Academic Records offices, administration wearing many hats, lean or nonexistent Institutional Effectiveness offices, and very thinly staffed Information Technology departments. At the time of the Ad Astra software implementation, many of the smaller participating community colleges were already committed to other critical initiatives.

Of the colleges that experienced the greatest success with the Ad Astra Platinum Analytics tool, including the three institutions that have chosen to continue leveraging the software—Lorain Community College, Stark State College, and Sinclair College—there was significant investment of staff time to the project, including the allocation of senior staff time to project manage the implementation and scale-up over a multi-year period.

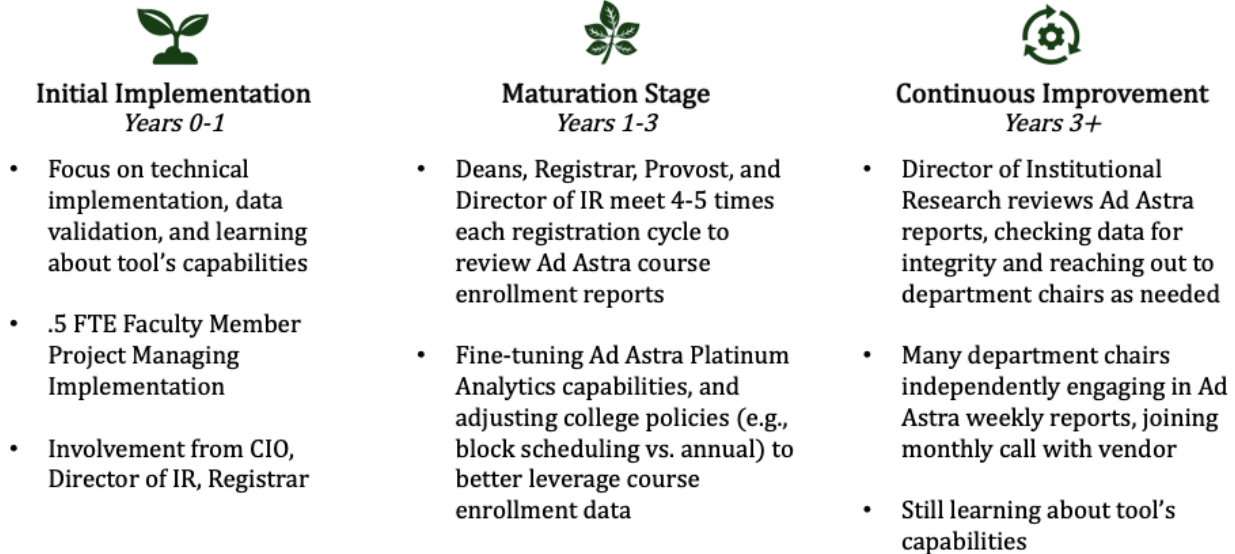
At Stark State, an OACC college that had been using the Ad Astra Platinum Analytics tool for several years prior to the Scheduling for Completion project, the Platinum Analytics software implementation team included the Director of Institutional Research, the Chief Information Officer (CIO), and the Registrar. During the earliest stages of the project, a faculty member with relevant data expertise was allocated one-half FTE to manage the day-to-day of the software implementation.

During the first year of implementing the Ad Astra Platinum Analytics software, the Stark State implementation team was actively involved in the technical components of implementation, data validation, and learning about the capabilities of the Platinum Analytics tool. After that initial year, Stark State began to develop longer-term processes for using the data within the Platinum Analytics reports. The Director of Institutional Research at Stark State College refers to this stage of the institution's Ad Astra implementation as the "Maturation Stage," a time period following initial implementation but when additional work was still needed to leverage and integrate the tool's capabilities.

