Doowii and the Challenges with Data in Education

Testing an AI-driven data tool with Program Mentors at WGU

Presented by WGU Labs

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wgu labs

Executive Summary

Purpose:

In July 2024, the WGU Labs Fund invested in Doowii, an AI-powered data analysis tool created specifically for the education space. Through this investment and subsequent pilot, we hoped to see how Doowii might facilitate WGU Program mentors in accessing and using data for student support, with the ultimate goal of gaining greater insight into how AI-driven data exploration can be leveraged to support the student experience. Program Mentors at WGU coach and advise students throughout their studies. Their effective use of data to support students can directly influence their students' outcomes.

Scope:

The four-month pilot engaged 48 mentors and four of their team managers representing all of the university colleges, including representatives from:

- Schools of Business, Technology, Health, and Education
- Specialized mentor teams that are created to support students whose mentors are on leave or unavailable
- Mentor teams who specialize in supporting students who are accessing WGU through their employers' corporate partnerships with WGU programs

Pilot Goal:

To assess the usability, efficiency, confidence, and satisfaction mentors had with Doowii.

Key Findings:

Mentors found Doowii intuitive, time-saving, and helpful in their decision-making. Roughly 75% of the mentors and managers engaged with the tool during the pilot, and almost half became regular weekly users. As their confidence with the tool grew through consistent use and curious experimentation, many mentors found novel ways to query student data and surface insights not possible with their existing tools. Mentors then used those findings to tailor their outreach and personalize their support for the students who needed it most.

The full report summarizes their experiences and recommends paths for scaling and adjustments to the roll-out approach and support.

Introduction: Context and Rationale

The Educator Data Challenge

Despite increasing access to educational data, many educators struggle to transform that data into usable insights. Four persistent barriers tend to exist for educators and administrators:

- **Data Fragmentation:** Educational data exists, but is trapped in siloed systems across tools and departments.
- **Data Literacy Gaps:** Educators tend to excel at educating students, and most are not trained to perform the types of complex analysis that are often required to gain insights from the systems and data that they ostensibly have access to.
- **Time Constraints:** Even those who could navigate the precarious landscape of their education data, almost universally, have very little time to spend locating, cleaning, and interpreting that data amid their existing demanding workloads. This point is supported by respondents to the 2024-25 School Pulse Panel, in which 75% of polled administrators reported that they do have sufficient access to data about their schools, but only 39% feel they have adequate time to utilize that data.
- **Underutilization of Resources:** Even when tools are available, they're often underused. Studies show that up to 70% of software licenses go unused in districts due to poor usability and unclear value. In focus groups conducted with WGU Program Mentors, many data tools were identified as valuable resources for mentors. However, the use and recognized value of these tools were very often distinct and different across colleges, mentor teams, and individual mentors.

In summary, despite a prevalence of data, particularly in online learning contexts, many educators struggle to leverage this information for actionable insights.

