

A LEADING U.S. UNIVERSITY TAPS DATA GOVERNANCE TO BUILD TRUST AND TRANSPARENCY IN ITS DATA



THE GEORGE WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY
WASHINGTON, DC

About George Washington University

Based in Washington, DC, George Washington University is a private co-ed educational institution founded in 1821. It has a total undergraduate enrollment of more than 11,000 students and also offers broad graduate student offerings. Among the scores of famous George Washington University graduates are politicians Harry Reid and Eric Cantor, former U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell, and performers including Kerry Washington.

The Situation: Lack of Data Collaboration Limits Business Intelligence Insight

George Washington University grappled with a number of data challenges, the biggest of which was gaining cross-organizational trust in its data. The university had pockets of what it called “spreadsheet governance,” with different functional areas each managing their data manually -- with little collaboration across departments. Because there was no one unified source for data, questions would often get three different answers because data was coming from a variety of reporting sources. This limited the university’s ability to draw trusted business intelligence insights from its data.

Additionally, like all higher educational organizations, George Washington University is required to comply with a host of federal regulations (ranging from the Title IX anti-discrimination act to HR hiring practices, and more). Trusted, accurate data is essential for George Washington’s ability to report on and show compliance with these regulations.

The data team at George Washington, led by Jelena Roljevic, Assistant Vice President of Business Intelligence, realized they could only get so far with manual approaches to data governance. It became clear they needed a technology solution that would help them take their enterprise data governance efforts to the next level and support true enterprise-wide data collaboration.

The Approach: With Input from the Key Stakeholders, Create Foundational Best Practices

George Washington started by identifying the right people across the organization who would need to play a role in data governance and by getting basic processes in place. The university believed their governance adoption efforts would be more successful if they approached it from the perspective of how users would benefit from data governance versus trying to force-fit processes in place.



The organization distributed surveys to its key data stakeholders to home in on the root causes of their data problems and also began identifying and assigning particular data roles (e.g., data stewards, trustees) to its personnel. They also kicked off regular data governance committee meetings where data stakeholders were welcome to have a seat at the table.

They also identified specific policies that would benefit from data governance, such as the university's data security policy, as well as certain data that was housed in George Washington's data warehouse, and began bringing those into the data governance circle.

The next step was identifying an advanced technology-enabled data governance platform that would enable the university to automate manual governance processes and enable true data trust and collaboration. Most important, the university sought a tool with a powerful workflow component that would enable report certification and data sharing agreements.

The Solution: Automated Data Governance Delivers Trusted and Transparent Data

George Washington University evaluated a number of data governance providers and engaged on a proof of concept project that quickly highlighted the Collibra advantage. Through this 10-day proof-of-concept exercise, the George Washington data governance team was able to engage with its data citizens, get them involved and comfortable with the solution, and see the tangible governance progress they immediately began making with the Collibra platform. The George Washington users also liked the ability to access the Collibra Community (formerly called "Compass"), an online help and training community that gives their data citizens the chance to tap into the greater Collibra data governance "hive mind" and see how other organizations approach data governance.

The Collibra product roadmap proved to be well aligned with George Washington's vision for how it would implement and leverage data governance, now and into the future. The George Washington governance team also liked the fact that the Collibra solution was purpose-built with the business user in mind and extremely easy to use. This meant George Washington didn't need to pull in a developer to approve terms or add information; the business users could easily complete those tasks themselves.

The real key for us in selecting Collibra was the proof of concept. Collibra put skin in the game and quickly helped us prove out the value of data governance. That really sealed it for us.

Ronald Layne
Manager, Data Governance
& Quality

Collibra has been an invaluable asset to George Washington in a number of areas, particularly from a data management process perspective. With Collibra, George Washington users can benefit from automated governance processes such as data sharing agreements, enabling users to easily get access to information they're seeking. The Collibra solution allows for ways to automate, facilitate and document information, showing where data sharing agreements can and can't be used. Information that was once scattered among multiple reporting systems has become much easier to find, thanks to the Collibra Catalog. And data lineage for tables, columns and relationships helps George Washington users eliminate data silos and better collaborate across the university.

Today, four years into its automated data governance implementation, George Washington now has more than 200 reports catalogued with certification. The Collibra workflow enables the university to not only create reports, but ensure the data and calculations in those reports have been rigorously certified. George Washington has more than 1,600 business terms approved and in the data governance system, with 14,000 table columns defined thanks to trusted lineage.

Looking into the future, George Washington plans to expand beyond traditional data governance into the world of data integration and data quality. Collibra has become George Washington's true internal data governance platform, allowing the university to deliver against its vision to make data transparent and trusted across the organization.

*Before Collibra and after Collibra?
The difference is like night and day*

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