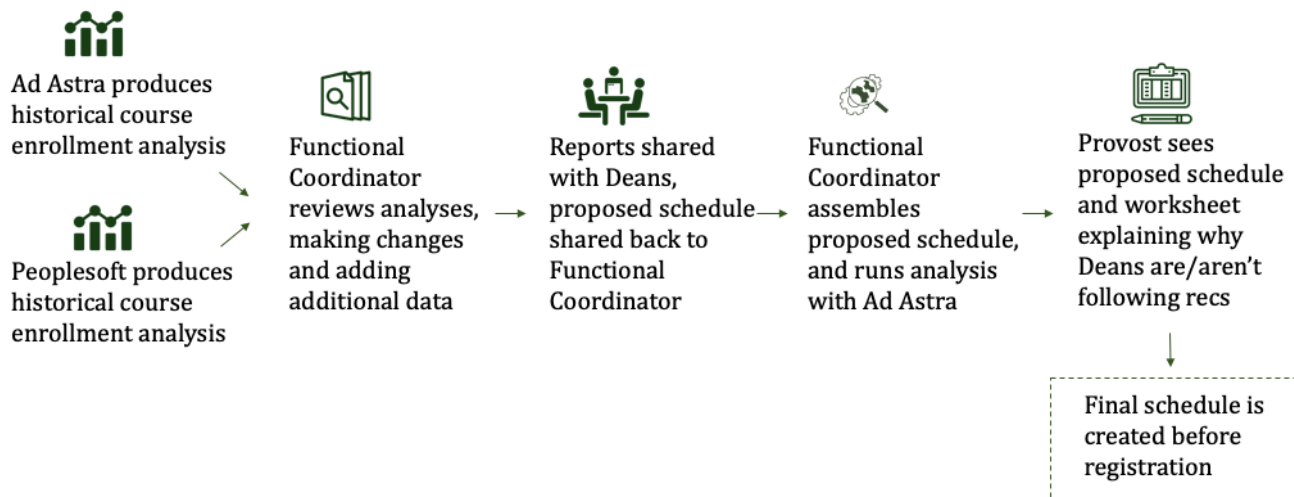
During the *Maturation Stage*, the Director of Institutional Research, Provost, Deans, and Registrar met four to five times each registration cycle to review the Ad Astra reports and make course scheduling decisions. During the roughly two-year *Maturation Stage*, Stark State enacted and responded to changes to its course scheduling policies, including moving toward block scheduling and away from an annual schedule.

Today, the Director of Institutional Research at Stark State continues to actively manage the Ad Astra Platinum Analytics tool. The Director of Institutional Research reviews the Ad Astra reports, checks the data for integrity, and, as needed, calls Department Chairs to inform them of courses where they may need to add or subtract sections. Across the last year, many Department Chairs have begun independently engaging in the Ad Astra weekly snapshot reports and joining the Director of Institutional Research's monthly calls with Ad Astra. This level of engagement took over four years. A visual of the Stark State College implementation stage timeline is depicted on the following page.

Stark State College Ad Astra Implementation Stages



Lorain Community College is deploying a similar approach to their implementation of Ad Astra Platinum Analytics. Like Stark State, Lorain dedicated FTE to project manage the Ad Astra software implementation. A Functional Coordinator with frequent, direct communications with the Provost has been staffed on the project since its inception. During the initial software implementation, the Functional Coordinator spent nearly 100% of her time managing interactions with the vendor, Deans, the Registrar's office, and other administrators to get the Platinum Analytics reports up and running. Today, the Functional Coordinator spends about 50% of her time managing the Ad Astra relationship and subsequent strategic scheduling processes. To understand the critical role of the Functional Coordinator, it's helpful to visualize the scheduling workflow at Lorain Community College:



Due to early challenges with data integrity in Lorain's Ad Astra reports, the Provost's office is committed to strong data validation practices and educating Deans on the Ad Astra tool. Today, the Functional Coordinator regularly reviews course enrollment reports with Deans who are unfamiliar with Ad Astra. Lorain anticipates it will be an ongoing process to engage Deans in how the tool can support their scheduling decisions.

Having learned from previous project implementations, Sinclair Community College delayed its participation in the Scheduling for Completion project until it was prepared to commit leadership time and focus to the project. Two Associate Provosts were assigned to project manage the Scheduling for Completion initiative, and the broader implementation team included Deans, Assistant Deans, Faculty Chairs, and representatives from Advising and Registration. The Sinclair implementation team meets every other week for one hour. In addition, the two Associate Provosts spend an additional two to five hours on the project each week. The Associate Provosts leading the initiative have contextualized the project as a part of Sinclair's focus on guided pathways and an initiative connected to Sinclair's broader theory of change.

