

## UA Vitae Faculty Fellows Progress Report

UA Vitae Faculty Fellows, 2021-2022  
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In Fall semester 2021, UA Vitae Faculty Fellows were charged with reviewing the current use and impact of UA Vitae. They engaged with key stakeholders who were identified as heavy users of UA Vitae to obtain feedback and then write a summary report of its usage and impact as well as make recommendations of its future implementation to the UA Vitae Faculty Affairs team.

During the initial phase in September, 2021, the Faculty Fellows developed a semi-structured interview consisting of a series of six open-ended questions. This occurred in conversation with the Office of the Vice Provost for Faculty Affairs. See Appendix A for these questions.

In October and November 2021, the UA Vitae Faculty Fellows conducted interviews on the Zoom platform with a total of 16 participants (administrators, faculty, staff) from units and colleges across the University of Arizona. Asya Roberts and Robbie MacPherson developed the list of stakeholders based on their frequent interaction with them about UA Vitae. The Office of the Vice Provost for Faculty Affairs provided this list of individuals who were identified as heavy users of UA Vitae from a diverse range of colleges and representing staff, faculty, and administrators. The Fellows rounded out the list to be as inclusive as possible and to maximize the number of colleges, units, and the number of different roles (administrators, faculty, staff). The participants who were included in these discussions represented 10 colleges including: Agriculture and Life Sciences; Applied Science and Technology; Fine Arts; Engineering; Humanities; Medicine-Tucson; Eller-Management; Nursing; Pharmacy; Science; and Social and Behavioral Sciences. Because UITS provides technical support for UA Vitae, that unit was also represented among the participants.

The Faculty Fellows recorded these conversations on the Zoom platform, which were also automatically transcribed via the Zoom software, and then Fellows corrected the transcripts by hand. During the interviews, Fellows also took notes, which were consulted alongside the downloaded transcripts. The Faculty Fellows then conducted a thematic analysis of these materials with a series of recurring themes, which appear below.

The Faculty Fellows are currently in the process of developing a draft of questions for a university-wide survey and plan to solicit answers from Department Heads and Directors in spring semester 2022.

### Overarching Themes from Interviews

Use of UA Vitae (UAV) varies widely across campus, from practically no use to full use for APR (Annuals Performance Review) and P&T (promotion and Tenure). Support for UAV also varies widely, with some units having dedicated staff and others providing very limited local support. Use of UAV for APR reviews (by committees, heads, etc.) also varies widely.

## Recurring Themes from the Interviews and Focus Groups

In order to maximize anonymity of responses, the Faculty Fellows have provided the following coding to indicate the professional role of interviewees who provided these comments:

-F (faculty) [4]

-ARC (administrators and faculty with service roles as part of Annual Performance Review (APR)/Promotion and Tenure (P&T) review committees) [3]

-S (staff including administrative support and IT personnel) [9]

### **1. Provide more resources and support – at university, college, and/or departmental levels – to optimize UA Vitae’s usability and capability:**

- Some colleges provide excellent and well-funded support. (ARC, S)  
Example:
  - o The APR process in the College of Medicine-Tucson is unique as they utilize teams and groups to complete the process; each division has a dedicated administrator to notify faculty as well as emulate and input information. Reviews are also primarily done online, which is not the case across the entire campus. (S)
- Many other college and units provide varying levels of support. (F, ARC, S)  
Examples:
  - o Some departments and units have a person dedicated to UAV including training of faculty if needed. (F, ARC, S) Other departments and units do not have this level of support, and for others, help is set up and provided (only) through Information Technology. (ARC, S)
  - o Some colleges hold training sessions and provide online resources. (ARC, S)
  - o There can be a high learning curve when employee turnover happens, especially for new staff and department heads. (F, ARC)
  - o Some faculty use peer-to-peer training when staff turnover happens because there can be no training for new individuals after turnover. (F, ARC)
  - o Some colleges and units believe increased financial commitment for support is needed for better implementation and informed usage. This could then lead to capturing more consistent and accurate data. (ARC, S)
- Some believe faculty and staff still need more training on the APR process and UAV in general. (F, ARC, S)

### **2. Provide more regular communication – from the university level – about the latest training resources for UA Vitae to optimize its usage:**

- Good training videos are available through the UAV site and the Vice Provost’s office, which some colleges know about and use. Other colleges appear to be unaware of these materials because they’re creating their own online materials, despite limited time and resources.

