

**University of North Carolina Wilmington
Ad Hoc Committee on Faculty Reporting Software**

**Committee Report to the Provost
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Executive summary

The Committee recommends the purchase of *Activity Insight*, a Web-based faculty activity reporting system developed by Digital Measures. The Digital Measures software presents an opportunity simultaneously to make more efficient existing faculty reporting and to address new reporting requirements that the university has no other means of satisfying. Based on numerous contacts with universities that are using *Activity Insight*, successful implementation will demand that user input be solicited in advance to inform careful design and customization of the software prior to faculty use.

Committee charge

Given the increased complexity of UNCW coupled with our increasing size, both of which have resulted in more reports required from faculty, Provost Hosier asked the Committee to explore ways to use technology to make such reporting more efficient and effective, and to relieve some of the resulting burden from faculty. Aware of the faculty reporting software developed by Digital Measures, he charged the committee as follows:

- First, frame the problem. What are the potential uses and benefits of faculty reporting software in general? What kinds of data does the university need to collect from faculty? What problems are we trying to solve?
- Second, determine whether or not the Digital Measures product addresses the needs we've identified. If not, Provost Hosier asked to be notified at once, at which point he would consider opening up the work of the Committee to examine other vendors' software. If, on the other hand, the Committee determines that *Activity Insight* does meet our needs, then assemble proof that it does for the purpose of convincing department chairs and faculty of that fact.
- Third, consider the extent to which it is advisable to begin with a pilot program, and, if so, design such a program that involves sufficiently

disparate disciplines to yield useful and convincing evidence at the end of the pilot.

Preliminary and background work

The Committee met six times: June 13; July 6, 20, 26, 27; and August 15. The primary activities of the Committee were: developing a list of potential benefits of faculty reporting software, contacting faculty and administrators at universities that have had experience using *Activity Insight*, conducting a conference call with a Digital Measures representative to answer a list of questions the Committee prepared in advance, and participating in an in-depth live Web demonstration of the features of the *Activity Insight* system.

After developing a list of nineteen specific benefits of adopting a faculty reporting software system, the Committee quickly determined by viewing a self-guided online demonstration at <http://www.digitalmeasures.com/> that Digital Measures' Activity Insight has the potential to provide every one of those benefits. These benefits are as follows:

Benefits to faculty (by making existing reporting requirements more efficient, and eliminating some requests for the same information needed for multiple uses in different formats)

- Generate annual faculty activity reports for merit raises
- Generate annual reports to the department chair for use in the departmental annual report
- Generate RPT dossiers
- Generate post-tenure review reports
- Generate a curriculum vitae, including pre-formatted specialized CVs (such as NEA, NSF or NIH grant application CVs, or abbreviated vitae required for SACS and other accreditation reviews)
- Make faculty peer evaluators' duties easier by allowing for online viewing of peer activity reports
- Assist faculty in submitting information required for disciplinary accreditation reports
- Enhance consistency in the reporting of faculty activities

Benefits to the university (by making existing reporting requirements or data collection more efficient or effective)

- Assist in the assembly of *some* of the information required for submission of departmental/unit annual reports
- Provide for the efficient collection of extra-classroom faculty activities for the Delaware II study of out-of-classroom faculty activity, mandated by UNC-GA beginning in 2008-09
- Streamline the collection of data on faculty regional service contributions (for reporting to the state, for the UNC Tomorrow planning process, and other uses)
- Make more efficient and complete the preparation of both institutional and disciplinary accreditation reports

- Incorporate the current *ad hoc* requests for faculty expertise contributions toward a speakers' bureau
- Allow for more efficient collection of course syllabi and CVs for accreditation reviews

Benefits to the university (by allowing us to do things we are not now able to do through access to more complete information on faculty activities)