One teaching from the Scheduling for Completion project is that while dedicated long-term project staffing is by no means the only prerequisite for a successful implementation, it is a precondition to success. For future software initiatives, there are several important staffing takeaways to keep in mind:

- **For most software tools, initial implementation takes at least one year.** During the first year of a software initiative, institutions should be prepared to commit technical staff resources, non-technical subject matter expert staff resources, and senior leadership management resources to the project. At institutions with leanly staffed departments, this often means difficult prioritization among a sea of worthy initiatives and, depending on the project, hiring additional staff to help with an implementation.
- **Reaching "at-scale" tool usage often takes an additional two to three years.** Three years after procuring a software tool, most institutions are still implementing features, adding new users, and adjusting their practices to improve the efficacy of the tool. From a staffing perspective, it's important that institutions can commit several years of staff time to a technology-related project. The cost and opportunity cost of this staff time should be carefully considered.
- **The senior leader overseeing the project must be fully bought into the project's vision and purpose.** While most OACC colleges had at least some senior leadership engagement in the Scheduling for Completion project, several institutions struggled with leadership transition midway through the project. In the absence of a senior leader's engagement and direction in the

early stages of an initiative, the project is unlikely to succeed. When leadership engagement is not possible, it's best to put an initiative on hold; continuing with the project in its absence is likely to cause staff and faculty initiative fatigue.

- **Ensure that Information Technology (IT) has project capacity—and a voice at the table—before committing to a major software initiative.** There is no shortage of demands on college IT in today's evolving landscape. At many OACC institutions, staffing hasn't kept pace with growth in software functionality and new hardware demands. Much like senior leadership is a prerequisite to a successful software project, IT capacity is also a requirement for a sustainable, long-term software portfolio. In the case of the Scheduling for Completion project, some institutions circumvented the need for IT by manually extracting data from the Student Information System (SIS). This is not an ideal scenario, and one that should ideally be avoided in future software purchases.

Audit Software Vendor Data Protocol, Engaging in Data Clean-up Before Finalizing Procurement

Among the Scheduling for Completion project participants, several smaller colleges such as Zane State College, did mobilize and plan for intensive project staffing. At these institutions, the primary implementation obstacle was data access and integrity. For many institutions, Ad Astra Platinum Analytics was never able to run its full spectrum of reports because a direct link with the college Student Information System (SIS) couldn't be established, the Ad Astra engine couldn't read the data fields in the college SIS due to unique college coding, and/or the college didn't have a fully implemented degree audit with student planning capabilities. These obstacles resulted in data access challenges for Ad Astra, and ultimately data integrity challenges with the Ad Astra reports.

Nine of the 12 colleges interviewed cited data quality as a major issue during their Ad Astra Platinum Analytics implementations. Over a multi-year period, institutions struggled to make sense of Ad Astra reports that couldn't easily disaggregate or remove College Credit Plus students, online courses, and satellite campuses. At colleges with more extensive internal staffing resources, it was possible to find manual workarounds. That option wasn't available at all institutions due to the time-consuming nature of manual workarounds, data-vetting, or SIS clean-up.

Ad Astra has a strong national reputation for its approach to implementation. The vendor has a transparent document on college source data requirements that it requires to run its analyses. Ad Astra typically shares this guide with institutions during the final stages of the procurement process, and again during project implementation. This document ensures that both the institution and the vendor are on the same page about system and coding requirements.

