

THE FACULTY INFORMATION SYSTEM:
Interfolio and the
Scholar-Centric Model



Today more than ever, higher education faces the task of demonstrating its value

Senior academic leaders are under increasing pressure to articulate academic impact to a range of sceptical constituents, from academics to students, funders, government and the media.¹ Academics are also increasingly burdened by data requests and the cumbersome business necessities of operating an institution—pulling their time away from the role that only they can play.

Yet many universities still lack centralised, accurate data about academic work, whether that's peer-reviewed publications, teaching, service, career growth, or the impact arising from funded research. For the most significant decisions facing their institutions, academic leaders are flying blind without reliable data.²

This gap in knowledge and empowerment around academic work threatens higher education. When it persists:

- Academics, the drivers of the scholarly mission, spend less time innovating, inventing, publishing, speaking, and—critically—teaching. Under increased administrative workload and unclear career advancement,³ student success suffers from the disengagement of academic staff.
- Universities face lawsuits over inconsistencies in academic hiring and tenure. Publicly stated diversity goals are missed year after year. Institutions lose top-performing researchers and professors to competitors. (Or the wrong staff are hired—a potential 30-year, \$3 million mistake.)
- Academic leaders are unable to tangibly demonstrate the value their institutions provide. Millions in research funding are lost that could have been secured.

Overcoming this gap starts with academics. Imagine a system that provides scholars the tools they need to succeed—so that the university, and its strategic initiatives, will succeed. There's no question that software has evolved in higher education. Forbes estimated that the value of the global EdTech market in 2021 was \$100B+ with >15% growth per annum anticipated until 2030.⁴ But EdTech solutions and business systems typically speak to Chief Technology Officers, and historically have focused primarily on student outcomes—neglecting the work experience of the very academics responsible for delivering those outcomes.

This is the gap Interfolio exists to fill.

¹ The 2020 Survey of College and University Chief Academic Officers, Inside Higher Ed, January 21, 2020 (<https://www.insidehighered.com/news/survey/2020-inside-higher-ed-survey-chief-academic-officers>) , pp. 7, 12, 16, 31-32, 47.

² "Big Data's Coming Of Age In Higher Education," Forbes, Jan 29, 2016 (<https://www.forbes.com/sites/schoolboard/2016/01/29/big-datas-coming-of-age-in-higher-education/?sh=6938fcc61c41>). Also see NACUBO, Analytics in Higher Education and Barriers to Expansion, November 19, 2019 (<https://www.higheredtoday.org/2019/11/19/analytics-higher-education-barriers-expansion/>).

³ Many Whitaker, "10 Things No One Told Me About Applying for Tenure," Chronicle of Higher Education, April 10, 2019 (<https://www.chronicle.com/article/10-Things-No-One-Told-Me-About/246187>).

⁴ "The Future of EdTech," Forbes Dec 26, 2022.

“When we began searching for a product well-suited to support our academic processes, Interfolio emerged as a leader in the area of faculty technology. Interfolio’s cornerstone belief that clients are more than clients—they are partners—coupled with the flexibility of its faculty-first products made it a clear and obvious choice when we were looking to enhance resources to better support our faculty.”

Alysia K. Loshbaugh

Assistant Provost for Finance and Operations, Tulane University

Faculty Information System

The Interfolio Faculty Information System (FIS) remains the definitive scholar-centric engagement platform for higher education. It’s a user-friendly system that brings academic recruitment, activity data, committee work and administrative workflows, and the scholar’s professional journey into a central place.

Capturing the attention of Gartner, Faculty Information Systems were named as a top 10 strategic technology for higher education in 2020.⁵

Sitting naturally amidst the institution’s other essential technologies, the Interfolio FIS model provides the necessary engine both to facilitate academic work and to study it.

What makes Interfolio’s FIS model different is precisely what makes it successful:

- Interfolio creates a self-sustaining, virtuous cycle. By strategically tying data validation and maintenance to opportunities for academic career growth, the Interfolio model yields a high-quality body of data that benefits both the scholar and the institution.
- Interfolio takes a broad view of what constitutes academic work and the academic career journey. The Interfolio model pursues a full picture of academics’ professional and scholarly role. It encompasses research and creative productions, teaching, service to the institution, appointment and advancement timelines, conference participation, patents, mentorship, and more.
- Interfolio integrates widely and flexibly. The Interfolio model calls for the FIS to draw upon all relevant data sources and reconcile them. It seeks to maximize data quality while minimizing manual data maintenance. At hundreds of universities worldwide, the Interfolio platform has become an essential piece of the technology ecosystem.

