

# HOW PIVOT CHANGED THE RESEARCH LANDSCAPE AT AUBURN UNIVERSITY



## **About Auburn University**

Auburn University is one of the largest universities in the South, offering more than 140 degree options in 13 schools and colleges at the undergraduate, graduate and professional levels. The University offers a traditional blend of arts and applied science that meets the needs of today while embodying the respect for tradition that is Auburn.

## **About Pivot**

Pivot accelerates the research process by integrating funding and collaborator discovery into one powerful tool. It connects researchers and financial support by leveraging the most comprehensive global source of funding opportunities combined with over 3 million detailed scholar profiles to match financial support with researchers.

### THE PROBLEM

Auburn University knows the value of research and therefore offers its faculty, staff and students the highest quality and most extensive research support available. This support structure includes a dedicated Office of Sponsored Programs that focuses on everything from locating funding opportunities to reviewing proposals and negotiating awards.

The problem that the University faced proved not to be a lack of support, but a lack of awareness about the work of its many scholars and researchers. This lack was in part due to collaboration-stifling silos, as well as resulting from having no easy way to keep up with the most recent publications.

"My role in the Office of Sponsored Programs has been to locate the funding that helps our faculty make big ideas a reality and then to connect faculty members to those funds. For over fifteen years, we've worked with Community of Science, a database that features research funding opportunities from private and government sources, to locate opportunities but we needed to go several steps farther. Namely, we needed to connect faculty members to financial opportunities while also supporting collaboration between faculty members of different disciplines in order to land more funding," says Marc Haon, Research Services Advisor at Auburn.

Continues Haon, "Our best option for determining potential collaboration was manually entering faculty expertise into an Excel spreadsheet and then referring to this incomplete data throughout the funding process to determine potential partnerships. Working with a document that requires manual updating cost us a lot of time and effort without providing a clear, definitive view of what our faculty had accomplished in various research fields."

### THE SOLUTION

Auburn needed a tool that would require less manual insertion and updating of publication information and a partner that would be willing to address specific needs as they arise.

"Since we worked with Community of Science with great results, we were excited to see that ProQuest used Pivot to expand upon Community of Science's research funding opportunity database, building in a collaborative aspect to augment the funding information. Not only did Pivot offer the same ease of finding funding that we had grown used to with Community of Science as well as a faculty database that helps Auburn scholars move outside of their silos to interact with researchers in different disciplines than their own, but ProQuest was willing to work with us when we needed even more," says Haon. "We don't have a cradle-to-grave system at Auburn so being able to identify limited submissions and promote them with enough time for faculty to prepare proposals has meant fewer missed opportunities. The best part is that Pivot didn't come with this capability at first, but when I brought up the need to my Pivot relationship manager, their team went to work making what we thought of as the perfect fit even better."

### THE RESULTS

With the support of the university, Auburn has found that using Pivot helped change its research landscape in three key ways:

- 1. Growing its research program:** Pivot's user-friendly search interface, extensive filtering options and helpful support staff have helped Auburn to prepare itself for a year of big initiatives.  
"We're continuing to narrow our focus by introducing an Office of Proposal Services and Faculty Support so we can reach our goal of developing bigger and better proposals that total over \$1 million. Our 2014 research expenditure level was \$142,487,000, which is an increase from the previous year, and this year will be even higher," says Haon. "A major step towards accomplishing that goal is continuing to leverage Pivot and all of its specialized functions to attract researchers to our University and further grow our research enterprise."
- 2. Increasing awareness of grants and funding:** As Haon continues to work on assessing the direct effect that Pivot has had on landed funding opportunities, he's pleased with the anecdotal evidence he's received that Pivot is doing its job and beyond.  
"During a Pivot presentation to new graduate students last month, we had a faculty member voice his concern that such a tool came with a greater expense than benefit since he knew all of the opportunities available to him," explains Haon. "Using Pivot's search capabilities, I quickly found two previously undiscovered funding opportunities for this faculty member's specific field. What we're seeing is that Pivot is proving that there's more than just the one, known opportunity out there."
- 3. Increasing researcher exposure:** The results have extended beyond just the faculty members who utilize the Office of Sponsored Programs to include graduate students seeking funding and undergraduate students seeking fellowships. That's not all: Because Pivot offers a public search option, use of the tool is not limited. The Auburn Research Advisory Board found Pivot answered their needs when it comes to locating faculty members with specific fields of expertise. The Auburn Communications and Marketing Department uses the tool similarly to pair their researchers with media opportunities that relate to their areas of expertise.

### IN CONCLUSION

Pivot has been instrumental in improving Auburn's ability to locate and secure new funding as well as collaboration opportunities. However, only about one fourth of Auburn's faculty is actively bringing in grant money right now. Haon is hopeful that by continuing to advocate for the use of Pivot at Auburn, they'll see a dramatic increase in the number of available grants being pursued and get closer to its objective of developing bigger and better proposals. "My goal is that anyone and everyone that 'touches' research at Auburn will know about Pivot, how it works, and how they can use it to identify new funding opportunities that will help Auburn's dream of growing our research enterprise become a reality."