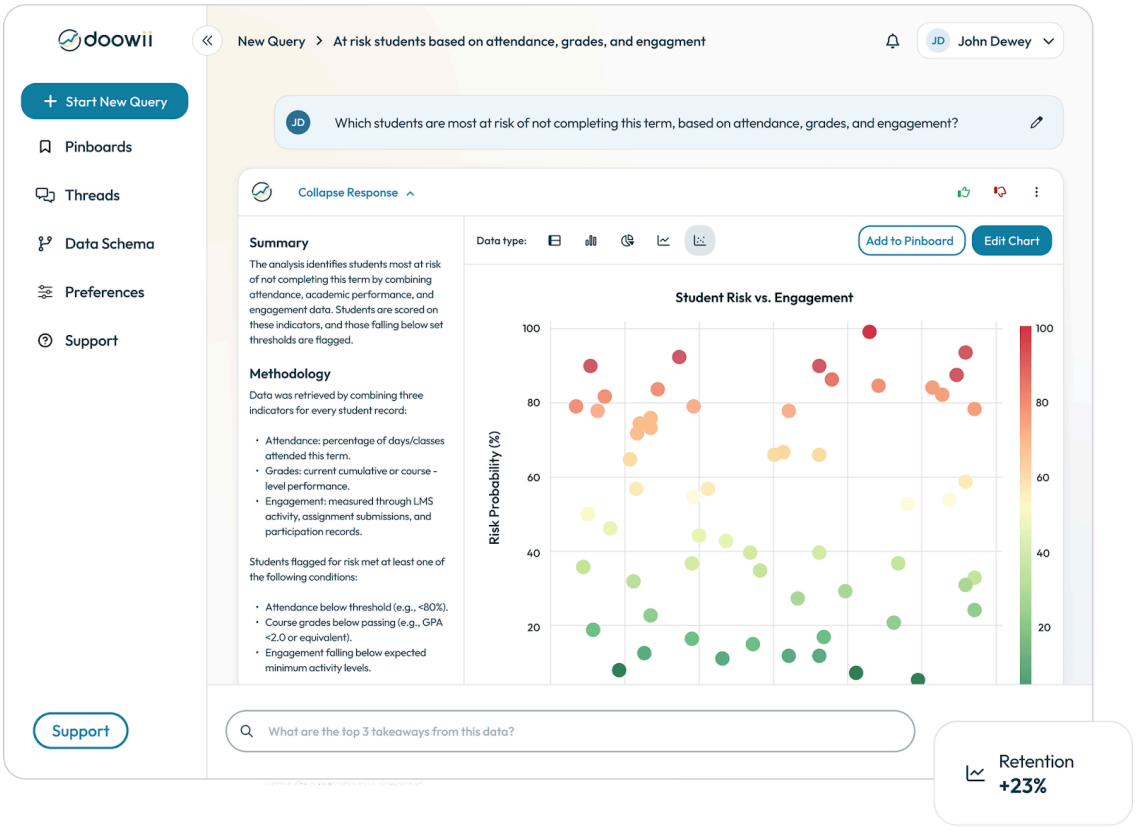
The Doowii Solution

What Is Doowii?

Doowii is a conversational AI data platform that leverages an institution-specific semantic layer, which allows users to ask plain-language questions about students and academic systems to get immediate, visual, and transparent responses. No SQL coding or dashboard training is required. By creating a tailored semantic layer aligned with an institution's unique business context and data, Doowii effectively addresses highly specific, context-driven inquiries.

Key Product Features

- **Natural Language Querying:** Users ask questions in plain English (or natural language) instead of dealing with complex query languages or forms.
- **Visual and Text Explanations:** Each query returns a visual chart or graph along with a concise written explanation, making data easier to understand.
- **Transparent Methodology and Assumptions:** Doowii reveals the data sources, definitions, and logic used to generate the answer, helping to build trust in the results.
- **Semantic Knowledge Layer:** A custom knowledge graph, built specifically for each deployment, in this case, WGU's unique data and business landscape, identifying institution and business-specific terms and principles like "non-traditional students," "OTP," and rolling enrollment terms. The construction of this semantic layer, while key to Doowii's ability to generate accurate and context-specific responses for WGU's program mentors, required very little time and effort from the WGU Engineering and Data partners.



Deployment at WGU

Doowii was piloted with a limited and curated set of WGU's data related to student engagement and academic performance. The platform was deployed to mentors for a four-month pilot, during which mentors could use Doowii on demand to query and retrieve insights from the student data.

Research Objectives

- **Satisfaction & Experience:** How do mentors perceive the usability, relevance, and value of Doowii?
- **Decision-Making Support:** Does Doowii help mentors feel more confident and efficient in supporting students?
- **Feature Insights:** Which functions did mentors use most, and what additional capabilities did they wish for?
- **Efficiencies Gained:** Were mentors able to perform any of their normal tasks quicker using Doowii?
- **Expanded Insights Possible:** Were mentors able to uncover useful and actionable insights using Doowii that they could not uncover using existing tools?

These objectives cover both quantitative outcomes (e.g., time saved, task completion rates) and qualitative outcomes (e.g., perceived confidence, satisfaction, and new use-cases discovered). Ultimately, the pilot aimed to inform WGU and Doowii whether the tool could make mentors more effective in supporting students, and how the tool might be improved or better implemented in the future.

