

Using Analytics for Well-Versed Discussions with Governing Boards

Introduction

Across the country, university governing boards (and those they report to, like legislatures) are seeking greater accountability, improved performance, and demonstrable return on investment for the institutions they oversee. Boards are interested in strategic planning, setting strategic direction, and important financial questions that arise at the university.

Increasingly, university presidents, vice presidents, and provosts are being asked to account for budgets and programs, in detail. Demonstrating the return on investments to governing boards has become a significant part of a public university leader's job.

Academic Analytics can help university leaders establish the return on investments—as well as the potential impact of new funding—and how their university compares with others across the country. This is driven by the Academic Analytics Database (AAD), which includes information on over 220,000 faculty members associated with more than 9,000 Ph.D. programs and 10,000 departments at more than 385 universities in the United States and abroad.

Showing a Return on Investment in Research

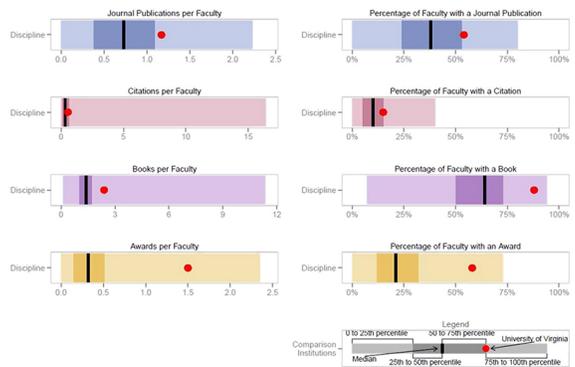
University governing boards typically include successful members of the business community as well as other individuals who may practice law or medicine. With the continuing push toward greater accountability these boards have taken more interest in the financial and business aspects of university operations, looking at ways to cut costs to keep tuition low.

Some governing boards have questioned the need for academic research, citing an increase in tuition needed to support additional faculty, as faculty members are spending significant time researching. Some board members suggest this time may be used to teach additional classes instead. Other board members have suggested the expansion of adjunct hiring or hiring lower-level faculty to save money.

Academic leaders need to show these boards the impact of research: that the investment by faculty in research brings returns for the university in the form of federal funding, citations and credibility, licensing income, and attracting graduate and undergraduate students who come to the university to study with these nationally known academic experts.

Leadership teams can use Academic Analytics tools to show governing boards that hiring top faculty and continuing research programs are necessary for maintaining the flow of federal funding to support research and the reputation of the university. Governing boards can see where the university and individual programs fit with respect to national universities or customized peer sets.

Figure 1. Example of comparison charts for journal publications, citations, books, and awards showing where university faculty rank (the red dot) compared to faculty at peer institutions.



Sharing the Right Views with the Right People

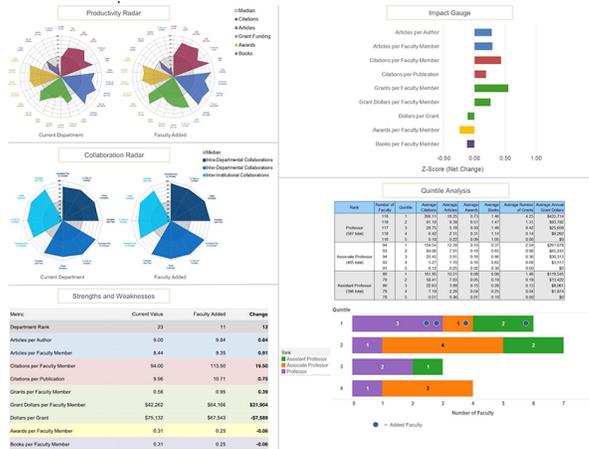
Academic Analytics recognizes that customized data and views are often important for sharing the right set of metrics with the governing board. Team members from Academic Analytics work closely with universities to develop the analysis, the visualizations, and the message so that the materials best meet their needs. For example, while university leaders may want to see detailed charts showing the distribution of university faculty across national or peer sets, and what this means for research, awards, and grants, it may be enough for the governing board to see a simple pie chart that shows the breakdown of faculty research activity. Academic Analytics can provide both types of analysis and views.

Showing the Benefits of Hiring Top Scholars

When governing boards approve initiatives to increase funding for faculty hiring, they want to see the results of hiring those faculty.

Academic Analytics tools can help university and program leaders identify the specific areas that would benefit most from hiring initiatives and can help determine the research and academic profiles of faculty members they should hire. Once hiring is complete, leadership teams can use Academic Analytics data, analysis, and visualization to show the impact of these hires.

Figure 2. Example of visuals showing the impact of new hires at a university.



University leaders can share the data and analytics that are most important to them. For example, level of research activity, collaboration, and research strength and weaknesses can be analyzed to understand the impact of the new faculty. An impact gauge allows the university to hone in on the net change, seeing how the program has improved since the faculty came onboard.