⁵ Morgan, Glenda, et al. “Top 10 Strategic Technologies Impacting Higher Education in 2020.” Published by Gartner, Inc. March 2, 2020.

Five Institutional Challenges and How Academics Support Them

Academics can be directly linked to almost every strategic scholarly and business process at a university:

- 1. Budget:** Through their stewardship of teaching and research, academics are responsible for the majority of institutional revenue generated through tuition and research grants. At the same time, payroll and benefits comprise the largest line item on most institutional budgets.
- 2. Student Success:** Research shows that engaged academics are one of the most direct influencers of student success.⁶
- 3. Equity:** The success of any strategic goal to increase campus equity, diversity, and inclusion is largely dependent on the actions of academics participating in governance practices like hiring, review, and tenure.
- 4. Governance:** A culture of shared governance places many of the most important and expensive institutional decisions in the hands of academics—for instance, a new professorial appointment.
- 5. Rank:** Through their scholarship, academics define the prestige, rank, and research culture of an institution.

Worldwide Needs for Improved Academic Information

Regardless of the country or language, higher education across the globe evidences the fundamental need for a scholar-centric information platform that creates a virtuous cycle of scholarly data, takes an inclusive view of the nature of academic work, and integrates freely with other systems.

Higher education systems in different parts of the world may have different terminology, different employment structures (e.g. presence/absence of tenure), different funding approaches, or different political climates. Those differences are meaningful. Nevertheless, the core challenges that the scholar-centric Interfolio FIS exists to address are active in higher education worldwide:

- At many universities, there is simply no dedicated system or institution-wide source of truth by which to reference who currently holds which academic appointments, or view career growth patterns among the scholars employed—key information that has bearing on academic management and succession planning.

⁶ The 2016 Employee Engagement and Retention in Higher Education Survey, Gallup.

“As a truly international institution, it’s imperative that we recruit and cultivate an academic workforce as global as the students we serve. Our engagement with Interfolio will enable us to maintain our competitive edge by attracting and retaining internationally-recognized research and teaching talent while empowering current faculty with the tools to focus on teaching, scholarship, and service.”

Jammu Francisco

Associate Dean Asian Institute of Management

- Departments hiring for research and teaching positions face a deluge of qualified applicants and grapple with efficiently making the right hire for the department at that time.
- Universities frequently lack either the data or the practical mechanism to increase equity and diversity or ensure an inclusive climate for academic employment.
- In promotion and advancement workflows for individual academics, university leaders struggle to ensure fairness, consistency, and transparency—let alone identify disparities—while also keeping the process efficient and sustainable.
- Higher education institutions compete for talented scholars but historically have only crude tools to inform where they should invest resources.
- Universities struggle to pull together accurate data to paint a compelling, credible, full picture of the local and global impact that their scholars are having.

For all these reasons, the Interfolio model provides an FIS flexible enough to be used worldwide.

Data Consolidation and Validation

A critical concept in the Interfolio model is that the FIS should make the best possible use of all of the academic data that is already stored in other systems—thus creating a single source of truth for academic data.

When considering the individual higher education institution, the FIS might draw (at a minimum) from:

- Campus systems (whether home-built or commercially licensed)
- Commercial and subscription-based data sources
- Publicly available data sources
- Curated data sources and profile systems

The Faculty Information System: Interfolio and the Scholar-Centric Model

Inextricable with the concept of data consolidation is the concept of data validation.

The significance of finding a successful, sustainable way to achieve data validation has only become clearer in recent years, as more and more institutions have adopted faculty activity reporting systems and grappled with the fundamental challenge of keeping data current, complete, and correct.

In the Interfolio FIS vision, academics have an unobtrusive experience of data validation that gets their eyes on data as it comes into the system, limiting manual data entry and improving linked metadata.

The result is an ever-accumulating body of reliable data about the academic activities of the institution's faculty—which academics are incentivized to keep current, as it powers their career milestones such as review and promotion.

Interfolio's Vision for the Academic Data Ecosystem

CAMPUS SYSTEMS

- ERP & HR systems (ex. Peoplesoft, Banner, DataTel, etc.)
- Student information systems
- Campus grants and funding management systems
- Research management systems
- Curriculum management systems
- Course evaluation systems

PUBLICLY AVAILABLE DATA SOURCES

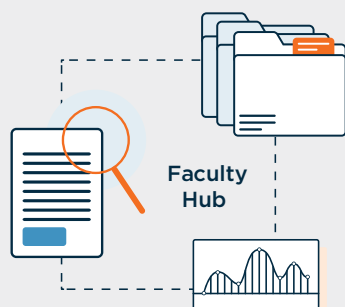
- MEDLINE/PubMed
- Clinical trials
- NIH

COMMERCIAL AND SUBSCRIPTION-BASED DATA SOURCES

- Scopus by Elsevier
- Web of Science by Clarivate
- Dimensions by Digital Science
- OCLC WorldCat

FACULTY-CURATED DATA SOURCES AND PROFILE SYSTEMS

- ORCID
- Google Scholar
- EBSCO



Elements of the Faculty Information System

The Interfolio FIS features are constructed specifically to champion the varied work that academics do. Even its many valuable tools for administrative and staff users are infused with the understanding that the institution's business necessities derive from its academic mission—and not the other way around.

