

Academic Excellence in Economics Research at the U

Amy Hillman, Ph.D.
Arizona State University

A preliminary draft of this report was circulated to some faculty members. This final version reflects my review and approval as the author.

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Introduction

In Spring 2024, the University of Utah launched a process to evaluate academic excellence in economics research. Phase one began with a comparative analysis of the Department of Economics (hereafter “Economics”) in relation to faculty at other public institutions in the Association of American Universities (AAU), a group that reflects the U’s peer aspirations for research excellence and productivity. Academic Analytics has been a primary source of research evaluation at the U and serves as a comparative analysis to the primary one developed here. After the initial findings were shared, the project was expanded to include faculty in the Division of Quantitative Analysis of Markets and Organizations (QAMO). The analyses were then updated to reflect both Economics and QAMO faculty, and the full findings presented in the sections that follow represent this integrated, two-step process. Phase two began with the formation of a task force to determine the project’s next steps. The task force initiated a survey of all tenure-line faculty in both units to gather input on research culture, hiring and organizational structure. Based on that feedback, each chair submitted a unit-level plan, followed by commentary on the other’s plan.

I provided analyses and supported the process as an objective third party. I served as Dean of the W. P. Carey School of Business at Arizona State University (ASU) from 2013-2020 and previously as Executive Dean overseeing all faculty and academic programs from 2009-2013. In these capacities, I had direct oversight for eleven years of the Department of Economics which delivers both a B.A. in Economics for ASU’s College of Liberal Arts & Sciences and a B.S. in Economics for the W. P. Carey School of Business. The same faculty also deliver an M.S. and a Ph.D. in Economics. I served as a board member of the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB) from 2015-2020. AACSB is the premier accreditation body for business schools for which I’ve also served on fifteen peer assessments of business schools, some of which contain the faculty of economics. As an elected Fellow of the Academy of Management and Strategic Management Society and former President of the Academy of Management I bring a focus on academic research excellence in my own discipline of management.

Phase 1: Academic Excellence Analyses

For every academic discipline there are shared standards of academic excellence in research. In economics, this standard is publication of peer-reviewed research in top-ranked journals. While winning competitive external grants and publishing books and book chapters are also indicators of success, by far the dominant reputation driver of academic excellence is publication in top-ranked journals.

The most accepted rankings of academic research excellence in economics are from Research Papers in Economics (RePEc). Among data available at RePEc are rankings of 3,200 journals in the field of economics and rankings of institutions by region and globally. RePEc does not include other disciplinary journals, nor do they include other forms of publishing. RePEc's ranking of the top 25% of U.S. economics departments was updated in July 2024. Brigham Young University (BYU) was ranked #95 and Utah State University was #104. University of Utah was not within the top 137 departments. This ranking can be accessed here:

<https://ideas.repec.org/top/top.usecondept.html>.

A broader ranking is one developed by the Shanghai World Rankings of Universities (formerly Shanghai Jiao Tung University), which ranks overall universities across several dimensions to include research output, research influence, international collaboration, research quality and international academic awards. While this ranking also provides rankings of academic subjects, including economics, the Shanghai World Ranking does not treat disciplines differently, despite each discipline having different markers for success. The 2023 Shanghai World Rankings of Universities for the discipline of economics rank orders global universities 1 to 100, then groups those in rankings 101-150, which is where University of Utah ranks for the discipline. (BYU is in the 201-300 group, and Utah State is in the 400-500 group.) This means that for a discipline that rests most of its scholarly reputation for academic excellence in publishing in top-ranked journals, this ranking, while informative, is *not* what economists view as the gold standard. This ranking can be accessed here: <https://www.shanghairanking.com/rankings/gras/2023/RS0501>

Research Papers in Economics

While RePEc is the most accepted research ranking of economics departments in the U.S., it has limitations. As noted above, interdisciplinary journals are not included, nor are books, chapters and other forms of research. Importantly, publishers self-index their work, so my analyses do not simply rest on the rankings provided for U.S. economics departments by RePEc. Instead, I use their very comprehensive rankings of 3,200 journals of economics to tier the analyses here. In other words, these analyses use RePEc's journal rankings to perform slices of analyses based on quality of journal (e.g. Top 500 economics journals, top 250, etc.).