Methodology

To address the objectives above, the research team used a mixed-methods approach, combining surveys, interviews, and usage analytics. Below, we detail the participants involved, data collection methods, example questions asked, and the pilot timeline.

Participants

Approximately 50 WGU Program Mentors, along with 4 of their team managers, participated in the pilot. These mentors came from all four of WGU's Colleges, including IT, Business, Health, and Education, as well as specialized mentor teams such as the "on-leave coverage" team (mentors who temporarily assist students when their assigned mentor is unavailable) and the "corporate partnership" mentors (who support students enrolled through employer partnerships). This ensured a diverse sample of mentoring contexts.

We relied on WGU leadership to nominate or recruit mentors who were interested in data-driven tools to recruit participants, though all participation was voluntary. Not every invited mentor ended up using Doowii extensively, but all had access to the tool and the opportunity to provide feedback.

Data Collection

We collected data through multiple channels:

- **Surveys:** We administered three online surveys to the mentors: one shortly after the rollout in March, one at the midpoint in April, and one in early July, right after the pilot closed. These surveys included Likert-scale and multiple-choice questions to gauge usability, satisfaction, perceived efficiency gains, and confidence in using data, as well as to capture which features were used and how frequently. We had the highest response rate on the initial survey, with 19 mentors responding, followed by moderate survey engagement in the second survey (13 responses), and the lowest response rate in the final survey (nine responses). Each survey took about 5-10 minutes and included both quantitative ratings and a few open-ended questions for comments.
- **One-on-One Interviews:** In early July, after about four months of usage, the research team conducted in-depth interviews with six mentors who had various usage levels of the Doowii platform during the pilot. Interviews were conducted via video call, typically 30–45 minutes each, following a semi-structured protocol. The interviews probed more deeply into mentors' experiences: "Can you describe your overall experience using Doowii?" "Did the tool help you make decisions faster or more accurately?" "How did Doowii compare to other tools you use?" "What were its limitations?" "Would you recommend it to others?" etc. These interviews provided rich qualitative insights and direct quotes about what mentors liked, what frustrated them, and their suggestions.

- **Tool Usage Logs:** Doowii provided usage data logs, which we analyzed in aggregate. These logs showed how often mentors logged in, the number of queries they asked, and broad categories of questions. We examined usage patterns over time — for example, if and when usage spiked or tapered off, and what the most common query types were. This quantitative usage data helped surface not just the actual usage counts and times, but more importantly, it showed the specific types of questions that mentors were asking, and the types of very personalized and proactive support they were trying to provide for their students.

By combining these methods, we aimed to get a 360-degree view: what mentors did with Doowii (logs), what they felt or believed about Doowii (surveys), and why they used it the way they did (interviews).

Pilot Timeline

- **September 2024:** Initial discussions with WGU CTO, David Morales, who expressed enthusiasm and willingness to sponsor a pilot with Doowii at WGU. This executive green light set the stage for rapid pilot development.
- **December 2024 - January 2025:** Initial discussions of a possible pilot between Doowii and the WGU Labs Research team. Research prospectus and Pilot design interactions were prepared and finalized by late January.
- **January - February 2025:** Internal data curation and Institutional Review Board (IRB) submission. Doowii's team worked with WGU's data team to connect the necessary databases via a Delta Sharing pipeline, an open protocol for secure, cross-platform data sharing. Concurrently, WGU Labs finalized the research plan and obtained IRB approval.
- **February – March 2025:** Mentor recruitment and onboarding, and Doowii rollout. In March, participating mentors received accounts and an initial training session during a live webinar demo. By mid-March, mentors began using Doowii in their regular work.
- **March – June 2025:** Ongoing use, surveys, and interim check-ins. The pilot ran for roughly four months. The first survey was sent in late March, after a couple of weeks of use, and the second survey went out in late April. A primer on the pilot, including a summary of the mentors' current feedback, was prepared in April for distribution at the ASU-GSV Summit.
- **June - July 2025:** Final data collection. The final survey was administered in early July, during which time the research team conducted 1:1 interviews with mentors.
- **July - August 2025:** Analysis and reporting. The research team analyzed all the data, including survey results, interview transcripts, and usage logs, to deliver key findings and recommendations to both WGU leadership and the Doowii team.

