

**UMFA
BARGAINING
TEAM**

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(Economics)
Chief Bargainer

Brenda Austin-Smith
(English)

Cam Morrill
(Accounting &
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Kevin Scott
(Biological Sciences)

Vanessa Swain
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Barbara Yapps
(UMFA Professional
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Stay in touch...

We welcome the opportunity to meet at the UMFA Office with individual Members or groups of Members who wish to discuss matters related to bargaining or any other concern they might have.

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Background: Performance Indicators

The University of Manitoba, as part of its Strategic Plan 2015-2020, has set the goal of finding a “means to assess and evaluate the impacts and outcomes of research, scholarly works, and creative activities.” The administration has recently suggested that this means the introduction of “performance indicators” (“PIs”).

How the administration intends to generate and use performance indicators remains unclear, and the Association has strong reservations about their use: they can steer, rather than simply reflect, academic work; they sometimes replace, rather than supplement, collegial peer review; they tend to favour quantity over quality; they can be easily manipulated; and more.

UMFA’s position is that a cluster of performance indicators does not and cannot replace a healthy culture of debate and self-evaluation, a culture that already exists within the University.

The imposition of performance indicators and rote electronic performance assessment at any level has the potential to negatively impact not only the working conditions of UMFA Members but also their academic freedom to pursue research that may not fit in with the University's priorities or with the prevailing opinion in a field. PI's have potentially large implications for academic workload, performance reviews, tenure and promotion outcomes, and academic freedom.

UMFA is far from alone in expressing these concerns. The Council of Canadian Academies (CCA) — an independent, not-for-profit organization that supports independent expert assessments that inform public policy in Canada — recently published a report on performance indicators that outlines several problems with them, including:

- They create a potential incentive for researchers to produce a greater number of publications at the expense of quality, particularly where funding is tied to output.¹
- In terms of citations, there is the potential to unfairly advantage certain areas of study over others: “Different fields of research have different citation cultures and practices; therefore, the baseline levels of citations differ across fields [...]. For example, papers published in biomedical research fields typically cite many more sources than those published in mathematics. As a result, comparing absolute counts of citations across fields is misleading.”²

1 Council of Canadian Academics, *Informing Research Choices: Indicators and Judgement*, Ottawa, 2012: Page 26.

2 *Informing Research...*: Page 68.

Accuracy and reliability are also big problems. This past December, *The Chronicle of Higher Education*³ highlighted potential errors in databases used to gather information on individual academics for measuring performance. The *Chronicle* looked at the use of data produced by Academic Analytics, a company that measures scholarly productivity by adding up academics' journal articles, citations, books, research grants, and awards and comparing the tallies with national benchmarks. The collection methods used, however, are unreliable. Academic staff at Rutgers University found that there were significant errors in the data. In one case, an academic's record listed more articles than he actually published and more awards than he received, but completely omitted a grant he had been awarded. In a second case, a professor found that 3 books and 28 articles were missing from her publication record. The suspected reason for the missing publications is that the works were published in smaller, non-traditional outlets. This bias has the potential to influence tenure and promotion outcomes, and dissuade academics from publishing in smaller, discipline-specific publications.

Gender can also present an issue when using metrics to measure performance. In "The Gender Citation Gap in International Relations,"⁴ researchers looked at data from a survey conducted by the Teaching, Research and International Policy (TRIP) project. The TRIP survey analyzed over 20 years' worth of publications in International Relations (IR) and found dramatic differences in the number of citations for women vs. men:

The TRIP project has coded approximately 3,000 articles on twenty-six different substantive and demographic variables. Using these data, we demonstrate the existence of a persistent gender gap in citation counts: articles written by women are consistently cited less than articles written by men. This is especially true of women who have not yet earned tenure [...]. If women in IR are systematically cited less than men in ways that do not appear to be associated with observable differences in their scholarship, and if citation counts continue to be used as a key measure of research impact, then women will be disadvantaged in tenure, promotion, and salary decisions.⁵

The U of M administration has attempted to impose performance indicators in the past, including in 2012 when they were introduced in the Faculty of Medicine. This was curtailed by the Association's intervention, such that no such measure can be used to evaluate a member of UMFA. More recently, UMFA has learned that a "central indicators working group" has been established at the University, and is made up of a group of members from various faculties that are seeking indicators as developed by individual units. UMFA is also aware that the Office of Research Services has purchased software not unlike those discussed by the CCA.

