

# VCU DASHBOARD DEVELOPMENT GUIDELINES

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The dashboard portal maintained by the Data Management Information Council (DIMC) serves as the primary source to inform the VCU community as to available information dashboards. The dashboards on the portal are expected to meet certain criteria to ensure the maximum reliability and utility to end users. Toward this end, this page provides the following resources:

- General guidelines to aid in the design and development of a dashboard
- A checklist is used to evaluate dashboard eligibility for addition to the DIMC portal
- Resources to ensure compliance with VCU requirements

## General Guidelines

It is important to realize that not all displays of information qualify as a dashboard. Information may be conveyed usefully and effectively via a report, table or narrative. A dashboard, however, is a largely visual display of the most important information needed to achieve one or more objectives. Dashboards are not used to provide all the possible information but instead help end users focus on the most important information via means of graphics and careful information selection.

Information should be concise, consolidated and arranged on a single screen so the information can be monitored at a glance. It is particularly important that the audience, purpose and informational goals are considered at the outset of dashboard development:

- Is the intended audience internal or external?
- Are you planning appropriately for the likely technical expertise or knowledge of the planned user?
- What is the desired informational goal or key take-aways you would hope to convey?

The below listing of types of dashboards may help you better define the critical data needed to allow end-users quickly and accurately assess the information provided by the dashboard.

## Types of Dashboards:

- **Strategic:** A dashboard focused on monitoring long-term strategies by analyzing and benchmarking a wide range of critical trend-based information.
- **Operational:** A business intelligence tool that exists to monitor, measure and manage processes or operations with a shorter or more immediate time scale.
- **Analytical:** These particular dashboards contain large streams of comprehensive data that allow analysts to drill down and extract insights monitor progress at an executive level.

- Tactical: These information-rich dashboards are best suited to mid-management and help in formulating growth strategies based on trends, strengths, and weaknesses across departments, such as in the example below:

**Dashboard Checklist for Inclusion in the VCU Dashboard Portal:** DIMC recommends, before you develop a dashboard that you consider the following. These criteria and others will be considered for granting approval into the portal.

- Do the content and structure of the dashboard meet the needs specified for development of this dashboard?
- Does the dashboard design and layout conform to the best practices and quality standards of VCU as outlined in VCU Web Standards, located at URL: <https://webstandards.vcu.edu/> ?
- Is the dashboard data sourced from data that adheres to quality and integrity audits?
- Identified and implemented security needed for the dashboard.
- Does the dashboard show trends in your data over time?
- Does the dashboard design provide a coherent overview that includes sparse, clear data with opportunities to “drill down” for deeper inquires?
- Does the dashboard provide links to definitions of the data and metrics?
- Are the key take-aways identified by the users, satisfied though relatively few clicks.
- Did all the business-specific questions get answered by the dashboard?
- Describe the usability testing that has been performed.
- Attempt a mobile application test (e.g. tablet/iPhone). What are the limitations for this to be mobile? Website for a quick mobile test: <https://search.google.com/test/mobile-friendly>

### VCU's Dashboard Design, Development and DIMC Approval Process