Illustrative Excerpt from Ad Astra Data Scoping Document

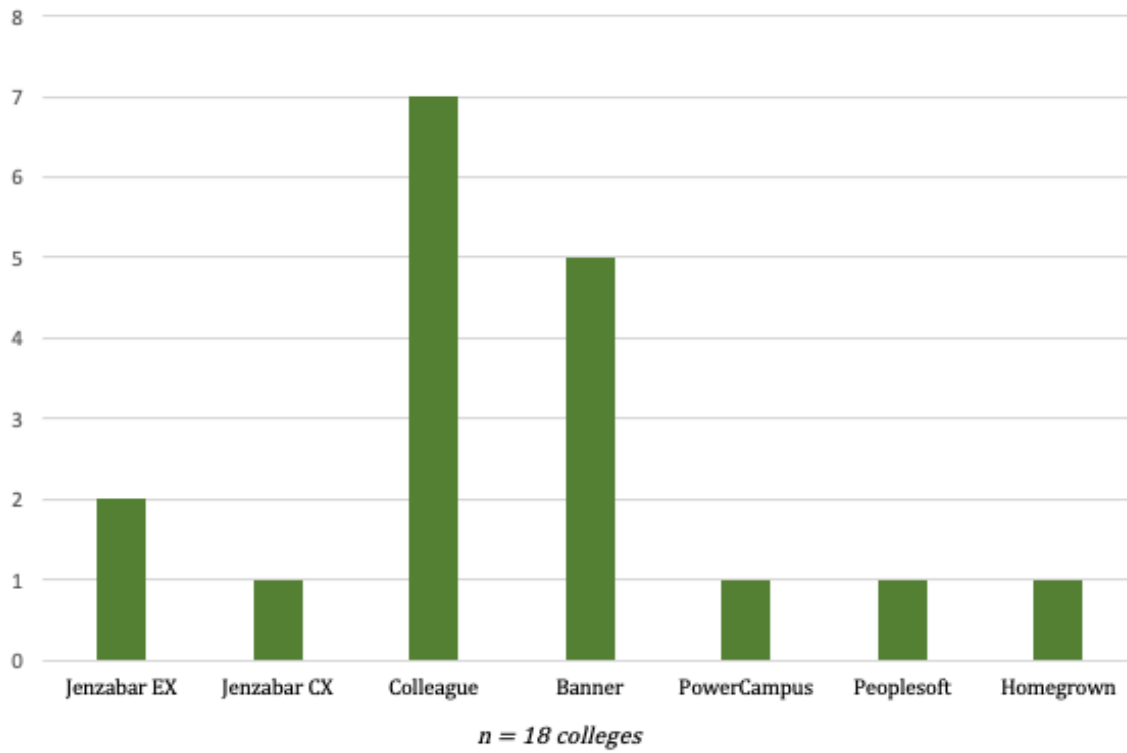


How many courses and sections should we expect to see in your Spring/Fall terms?	
What is the ideal time of day that imports should be run?	
Describe your SIS & degree audit term structure (i.e. 200810, Fall2008, etc.). Give code and description samples.	
Does your institution use part of term? If yes, how is this identified inside your system?	
For scheduling and analytics, are you interested in all course levels? (i.e. graduate and undergraduate? Non-credit?)	
Do you link lecture and lab components or list them as separate courses?	
Do you cross-list courses? Describe your practices. How should Ad Astra process this information? (Use a maximum on the crosslist or sum individual sections.)	

The Ada Center strongly recommends that future state or college software purchases include significant engagement from college IT throughout the software procurement process. Specifically, college IT should review the vendor’s core data system requirements and the nature of the vendor’s requested access. The more complex the requested integration with the college source systems, the more vetting is required.

The OACC faces a particularly unique data climate due to the diversity of student information systems in the state. Among Scheduling for Completion participants, two institutions operate Jenzabar EX, one operates Jenzabar CX, seven operate Ellucian Colleague, five operate Ellucian Banner, one uses PowerCampus, one has Peoplesoft, and one has a homegrown system. This diversity of student information systems lends itself to a diversity of degree audit systems. The three institutions with Jenzabar leverage the degree audit within Jenzabar, the seven Colleague institutions leverage that system’s Degree Audit (Colleague Student), four of the five Ellucian Banner colleges use DegreeWorks, and one of the Banner institutions uses CAPP.

Student Information System Diversity Across OACC Project Participants



This diversity complicates the process of purchasing software tools across the state. Several of the OACC's member colleges have SISs that are notoriously difficult for third-party vendors to integrate with. Further, the diversity in student information systems complicates data storage best-practice sharing across the state.

