



TAIR 2026

**SUPERCOMMUNICATING
DATA: UNLOCKING THE
SECRETS OF EFFECTIVE
COMMUNICATION IN
INSTITUTIONAL RESEARCH**

Presented By

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Agenda

We have more data than ever.

Data doesn't change minds; trust does.

● *Background*

● *The Framework*

● *Key Techniques*

● *Case Study*

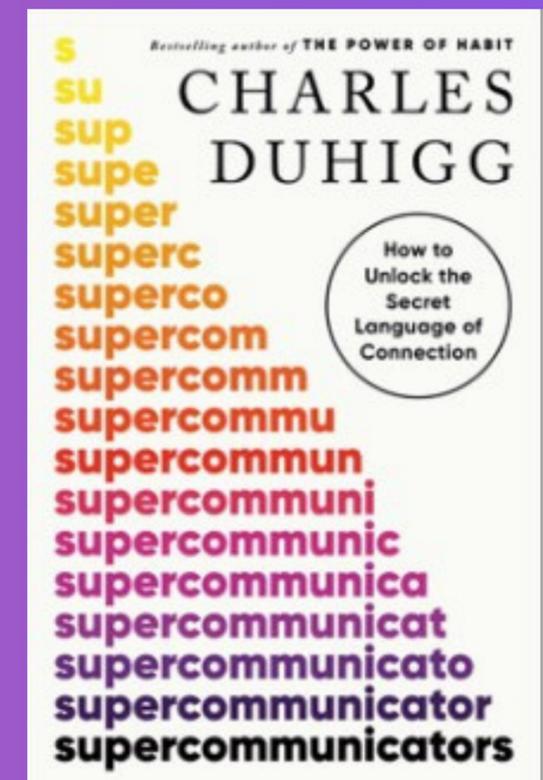
● *Toolkit*

Summer Book Club

Our summer read of Supercommunicators evolved from a simple book club into a deep dive on how to lead impactful data conversations.



Inspired by our book club's insights on purpose and trust, we created this presentation to turn those reflections into actionable strategies.





Core Framework

To build a genuine connection, align your conversation by matching your partner's intent and tone.

Every data presentation involves three simultaneous conversations:

1. Practical: What is this really about?
2. Emotional: How do we feel?
3. Social: Who are we?

Three Kinds of Conversations



Practical

Focused on facts, numbers, and logic



Emotional

Focused on fears, pride, and anxiety.



Social

Focused on identity and belonging.

The Matching Principle

Successful communication requires recognizing what kind of conversation you are having and matching your partner.

Matching is not purely imitating each other, but rather using skills that help us share vulnerabilities, feelings, and prove that we hear each other.



Learning Conversations

Do you want to be:



Helped?

A practical *What's This Really About?* conversation



Hugged?

An emotional *How Do We Feel?* conversation



Or Heard?

A more social *Who Are We?* conversation

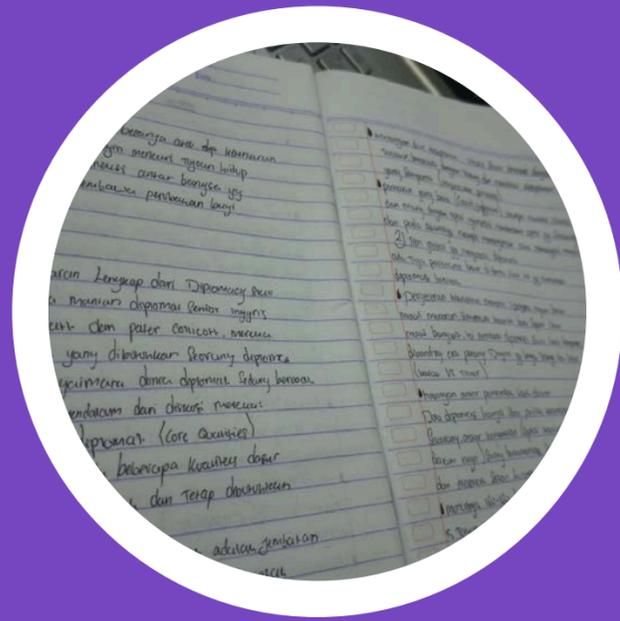
1. Pay attention to what kind of conversation is occurring.
2. Share your goals and ask what others are looking for.
3. Ask about others' feelings and share your own.
4. Explore if identities are important to this discussion.

Looping for Understanding



Listen

Pay attention to what they are really asking (look for emotional cues).



Summarize

Repeat back what you heard in your own words.