Throughout the pilot, WGU Labs, WGU project liaisons, and the Doowii team periodically checked in to monitor progress and address any technical or usage issues quickly.

Implementation

Pilot Design & Planning

WGU's Executive Leadership, recognizing that Program Mentors, who are central to student success, often lack efficient access to the data they need to fully support students, catalyzed this pilot. This gap highlighted the need for a tool that would integrate seamlessly into mentor workflows, which framed the goals and design of the pilot.

Propelled by this executive recognition and institutional backing, the project kicked off with joint vision-setting between the Doowii team and WGU Labs. Both parties aligned on the intentions and scope for the pilot and the research questions to answer. The team then worked with Program Mentor leadership to launch recruitment and engagement efforts, with Mentors from the targeted colleges and teams serving as the first pilot users to demonstrate how the tool could shape student support decisions. WGU Labs also collaborated with the WGU Data Engineering and

Security team to identify and connect the data and technology pieces. Emphasis was placed on the opportunity this pilot presented for mentors to shape tools that could make their jobs easier.

Data Preparation & Integration

To stand up Doowii for the pilot, the team first identified the data that Program Mentors truly rely on, things like course enrollments, assessment results, and course engagement tables, trimming WGU's vast data warehouse to a manageable slice. Doowii's team worked with WGU's Systems Engineer to lock down the data pipeline via secure Delta sharing with Databricks. This turned what is usually a months-long task into a matter of weeks. By March, the secure pipeline was live, giving mentors near-real-time student data without exposing anything outside their permissions. The result was a lean, governed foundation that let the pilot move fast without sacrificing compliance.

Semantic Layer & Platform Setup

While the data connection was being built, Doowii's team was able to simultaneously begin the work to construct the semantic layer and configure the platform for WGU's use cases. This involved mapping WGU's data dictionaries and terminology into Doowii's knowledge graph. For example, defining what counts as an "active student" in WGU terms, or linking acronyms like "PA" (performance assessment) to the appropriate data fields. The Doowii team also set up user accounts for the mentors and ensured the web application was accessible via the mentors' credentials. By early March, user provisioning was completed, and each pilot mentor had a login and initial password. The platform was now populated with WGU data and understood WGU-specific language, ready for mentors to query.

Institutional Support & Acceleration Factors

A critical factor in the pilot's rapid launch was strong institutional sponsorship from WGU leadership. The initial momentum for the project began with David Morales, WGU's CIO, whose early support was pivotal in moving the pilot from concept to execution. David's leadership of the technology and engineering teams ensured that data integration, security measures, and necessary clearances were completed quickly, laying the technical foundation for the pilot. In addition, leveraging a single engineering lead to support the data integration was key to removing barriers and preserving institutional resources.

Creating and getting clearance for a recruitment strategy for a pilot like this can be especially challenging. However, with the support of Malika Clinkscales, WGU's VP of Mentor Strategy and Operations, the recruits for the pilot were quickly identified, and Malika's team played a central role in maintaining clear communication and providing ongoing support throughout the pilot period.

This combination of high-level leadership and a small, action-oriented cross-functional project team enabled the project to move from initial conversation to an active pilot in just two months. After launch, dedicated WGU staff served as liaisons between the Doowii team and the mentor community, coordinating communications, scheduling trainings, encouraging engagement, and participating in regular cross-team meetings to track progress and address issues.

Training and Change Management

While Doowii is designed to be intuitive, the team still provided initial training and documentation. A live demo session showed mentors how to enter questions and interpret results. Step-by-step guides and FAQs were shared online. The importance of change management soon became evident: Mentors already juggle many responsibilities, so simply giving them access to a new tool wasn't enough — they needed to understand why it was worth investing their time

into this new tool. The project team sent periodic newsletters highlighting new features. Ad-hoc Q&A sessions were offered for mentors who had questions or wanted to delve deeper. This supportive approach helped lower barriers to trying the new tool.

Challenges & Lessons Learned

During the implementation phase, a few challenges arose, offering lessons for future scale-up.