### **3. Improve data import, export (reporting), and maintenance**

- APR report is messy and the spacing makes it difficult to read. When users preview their report (on the preview screen before submission), the UAV system does not generate a user-friendly report. It doesn't seem to generate a user-friendly report for APR committees or Heads and Directors and their own evaluation criteria categories of teaching, research, and service/outreach. In short, it is difficult to create readable output.
- Some participants envision a system that would allow administrators to pull metrics and reports in a consistent manner. The system was initially envisioned to provide a consistent annual review process across colleges and departments and to capture faculty activity (i.e., scholarship, services, instruction and research activity), but the system was not implemented in a consistent manner. (ARC, S)
- Unfamiliar with creating customized reports.
- Once data is submitted, it is very difficult to go back and add new information; there is a permission process that exists re-enter the system after submission but the request must go through administrative review and adds time and work. (ARC, S)
- Data is submitted in a short time frame during the year, which may not provide an incentive to faculty to maintain a dynamic record of research, teaching, service, clinical hours, etc. (F)

Example:

- o Some units expressed frustration about this issue, to the point that APR was not performed via UAV, partly because faculty were late in uploading data.
- It would be valuable to keep UAV if migration occurs without any issues and maintains the data that currently exists. In that case, shifting to a new system would not be favorable. This, however, assumes the issues addressed herein will be resolved. (F, ARC, S)
- System utilized to pull data and information for reports about faculty activities can also be used for other reporting such as grants and sabbaticals and accreditation. (F, ARC, S)
- Faculty expressed how their burden of input was reduced when information from the University systems (SCS Teaching Evaluations; Sponsored Programs) were automatically and correctly integrated into UAV. (F)

Example:

- o UAccess course assignment reviews are included and faculty can verify the accuracies of the course system on their annual reports.

### ***3.1 Simplify data entry and import for faculty***

- Provide a more streamlined data-entry platform and user friendly "preview report" screen for faculty. (F, S)

Examples:

- o To get buy in, customization was put in place for individual units and colleges to capture data that were important to them. (S)
- o Incentivize the faculty to enter their data/material (publications, grants, etc.) more frequently to make the tool useful in addition to APR; For example, allow it to help populate their website information or in making an exportable CV. Some units asked for this but seemed unaware that this was already being done in some other units. (F, ARC, S)

- Make it useful for “me” (faculty) instead of just the University (F, ARC, S)
- Limitation in automated import function from various sources and little support for exporting information to front facing website.

Examples:

- Information pulled from sponsored Projects, SCS Teaching Evaluations, Web of Knowledge, Google Scholar, etc., are not being automated or are problematic when pulling information from these sources. (F, ARC, S)
- Other tools do exist that can collect activity reporting; some mentioned are SciVal, Digital Measures, and a commercial product from Watermark.
- UA Profiles was to demonstrate value to faculty but was not a formal service and there was little support and resourcing for it. (RC, S)
- Very few colleges and units utilize UA Profiles for pulling information for faculty profiles on website. (S)

#### ***4. Provide more long-term access and accessibility to UA Vitae data with the capability to share in a real-time environment***

- Desire for continuous, broader, and concurrent access to UAV faculty activities. (S, ARC)

Examples:

- A small number of people can have access or full authority to the system at one time, otherwise permission is required to access the system. (F, ARC, S)
- Communication occurs with Robbie MacPherson for a wide range of requests such as general questions, permission to re-access information, and customization requests. (ARC)

#### ***5. Reconsider limiting customization***

- Over-customization has made it difficult to pull data consistently across the board and such customization cannot be sustained by current staffing.
- Customization can be an issue when pulling data since it can be “overcustomized.” (F, ARC, S)

Examples:

- From the interviews, it became clear that customization at the data input stage should be eliminated or significantly reduced (data input should follow the P&T format for all units).
- Yet customization at the review stage should be increased (to accommodate how different units perform APR, e.g., using numbers for evaluation).

##### ***5.1 Consider minimal or no customization at the report level***

- Over-customization has made it difficult to pull data consistently across the board and such customization cannot be sustained by current staffing. Customization can be an issue when pulling data since it can be “overcustomized.” (F, ARC, S)

Example:

- One unit was a late adopter of UAV and it was recommended by UAV administration that they use very little customization.