The Interfolio FIS intentionally exists in a modular form, offering functionality (for hiring, for appointments and journeys, for review workflows, for data analytics, and so on) that can be used independently. This is highly complementary to the overlapping project of research impact modelling, so we have included a blueprint for that functionality here as well.

Yet, ultimately, Interfolio's vision of the FIS creates the most value as a unified platform, striving for a seamless connection between different aspects of academic work.

Committee Decision Workflows

Interfolio's vision of the FIS supports the laborious, workflow-heavy shared governance processes around recruitment/hiring, onboarding, review, sabbatical, tenure, and promotion.

- Committee responsibilities, including reviewing/annotating materials, inter/intra-committee communication, voting, required documents/forms, recusal, and external evaluations
- Adherence to procedures and policies, including workflow automation, templates, and pre-defined processes
- Access permissions, including options to restrict and grant access per material, per case, per user, per step
- Communication, including sending, automating, and logging correspondence to candidates, reviewers, and external references, around academic hiring and reviews
- Structure, including options to centrally manage, standardize, and reflect committee membership and administrative hierarchy

Appointment and Career Journey Management

The Interfolio FIS gives academic leaders a consolidated resource to know, at any time, who all scholars in their organisation are, what employment agreements are in place with them, and their professional career journeys from hire to retire.

- Database/directory of academic appointments showing title, rank, full-time/part-time, tenure status, and other academic attributes
- Agreements and commitments of academic employment, such as workload allocation, resource provision, and spousal hires

- Academic employment models, digitizing the ranks, progressions, timelines, workloads, etc. found in the faculty handbook
- Timeline and exception management to track each scholar's individual variation on the common pathway projected for their position
- Visualisation of past and future journeys to absorb and anticipate upcoming promotion, tenure, contract expiration, sabbatical, and other resourcing concerns

Activity Data Gathering and Validation

In Interfolio's academic-centric vision, the FIS should pull in data on activities and profiles from all available sources, clean up that data automatically as much as possible, and present it to scholars for easy validation.

- Data service to consolidate, deduplicate, and standardise as much relevant data as possible about the institution's academic staff, from sources on and off campus
- Pre-population of data in academic user accounts upon implementation and routinely thereafter
- Easy validation interface that minimizes the burden on academic staff to maintain their own activity and profile data
- Activity data input workflows to automate and manage any direct collection from academics during times of peak incentive for them
- Broad coverage bringing in data representing all disciplines—including STEM, arts, humanities, social sciences—and all activity types, such as research, teaching, and service

Scholar Profiles and Resources

The academic-centric FIS must first and foremost be a system by which academics tell their own professional story.

- Private, portable, growing digital dossier for all scholarly artifacts and data, integrating with the institutional system
- Flexible CV generation tools, with modern visual styling, for advancement, funding, and career pursuits
- Ability to share and comment on work with mentors and colleagues, whether for collaboration or to prep for upcoming reviews
- Clearly lighted paths for appointment, data compliance, professional review requirements, committee responsibilities, and internal opportunities
- Synchronization with profile and identifier systems (such as ORCID), without having to update different systems
- Integration opportunities to create public faculty profiles online
- Searchable database for scholars and administrators to find colleagues by discipline, expertise, etc.

Accreditation and Compliance Reporting

Interfolio embraces the full scope of academic activity, credentials, teaching, research, and service, and tells stories about every discipline—from STEM to practice-based disciplines within the arts and humanities—in the appropriate language.

- Rich reporting to meet the requirements of regional and professional accreditation bodies e.g. Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB)
- Flexible ad hoc report building, meeting administrative needs for formative and summative processes across institutions
- Metadata to link and cross-reference activities, configurable by administrators at the institution
- Navigation and easy sharing of reports, inside and outside institution
- Data for use in the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) and the Transparent Approach to Costing (TRAC) exercise in the UK

Analytics, Impact Tracking, and Comparison

The transformational benefit of using the academic-focused Interfolio platform—over time—lies in the intelligence and storytelling it provides around the institution's overall impact and growth, including its funded scholarship, academic emphases, and faculty development patterns.