- Allow for the collection of faculty service or regional engagement contributions
- Permit “research fingerprinting” (a means of identifying themes of research as targets for future external funding opportunities)
- Provide for a common, optional mechanism for departmental record-keeping of assessment plans, data, findings, and uses
- Provide a mechanism for better publicizing of faculty research (e.g., by Marketing and Communications) by assembling a database of cumulative and comprehensive research successes
- Maintain an archival history of the university's faculty accomplishments

The Committee contacted, by telephone or email, our counterparts at nine universities known to be clients of Digital Measures for the purpose of gathering independent assessments from both faculty and administrators of the strengths and weaknesses of the software. In general, we sought to discover their extent of satisfaction in dealing with the company, usefulness of the software, problems with implementation, whether they had experienced any surprises, and any other information that might be offered. Responses were collected from faculty and administrators in each of the listed departments of the universities listed in Appendix 1.

Findings

The following common themes emerged from conversations with faculty and administrators at the universities we contacted.

- The most common negative comments had to do with lack of faculty buy-in for full participation, and the time-consuming task of entering faculty activity information piecemeal.
- The institutions that had the least success were those that imposed use of *Activity Insight* “top down” and without careful advance customization of reports.
- The institutions that appeared most successful were those that a) sought the needs of department chairs and faculty in the design phase, b) had a knowledgeable (of what the university wants to accomplish) and respected “point person” who served as liaison with Digital Measures, c) mapped out reports and input screens in advance, and d) populated the screens with some existing data from other university databases before faculty were even asked to test it.
- On the whole, administrators saw more benefits to the use of *Activity Insight* than did faculty at the institutions we polled.

- Digital Measures has generally been responsive to requests, with no hidden costs, though there is some evidence that response time has slowed as they have added more clients.

Following the conversations with our counterparts at other universities described above, the Committee developed in advance a set of questions to ask in a telephone conference call with Digital Measures. These questions, along with paraphrased answers, are listed in Appendix 2.

The July 26 live Web demonstration, conducted by means of GoToMeeting software and Polycom telephone, left a very positive impression with the Committee. Specifically, we learned during that session:

- The system response time is fast, partly due to uncluttered and self-explanatory input screens. A sample screenshot is included in Appendix 3.
- The system is extraordinarily customizable.
- Document attachments (such as course syllabi) reside in on-campus servers, reducing Digital Measures' storage requirements.
- The Delaware II study of out-of-classroom faculty activity has already been implemented via input screens, definition help pages, and output reports in the Digital Measures software.

Recommendations

After extensive investigation of our own university's needs, the capabilities of Digital Measures software, other universities' experiences with Digital Measures, and frank discussions with the company representative, we recommend that UNCW adopt the *Activity Insight* software for use by all faculty, but only after careful customization and design with input from faculty and department chairs and deans, and only through careful phased-in implementation by type of use. Specifically, we recommend that:

1. UNCW should enter into a five-year contract with Digital Measures to use their Activity Insight faculty reporting software.

Reasoning:

- *Activity Insight* has the features to meet all potential benefits identified by the Committee.
- The utility of *Activity Insight* for both individual faculty and for the university is overwhelmingly clear.
- Shorter contract lengths are impractical because of the continuing need for Delaware II reporting; because in 2012—five years from now—UNCW will need faculty roster information, course syllabi, brief CVs and other accreditation archives for the SACS accreditation review; and because the first cohort of new faculty will be using *Activity Insight* for promotion and tenure dossiers that eventually span five years.
- The 20% discount offered for a five-year contract, and the ability to lock in current prices, make this option most cost-effective.

- 2. All faculty in the College of Arts and Sciences and the three professional schools should use the software under the conditions and schedule described herein. We recommend against any pilot program by discipline.**

Reasoning:

- In general, institutions that piloted *Activity Insight* with selected disciplines tell us that, had they to do it over again, they would have initially implemented it campus-wide.
- Collection of information for Delaware II requires an out-of-classroom activity summary with full faculty participation; hence, a partial implementation would defeat this intended purpose.
- Because of discounts for campus-wide implementation, cost savings, if any, for partial implementation are negligible.