"...performance indicators clearly have an impact on the terms and conditions of employment of our Members, on their academic freedom to pursue their research/scholarly and creative endeavours, and on a variety of rights earned in previous rounds of negotiation. As a result, the development of PIs at any level must be addressed in collective bargaining."

From UMFA's perspective, the problem with performance indicators is that numbers tend to be taken as self-evident and prescriptive. Worse yet, in contradiction to the principles of academic freedom, PIs can be used to create and justify research priorities that align with administrators', rather than researchers', prerogatives, and they can punish researchers working outside of the mainstream within their discipline, as well as those engaging in interdisciplinary scholarship.

3 Ellen Wexler. "Can Data Measure Faculty Productivity? Rutgers Professors Say No." *Chronicle of Higher Education*, December 11, 2015. Online.

4 Daniel Maliniak, Ryan Powers and Barbara F. Walter. "The Gender Citation Gap in International Relations." *International Organization*, doi:10.1017/S00208183130002: Page 3.

5 Maliniak, "The Gender Citation Gap...", page 3.

The information UMFA has received to date suggests that the administration is indeed looking to use indicators for prescriptive rather than formative purposes, and that the discussion to create a set of global indicators has been initiated by Central Administration, not by individual academic units. The information also suggests that a limited set of information is being considered and the use of these indicators will have the effect of comparing unique departments to one another, leading to inter-departmental competition for funds and other resources.

In a recent letter to Members, UMFA President Mark Hudson stressed that performance indicators clearly have an impact on the terms and conditions of employment of our Members, on their academic freedom to pursue their research/scholarly and creative endeavours, and on a variety of rights earned in previous rounds of negotiation. As a result, the development of PIs at any level must be addressed in collective bargaining.

When the issue is raised in your department, school, college, or faculty, UMFA advises that Members respectfully decline to develop or recommend performance indicators, and move to have any further discussions tabled. Department Heads, Directors and Deans should be told that this is an issue for UMFA to address in this year's contract negotiations. UMFA encourages all Members to contact the UMFA office should you have any questions or concerns about what is happening in your unit.

From Bibliometrics: The Leiden Manifesto for research metrics

"Use these ten principles to guide research evaluation..."

- 1) Quantitative evaluation should support qualitative, expert assessment.
- 2) Measure performance against the research missions of the institution, group or researcher.
- 3) Protect excellence in locally relevant research.
- 4) Keep data collection and analytical processes open, transparent and simple.
- 5) Allow those evaluated to verify data and analysis.
- 6) Account for variation by field in publication and citation practices.
- 7) Base assessment of individual researchers on a qualitative judgement of their portfolio.
- 8) Avoid misplaced concreteness and false precision.
- 9) Recognize the systemic effects of assessment and indicators.
- 10) Scrutinize indicators regularly and update them."

Diana Hicks, Paul Wouters, Ludo Waltman, Sarah de Rijcke & Ismael Rafols. "Bibliometrics: The Leiden Manifesto for research metrics." *Nature*, April 22, 2015. Online.

UMFA Gives Notice to Commence Bargaining

With our Collective Agreement running through March 31st of this year, UMFA formally launched the bargaining process with a letter to the administration last week.

"The launch of bargaining comes after a lot of listening," said UMFA President Mark Hudson. "The UMFA Collective Agreement Committee and Bargaining Team have been meeting with Members at Fort Garry and Bannatyne campuses during the past several months, hearing about Members' concerns and priorities. Your team is building proposals that reflect what we've heard, the needs expressed through the bargaining survey, and using input from our grievance officers and staff. We're looking forward to a successful round of negotiations and to achieving positive results for the over 1200 academics that UMFA represents."

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HAVE A QUESTION ABOUT YOUR JOB?

NEED ADVICE ON AN ISSUE?

WANT TO GET INVOLVED WITH YOUR ASSOCIATION?

**UMFA IS HERE TO HELP.
CONTACT US AT 474-8272 OR TALK TO
YOUR BOARD REPRESENTATIVE
TODAY!**



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