- Dashboards and analytics representing key performance indicators for individuals and academic units
- Impact data and modelling, beyond just bibliometrics, that gives a full picture of scholarly work's impact, such as influence on policy, healthcare outcomes, commercial and nonprofit “spin-outs,” and all other recordable outcomes
- Benchmarking of the outcomes of one institution's academic activity against other peers, clusters, or sectors in higher education
- Searchable database for scholars and administrators to find colleagues by discipline expertise, etc.
- Answering critical academic governance questions, such as:
 - Do I have enough academic effort to enable my PhD students graduate in four years?
 - At what points in the employment lifecycle are we experiencing the greatest losses of academics from underrepresented and minoritized groups?
 - Where are our research strengths, and are our approaches working in securing funded research?
 - What is the likely impact of the upcoming cycle of promotion cases on budget requirements?

Benefits of Academic-Centric Technology

What sets Interfolio's academic-centric vision apart is its focus on mutual benefit for the scholar and the institution. When the system is structured around the central position that academic work occupies, everyone using it benefits—including academics, administrative leaders, and professional services staff.

BENEFITS FOR THE INSTITUTION	BENEFITS FOR THE ACADEMICS
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Foster trust by demonstrating greater transparency about data, decision statuses, deadlines, promotion pathways, committee involvement, and related concerns▪ Make informed decisions about budgets, investments, and workload allocation on campus▪ Create insightful reports on disciplinary achievements, research activity, grant monies, and more▪ Understand where scholarship is being generated and the full scope of its impact▪ View dynamic, real-time results on diversity initiatives in hiring and advancement to help meet equity goals▪ Combine and reconcile data from disparate sources in one accumulating record▪ Facilitate better use of academic time and better circumstances for professional growth	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Control the presentation and accuracy of one's full scholarly and professional story▪ Benefit from a private system that links to the institution's platform (but moves with academics through their career)▪ Export one's information in useful formats, like CVs, grant applications, and more▪ Go to one familiar place for all citations, research, service, and teaching▪ Free up time for valuable academic work by reducing the time and effort required for activities like committee service, funding applications, and submitting reports▪ Get more meaningful support from the institution when they have a fuller, more consistent picture of the individual scholar's journey

The system that best serves academic development and makes academics more effective is the one that most closely ties employment responsibilities—including data maintenance, committee service, and curation of materials—to academic career aspirations.

Supporting Academics From Hire to Retire

Interfolio's critical differentiation from other available technologies is its prioritisation of the academic and their scholarly self-presentation.

Instead of just demanding and reporting on a limited range of academic information—whether it be hiring or teaching or research publications—the Interfolio Faculty Information System addresses the full lifecycle of decisions, milestones, and activities that mark an academic's career, from job seeking and appointment to review, tenure, sabbatical, committee work, research, service, and beyond.

The Faculty Information System: Interfolio and the Scholar-Centric Model

When an institution has genuinely invested in support for their academics:

- The university competes globally among its peers for funding, academics, and rank
- Academic leaders can drive change with purpose and confidence
- Faculties and departments can focus on their most valuable assets—their people—enabling innovation and setting a global standard of excellence
- Academics spend more of their time researching, publishing, innovating, creating, writing, and teaching
- Inclusion and diverse representation among academics are the norm
- The university mission is clear and shared by everyone, so campus culture thrives
- Millions in research investment go to the most demonstrably valuable projects—in all disciplines
- The public knows what universities produce and why they deserve support
- Businesses are founded, jobs are created, patents are filed, medicines are developed, policies are implemented, and knowledge is advanced
- Universities optimize and deliver impact today, tomorrow, and into the future

This mutual benefit for the scholar and the institution is the bedrock of the Faculty Information System.



If your academic institution is ready to join the 500+ colleges and universities managing academic information through Interfolio, it's time for us to talk.

Contact us at www.interfolio.com or email us at interfolio-international@interfolio.com today.

About Interfolio

Empowering scholars worldwide, Interfolio by Elsevier is an education technology company trusted by more than 500 universities across 20 countries since 1999. With innovative products designed to support major milestones in the academic lifecycle, Interfolio's technology enables academic leaders to effectively advance institutions and their academic staff.

The most comprehensive platform of its kind, the Interfolio Faculty Information System streamlines processes for academic hiring and recruitment, academic appointments and timelines, activity data reporting, and reviews and promotions. In addition, millions of scholars have used the Interfolio Dossier service to pursue academic programs and positions.

For more information about Interfolio, please contact **interfolio-international@interfolio.com**, or visit **www.interfolio.com**.