- 3. The Provost should name a liaison to be the single contact between UNCW and Digital Measures. This liaison should have the respect and confidence of the faculty, and should have a sufficient level of administrative responsibility to have influence with the Digital Measures company. The Committee suggests that the Associate Vice Chancellor for Faculty Support and Development might be a logical choice for liaison.**

Reasoning:

- Institutions that have been most successful implementing Digital Measures and that have achieved faculty buy-in have done this; institutions that have had less success have not.

- 4. The Provost should appoint a time-limited “implementation steering committee” to oversee the design, customization, and technology integration of *Activity Insight*. This committee should also be responsible for advocating the software to campus constituents, conducting workshops as needed, gathering input from stakeholders, developing a Web FAQ, custom screen testing, and completing other preliminary preparations in advance of campus-wide implementation. The Committee suggests that membership of the implementation steering committee include at least: point-persons from the College and schools (likely associate deans), several faculty representatives (perhaps from departments or schools likely to be involved in preliminary testing of screen design), a representative from ITSD, a representative from Institutional Research, and a representative from Public Service and Continuing Studies.**

Reasoning:

- Broad representation from the faculty, ITSD, Public Service, Academic Affairs, Institutional Research and other offices will be required to make the decisions necessary to design a system that both streamlines existing faculty reporting and meets the new reporting needs of the university.

5. **The Committee recommends an implementation plan along the following lines:**

Fall 2007

- **Seek preliminary buy-in from the deans and from attendees of the September 5 meeting of department chairs.**
- **Gather the needs of all constituents, including deans, department chairs, faculty and others, to inform the design and customization phase.**
- **Conduct information sessions for the Faculty Senate and Cabinet.**
- **Arrange for server and other technology support on campus.**
- **Customize input screens and report formats in coordination with Digital Measures.**
- **Program advance input of Banner data.**
- **Design login page, FAQ, and PowerPoint help and workshops as needed.**
- **Pilot testing by 20-30 volunteer faculty across departments.**

Spring 2008

- **“Go live” with UNCW login page and FAQ.**
- **Rollout to all faculty for first-year use limited to: 2007-08 annual activity reports for all faculty, test-use for collection of Delaware II out-of-classroom activity (and related regional engagement contributions) for all faculty, and preparation of RPT dossiers for those faculty who have their first reappointment decision in 2008-09.**

Academic Year 2008-09

- **Phase in additional uses of *Activity Insight* based on an assessment of its success in Spring 2008.**
- **These uses may include building professional *curricula vitae* for new faculty, building post-tenure review records for newly tenured faculty, using Digital Measures as the preferred method of generating grant application CVs, and other purposes.**

Reasoning:

- **Institutions that have successfully implemented *Activity Insight* have been intentional and careful in their pre-implementation design and customization, and in their phased-in uses, starting with current-year activities of faculty.**
- **This implementation plan follows the most successful practices gleaned from institutions contacted by the Committee.**

6. **Deans and department chairs should be free to require additional uses of *Activity Insight* for their own faculty.**

Reasoning:

- The need to address disciplinary accrediting agency standards may dictate additional use or accelerated implementation of some uses.
- Experiences of faculty in departments or schools that accelerate implementation may be useful in eventual campus-wide implementation of additional uses.

7. The Provost should involve General Counsel in negotiating the Digital Measures contract in order to protect the university's proprietary systems (for example, assessment reports and rubrics) and certain other intellectual property.

Reasoning:

- The Digital Measures contract provides in Section 5.2 that all "customizations, modifications, [and] additions" to the system are proprietary to Digital Measures. There is a possibility of potential conflict in case UNCW wishes to incorporate its own proprietary materials in the customized reporting software for our own use.

8. The Office of the Provost should bear the continuing cost of subscription to Digital Measures' *Activity Insight* software.

Reasoning:

- It is imperative that all faculty use *Activity Insight* to realize the full benefits of summarizing faculty activity, and removing cost as a reason for resistance is an important step toward full participation.
- The cost savings to the university just for the purpose of meeting the new Delaware II requirement justifies this expense.

