



UNIVERSITY COMMITTEE ON ACADEMIC PERSONNEL (UCAP)
Michelle Yeh, Chair
mmyeh@ucdavis.edu

Assembly of the Academic Senate
1111 Franklin Street, 12th Floor
Oakland, CA 94607-5200
Phone: (510) 987-9466
Fax: (510) 763-0309

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SHANE WHITE, CHAIR
ACADEMIC COUNCIL

RE: ACADEMIC ANALYTICS

Dear Shane,

At the UCAP meeting on May 9, the topic of Academic Analytics came up for discussion and some members expressed concerns about why and how some UC campuses were using the service. The information was shared with UCFW.

Subsequently, UCAP members provided more information about campus subscriptions and practices, which are collated in Enclosure 1.

For background information, I am enclosing two articles, respectively from *The Chronicle of Higher Education* (October 11, 2016 - Enclosure 2) and the UC Santa Cruz Faculty Association Newsletter (June 2017 - Enclosure 3).

UCAP's concerns have to do with the quality and the cost of the service and how the service is used in academic personnel processes on campuses. In fact, UCAP members vigorously discourage the use of this service in any personnel-related assessments and decisions. Therefore, we are bringing the issue to the attention of the Academic Council.

Please let me know if you have any questions. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Michelle Yeh, Chair
UCAP

Enclosure 1

Campus Subscriptions to Academic Analytics

| | |
|----------------------|--|
| Berkeley | Not Available. |
| Davis | The Davis CAP met with our Vice Provost for Academic Personnel. He did not know of the existence of Academic Analytics, but he will find out. |
| Irvine | <p>The Chancellor at UCI said that we have a subscription to AA, but that he's not pushing for a systematic use of their scholarly performance index as a metric for evaluating individual faculty.</p> <p>However, he did say that individual deans and other administrators may use this information in an ad hoc manner, and that if the faculty have a problem with that, they should take it up with those administrators. At that point, my school's equity advisor noted that the ad hoc use of such information is very prone to bias. Most faculty had not heard of AA or that it was being used on our campus.</p> |
| Los Angeles | No subscription |
| Merced | Merced's subscription to Academic Analytics was cancelled earlier this academic year. |
| Riverside | Academic Analytics subscription was under consideration and the faculty were being consulted. Unclear if any decision was made to subscribe. |
| San Diego | UCSD has not subscribed to the service yet. The EVC is discussing with the Deans and thinking about who would be given access and appropriate uses of the data, if we subscribe. The intent would not be to use the data as part of the academic file review process. She plans to bring the issue to the Senate at some point. |
| San Francisco | No subscription |
| Santa Barbara | The EVC reports that UCSB experimented with a subscription to Academic Analytics ~15 years ago and was "disappointed with the information provided to us," and that at this point he "would have to be convinced that this would be a good investment." |
| Santa Cruz | UCSC currently has a subscription |

Enclosure 2

The Chronical of Higher Education

As Concerns Grow About Using Data to Measure Faculty, a Company Changes Its Message

By Paul Basken

OCTOBER 11, 2016

Just a few years ago, [Academic Analytics](#), an upstart company providing data on faculty productivity, talked of helping cash-strapped universities save as much as \$2 billion by identifying their lowest-performing professors.

At many universities, "an awful lot of the scholarly work is being carried by a relatively small proportion of all of the people," said a company founder, Lawrence B. Martin, [back in 2012](#). The value of stanching such waste could be "staggering," Mr. Martin said.

Now the ambitions of his decade-old company are now a bit more measured.

Following the defection last week of Georgetown University — whose provost explained a decision to drop the university's subscription by questioning whether Academic Analytics' data is comprehensive, accurate, or consistently valuable — the company is now dialing back its promises of huge cost savings.

Academic Analytics combs various databases to supply universities with details on the research activity of their faculty. The company does not now believe that institutions should use its information to make individual personnel decisions, said a spokeswoman, Tricia Stapleton. Instead, Ms. Stapleton said, data from Academic Analytics should just be one element among many pieces of information that university leaders use to make broad assessments of their schools and departments.

Ms. Stapleton said she did not know why Mr. Martin, one of two company founders, would have encouraged individual evaluations back in 2013. Mr. Martin, a professor of anthropology and former dean of the Graduate School at Stony Brook University, was not available for comment, she said.