The data access and integrity challenges experienced throughout the Scheduling for Completion project are certainly not unique to Ohio. Through The Ada Center's broader work in the field, 60% of institutions that procure a student success software tool spend the first year of implementation engaged in source data system clean-up. That is, institutions are not able to complete technical implementation of a third-party software tool because the college source data feeding the tool needs to be attended to first. As OACC institutions continue their focus on guided pathways, they will surely explore other third-party tools with significant data integration requirements. The Ada Center recommends:

- **Rigorous vetting of vendor data protocol before commencing procurement.** If a vendor does not volunteer a data requirements and expectations document as part of the procurement process, ensure you ask for a copy of the document and have your IT team review it.

- **A period of preparation for implementation before entering into a contract with a software vendor, including a review of source system data for coding clarity.** Nearly all institutions have some aspects of their SIS that would benefit from coding clean-up (e.g., duplicates, multiple acronyms for the same concept). Absent that clean-up, it's difficult for a third-party to appropriately understand your college's data.
- **Staffing for the data validation back-and-forth that is often required with implementations.** All successful software implementations require end users with content familiarity to thoroughly examine the information that a software tool is "serving up" in different scenarios. That is, advisors will need to examine the integrity of student planning tool recommendations, faculty will need to examine the integrity of their course data, and institutional research will need to examine the integrity of reporting tool outputs. This data validation can take months, and often needs to be completed by the end user of the data rather than IT.

Advocate for a Vendor Implementation Consultant that Can Work Through Hurdles

Among institutions that were able to work through data quality challenges, nearly all had a strong and consistent Ad Astra implementation consultant. Ad Astra, like most of today's student success software vendors, assigns each client institution an implementation consultant to manage that client's implementation experience. Implementation consultants are typically assigned by region, and their levels of experience, strengths, and communications styles vary.

In the Scheduling for Completion project, there were multiple implementation consultants assigned to the 18 participating OACC colleges. While all college leaders shared that their consultant was professional, experiences with implementation consultants were highly variable. Several institutions were able to partner with their implementation consultant to effectively remove College Credit Plus and satellite campus data from their Ad Astra reports. Other college leaders shared their implementation consultants had no suggestions for how to disaggregate College Credit Plus, online campus, and satellite campus data from the Ad Astra reports. In some cases, institutions spent over a year waiting for their implementation consultant to respond to a data challenge. In other cases, institutions transitioned implementation consultants three times over the course of the project; college leaders had to repeat the history of their project experience each time the consultants transitioned.

In the subsequent section "Reflection on Future State Technology-Related Initiatives," we'll explore how the OACC might help institutions avoid these types of vendor staffing frustrations on future projects. However, there is also a role for college leaders to play in raising implementation challenges

early and often. Much like large higher education institutions, education software vendors have complex organizational structures. If an implementation consultant is not able to be an effective strategic partner to a college, it's important for college leadership to raise the issue to software vendor leadership directly. The Ada Center recommends:

- **If after 6 months of concerted effort the software implementation is not meeting expectations and there isn't a clear plan to remedy, it's time for college leadership to directly communicate these concerns to software vendor leadership.**
- **As a first step, college leadership should create a project timeline of key events and communications, highlighting activities that didn't meet expectations.**
- **As a second step, college leadership should be open with their implementation consultant about the challenges, requesting a meeting with an implementation manager.**
- **Prior to the conversation with the implementation manager, college leadership should share the project history electronically. This enables the conversation to focus on what can be done to remedy the challenges moving forward.**

In the case of the Scheduling for Completion project, many college leaders expressed they did not raise concerns with implementation because they assumed their situation was unique. In fact, over half of the institutions interviewed by The Ada Center experienced similar challenges related to an implementation consultant that, for one reason or another, was not able to be a strategic partner in overcoming implementation obstacles.