Confirm

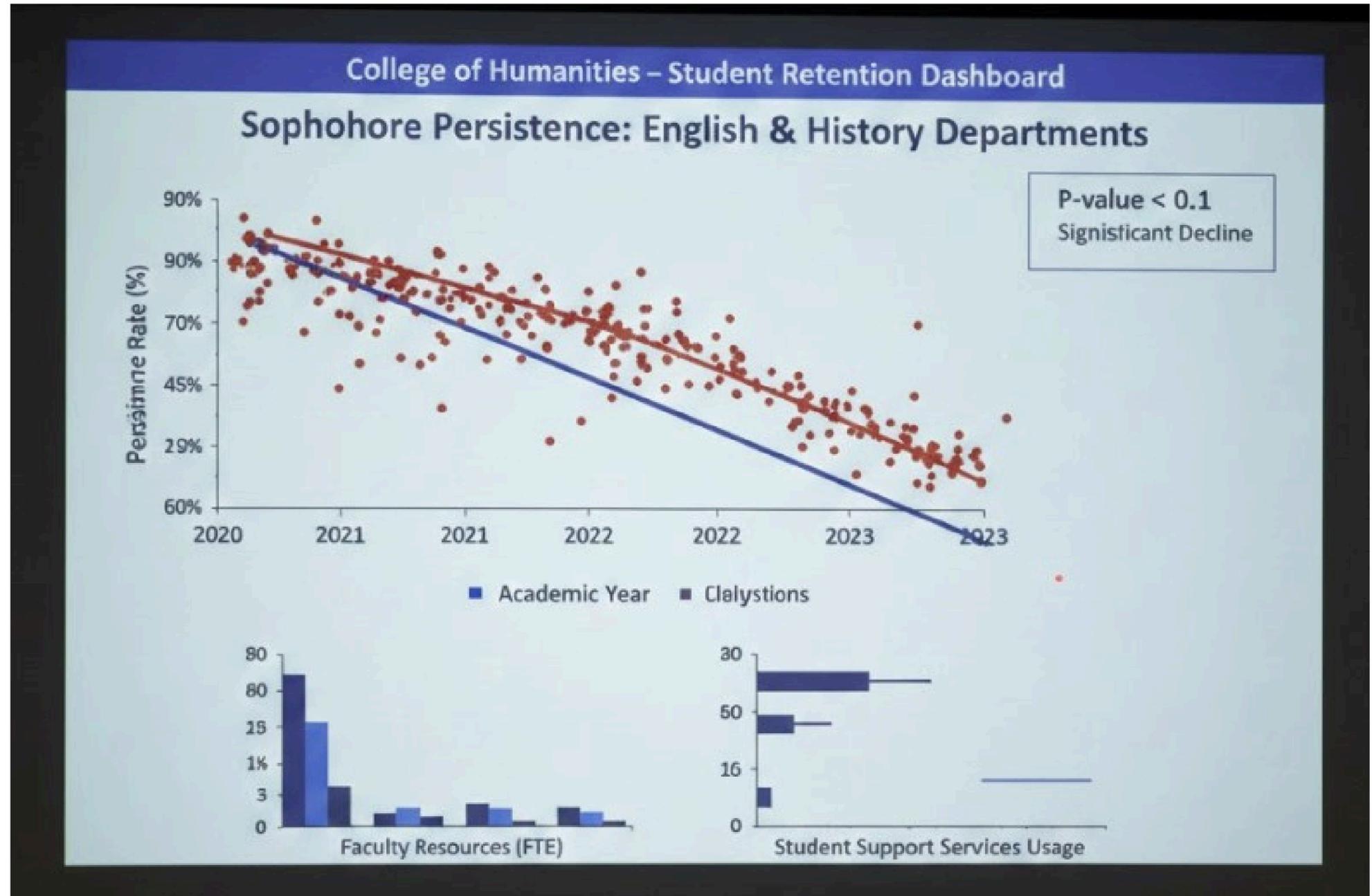
Ask, "Did I get that right?"

Case Study

The IR department was tasked with presenting a new dashboard on student retention to the College of Humanities. The data clearly showed a 15% drop in sophomore persistence within the English and History departments over the last three years.



Case Study



Guiding Questions

1. **Identify the Conversations:** Looking at the breakdown, at what specific moment did the "Practical" and "Emotional" conversations collide?
2. **Practice "Matching":** If you were the IR Director and heard a chair say, "Our faculty are working harder than ever," how could you "match" that emotional or social statement before returning to the data?
3. **Applying Learning Questions:** What is one "Learning Question" (starting with How or Why) that the IR Director could have asked to uncover the chairs' underlying motivations or fears?
4. **Showing Vulnerability:** How might the Director have used vulnerability (e.g., admitting the data's limitations) to increase their credibility and lower the room's defensiveness?



Conclusion

To build trust, we must identify the conversation —Practical, Emotional, or Social—and use 'looping for understanding' to prove we are truly aligned.



Supercommunicator's Cheat Sheet for Institutional Research



Unlocking Connection to Drive Data-Informed Action.

This worksheet is adapted from *Supercommunicators: How to Unlock the Secret Language of Connection* by Charles Duhigg.

THANK YOU

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