Analyzing faculty research activity within the discipline and faculty rank with a tool such as Academic Analytics' Quintile Analysis demonstrates to client universities what research attributes push them into top quintiles. They are more likely to hire candidates with those attributes. Sharing the Quintile Analysis and identifying these individuals in reports on faculty hiring sends a message to university boards that the institution doesn't just hire people to fill gaps; it hires faculty researchers at the top of their game relative to their faculty status.

Conclusion

Although the economy shows signs of improvement, governing boards will continue to focus on finance, audit, and investment. They will continue to scrutinize hiring and research needs, and will want to see a return on the investments made by the institution.

Academic Analytics tools can help university presidents and vice presidents show governing boards the impact of new hires and research activity. The analysis, visualizations, and message crafted with Academic Analytics' assistance help university leaders show their governing boards that they are responsible stewards, and that they are investing wisely to ensure the school's reputation remains strong for the future.

CASE STUDY: UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA

Sharing New Hire Impact with the Board of Trustees

When the Florida state legislature gave \$15 million—later increased to \$20 million—to the University of Florida to strengthen research through hiring new faculty, the institution decided to use the money to fund hiring in specific research areas rather than the traditional department-based hiring. Because they chose an atypical hiring process, Provost Joe Glover looked to Academic Analytics to help the university understand the impact on departments of hiring by research area.

The university's initial analysis focused on the impact of the hiring effort in three departments: the Geography department, which hired four people; the department of Computer & Information Sciences and Engineering (CISE), which added seven faculty members; and the Department of Pharmacy & Therapeutics, which broad aboard one new person. Although the then current version of the Academic Analytics database listed the new hires at their previous institutions, the Academic Analytics team was able to include them in reports for the University of Florida so that they appeared as university employees.

With the new staff included, Glover could see the impact of adding four people into the Geography department. The quintile analysis showed the university had hired exceptional people, as all were ranked in the first quintile of research activity within the discipline. Hiring a nationally recognized scholar in the field, CISE also saw a significant increase in scholarly productivity and rankings.

This information was shared with the Board of Trustees to show that the funds invested in hiring were having a positive effect on the institution's standing in the higher education community. The Academic Analytics team developed a single sheet view for this presentation that included the change in institutional and departmental ranking, the change in individual indicators of scholarly productivity, the differences in the productivity and collaboration radar, and the positions faculty occupied in the disciplinary quintile rankings. The information was provided at a high level, but details were available if board members wished to dive deeper into the data.

"I think it's reassuring to the Board of Trustees that the data was there. They could see that the ranking was in some sense the summary piece of data; it was not just pulled out of thin air, but there was an analysis there."

— Joe Glover

Glover plans to continue using Academic Analytics data to look at the impact of new hires across campus. He is now looking at all new hires in all departments, rather than just focusing analysis on a few areas. The university will continue to share future analyses with the Board of Trustees so they can see the progress being made. Glover also expects that the continued use of Academic Analytics will help the university to ensure departments and research programs are investing money on the right people in the right places.

CASE STUDY: UNIVERSITY OF UTAH

Creating a Partnership with the Board of Trustees Through Analytics

When Provost Ruth Watkins arrived at the University of Utah in 2013, the colleges and departments on campus had only a limited sense of their research activity against national benchmarks. That fall, she engaged the deans to better understand the state of their departments: where were their strengths, where they had challenges, and how they wanted to shape their future plans. Academic Analytics was a critical element in this exercise.

The following summer, the university included several Academic Analytics metrics in the annual budget reporting process, as well as at a strategic retreat with a subset of the Board of Trustees. Watkins used the Academic Analytics data to talk with those members of the Board about the state of the programs across campus and the strategies in place to make change, as well as issues related to retention and recruitment of faculty.

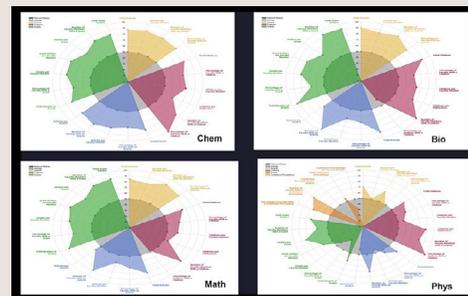
“The board is really interested in where we are and where we’re going, and they are not trying to interfere with that happening. They want to see how we measure ourselves, how we want to be measured, and what we’re trying to accomplish.”
– Ruth Watkins

Previously, how investment decisions were made and measured remained an opaque process to the Board of Trustees, leaving them with a sense that internal review was not happening. Watkins believes that sharing Academic Analytics metrics has created a huge sense of partnership with the Board of Trustees.

While departments and colleges drill down to look at individual performances, that information is too detailed for a governing body. Academic Analytics metrics shared with the Board of Trustees are presented at a higher level. Watkins uses this information to educate the Trustees on how the University of Utah assesses its research activity.

Watkins said she usually shares the basic productivity radar and peer comparison charts with the Board of Trustees so they can get a sense of how the university and its departments compare to other high research-active institutions.

Figure 4. Productivity radar for the College of Science



Watkins plans to use Academic Analytics data in future discussions with the Board of Trustees. Academic Analytics data will also inform conversations with the Financial Advisory Committee which is interested in seeing how colleges set targets and where they invest.