Mr. Martin helped create Academic Analytics out of a concern that the leading source of information on faculty research productivity — study data issued by the National Research Council — was only issued about once every decade and was therefore unreliable for many uses.

In promoting his company, he emphasized the value of Academic Analytics' data in helping cash-strapped universities identify faculty whose relatively low teaching loads were not justified by the volume of their research output.

Georgetown is one of a handful of institutions where faculty began to chafe at the data's role on campus. Georgetown's provost, Robert M. Groves, [posted a notice](#) online last week saying his office began a project this summer to compare Academic Analytics records with the university's own understanding of its faculty research output.

The project found various inaccuracies, including a failure to count about 35 percent of the academic papers published by faculty in the Georgetown School of Public Policy, said Mr. Groves, a professor of math and statistics and sociology.

"Even with perfect coverage," he wrote, "the data have differential value across fields that vary in book versus article production and in their cultural supports for citations of others' work."

Academic Analytics now has about 100 subscribing universities, after steady growth since its founding in 2005, Ms. Stapleton said. Some universities have discontinued service, though often for budgetary reasons, she said. In the case of Georgetown, company representatives said they had not yet had a chance to review the specific findings of its investigation and could not immediately comment on it.

Faculty Discontent

Beyond Georgetown, institutions that have publicly encountered faculty uprisings include Rutgers University at New Brunswick, where the local chapter of the American Association of University Professors has led a persistent campaign for the university to reject Academic Analytics, as Mr. Groves did.

The local union president, David M. Hughes, a professor of anthropology at Rutgers, said he also regarded Academic Analytics' data as both inaccurate and insufficient for judging the complexities of professors' value.

"Our objection, fundamentally, is that these kinds of corporate-derived measurement tools, if successful, will narrow the scholarly life," Mr. Hughes said.

Mr. Hughes said the market demand for Academic Analytics fits with the growing tendency of universities to hire professional administrators. He cited examples such as Peter March, executive dean of the School of Arts and Sciences at Rutgers, saying the former professor of mathematics at Ohio State University has "never been among us as a colleague" and therefore needs Academic Analytics to tell him what's happening inside his own institution.

University administration has become "an academic aristocracy of people earning very high salaries who move around like traded baseball players among institutions, climbing the ladder," Mr. Hughes said.

The Rutgers chancellor, Richard L. Edwards, strongly disputed that characterization. Many Rutgers administrators are current or former faculty members, Mr. Edwards said. And those coming from the outside can bring a useful perspective, he said. Sometimes long-serving faculty "really haven't been out and about much, and don't know what's happening in other places," he said.

Even administrators with extensive faculty experience can't possibly have a deep familiarity with all departments under their jurisdictions, said Robert M. Berdahl, a former president of the Association of American Universities who is now serving as a senior academic adviser to Academic Analytics.

As a dean, provost, and historian, Mr. Berdahl said, he knew his department. But he was also responsible for departments in physics, chemistry, and economics. To assess them, he said, it would be invaluable to have comparable data from other institutions.

Rather than drop subscriptions to Academic Analytics, some institutions are finding ways of managing faculty discontent. Rutgers is now in the process of establishing a process by which individual faculty members can learn what data goes into their Academic Analytics profile and get inaccuracies corrected.

But a thorough, universitywide assessment of the data's accuracy, as took place at Georgetown, isn't likely at Rutgers. The institution is too large for that, Mr. Edwards said.

The Faculty Association at the University of California at Santa Cruz is also challenging its administration's use of Academic Analytics, said the union's co-chair, Deborah B. Gould, an associate professor of sociology.

Ms. Gould said she and other faculty have seen numerous instances of the company's database failing to include their papers, awards, and other elements it counts.

But a more fundamental objection, she said, is the company's premise of being able to truly judge a faculty member's long-term value by making year-by-year tallies of academic output. A researcher might have thin levels of output while working for years on a project that fundamentally changes his or her field, she said. That's the kind of thing that should be judged by fellow faculty, Ms. Gould said.

"It seems strange to me to turn to a data-gathering corporation that actually isn't thinking about the kind of nonlinear, erratic temporalities of intellectual labor," she said. "We are able to evaluate ourselves on that front, really."