Appendix 1

Departments and units of universities contacted to gather an independent assessment of satisfaction with the Digital Measures software

Baylor University
 School of Nursing
 School of Business

College of Charleston
 Communication Studies
 Hispanic Studies
 School of Education
 Music
 Office of Accountability, Accreditation, Planning and Assessment

Indiana State University
 Political Science
 Strategic Planning, Institutional Research and Effectiveness

University of Alabama
 School of Education
 College of Nursing
 College of Commerce

University of Arkansas-Fayetteville
 School of Nursing
 College of Business

University of Idaho
 Foreign Languages
 Chair of the Faculty Council and Digital Measures “point person”

University of Wisconsin – Whitewater
 Languages and Literatures
 Political Science
 Research/Sponsored Projects

Utah State University
 College of Business

Western Illinois
 Communication Studies
 Foreign Languages
 Political Science
 Research/Sponsored Projects
 Planning and Budget

Appendix 2
Questions prepared by the Committee and paraphrased answers
from the Digital Measures representative

Questions submitted in advance

Technical issues

1. Please clarify the extent to which the software can be integrated with BANNER. *Answer: BANNER integration is a routine feature at institutions using Activity Insight. Data can be easily imported from BANNER.*
2. Is it possible to view a CV through DM (e.g., via a Web link) from an external source such as a Web address? *Answer: Activity Insight supports HTML and one can use the Web for both import and export.*
3. Does Activity Insight have a software interface that allows third party vendors to add additional functionality (e.g., an API or Web service interface)? *Answer: Yes. Activity Insight fully supports Web services, an open and standards-based approach for data and application integration through software interoperability.*
4. Do Activity Insight input fields handle HTML as input? *Answer: Yes, input fields can be customized to accept HTML input.*
5. Please discuss disaster recovery, backups, security, and confidentiality of data. *Answer: Digital Measures uses a Tier One data center at a third party site (Iron Mountain). Iron Mountain conducts daily backups and employs multiple electronic and geographic redundancies. Digital Measures ensures the electronic, physical, and intellectual security of its clients' data, safeguards confidentiality of the data, and abides by FERPA regulations. UNCW is responsible for security and integrity of our own network and documents stored within Activity Insight on our own servers.*
6. What are the policies, protocols, responsibilities and costs of software revalidation following software revision? *Answer: While Digital Measures has no formal Quality Assurance section, they test changes and ask clients to test as well. There is no additional cost for revalidation or testing. As a Tier One technology partner, they are audited monthly by external entities.*

Formatting and data entry

7. Does Activity Insight allow sharing of data across departments (so that for example only one co-author needs to enter a research citation)? *Answer: Yes. Usually the lead author enters the citation, but other customized protocols are possible.*
8. What information is used for the vita output? (Does Activity Insight have a pre-defined format? Can the institution specify the output? Does an individual have flexibility within those constraints?) *Answer: The format of the vita is completely flexible down to the departmental level. Activity Insight does not impose any sort of format restriction. An individual can always maintain a separate vita, of course, but*

formats are customized for departments, for accreditation reporting, for grant applications, etc., with no limit on the number of formats.

9. Can *Activity Insight* input fields handle special symbols? (Does it use international standards for storing special diacritical marks, foreign alphabets, mathematical symbols, etc.?) Can an individual control options such as boldface, color or symbols on CVs or other reports? *Answer: With respect to special symbols, diacritical marks, foreign alphabets and mathematical symbols, the answer is yes. Activity Insight uses UTF-8 (specified by ISO 10646), which supersedes ISO 8859. UTF-8 encompasses all of the character sets supported by the older specification and more (mostly Asian) languages. Special formatting such as boldface is supported at departmental and higher level reports by custom design, but not at the individual CV level.*
10. Are there limits to the character length of input fields? *Answer: No, not unless the client specifies that there should be a limit.*
11. Is formatting preserved as Microsoft Word documents are imported and exported? *Answer: Microsoft Word documents can be copied onto a clipboard for cutting and pasting into fields on the input screens, but formatting is not preserved for that purpose. Formatting is extremely customizable for report design, however, and reports can be exported in MS Word, PDF, or HTML form with prescribed formats.*

