

Case study: University of Kentucky

Understanding and showcasing *research strengths*



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In addition to raising the visibility of University of Kentucky researchers, Pure has become a cornerstone of the institution's responsible research assessment strategy.

Background

Sited in the heart of America's famous Bluegrass region, the University of Kentucky is the state's largest university with 16 colleges, a graduate school and an academic medical school. Together, these offer around 90 undergraduate programs, nearly 100 master's programs and 66 doctoral programs. In fact, it is one of only eight US institutions that provides liberal arts, engineering, professional, agricultural and medical colleges and disciplines in a single location.

But, according to Baron Wolf, PhD, the university's Assistant Vice President for Research and Director of Research Analytics, the digital tools his office was using back in 2021 didn't necessarily reflect or support that rich variety of research activities.

This led the university to launch a formal 'request for proposal' process for a research information management system (RIMS) to capture and highlight the full range of its achievements.

In this case study, Baron runs through the rationale for choosing Pure, how he encouraged buy-in on campus, and the current use cases for the university's Pure portal, [Scholars@UK](#).

“With Pure, we can let people know about the breadth of research that we do.... It enables us to tell the full story of the University of Kentucky.”

“We appreciate the user friendliness of Pure, how clean the system is, and all the things you can do with it. Pure also offers a high level of data connectivity.”

Baron Wolf, PhD

Assistant Vice President for Research & Director of Research Analytics, University of Kentucky

Pure: An intuitive system that streamlines workflows

For Baron and his colleagues in the Office of Research, it was Elsevier’s research performance assessment solution, SciVal, that seeded the idea of adopting an institutional RIMS. He explains: “We had been using SciVal to gather bibliometric information about our researchers for several years. However, at a certain point, we wanted to capture the kind of data you don’t find in many solutions and databases, such as arts and humanities work. We also wanted to create public profiles for our faculty to raise awareness of the University of Kentucky and the research that we do.”

Although Baron describes himself as a “proponent of home-grown systems”, when his team began to explore options to better showcase their researchers, they realized that building a RIMS-style system inhouse would involve starting from scratch. The team also considered developing individual websites for researchers, but soon dismissed the idea due to the volume of manual work involved in maintaining them. As Baron notes: “All too often, those kinds of sites aren’t kept up to date with important information like recent publications.”

After sifting through the responses to their request for proposals, Baron says Pure soon emerged as the favored option. “One reason is due to our existing relationship with Elsevier through SciVal, but Pure also suited our needs”, he admits.

Pure’s automated processes were another big draw for the team. “The system enables us to pull in and integrate data quite easily, including data we didn’t have before. In addition, Pure’s Profile Refinement Service has helped us ensure the lists of publications in our researcher profiles are accurate and up to date.”

“We didn’t buy Pure for the STEM and biomedical fields, we bought it for all researchers, and with that comes a lot of culture change and understanding for buy-in.”

“To me, the fact that researchers are taking content from Pure to showcase themselves is a sign that the system is effective.”

“Without a tool like Pure, it’s really difficult to understand research output connections.”

Baron Wolf, PhD

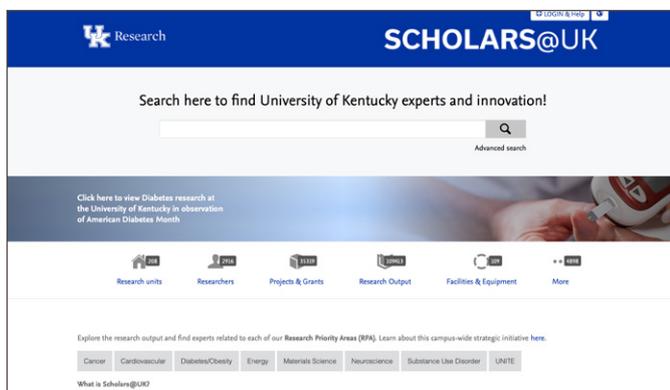
Assistant Vice President for Research & Director of Research Analytics, University of Kentucky

Building support on campus, one school at a time

Because the university purchased Pure to manage and showcase the full range of its research, Baron says his team took a “slow, strategic approach” to introducing the solution. In fact, implementation took more than a year in total, with Scholars@UK going live in July 2022. “The benefit of taking our time was that we could create a very clear communication track with our researchers about why we were doing it, how it would benefit them, and how they could access training,” Baron explains.

This methodical approach also gave the Office of Research time to meet with the leadership teams of each of the university’s academic colleges. “It was an opportunity to learn more about their specific use cases, and any potential stumbling blocks they might encounter when Pure was launched.”