The faculty union at the University of Connecticut at Storrs is also pressing for change, saying that professors have been told that Academic Analytics data affects their professional standing. The president of the local chapter of the American Association of University Professors, Diana Rios, an associate professor of communication, said university administrators have been in talks with the union over possible solutions. She said she didn't want to discuss details, to avoid harming the process.

As Academic Analytics backs away from Mr. Martin's suggestion of billions of dollars in savings on unjustified salary costs, the company has changed its message about the value of the data it says it has assembled on some 390,000 faculty and 33,000 journal articles.

Mr. Berdahl, designated by Academic Analytics to speak on its behalf, initially said a university dean might use the company's product to help determine "what faculty you can identify for outstanding awards, or what faculty are really crucial to the future of the department, and what kind of retention efforts one would want to make on their behalf."

But he distanced himself from Mr. Martin's talk of cost savings associated with individual faculty members, saying the Academic Analytics data really is meant for broader assessments. "It's based upon individual faculty," he said of the data, "but by and large you're trying to evaluate the department."

<https://www.chronicle.com/article/As-Concerns-Grow-About-Using/238034>

Enclosure 3

<http://ucscfa.org/2017/06/academic-analytics/>

* Academic Analytics

UCSC entered into a contract with a company called Academic Analytics in 2013. Academic Analytics describes itself as a provider of "custom business intelligence data and solutions for research universities in the United States and the United Kingdom." Their mission, in their words, is "to provide universities and university systems with objective data that administrators can use to support the strategic decision-making process as well as a method for benchmarking in comparison to other institutions." Academic Analytics sells their data to universities as a tool to guide university leaders "in understanding strengths and weaknesses, establishing standards, allocating resources, and monitoring performance."

One of their data bases, "Faculty Counts," provides "a numerical summary of productivity on a person-by-person basis....[with] a numeric tally of each faculty member's total scholarly productivity in each of the five areas of scholarly research (journal articles, citations, books, research grants and honorific awards) measured by Academic Analytics." In other words, AA tallies the productivity of individual faculty across numerous universities.

The Academic Analytics database, however, suffers from a number of systemic flaws that lead to incompleteness and inaccuracy, making it of questionable value. For example, the measures mentioned above fail to count numerous journals, many granting agencies, various forms of collaboration on grants, and numerous awards.

SCFA learned about UCSC's contract with AA last spring and began an investigation based on reported widespread inaccuracies in AA data collection at other universities. Our concerns were amplified in October 2016 when Georgetown University's Provost, Robert Groves, posted a blog with the results of research he and others conducted that showed serious inaccuracies in Academic Analytics' datasets. As just one example of Georgetown researchers' findings: they compared AA data with 348 faculty members'

CV's and found that AA captured only 48% of the academic papers — journal articles and conference papers — listed on faculty members' CV's. They found that the departments that fared least well were Computer Science and Psychology. They also found that AA significantly undercounted faculty grant activity. There were other troubling data as well, but for purposes of brevity, suffice it to say that they found AA's data to be both incomplete and inaccurate. ([Click here to read Groves' blog](#)).

In Provost Groves' words: "the quality of AA coverage of the scholarly products of those faculty studied are far from perfect." He added, and we think this point is perhaps more important: "Even with perfect coverage, the data have differential value across fields that vary in book versus article production and in their cultural supports for citations of others' work." The Georgetown Provost concludes: "we will be dropping our subscription to Academic Analytics."

Along with the fact that AA's data are incomplete and inaccurate, SCFA has additional concerns and questions.

1. Why did UCSC contract with AA? How does the campus leadership plan to use the data?

Labor Relations informed the SCFA that the University planned to use AA "as a source of curated comparative scholarly productivity data (e.g., grant activity, published articles/conference proceedings, citations) that will help leaders (e.g., at the decanal and campus-wide levels) understand opportunities we may have overlooked and to inform planning."

With regard to opportunities "overlooked," we presume that means grants that faculty should or could be seeking. It's hard to understand how an incomplete and inaccurate database would provide better information and guidance than the various staff whose job it is to help faculty secure grants.

The University's statement that it will use AA to "inform planning" is vague but raises concerns that AA data would be used to allocate FTE and other departmental resources.

2. Insofar as there already exist other ways of comparing departments across universities — the National Research Council rankings, for example — why is UCSC paying presumably hundreds of thousands of