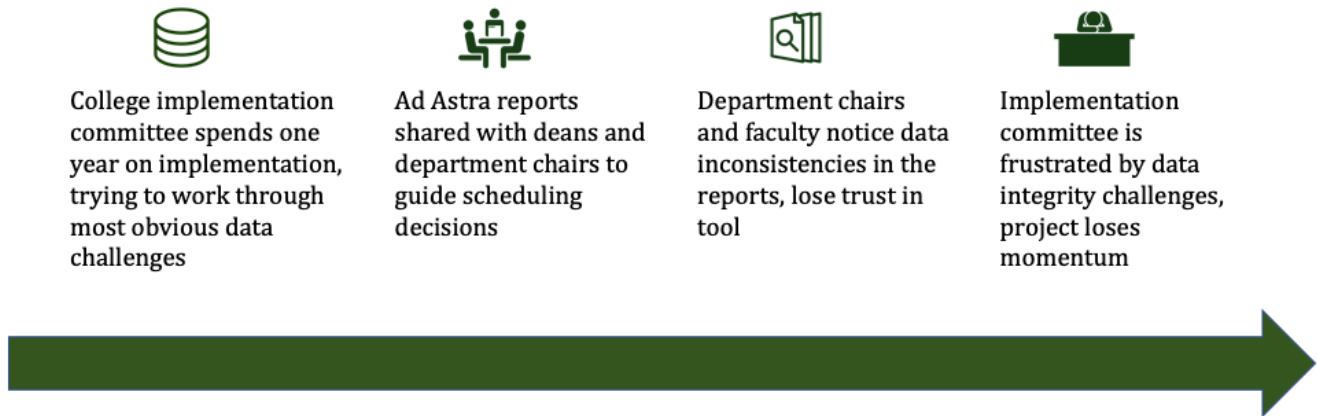
Shield End Users from Tool Until its Ready for Prime Time, Then Launch Utilization Campaign

Institutions that shared positive experiences with Ad Astra were very careful about how and when to introduce Faculty, Deans, and Department chairs to the reporting tool. These institutions chose to keep the Ad Astra enrollment analysis within the confines of the implementation team until members of that implementation team were able to understand how the reports were created, validate the data within them, and explain how the reports should be used.

Five of the 12 institutions interviewed shared a common story of how the Scheduling for Completion project lost momentum. At these institutions, Ad Astra reports were shared directly with Faculty and Department Chairs without first being massaged and validated. In turn, academic leaders found data

integrity challenges with the reports and the project struggled to recover. An illustration of the sequence of events is depicted below.

A Common Story of Faculty and Staff Disengagement



Sinclair Community College, in partnership with their Ad Astra implementation consultant, devised a multi-step rollout plan for the broader community of Deans and Department Chairs. First, Sinclair’s implementation team spent the better part of a year learning Platinum Analytics capabilities, reviewing reports, and partnering with Ad Astra to determine the best way for Sinclair to sequence its use of Platinum Analytics capabilities. Initially, Sinclair focused its efforts on identifying course candidates for addition; for courses filling at 85% or greater, Sinclair has made an effort to add an additional course to the schedule. To facilitate this activity, Ad Astra partnered with Sinclair to create a list of top course candidates for review, helping the Sinclair implementation team prioritize among a vast field of available reports.

Before the Ad Astra reports were shared with the Deans and Assistant Deans, Sinclair asked Ad Astra to conduct an additional training session. The Associate Provosts leading the Scheduling for Completion initiative have also worked to make clear the benefits of using the Ad Astra reports. For example, Deans that make data-informed scheduling decisions aren’t required to attend the same volume of college budget meetings. Further, Deans overseeing programs with high course fill rates have been encouraged to leverage the Ad Astra reports to justify additional resources, such as the addition of a computer lab or a new department hire.

Borrowing lessons from the Scheduling for Completion experience, The Ada Center recommends that for future software initiatives:

- **College implementation team members hold on releasing the software tool to a wider audience until it has been piloted extensively by the implementation team. This requires**

implementation team members to thoroughly vet data validity across a wide spectrum of features and cases.

- **Upon sharing the software tool with a wider audience, leadership should clearly articulate how the tool maps to broader college priorities, including those that the tool end users care most about.**
- **Offer incentives for tool usage whenever possible. Even small incentives—such as avoiding reporting requirements or meeting attendance—can be meaningful.**

Set, Routinely Evaluate, and Communicate Realistic Goals for the Project

Many Scheduling for Completion project participants voiced, “I initially thought Ad Astra Platinum Analytics was going to build our semester schedule.” Ad Astra is transparent that the data it shares with institutions is designed to be one piece of feedback to support strategic scheduling decisions. Data within Platinum Analytics must be paired with faculty insight, broader goals for an institution (such as expanding access to a rural area or partnering with a local employer to offer evening courses), and institutional knowledge. While most Scheduling for Completion project participants were able to reconcile their original vision for the Platinum Analytics tool with its capabilities in practice, that mismatch of expectations was a learning experience for many institutions.