- The **limited data scope** initially frustrated some mentors who explored the boundaries of Doowii's connections. For example, some mentors wished to see data fields that they use in Salesforce to enter hashtags for interactions with students so that their team can easily search and find those conversations. This taught us that setting expectations is important: We clarified to users what data was available through Doowii and gathered requests for additional data to possibly include later.
- Second, the importance of **robust documentation and mandatory training** became clear when we saw varying uptake. Not all mentors attended the live training, and the engagement with the Q&A sessions was also low.
- Finally, we recognized that **careful change management** is essential to a successful rollout of an AI tool in an institution like WGU. This type of thoughtful approach should include understanding and implementing for mentor workflows, addressing skepticism, communicating value, and creating communities of practice to share learning and grow innovative use.

While stronger training and clearer documentation may have helped more mentors engage consistently, the pilot also showed that structured onboarding is only one part of effective change management. Mentors who did participate deeply often built confidence and trust in Doowii through their own process of exploration, experimentation, and peer sharing. This suggests that successful adoption requires a balance: providing enough structure to get everyone started, while leaving space for discovery so that users can develop their own sense of ownership and value. These lessons informed our recommendations for any larger rollout.

Findings

Engagement

Overall Engagement Levels: Mentor engagement with Doowii was high but not universal. Out of 48 pilot mentors and four managers of mentor teams, 75% logged into Doowii at least once and ran a query. About half of the mentors became regular users, using Doowii at least weekly throughout the pilot. The remaining mentors used it only sporadically or not at all after initial login. This is not unusual for a voluntary pilot. As one mentor candidly admitted in an interview, "I was skeptical at first and honestly too busy to try a new tool in the beginning." Some mentors hesitated to engage initially due to competing priorities or uncertainty about the tool's value. Others jumped in right away.

Trends Over Time: Engagement with the unfamiliar platform was slow at first, but surged between weeks two and three. During this more active period, mentors who had become comfortable with basic queries began to explore more complex questions, and word-of-mouth spread among colleagues about interesting things Doowii could do.

One mentor described this phase: "After I tried a few simple questions and got the hang of it, I started pushing Doowii — I asked it the weirdest, most specific questions I could think of, just to see if it could answer." This exploration phase corresponded with the highest overall query volumes. By the latter half of the pilot, usage leveled off to a steady state. Mentors by then had identified the specific scenarios where Doowii helped them most, and they tended to use it for those targeted purposes rather than for novelty. For example, one power-user mentor noted that by May, "I use Doowii a couple of times a week now, mainly to pull up my targeted outreach list. Once I have that list, I'm set for a few days." This indicates Doowii became embedded in specific workflows, like generating very specific and personalized student outreach lists periodically, while still being available for ad-hoc questions.

Why Some Didn't Engage: Through interviews with mentors who had low usage, we learned a few common reasons. A primary factor was the short-term nature of the pilot. A few mentors felt that since the tool might not be permanent, it wasn't worth investing a lot of time to learn it deeply. Others mentioned timing issues, such as "March is a busy time for us with term transitions; I just didn't have bandwidth to experiment with Doowii." However, even among those who didn't use it much early on, interest remained: "I regret not using it more. Hearing what others found, I plan to try it if we get it back," one mentor said. This suggests that with more time or with a full deployment (not just a pilot), engagement might grow as mentors see the successes of their peers.

Mentor Satisfaction and Usability

Mentors consistently praised Doowii for being both intuitive and easy to use, many noting they could "just type a question" without special training. By consolidating data that once required multiple log-ins, several open reports, and specialized knowledge to navigate these tools, Doowii sharply cut the time mentors spent hunting for student information and boosted their confidence with clear, cited explanations of each answer. Mentors described the experience as "empowering," even "fun," and nearly all said they would recommend the platform to colleagues. While a handful encountered limits when certain data weren't yet available, these issues were minor compared with the overall sense that Doowii had become a game-changing, time-saving addition to their daily work.

Efficiency and Confidence

The majority of mentors reported that Doowii helped them complete common tasks faster than they could with traditional tools. These included things like running reports or generating lists of students who might need support

that day or in the coming days. Mentors also used Doowii to view data aggregations that were either impossible or prohibitively time-consuming with other tools.

