

Academic Analytics Benchmark Use and Access

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Purpose

To support VCU in its commitment to scholarship and research productivity, recruiting, mentoring and retaining scholars to advance new discoveries and innovative ideas, and supporting faculty in gaining prestigious honorific awards and achieving career success, an analytics tool provides data and metrics to both recognize excellence and generate discussion for opportunities.

The Academic Analytics (AA) tool is used to strengthen and build areas of excellence. The tool incorporates nationwide data to assist institutions in benchmarking activities at the academic discipline level. The use of this tool requires a clear understanding of how the data will be used and for what it will not be used. The purpose of this document is to define the use of the tool and data.

Definitions

Academic Analytics

A company that gathers data from more than 385 universities in order to allow for the benchmarking of faculty and departments with their nationwide peers.

Academic Analytics Benchmark Tool

A comparative tool that reflects scholarly activity in academic research for a given time window. Activity such as professional honors and awards, federal grants, book publications, journal articles, conference proceedings, and citations.

Academic Unit

The academic department related to faculty's primary research and scholarship.

Rationale

The reason for this document is to describe and explain the use of Academic Analytics data tool and its intended use by the university and faculty. States who will have access to the tool and how the data will be utilized. It is applicable to all administrators and faculty at VCU.

Use of Data

The use of AA data is bound by the core principle of being informative to build, advance, and recognize areas of excellence within academic disciplines. The data are not intended to compare across disciplines, but rather to compare like disciplines relative to aspirational peers for purposes of enhancing faculty scholarly activity, impact and career success and supporting strategic planning at the unit level.

Examples of appropriate use of AA data include:

- Identify relevant grant opportunities for faculty
- Facilitate collaboration of faculty in similar research themes
- Increase opportunity to national award recipient among our faculty
- Identify potential mentors to support emerging scholars and mid career faculty
- Identify high-performing faculty for proactive retention
- Identify university-wide areas of scholarly excellence
- Identify current and aspirational peers within the discipline

AA data will not be used for:

- Faculty evaluation purposes (i.e. Annual review and/or Promotion and Tenure)
- Faculty determination of continued employment
- Setting salary or merit increases

Limitations of Data

AA data and tool reports research and scholarship impact. The users of the data should understand that impact also embodies teaching, service and engagement; which is not reported in the AA data.

In certain disciplines, there are forms of research and scholarship that are not captured in AA data. The users of the tool and data understand that this is a data limitation.

Access Guidelines

Academic Deans, department chairs, and designated faculty and staff will be granted access to the AA tool as granted by the Office of the Provost.

Prior to granting access the required training from Academic Analytics and all additional VCU onboarding activities should be completed. The additional VCU training and onboarding will be provided by Institutional Research and Decision Support. Successful completion of all training and attestation of the understanding of this policy will be documented. An annual review of permissions will be conducted to ensure an active list of users is maintained.

Related Documents/Websites

1. **About Academic Analytics:** <https://academicanalytics.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/About-Academic-Analytics.pdf>
2. **Academic Analytics Principles and Best Practices:** <https://academicanalytics.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Academic-Analytics-Principles-and-Best-Practices-for-Implementation.pdf>
3. **Academic Analytics Privacy Policy:** <https://academicanalytics.com/privacy-policy/>

FAQ

1. **Which office do I contact to get access to Academic Analytics tools?**

Contact Institutional Research and Decision Support at irds@vcu.edu

2. **How is the data quality ensured?**

An initial list of tenure, tenure track, and faculty who are expected to conduct research and scholarship are validated by each Dean and/or their designee. The resulting data in the tool will be continually reviewed for accuracy and appropriate actions for data correction will be employed.