### ***5.2 Consider more significant customization at the review level to eliminate silo effect***

-UAV does not have the capability to “share” information in real time or even from first reviewer to second reviewer. Reviews are “siloesd” by user and there is no ability to generate a readable/customizable CV. (ARC, S)

-Improvements could be made on the reporting side for review committees, such as methods of calculations of overall performance rating, easier way of exporting and importing information, and other activities. (ARC)

-APR committees often download info from UAV to perform their evaluation. Thus, evaluation is not performed directly through UAV. (F, ARC, S)

### ***6. Redesign system to minimize the time and number of clicks required for data entry***

- Entering data in UAV takes more time and clicks than using a paper process. (F, ARC, S)

Example:

- Faculty spend a lot of time inputting data, re-inputting data that does not get saved properly, or updating/correcting data from previous years that are neither updated automatically nor deleted automatically such as unfunded grants. (F, ARC, S)
- Ensure the process of the APR evaluation matches the technology, and that the technology match the process, and has consistency across the institution.
- Implement an input process for faculty where technology can capture the activities (such as publication) necessary for an effective and streamlined APR exercise. (ARC)
- Some units use an APR scale that is larger than 0-5 in UAV. Consequently, these units take a hybrid approach in the evaluation process that includes uploading supplemental documentation. In turn, this requires an increased number of clicks for the review committees, etc. (F, ARC)

### ***7. Rename/streamline entry fields in UA Vitae software so that units can represent themselves more efficiently and accurately***

- There are too many fields of entry and they are sometimes ambiguously labeled. Reduction and renaming of these fields are required in order to capture accurate and robust information across disciplines where outlets vary for research, scholarly work, clinical hours, exhibitions, performance, etc. (F, ARC, S)

### ***8. Require training and usage of UA Vitae across campus***

- Requiring orientation or training, like the UA HR website provides for other purposes, is an effective way to ensure proper familiarity for all involved. (ARC, S)
- Requiring usage of UAV is an effective way to make sure everyone gains practice, familiarity, and eventual mastery.

Example:

- Some Deans have championed the system and require all faculty to utilize the system. (ARC)

### **9. Merge the APR and RPT Processes: UA Vitae for the APR vs. RPT for Promotion & Tenure**

- Many departments use UAV for APR and then use RPT for P&T. It seems however, that there is little awareness that these are two separate systems (UAV and RPT), presumably because users access RPT through UAV. Nevertheless, the difference in functionality between these two is not realized by many. (F, ARC, S)
- (F, ARC, S)
- Many found RPT to be a robust and useful system worthy of investment even though it requires a learning curve. They see worth and utility because it builds toward the larger goal of promotion and tenure. (F, S)
- UAV does not easily transfer data to RPT. (F, ARC, S)
- Suggested to invest more in UAV to connect APR with P&T and P&CS (Promotion & Continuing Status) to make it easier for faculty to have a consistent workflow. (ARC, S)
- Most colleges and units use UAV for the APR process and few use RPT for Promotion & Tenure (P&T). (F, ARC, S)
- Some expressed interest in merging the two systems in order to facilitate usage for both APR and P&T. (ARC, S)
- Utilization varies with college and unit. Some administrators and staff were familiar with the APR side and others used both UAV and RPT. (ARC, S)

### **10. Other: comments not categorized under a common theme**

- UAV was originally envisioned as a faculty reporting system and annual review process system and potentially linking into the P&T (Promotion and Tenure) and P&CS (Promotion and Continuing Status) processes to make it easier for faculty to compile their dossiers for P&T and create vitas.
- UAV was customized to support workflows in place across campus, but support was not at the level it should have been, and also turnover was an issue within colleges and departments and support was inconsistent.
- Arizona Board of Regents (ABOR) has expressed interest in capturing data and making connections for all three universities, but prioritization seems to be focused on the sciences with SciVal and not all researchers are represented.

### **APPENDIX A: Interview and Focus Group Questions**

1. It's our understanding that you have some working knowledge of and experience with UA Vitae. Could you please talk a little bit about it?
2. What has your experience been working with support staff, heads, directors, etc. supporting them as they use UA Vitae?
3. Have you seen or experienced turnover among those units and have you had to hold training programs on a continual basis?
4. Based on your experience, do you have any other suggestions on how UA Vitae could be better implemented or improved?
5. Would it be valuable to and maintain UA Vitae? Is it valuable to use in the APR Process?
6. Do you have any final thoughts about UA Vitae you'd like to share?

**APPENDIX B: Department Heads and Directors Survey**

As a final step, the UA Vitae Faculty Fellows have created [this questionnaire/survey for all UA Department Heads and Program Directors](#). We would like to gather information on how Heads or Directors utilize UA Vitae. We welcome your input on both strengths and weaknesses.