One mentor, for example, described using Doowii to generate a list of students with assessments scheduled that week, paired with Doowii's risk profile score — an indicator of each student's likelihood of not passing a given assessment. The mentor noticed that one student, who had already completed their required courses for the term and enrolled in a bonus course to accelerate their progress, had scheduled their final assessment for the last week of the term and had a very high risk score. With so little time left in the term, the mentor recognized that the student was unlikely to pass the assessment, which would result in a "not passed" on their transcript. Knowing this student well, the mentor feared such an outcome could seriously harm their confidence and motivation.

Armed with these insights from Doowii, the mentor proactively reached out and suggested a different path: The student could drop the bonus course before the end of the term with no negative consequences. The student took that advice, re-enrolled in the course at the start of the next term, and, after more preparation, was able to tackle the assessment with a much higher chance of success.

Many mentors shared similar stories of hyper-personalized outreach and proactive student support enabled by Doowii. Several also noted that after initial skepticism and after double-checking Doowii's responses against existing tools, their confidence in the tool grew. More importantly, their confidence in their ability to act on personalized data to support students grew as well.

Mentors' Usage Arc

Initially, mentors asked questions that were largely replicates of what they could get with existing tools: course completion, student progress queries, and EA flags. During this period, mentor engagement showed that they were trying to develop a level of trust and confidence in the tool by confirming that Doowii was returning the same results as existing tools for typical queries they would have in their day-to-day workflow.

This was followed by a period of exploration, where engagement peaked and mentors experimented with complex and esoteric queries, trying to gauge the limitations of the tool. As the boundaries and use-cases became clear, the usage leveled off, and typical queries were aimed at generating very specific lists of students in need of outreach, based on the complex queries that mentors had learned to construct in the exploration phase. Mentors using Doowii in this phase were very often generating these student lists only a few times a week, and then using them to drive their targeted outreach for several days.

This pattern of exploration and normalized use underscores a key lesson from the implementation phase, aligning with existing research on Change Management and Change Adoption strategies from Everett Rogers's work, *Diffusion of Innovations*, which highlights the importance of both structured support and trialability in adoption, as well as the more contemporary ADKAR framework from Prosci. Both support the idea that, while robust onboarding helps ensure broad participation at the introduction of a change — or a new tool like Doowii — opportunities for free experimentation and discovery-based learning play an equally important role in the subsequent phases of adoption. Mentors who experimented with Doowii early in the pilot, and beyond the basics, showed more consistent use in later phases of the pilot as well. Not only was their frequency of use higher, but they also deepened their own understanding of the Doowii tool, demonstrating how unstructured exploration can drive creative use, build trust, and uncover novel use cases for new technology. The pilot, therefore, highlights the importance of blending structured change management with opportunities for user-led discovery.

Discussion

The pilot results offer a number of insights into Doowii's strengths, limitations, and broader implications for WGU and similar educational institutions. In this section, we interpret the findings in context and discuss what they mean for the future of data and AI tools for mentors.

Doowii's Strengths

The pilot demonstrated several clear strengths of the Doowii platform:

- **Accessible Data Insights:** Doowii effectively translated complex data into accessible formats for non-technical users. Mentors who are not data analysts were able to ask complex questions and get understandable answers. The combination of natural language querying, visualizations, and plain-text explanations proved powerful, lowering the barrier to entry for data-informed decision making. One mentor without an analytics background could still retrieve and interpret multi-variable student data with ease. This strength is significant because many data tools fail at the last mile — they have the data, but not in a form or interface that typical educators can use. Doowii succeeded in bridging that gap.

- **Positive User Emotions and Empowerment:** Mentors often described their experience with Doowii in emotional terms, frequently using words like "empowered" and "less frustrated" to convey their relief at not having to manually track down data by switching through Salesforce reports or dashboards in other systems. This emotional shift is significant because mentors and students consistently emphasize that the foundation of student success is the personal relationship between mentor and student. By quickly delivering actionable student insights, Doowii allowed mentors to spend less time managing data and more time building and fostering those connections in order to provide the personalized support and motivation that students value most.