Student success software implementations are a significant amount of work for an institution. As we explored in previous sections, implementations often take years of dedicated staff time and attention to produce meaningful outcomes. Given the sustained staff capacity required to realize success with a technology-mediated project, The Ada Center recommends setting realistic project milestones to track progress and celebrate incremental victories. This progress tracking also helps create a paper trail evaluation of the software initiative, a practice that can be immensely helpful amid staff transitions, software challenges, and competing institution priorities. An illustrative template for managing project goals can be seen on the following page.

Illustrative Software Implementation Milestone Template

**Year 1
Goals for
January 2019 -
December 2020
Ad Astra
Implementation**

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff implementation committee and assign .5 FTE Project Manager
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Finish technical implementation of Platinum Analytics historical analysis
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish direct connection between SIS and Ad Astra analytics engine
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure at least two “super-users” of Ad Astra Platinum Analytics tool
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop rollout and training plan for Department Chair reports to be introduced during winter Professional Development Day
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create Ad Astra report “use case” template and establish internal data validation protocol
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify 3-5 courses that may be good addition or reduction candidates for the following semester

Organize By:
 Milestone
 Sub-Tasks
 Status
 Individuals
 Responsible

The three OACC colleges that have chosen to continue with Ad Astra—Lorain Community College, Sinclair Community College, and Stark State College—have taken a long-term project management approach to their relationship with the software. The Director of Institutional Research at Stark State College shared, “Five years into our college’s partnership with Ad Astra, I am still learning more about Platinum Analytics. Each year we learn a bit more and adjust our scheduling approach a bit more. Software initiatives are really a long-term commitment, and it’s important to socialize the nature of that commitment across campus.” For future software initiatives, The Ada Center recommends that institutions:

- **Don’t delegate the project management of the software initiative solely to the vendor. Develop a thoughtful internal rubric of success milestones and share that with your vendor representative for feedback.**
- **For each success milestone in a software implementation, articulate the sub-tasks required to realize that milestone, the individuals responsible for those sub-tasks, and the status or suggested timeline of activity.**
- **Hold regular meetings with the implementation team during the first year of software implementation (bi-weekly) to update the success milestones and evaluate progress.**
- **Ensure project successes—and roadblocks—are appropriately communicated to institution leadership and other key project stakeholders. Ideally, implementation progress is discussed with college leadership during quarterly in-person meetings.**

Reflection on Future State Technology-Related Initiatives

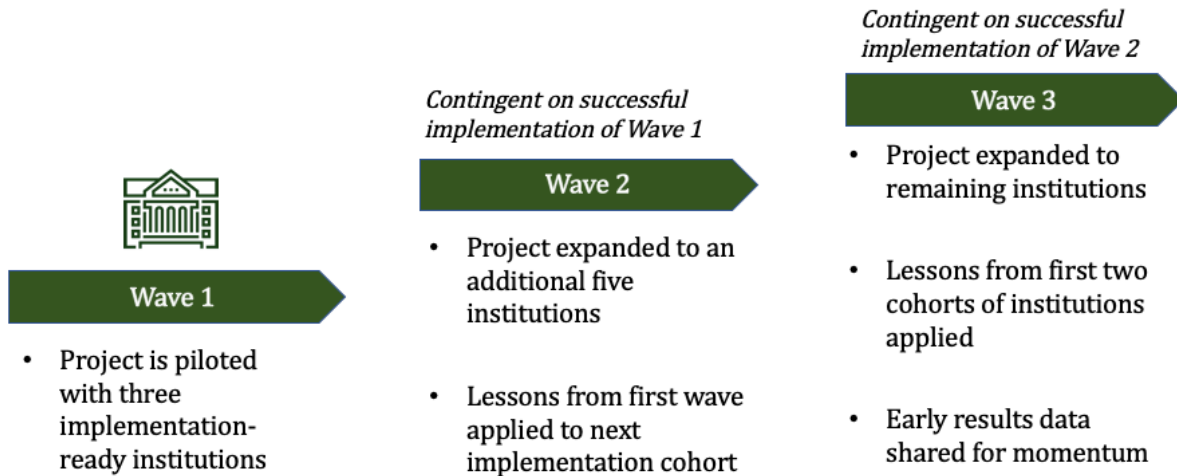
Nationally, the Scheduling for Completion project was one of the first state-facilitated technology initiatives of its kind. Across institutions with unique core data systems, capacities, leadership structures, and student demographics, a major software initiative was piloted simultaneously across institutions. The subsequent learning from the Scheduling for Completion project is tremendous. Institutions that would not have otherwise had the resources to procure a software tool like Ad Astra Platinum Analytics gained experience and expertise; even institutions that struggled with implementing the software have learned a great deal about how to approach future technology investments.

