

## Research Counts

By Paula Felps

A new SOM database uses peer-reviewed published research to compute business-school rankings. SOM is 37th in North America.

Inspired by a 2002 study published in OR/MS Today magazine, The University of Texas at Dallas School of Management (SOM) has created a new tool for ranking research productivity in business schools.

The new system tracks research published by business school faculties around the world, then ranks the schools based on the number of articles by their faculty members. The database traces titles and author affiliations in publications back to 1990. However, the rankings are based on the number of articles published between 2000 and 2004.

"Initially we decided to compile the database because we wanted a tool for benchmarking for our own faculty," SOM Dean Hasan Pirkul, Ph.D., explains. "We wanted to know where we stood amongst our peers."

The 2002 article, which appeared in OR/MS Today, a bimonthly magazine for members of the Institute for Operations Research and the Management Sciences, was based on a study by two University of Connecticut researchers. James R. Marsden and Ravi Bapna measured the research productivity of business school faculties in the fields of operations management (OM) and management information systems (MIS). That study showed that between 1997 and 2002 the UTD School of Management ranked sixth worldwide.

"We looked very good in that study," the dean says, "and we wondered how we were doing in the other fields of business. It made us want to look beyond OM and MIS."

### Launching the Project

At Dean Pirkul's request, the SOM's Center for Information Technology and Management, Dr. Varghese Jacob, SOM's senior associate dean and a professor of information systems, and Dr. Young Ryu, another member of SOM's information systems faculty, designed and implemented the database that led to The UTD Top 100 Business School Research Rankings.

"We picked 22 leading peer-reviewed journals in all disciplines," Dean Pirkul says. "We talked with colleagues across all disciplines to come up with which journals should be included."

The UTD Top 100 includes both the top 100 North American business schools and the top 100 business schools worldwide. The results of the study's rankings appear on the website of the Center for Information Technology and Management at [citm.utdallas.edu/utdrankings/](http://citm.utdallas.edu/utdrankings/). In those results, as of mid-April, UTD's School of Management ranked 37th on the North American list and 40th worldwide. The Wharton School at the University of Pennsylvania and Harvard University's Business School ranked first and second, respectively.

The project took about 18 months to complete, and it now will be an ongoing effort. Jessica Brown, assistant to Dr. Jacob, was responsible for inputting the initial information and will continue to update the research rankings as new journals are published. Dr. Jacob notes that while the database will be kept up to date on a continuing basis to allow other schools and faculty members to do their own analyses, the rankings will be announced for the most recent five-year period each year in January. UTD announced the initial rankings when the database was made public in February.

"As data comes in, we'll input the new information and keep it updated,"

Dr. Jacob says. "By and large, there were no big surprises; there are schools that you expect to be productive in research. But the database really shows research productivity across the whole business school as opposed to a specific niche, as done in the prior OR/MS Today study."

#### More Than Just Rankings

"This started out as something we wanted for our own use, but it has become something that everyone can use," Dean Pirkul says. "And it's much more than just ranking; it provides a database with publications [dating back to] 1990. People can pick a range of years or a set of journals to search."

Dean Pirkul says searches can be done by a particular name to see how well a faculty member has done in terms of research. He notes that a handful of publications rank universities annually based on their progress, "but few take into consideration the research being done by these schools. Until now, there wasn't a comparison of rankings for research."

He says such a resource is long overdue because faculty research plays an important role in providing students the most advanced educational experience available.

"Research is an integral part of the work of institutions of higher education," he says. "There are many rankings, particularly of MBA programs. These rankings in themselves are important. But they often do not address this important aspect. We are trying to fill that void."

#### UTD Makes a Strong Showing

Dr. Hobson Wildenthal, executive vice president and provost of UTD, has praised the project both for its innovation and for its results.

"They had a creative, powerful idea of putting together this objective and comprehensive survey," he says. "As soon as Dean Pirkul told me about it, I realized it was a great idea. The results are something you can't argue with because they're hard facts. The whole world accepts it because the methodology is so strong."

The fact that UTD fared so well against schools that have been around a century longer speaks volumes for the caliber of faculty on board, Dr. Wildenthal says.

"As a whole, [this study showed that] we are very strong, perhaps even stronger than we expected," he says. "I consider this a fantastic achievement, given where we started and what we've had to overcome. This gives us tremendous credibility and name recognition."

#### Ongoing Benefits, Limitless Possibilities

Dr. Michael Savoie, director of CITM, and Rishi Pagnis, CITM assistant director, were part of the team compiling the information. Dr. Savoie says that the ongoing benefits of the study are impressive and valuable Ñ not just to UTD, but to schools worldwide.

"It's a complicated formula, and it is unique in that it isn't just based on a single ranking. There are different criteria schools can use to see where they stand. If they want to see how they stand in a particular journal, they can do that. Or they can see how they're ranked internationally. There are an unlimited number of possibilities and benefits."

#### Criticisms and Compliments

Response to the study overall has been very positive, but Dean Pirkul says those who compiled the rankings anticipated Ñ and received Ñ a few criticisms. One complaint is that the database doesn't adjust rankings in terms of size; a school with a small faculty that has a few articles published may look less active than their larger counterparts when, proportionately, they actually have more research published.

"In the beta version, we tried to adjust for size," Dean Pirkul explains. "The problem is, it is difficult to get and maintain an accurate faculty number for each school. As a result, we had to go with a formula that did not adjust according to size. Nonetheless, this gives you a picture of the total amount of research the school is doing."

Some schools took issue with some of the journals the study was based on.

"Because we wanted it to be manageable, we limited it to the top journals," the dean says. "There is always some question over which ones to include. There are possibly other journals that could be included down the road."

#### Praise and Progress

As a whole, schools have praised both the effort and the results.

"A lot of the responses we've received have been positive and talked about how there was a tremendous need for this," Dean Pirkul says. "This serves us two ways: Our colleagues, worldwide, appreciate the fact that we have done this, and it also puts our name out there as a school that advances the cause of research."

For all its high-profile benefits, however, the most important fact remains the idea that initiated the study to begin with Ñ it provides UTD with a way to keep track of its own progress as a research powerhouse.

"What this study shows is that we're a strong competitor in research," he says. "That makes it easier to recruit new, young faculty who know that research is important. This puts us out there as a school that advances the cause of research. We will be appreciated and recognized for that."