In particular, they had time to liaise with colleges in the fields of arts and humanities. “They have previously felt excluded from the systems that we use, but this exercise enabled us to show them that Pure is also for their researchers, and that we believe their work is just as important as content indexed in Scopus and other databases,” Baron says. “We also told them that, yes, some manual work would be involved for them, because there are no other systems from which we can automatically import their data into Pure. However, we reassured them that there was plenty of time for them to create profiles they were happy with – that helped to get their buy-in.”



Driving visibility and inclusivity with Pure's connected data

With Scholars@UK now operational on campus for over a year, use of the solution continues to grow – as do the inventive ways in which the university's teams and units leverage it.

1. Finding and showcasing experts

Using Pure to identify experts has become a popular use case on campus. For example, according to Baron, Pure is now his team's first port of call when looking for researchers with specific skills and knowledge. He explains: "It helps us find and connect people on campus, but also globally. With the growing opportunities for multidisciplinary research offered by US federal funding agencies, and requirements for more team science, Pure has become an essential tool in helping us make people realize that University of Kentucky is active in many disciplines."

For some of the 2,800+ researchers profiled on [Scholars@UK](#), Pure is fast becoming a source they can draw on to promote their expertise. "I've noticed that they are adding Pure fingerprint and collaboration graphics to their presentations," Baron reveals. "Prior to Pure, many of them did not have access to that level of information. And, if they did, creating a graphic like that required a lot of manual work, as well as expertise in social network analysis."

2. Identifying promotional opportunities

For the university's marketing and PR departments, **Pure is proving a useful tool to uncover hidden research stories.** Baron explains: "It's easy to do publicity about research that has been funded by grant dollars, because we receive an award notice from the agency. However, it's really hard to identify the people doing research via other channels, or those publishing books or non-textual forms. With Pure, that's changed. For example, we can use the reporting module to run a custom report on anyone who has published a book in the past 12 months, then go to them and say, hey, let's do a story!"



2.8K

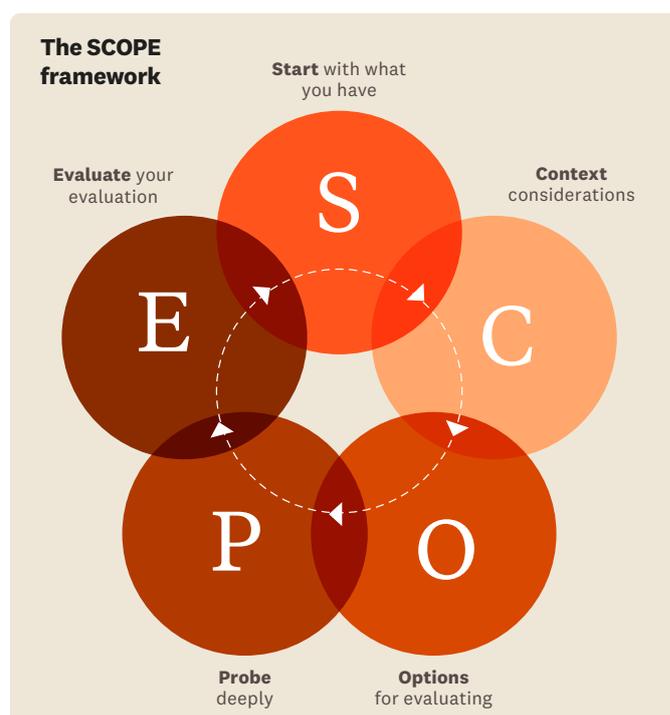
researchers were profiled
on [Scholars@UK](#)

3. Implementing a value-led assessment process for internal funding programs

Equitable and responsible research evaluation is a strong research interest for Baron. Alongside his roles at University of Kentucky, he also represents the Society of Research Administrators International on the INORMS¹ Research Evaluation Working Group. In 2019, the group released the first version of the [SCOPE Framework](#) – a five-stage process for evaluating research responsibly.

Baron explains: "Many institutions, organizations and ranking agencies use typical bibliometric evidence for research assessments, like citation count and h-index, but these metrics are problematic. For example, using the h-index as a predictor of how much money you give a newly hired researcher for their start-up package, ignores inherent biases in publications that can negatively impact female researchers, early career scientists, etc. It also ignores the disparities in scholarly disciplines; the arts and humanities don't have the same type of outputs or measures as STEM or biomedical fields."

Building on the work of existing models like the [Leiden Manifesto](#) and the [Declaration on Research Assessment \(DORA\)](#), the SCOPE Framework aims to combat these inequalities in research assessment and provide a more equitable, fair and value-led process.