Since the Scheduling for Completion project launched, a handful of more centralized community college systems have procured a major student success software for their member colleges. In Virginia, the Virginia Community College System procured both EAB-Navigate and Ad Astra Platinum Analytics. For both software tools, the system is phasing implementation across an extended period of time. Each year, only a handful of institutions embarks on implementation. After one “wave” of institutions is complete, another begins. Other community college systems have also followed this phased approach to implementing student success software across the state, including the Colorado Community College System. In Colorado and Virginia, these state community college systems benefit from institutions with a common SIS.

In the context of the Scheduling for Completion project, the merits of this phased implementation approach are best illustrated in the case of Sinclair Community College. Sinclair began its implementation of Ad Astra one year after the rest of the institutions in the Scheduling for Completion cohort. Going into the project, the implementation consultant assigned to Sinclair was able to draw upon the lessons learned from other institutions around the state, offering suggestions about how to manage College Credit Plus students and how to structure the implementation team.

Should the OACC wish to embark on future technology-mediated initiatives, The Ada Center recommends adopting a phased approach to implementation. Drawing on recommended practices from other state systems and regional consortia, The Ada Center suggests embarking on implementation with a group of three eager institutions in year one, five institutions in year two, and the remainder in years three to four. The Ada Center also recommends structuring any future software contract to stipulate that all institutions in each wave of implementation must have all agreed-upon functionality fully operational before commencing implementation with the next wave of institutions. This wave approach can also be applied to initiatives that don’t involve technology, but rather technical assistance.

For Future State Projects, Consider a Wave Approach to Implementation



All institution leaders interviewed by The Ada Center expressed the deep value they find in the OACC and the Student Success Leadership Institute. Many institutions suggested that it would be helpful for the OACC to continue the conversation on student success technology. Specifically, college leaders expressed they would value forums for candid, practical feedback on how their peers are experiencing various software tools. Several of the following technology-related topics were suggested as worthy of conversations among peers:

- **Scheduling for Completion Follow-up: What Data Does Your Institution Actually Use for Strategic Scheduling?** Institutions are eager to hear the types of data and reports that their peers are using to guide scheduling decisions. The Ada Center recommends drawing upon Owens Community College as one example alongside one of the current Platinum Analytics colleges.
- **Sub-Meeting of Colleges with Shared SIS:** Several college leaders suggested it would be useful to chat with their peers about their experiences with add-on SIS modules. In particular, Jenzabar colleges would benefit from discussing the Jenzabar degree audit and student planning capabilities with their peers.
- **Learner Management System (LMS) Experiences:** Much as the SIS landscape is unique across Ohio, the LMS landscape is equally diverse. Institutions are curious about peer experiences with Canvas, Blackboard, Moodle, and D2L. Further, college leaders hope to discuss policies for encouraging faculty usage of the LMS and supporting faculty professional development with digital learning tools.
- **Marion Technical College Shares Pilot Partner Experience with Aviso Retention:** While

several colleges in Ohio have shared their experiences with student success technology vendors Starfish and Civitas, Marion Technical College has been an active early partner with a newer vendor, Aviso Retention. As Aviso expands its presence in Ohio, colleges may benefit from hearing about Marion Technical College's experiences.

- **Curriculum Management System Experiences:** As part of a broader focus on guided pathways, many colleges in Ohio are actively reviewing their curricular offerings. College leaders expressed an eagerness to chat with their peers about how they're using curriculum management software and their experiences with vendors.