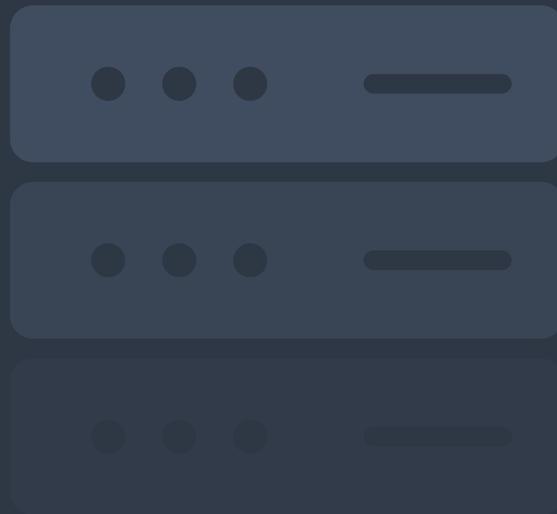


Faculty Data Management in the Era of Extreme Documentation



FACULTY DATA MANAGEMENT IN THE ERA OF EXTREME DOCUMENTATION

The latest trends affecting institutions of higher learning will require more than ever from college administrators. Government cutbacks have intensified competition among faculty and institutions for funding. “Competing for grant funding has gotten harder since 2008 and the number of successful grant hits has declined. In short, there is more competition for grants but the dollars haven’t grown,” says Thomas Miller, Associate Provost for Faculty Affairs at the University of Arizona. That leaves faculty members scrambling.

A rise in public scrutiny, another recent trend, has also increased the pressure, especially for institutions that rely on tax dollars or other public money. Disgruntled taxpayers increasingly are demanding proof that faculty are productive. The bureaucrats, responding to the politicians, are demanding more up-to-date and comprehensive documentation on faculty from administrators.

“I’m seeing a greater sense of accountability in general. We want to show the connection of the university to priorities and needs,” notes Daniel Kain, Vice Provost for Academic Personnel at Northern Arizona University. Adds Miller: “We want to be able to map the footprint of the faculty and the university in the world in terms of partnerships and agencies.”

Finally, there is the increasingly demanding accreditation process and the documentation entailed. Accreditation was simple when all an institution had to do was trot out its lineup of full-time faculty. But now there is a host of adjunct faculty of various sorts who have to be documented and accounted for too.

“The accreditation environment has changed; the Federal government is more involved due to financial aid so accreditation is now taken more seriously,” observes Alan McCord, Associate Provost and Dean of Graduate Studies, Lawrence Technological University. Many barely have the tools to cope with the data and documentation. Excel spreadsheets and Microsoft Word documents are simply too cumbersome to meet the incessant demands for the most up-to-date documentation.

At the same time institutions of higher education need to leverage data—program data, faculty data, student data, and more—to satisfy the unceasing demands for more documentation even while faculty scramble to crank out more grant and funding proposals. Let’s call this the era of extreme documentation.

With a Push of a Button

In response, institutions are starting to realize that these trends require systematic data management, and they are turning to sophisticated tools to help them meet what amounts to never ending demands for documentation and information — usually the same information but in different forms and formats. A good data management system, however, can turn out faculty profiles for accreditation and with the push of a button crank out a slightly different version for a grant application.

To prep his faculty for this new era of documentation, Miller put together a list of ten reasons why they needed a tool to collect, manage, and distribute all their faculty

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accomplishments, including outreach collaborations with businesses and community partners. The latter especially goes unpublicized and unrecognized. With the slowdown in grants and funding, this kind of effort takes on even greater importance.

Miller's list of reasons emphasizes the various ways a data management system saves faculty time. For instance, faculty will only have to enter information once and not be asked to provide such information for program reviews, biosketches for grants, and other purposes. It also will save them time when preparing materials for annual reviews because they will be able to draw on information already in the database. Neither will they have to enter information on their teaching, sponsored projects, or other activities; again, the information simply can be drawn from the existing database.

Miller concluded both faculty and department staff will save time by being able to transfer annual review information into promotion and tenure dossiers. Furthermore, the system will generate CVs that faculty can customize and use for varied purposes.

Significant Cost Savings

How much can a data management system save an institution? After the initial data entry faculty can save three, five, ten or more hours a year depending on how many funding opportunities and grants they are chasing. According to an informal ROI analysis by Dr. Charles Patrick, Chief Academic Officer and Professor, Penn State University - Worthington Scranton campus,

for an institution with 300 faculty, annual savings can be as much as \$210,000 in saved time for faculty. At an institution with 1500 faculty, annual savings could top \$1 million.

Although the faculty should be clamoring for a data management system, if only to put an end to the unending requests for information and to expedite their search for funding, there are better reasons for the institution to invest in a modern data management system. These revolve around the ability to leverage data for a variety of purposes, from attracting corporate involvement to facilitating accountability and more efficiently managing faculty data.

Accreditation Support

But the biggest reason for a solid faculty data system may be streamlining accreditation. In our current era of extreme documentation, a data management system helps ensure that faculty data and the critical documents based on that data are accepted without question the first time — saving faculty and administrators significant amounts of time.

Independent Assessment Analysis

An organization's information is increasingly understood as a valuable asset, maybe its most valuable asset. This understanding is driving the growing interest in big data and data analytics. This is not about only big data but all the organization's data

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assets. Especially when it comes to managing faculty, better data management eases the administrator's faculty documentation requirements and simplifies the showcasing of faculty accomplishments.

For institutions of higher education any data about faculty, programs, professional affiliations, accreditation, administration, courses, research, grants, various documentation, and more constitute an equally valuable information asset that can and should be leveraged in multiple ways. To optimize that data for maximum value institutions need a modern data management system to facilitate the most efficient use of the data.

The best data management systems for higher education streamline the entire data creation, distribution, and management process. They make it easy to repurpose data for a variety of needs and reformat it to meet different requirements and do it all with the push of a button or the click of the mouse. The result amounts to customization without adding complexity or costs, which is exactly what institutions of higher education need in this era of extreme documentation.

About Interfolio

Interfolio launched its academic decision-making platform in 2012 as a response to user feedback about the need for better systems to support shared governance and committee decisions. Today, Interfolio has grown to support the entire lifecycle of faculty activity, decisions, and data, from hiring through tenure. With the addition of a system for faculty activity reporting and accreditation, Interfolio now offers the most comprehensive, user-friendly, and faculty-focused technology in higher education to over 200 clients worldwide. To learn more about what your peers are saying about Interfolio, visit www.interfolio.com or contact team@interfolio.com