- **Trust and Transparency:** Another strength that emerged was the platform's ability to build user trust through transparency. Mentors grew confident in Doowii's outputs relatively quickly because the tool was open about its data and methods. User trust is often cited as a barrier to adopting AI-driven tools. Doowii's design circumvented that by making the AI a "glass box" rather than a black box. As a result, mentors were willing to rely on the tool for important decisions by the end of the pilot, which is a testament to this trust-building.

- **Adaptability Across Use Cases:** Finally, the variety of creative queries mentors tried in the exploration phase demonstrated Doowii's flexibility and robustness. It handled a wide range of questions, from simple lookups to complex filters, without requiring custom development for each query. This adaptability means that as mentors think of new questions, or as the tool is made available to other roles with different data needs, the tool can likely support them, which bodes well for long-term utility and user engagement.

In summary, the pilot provided strong evidence that a thoughtfully designed AI data tool like Doowii can indeed make data usable and actionable for front-line educators, advancing the goal of data democratization in an education setting.

Limitations

It's important to acknowledge the limitations of the pilot and of the findings, both in terms of the pilot study design and the tool's context within this limited deployment with select WGU Program Mentors:

- **Pilot Scope and Participant Self-Selection:** The pilot was limited to select mentor teams, and while they were selected for their interest in new tools and technologies, ultimately, their participation was voluntary. This means our sample was not random or comprehensive of all WGU mentors. Those who did engage may have been more tech-forward or motivated than average, which could skew results positively. Moreover, with ~50 mentors out of 5,000+ at WGU, the scale was small. Some of our initial goals for engagement analysis, like trying to correlate usage patterns with outcomes, turned out to be impractical due to the low sample size. So, while the trends that are observed are suggestive, we can't generalize to all mentors with statistical certainty due to the limited scope.

- **Less than 100% Engagement:** Not all mentors actively engaged with Doowii during the pilot. A small group became frequent users, while others used it sparingly. This varied engagement is common in short-term pilots, particularly when participants know a tool is temporary and have existing, familiar options still available to them. Many may understandably hesitate to invest effort into learning a system without assurance of its longevity. This reality highlights an important point: the observed benefits primarily reflect the experiences of active users. For broader adoption, targeted strategies would be required to encourage more universal engagement or, at a minimum, to identify and overcome barriers for less-engaged users. Therefore, findings about efficiency and satisfaction should be interpreted as representative of active users rather than all participants.

- **No Control Group for Student Outcomes:** This pilot did not use an experimental control group, as all participants had access to Doowii, and no comparable group without access was identified. Additionally, directly linking mentor use of Doowii to specific student outcomes was not feasible in this context. Many pilot mentors served specialized roles or handled students only temporarily, complicating any attribution of student performance to Doowii use. Even frequent Doowii users continued to rely on traditional tools, making it difficult to isolate Doowii's direct impact on student metrics like course completions or assessment passes. Therefore, conclusive evidence connecting Doowii use with student academic outcomes was not sought. This did, however, shift the evaluation focus to mentor-centric metrics such as usage patterns, efficiency gains, and confidence, all of which remain valuable indicators of the tool's immediate impact.

  Future studies aimed at demonstrating a direct link to student success would require permissions to execute a pilot with a much more rigorous design: random sampling from the full mentor population, larger sample sizes, longer pilot durations across multiple student terms, and tightly controlled mentor access to alternative tools to minimize confounding factors.

- **Short Pilot Duration:** Four months is a relatively short time to gauge long-term adoption and habit formation. Mentors had enough time to learn the tool and integrate it into some routines, but certain effects, like sustained behavior change or eventually waning interest, cannot be fully observed in this window. We saw a leveling in usage toward the end of the pilot, but a longer observation would be needed to determine a

stable long-term usage pattern. Additionally, some impacts, like mentor skill development in data literacy, might need more time to manifest.

- **Data Limitations of the Pilot Implementation:** By design, the pilot only integrated a portion of WGU's data, so mentors occasionally ran into the edges of what Doowii could answer. This means the findings on satisfaction might have been even higher if all the desired data were available. Conversely, a few mentors who hit those limits felt some frustration. So the pilot's technical scope itself is a limiting factor, not of the concept of Doowii, but of this specific evaluation. It's something to keep in mind: Some of the negative or lukewarm feedback wasn't about Doowii's concept or interface, but about "I wish it had X data." That's a solvable limitation in future rollouts, not an inherent flaw, but it did affect pilot feedback in small ways.