¹ The International Network of Research Management Societies (INORMS) brings together research management societies and associations from across the globe, enabling interactions, sharing of good practice and coordination of activities.

Since the launch of Scholars@UK, **Baron has been using Pure's impact module to help him and his team deliver on the framework's goals.** In particular, Pure plays a valuable role in:



Complying with funding body mandates

When a University of Kentucky researcher receives a grant from a funding body like the National Institutes of Health, it comes with specific requirements. “We need to report back on things like the publications that came out of it, the datasets, prizes and honors, etc.,” Baron explains. “These should be cited within the final journal articles, but often that doesn't happen and then it's a hard and time consuming manual process to track the data down.”

Prior to Pure, Baron and his colleagues relied on asking researchers to update Excel files with the information on an annual basis. Today, they ask researchers to upload that information directly into Pure, greatly reducing the administrative burden. “And the great thing about Pure is that it's easy to attach documents and other supplementary material,” Baron adds.



Tracking and reporting on internal funding

Prior to Pure, this was a challenge for the Office of Research. “We don't currently have a campuswide database for internal funding opportunities, so information was buried in whatever system that particular funding unit or department used.” Now Baron and his team add the internal grants to Pure as projects. “It means that we can not only share with the community that this researcher is doing this type of pilot work, we can also track and attach outcomes of that work and its impacts.”

Importantly, it's also reduced the workload for Baron and his team. “When my leadership asks me how many papers have come out of a program, I don't have to comb through lots of Word and Excel files to manually count them. Pure enables the researcher to capture that information themselves, and then I can just pull the numbers I need using the reporting module.”

Using Pure in this way is also helping to guide his office's responsible assessment strategy. Baron explains: “We can look at the outcomes of the projects and use them to understand whether the guidelines we developed for those internal funding dollars were appropriate. And we can identify areas for change.”



Increasing the accountability of researchers

One of the guiding principles of the SCOPE Framework is to “evaluate with the evaluated”; in other words, make the process inclusive. According to Baron, before the introduction of Pure, researchers working in the arts & humanities had expressed concerns about a lack of recognition and resources for their disciplines. For Baron, [Scholars@UK](#) provides the ideal opportunity to “give them a seat at the table”. He explains: “We said to them, tell us what your impacts are – how do we measure you, not necessarily for promotion and tenure, but to tell the world how great you are in the work that you are doing? It hasn't been easy for them to identify those measures, and it will require a culture change, but Pure is helping them to show their work and its impact.”



Capturing more qualitative measures of impact

The first phase of the SCOPE Framework is ‘Start with what you value’, but, according to Baron, “so often we value what we think we can measure, rather than measuring what we actually value.” The University of Kentucky is taking a different approach. “At our institution, we don't fully embrace rankings and evaluation and some of the things that other institutions struggle with. Our President is all about the mission to support the commonwealth of Kentucky and our citizens. The Pure impact module helps us to create that narrative, qualitative part of it,” he explains.

“When a researcher receives seed funding for a pilot project that's not going to lead to a publication, they can actually go to Pure and describe what they did. For example, if they ran a diabetes-based education course for African American communities, they could talk about the impact that had, the questions it sparked, things like that. And my office can then collect that qualitative data information in a more cohesive way, real time, for reporting.” Baron adds: “The same evidence can be used for other things, like our regional accreditation as an institution.”

Similarly, the university is using Pure to keep a record of the social innovation work it's involved in; for example, by capturing related press releases and other documents. Baron anticipates that the value of Pure will continue to grow as the university and its researchers learn and build additional use cases across campus and research disciplines.



About University of Kentucky

Founded in the city of Lexington in 1865, University of Kentucky is a public university that grew out of pre-existing institutions in the area. It has a broad range of resources centered on a single campus. With 16 degree-granting colleges and more than 200 academic programs, it excels in multidisciplinary studies and fosters an environment of cooperative engagement across all colleges, programs and research endeavors.

It remains anchored in its mission to Kentucky – to educate, innovate, heal and serve. The fruits of its mission are evident in its research and development (R&D), which has a direct economic impact on Kentucky. For example, the \$504 million that the university spent on R&D in the financial year of 2023 generated \$925 million in economic activity across the Kentucky Commonwealth. As a result, 4,903 jobs were supported throughout the commonwealth, with 2,408 of those jobs directly supported by research initiatives.





Pure

Pure helps institutions to streamline workflows, ensure compliance, and showcase their research impact. By centralizing their data and fostering collaboration, Pure enables research leaders to make informed decisions, accelerate academic progress, and confidently demonstrate their institution's contributions to society.

For more information about Pure, visit elsevier.com/solutions/pure

