Faculty Comments Regarding the Use of Elements for Faculty Annual Reviews
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This report was compiled by the Faculty Senate GRA Brook Killian from comments sent to Faculty Senate President Beauvais Lyons. Comments were received from faculty members in the Colleges of Art and Sciences, Engineering, Communication and Information Sciences, Law, Haslam College of Business, and Education and Health and Human Sciences. This report will be was also reviewed by the Faculty Senate Executive Council before submission to the Office of the Provost.

The comments from faculty members are organized into areas of concern including technical issues, limitations, broader issues with the platform and a final set of specific suggestions for improvement.

Technical Issues

Data Entry and Reporting
- Data entry process is too time consuming
- Microsoft Word report of data is impossible to edit to correct Elements mistakes
- When attempting to correct something incorrect, the changes did not transfer to the Elements platform. A Word document was used to fix the errors and then it was saved as a .pdf
- Workload report for grant continued to indicate 'pending status' for unfunded grants
- Teaching – all independent studies automatically populate to 1 credit hour even though its listed as 3; can't edit to fix
- Proposed grants do not show up on workload report; have to manually type the grant information into the document
- When an activity is ongoing, the system doesn't allow you to save the activity and insists you select an end date. It forces an imaginary end date even though it's marked as "ongoing"
- PDF from workload report does not add any value over submitting a PDF through the former FAR system

Publications and Citations
- Automatically used an incorrect publication name for faculty member
- Entering a publication reference is broken down into too many separate steps
- Did not find accurate reports of actual scholarly productivity:
    - Missed many publications and mislabeled others
    - Missed conference papers at leading national venues
- Omitted essential information (month of journal, number of pages in book)
- No space to indicate date of acceptance for book chapters
- Manuscripts submitted for review shows up as a published paper with no date or volume etc. in the workload report automatically generated by Elements

- If user has collaborated with other scholars on a paper or presentation and the paper or presentation has already been listed and the other collaborator lists the paper or presentation in his or her own Elements account, then Elements automatically reorders the original listings input by the first user.
- Publications are not listed in the right order chronically when "workload" file is downloaded
- Cannot rely on Elements reports for correct publication lists; have to look at CVs and then look up month of publication in order to view publications for a specific period of time
- Have to manually enter all publications
- H-Index not included in reports set up in Elements default CV or UT faculty workload report
- Elements does not fully address the issue of Web of Science, Scopus, and PubMed being heavily weighted toward STEM disciplines and quantitative social sciences by not accurately index publications for disciplines outside of STEM or quantitative science.

Elements Limitations

- System is cluttered and overwhelming
- Data categories are not defined or mutually exclusive
- Does not provide space for other categories, such as lectures/speaking engagements
- It would be easier to type a list of everything instead of trying to fit it into the categories available
- No way to document medical leave
- There isn't space for ongoing research projects
- Unclear what is intended to be added under "teaching activities"
- Should student committee work, SAIS, Syllabi, chair or serve as members to committees be added?
- No space to enter the name of a conference when entering presentations
- Unclear what is intended to be added under "service"
- No place to enter workshops and professional development sessions for teachers
- No place to enter other professional development activities
- No place to indicate that someone was a consultant on a grant/roles are not adequately reflected
- Does not allow indication of the number of papers reviewed for a journal in a year. Only lists it one time
- Full number of classes taught are not automatically listed by Elements correctly; had to manually enter
- Categories generated by the system were not consistent with normal vita format and were lumped together
- Cannot run reports of other faculty members or for the department without getting error messages
- Some departments require reporting selected EOC ratings for courses but Elements does not capture these

- No clear place to put dates of conference presentations
- No clear way to input internal funding received
- Humanities has faculty research seminars but Elements has no place to enter participation or creation of a faculty seminar
- No way to add each issue in which the user was an editor in chief of a journal without manually entering the authors of each article
- No clear indication of where to list being a faculty advisor to a student organization
- Faculty changing from FT to PT cannot access Elements information

<u>Broader Issues Regarding the System</u>

- An explanation as to why Elements is beneficial for the University or University Faculty was never provided
- Concern that the reporting system emphasizes number of publications, not their quality and impact on the discipline
- Elements is linked to annual evaluation but faculty were given short notice that they were to enter their data into a new and unclear system without any training to use the system
- No clear understanding how the data will be used
- Since the platform is so troublesome, it might be removed and everyone's time spent entering data will be wasted.
- Administrators are not supporting faculty with this system
- Concern that Elements system format caters to STEM over Humanities
- Faculty should have had opportunity to discuss this system and it's drawbacks before it forced on them
- Having to input one's professional life is tedious
- Some departments have specific requirements/categories for review but Elements does not allow the user to add certain categories. Elements and the requirements of Colleges do not always overlap; Elements cannot be used as a replacement for annual review until it can allow users to add categories required in review by department
- Using Elements doubles the work: have to spend time inputting everything and then spend more time checking for accuracy and editing
- Elements is inwardly focused and does not promote online visibility of faculty or UT
- Elements does not truly reflect faculty performance as data is fetched from online sources but is imperfect
- Elements does not adequately reflect or recognize faculty accomplishments because the definition of what constitutes a "citation" is too narrow. In some fields, such as art and design, citations would include a review, a reproduction, a book or book chapter, or media profile.
- Due to having to constantly go back and edit Element errors, the discrepancies could be interpreted negatively and negatively impact a faculty review
- It is unclear if and when all NTTF will be required to use the system

Suggestions

- System should automatically pull student comments (SAIS scores, End of Course Evaluations) on teaching
- Cut/paste service from CV
- Separate funded proposals from unfunded
- The service section should allow faculty with extraordinary service duties to the university or profession include a narrative statement
- Show research expenditures per year/project
- Highly identifiable links should be added to help faculty navigate across and within sections of Element
- Reduce redundancy in data entry across sections of elements
- TRACE should be connected to Elements (have theses and dissertations from TRACE automatically populated into Elements records)
- Element should provide a spelling check function
- Elements should allow users to import graphics in the form of screen shots
- FAQ section on Elements website should have information – it remains empty
- Should be able to copy and paste from CV for listing publications
- Publication listings should have a dedicated box for citations that fall outside of citations from data-base searches
- It should be clearly explained as to how Elements can benefit the University and the University Faculty because the time-consuming entry process for Elements takes away faculty time that should be devoted to instructional, research, service, and funding possibilities.
- "Published and Media Recognition" section should be added under "Professional Activities" so users can list reviews, reproductions, book/book chapters, critical essay, or media profile about the user's work.
- When the system is going to be used for NTTF, they should (1) get a specific timeline as to when it will become universal; (2) have that clearly communicated to department heads, department associate heads, and lecturer faculty; (3) get to have some training; and (4) have Elements (or how it is interpreted) actually take into account what Lecturers and other NTTF are hired to do in their letters of appointment
- Campus administration should be able to mine data from Elements to help link faculty with common connections. For example, if the US Ambassador from France is speaking at the Baker Center, all faculty with research, teaching and service connections to France should be invited to attend. Having this sort of qualitative capability, as well as other integrative uses for the system would help justify the faculty effort for Elements.