In summary, while the pilot provides encouraging evidence of Doowii's benefits, these limitations suggest caution in interpretation. The results show strong potential, but additional study (with more mentors, over more time, possibly with comparative groups) would strengthen the evidence base, especially if WGU or Doowii wants to quantify impacts on student success or engagement at scale.

Implications

Despite the limitations, the pilot yields some important implications for WGU and the broader landscape of mentor support tools:

- **Usability Drives Adoption:** Mentors willingly adopted Doowii because it clearly saved them time and provided actionable data in ways that they could not get with any existing tools. This pilot counters the assumption that faculty resist new technology; rather, they resist burdensome tools. Investing in user-friendly design and understanding mentor workflows is key to successful adoption.
- **Mentor-Focused Tools Show Promise:** This pilot highlights a promising model for mentor-centric data platforms. Traditionally, analytics tools target administrators, but empowering front-line staff with direct access to useful data can significantly improve student support. This opens a new avenue to enhance mentoring quality and consistency.
- **Institutional Support is Essential:** Institutional backing and proactive change management are vital. Successful rollout requires clear communication, training, integration with existing workflows, and ongoing support. Technology alone isn't sufficient; mentors must feel supported and motivated to adopt new platforms fully.
- **Potential Impact on Student Outcomes (Hypothesized):** While student outcomes weren't directly measured, mentors using Doowii intervened faster and felt more confident. Logically, better-informed and proactive mentors could positively influence student performance, warranting further research into long-term student benefits.
- **Considerations for Scaling:** For broader adoption, start with enthusiastic early users, build success stories that demonstrate valuable use-cases, ensure comprehensive data availability, and continuously refine the tool through user feedback. Leveraging engaged users to demonstrate and teach others and providing sharing opportunities among users are key to fostering the adoption and sustained use of these types of tools.

In short, this pilot validated Doowii's value and provided practical insights on implementing educational innovations that meaningfully align with institutional goals.

Conclusion

The Doowii pilot demonstrated that thoughtfully designed AI tools can make data usable and actionable for WGU Program Mentors. When mentors have tools that leverage their specialized understanding of the WGU student experience, combined with easy and intuitive access to student data, they become better equipped to support their students confidently and efficiently. Within just a few months, mentors went from spending substantial time piecing information together from different sources to simply asking questions and immediately receiving insights. This streamlined workflow not only saved time but also empowered mentors to act more quickly and confidently, enhancing their day-to-day effectiveness.

Crucially, this pilot highlighted that the real power of data in education comes from making it usable for educators. Doowii effectively bridged the gap between WGU's extensive databases and mentors' deep student support expertise, allowing mentors to combine their human insights with data-driven evidence on demand. Looking forward, the pilot points toward a clear path for WGU and similar institutions to invest in tools and support systems that deliver meaningful data directly into mentors' hands. With ongoing improvements and thoughtful scaling, platforms like Doowii could become integral to WGU's strategy for student success, reinforcing the idea that when mentors thrive with data, their students thrive too.

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About WGU Labs

Labs is the research and development arm of Western Governors University, where our mission is to identify and support scalable solutions that address the biggest challenges in education today.

About Doowii

Doowii is a conversational analytics platform built for educators. Our mission is to make data access effortless for educators, enabling them to ask questions in natural language and uncover insights that drive student, educator, and institution success. Doowii bridges the gap between data and daily decision-making through intuitive, conversational technology.

Report Contributions

This report was authored by Jeremy Hodgson, with valuable contributions from Susie Chen, Holly Wallace, Betheny Gross, Natalie Berkey, Mattie Jennings, and Drew Ceccato. Special thanks to Malika Clinkscales, WGU VP of WGU Mentor Strategy and Operations, Blake Smith, Manager of Program Mentoring Faculty, as well as David Morales, WGU Senior VP of Technology and CIO. Visual design was provided by CallyAnn Hamilton.