Customization

12. Please clarify the customization process. For example, with respect to annual review templates, would Digital Measures create unique versions as requested by academic units, or would one master UNCW annual review template incorporate all data fields, thus requiring faculty to enter “N/A” when a prompt does not apply to their department/program? *Answer: A faculty member’s login determines the input fields, content of drop-down menus, requested information, and output reports—all customizable by individual department. For administrative reporting, however, summary reports still draw information from all the various templates used across campus.*
13. Are reports pre-defined, or is the reporting software capable of producing new reports? Is there a limit to the number of reports available? *Answer: Sample reports were prepared for demonstration purposes, and pre-defined reports have been developed, for example for AACSB and for Delaware I and Delaware II reporting. However, the university decides what reports it wants, what information they contain, and the format of the reports. There is no limit to the number of reports an institution may use.*

General

14. How many institutions use *Activity Insight* campus-wide? What is the balance of disciplines that use it in universities where implementation is not campus-wide? Are there any disciplines that seem to be more successful in using *Activity Insight* than others? *Answer: Close to 50 institutions use it campus-wide, and many more use it in some subset*

- annual
- activities first; then each department learns, customizes, makes changes, and adds reports. The most successful faculty buy-in has occurred at campuses that take it slow; those that define a “whole bunch” of reports at the beginning have a harder time.*
15. Beyond the cost of the annual contract, what is the cost of updates, customization, and adding new features? *Answer: There are no additional or hidden costs. Customization, updating, changing or adding features is all part of the contract.*

Questions for the live demo on July 26

16. How does Digital Measures evaluate your own success? What measures do you use, and what have you found? *Answer: Digital Measures just hired a client manager to evaluate satisfaction, and will use a survey tool in the near future. They plan to post client testimonials on their Web page soon. They have not developed “hard measures” of success yet.*
17. What are the most common problems universities have with *Activity Insight*? What are its greatest successes? *Answer: The most common general problems are associated with faculty buy-in. Recently, with rapid growth of their client base, there has been some frustration and confusion about whom to contact at the company and for what purposes. On the positive side, the one thing that customers mention most often is the customization—the ability of Digital Measures to make reports look exactly like the examples that they’re given.*
18. How are you accommodating client growth? What are your plans for maintaining responsive service? *Answer: They have increased their staff by 100% in the past year, and continue to take the steps necessary to serve their customers. They have a contractual responsibility to provide a turnaround in requested changes within 10 working days.*
19. Please talk us through the first three months after purchase of design and customization. Once we identify our needs, who creates the composite templates? *Answer: The campus-level UNCW liaison works with the Digital Measures account manager to provide a list of all users and method of authentication. The first steps involve decisions pertinent to the entire university. Then we provide Digital Measures with sample reports (hard copy or electronic) that we want the software to produce, they program it, and in an iterative procedure we test it and request further changes.*
20. Is the software ADA compliant? *Answer: Yes.*

Appendix 3

**Partial screenshot showing the simplicity of input screen layout.
All input fields are completely customizable down to the departmental level**

The screenshot shows a web form with the following fields and controls:

- Contribution Type:
- Explanation of "Other":
- Ranking:
- Classification:
- Current Status:
- Title of Contribution:
- Authors**
Please order the authors in the order of authorship.
- Table of authors:

	First Name	Middle Name/Initial	Last Name	Delete	Order
1st Author	<input type="text" value="Ann"/>	<input type="text" value="J."/>	<input type="text" value="Roberts"/>		▼ ▲
- ADD ANOTHER AUTHOR:
- Journal/Publisher/Proceedings Publisher:
- City and State of Journal/Publisher: