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Subject: Problem with use of SRI metric from Academic Analytics

Everyone,

The Statistics department has been preparing for the APC hearing by digging into the data, and we have discovered a problem with implications not only for the budget proposal but also for UNL's plans to rejoin the AAU. IANR leadership has indicated that any issues with the metrics used for budget cuts should be brought to the attention of ORI (for research) as soon as possible.

We have discovered that the UNL computations based on SRI produce misleading results (e.g. the z-score comparison method). Yesterday, we met with an Academic Analytics analyst and confirmed our suspicions. Ultimately, because SRI is a discipline-specific weighted average of different research factors, creating z-scores from SRI metrics is problematic and destroys the signal available in the data, particularly when those scores are calculated across different disciplines with different weightings. There are alternatives that would allow for cross-department comparisons, and we would be happy to discuss those alternatives.

In the case of the Statistics department, the SRI numbers from Academic Analytics indicate that we are performing at a level of productivity equivalent to leading departments in Statistics — Iowa State, Michigan State, and Univ Illinois Urbana-Champaign, among others. Obviously, this is a far cry from the z-score SRI provided to the department that indicates that we're performing poorly relative to other departments on campus.

We would like to meet briefly at some point between now and Tuesday to explain the issue and demonstrate the problem for our department, because this discovery has the potential to inflame an already volatile situation as campus reacts to the proposed cuts. If we have missed anyone who needs to be included in this discussion, please feel free to forward this and to include them in the meeting.

Thanks,

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