

## Discussion and Q&A Notes: Metrics Town Hall

March 16, 2018

*\*The Office of the Provost attempted to capture comments and questions as best as possible; these are not verbatim quotations but summary comments. Individual faculty names were removed, but each break represents a new inquiry/comment.*

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Urged that any suggestion of metric should come with (1) a statement of what desirable quality does that metric measure and (2) what empirical evidence do we have that said metric measures said quality

Concern: as faculty at a public institution, interests are also about serving community and service; has administration asked for any metrics that recognize or support that

*Responses: acknowledged the importance of all three pillars (including service); encouraged departments to include that in their local metrics upward; mentioned the work with senate on the need to account for service better as a whole and the need to track this better to provide such credit*

Pointed out that the root of some concerns and questions might be less about what the data and metrics are, but how they will be used.

*Responses: There are three primary uses – (i) external communications, (ii) internal communication, and (iii) internal transparency (especially junior faculty); also helpful in GE allocations, identifying problems to address, identifying areas for investment; recognition that judgment is not a formula and it's not the provost's intent to try to quantify judgment*

To the extent we are thinking about service and public impact, it should be the service that is tied to our scholarship and research. It's important to have this information to really understand what our top departments are, and currently those in leadership and administrative positions don't know how to analyze this in the absence of such information.

Looking at publication rankings is fruitless in certain disciplines; ranking university presses is even more fruitless; using these metrics are an abdication of evaluating scholarship; why not just use more classic program review?

*Responses: This is indeed the hard problem of evaluation, there is no one-size fits all approach and some disciplines are much more difficult. The metrics established by a unit do not necessarily have to be "rankings." Think of this as a goal-setting exercise: how – in your department – do you know if you are getting better? We understands and agree; some disciplines cannot rank journals at all, and some journals are very specific to individual issues. That's why the people in the field need to tell us what is important within the field with regard to publications and maybe it cannot be rankings.*

The focus here is on research metrics and not on service metrics, yet there is a direct correlation between the amount of service a faculty member does and the amount of research they can do. Skeptical that you can parse out service metrics from research metrics. Applauds not just sending money where the students go and recognizes that resource allocation is a necessary part of this; but with respect to allocating resources, metrics have to be compared. Thus, how do you allocate resources without comparing, and how can you compare if everyone is coming up with their own? How will this work? The lack of understanding of this particular question makes people distrust that what they are being told is really what it's about.

*Responses: Understands and recognizes this issue completely, but in the absence of something we have nothing, which is also unacceptable. This will have to involve judgment and consultation, which is why we want to continue talking with you.*

Gratitude for extension of deadline. Asked for more information about how they are thinking about resource allocation outside of things like tenure lines, etc. How will this apply to things like strategic investments, block grants, etc.?

*Responses: Admittedly that's the next step of our planning, but it has to be done in consultation with folks once we see what units are submitting. Deans are going to have to be engaged in this because it is not just the provost coming to the faculty with money; it's really often also at the local level.*

Resource allocation vis a vis metrics: In ten years, are these metrics are going to be used in large part to help weaker units achieve their metrics at the expense of a stronger department, or will it be a model that we really want this university to be excellent where it will most shine and thus will invest in those at the expense of the weaker departments? Points out that knowing the model can help folks game the system in how they set up metrics because in the end, with regard to resources, it's a zero sum game.

*Responses: Resources are not large so no investment will be huge either way. Therefore, it might be about the marginal difference of additional resources, which could go to both purposes above. It may also be about preventing someone from going down/getting worse. If there is a unit that is very poor and would take massive resources to improve it, we must then ask how important it is to the students and factor that important principles into the decision making. So it's not necessarily one or the other.*

Does the university have some obligation to a mission that goes beyond the political or economic trends (ex: students don't often have exposure to various languages in HS and then come to university predisposed to not enter certain programs because of lack of exposure before arriving.)? Also, why are merit and P/T guidelines already in place by units not just used for this? This just creates more work.

*Responses: We agree. It's not just about how many students take a program; that's not the point here. It's about how well those students are served and how well scholarship in the area, apart from operational numbers, is going. As to other metrics established at the unit level – if you in fact have those and they are working, then include those and certainly not reinvent the wheel.*

The MOU [signed 3/16/18 between Provost and United Academics] provides a good baseline for the reassurance that some faculty need in terms of knowing what metrics won't be used for. One thing heard from a lot of colleagues is that there is a sense that people understand that departments are not on equal turf. There are deep histories here that are not easy to understand. Wants to ensure provost understands these very different loads (teaching, service, etc.) across departments as we move forward.

*Responses: Hopes that units will communicate with us about such circumstances as we do have to understand these. It is critical for us to understand the context upon which we look at data and information, particularly with regard to resource allocation*

*Closing comments from panel:*

*Recognition that admin should have been much more systematic in our processes around this and commits to that going forward. Appreciates the chance to be able to communicate on what's important. With regard to "gaming" metrics – recognizing that some say this endeavor is naïve because of that ability – it's not naiveté...If a departments wants to sacrifice its own scholarly judgement to "game the system," then we probably have bigger issues. We do have to build trust, especially because we have a new provost. Perhaps trusting him is more important and easier than to try to game a system.*