To compare to AAU publics, a dataset of all tenure-line and tenured faculty at each institution as of May 2024 was created by visiting each institution's webpage. If a CV was available online, each faculty member's CV was downloaded. However, many online CVs are out of date, so Google Scholar pages were identified for each faculty member. Google Scholar has the advantage of being constantly updated as publications occur. Over 88% of the 1,055 faculty from 38 institutions were available on Google Scholar, and another 10.5% of faculty had online CVs to use. Of the entire sample, only 12 or 1.1% of faculty did not have either a Google Scholar page or online CV to use. Because online CVs are not always current, the data for 10.5% of the sample should be considered

directionally accurate; any omissions are likely limited to the most recent publications not yet reflected on those CVs. (See Appendix A: RePEcs Analysis of AAUs, Summary Statistics Table.)

Publication data from RePEc journals were tracked from January 2000 through May 2024, covering a 23-year period. Data prior to 2000 is not reliable within Google Scholar, so data for older faculty may be truncated. Career productivity was measured by calculating “faculty-years per research event,” which accounts for the number of years since each faculty member’s Ph.D. To calculate faculty-years per research event, each professor’s publication record was evaluated beginning with their Ph.D. year. For example, Professor X earned a Ph.D. in 2015 and has published 11 papers since then. Professor Y earned a Ph.D. in 1992 and has published 15 papers since 2000. Collectively, these two faculty members have produced 26 papers over a combined 33 faculty-years of publishing activity (9 years for Professor X and 24 years for Professor Y). Dividing total faculty-years by total publications results in a rate of 1.26 faculty-years per paper.

As the tables in Appendix A show, both Economics and QAMO faculty had full data availability in this sample, whether through a Google Scholar page or an online CV. Both units are relatively young, as evidenced by the “average year of Ph.D.,” with QAMO faculty being the earliest on average in their careers among AAU publics. The series of Appendix A charts show that when comparing “faculty years per RePEc publication” rates, Economics ranks near last among AAU publics for total RePEc publications since 2000, as well as for publications in the top 500, top 250, top 100, top 25 and top 5 journals since 2000. QAMO faculty performance, by comparison, is also near the bottom for total publications since 2000 and in the top 500 journals but becomes more competitive with other AAU publics at the top 250, top 100, top 25 and top 5 levels.

Similar analyses were performed to examine impact using citations per article. This includes faculty years per paper with more than 20, 50, 100 and 250 Google Scholar citations within all 3,200 RePEc journals. Economics faculty take 4.01 years to achieve 20 citations for one article, 15.48 for 50 citations, 46.43 for 100 citations and 108.33 years to achieve over 250 citations. QAMO faculty respectively take 1.84, 2.38, 4.28 and 8.92 years for each hurdle. The comparison for all publics is 1.43, 2.05, 3.13, and 6.89 years for each hurdle.

Academic Analytics

Academic Analytics (AA) data was used for comparison. AA does include all publications, representing an advantage over RePEc because it captures non-economics journals and thus interdisciplinary work. It also has an advantage in that it captures publishing books, chapters, faculty receiving prestigious awards and external grant funding. Finally, there is a citation component of AA making this source of data much broader than simply journal publications as with the RePEc data. While AA does not provide a detailed ranking of journal quality, it does allow users to filter results based on a designated (but not individually ranked) set of “Top 100” economics journals.

AA uses default weights for each category tracked of:

- Articles: 14%
- Awards: 28%
- Books: 9%
- Chapters: 15%
- Citations: 20%

- Grant Dollars: 14%

Using this default weighting of contributions, Economics performs very well as shown in the charts in Appendix B: Academic Analytics Analyses of AAUs. Economics is above the mean of all AAU publics on books, chapters and article publications, yet below the mean in awards, citations and federal grants. Economics is well above the median AAU publics in articles per faculty, with 100% of faculty having publications, and above the mean for articles per author and articles per faculty, yet just below the mean for total articles. However, applying the “Top 100” filter for economics journals, Economics falls far below the median of AAU publics in Top 100 economics journals.

Comparison of RePEc and AA

Each analysis should be recognized by its strengths and limitations. RePEc includes a ranking of 3,200 journals allowing for examination of publication within different tiers of journal rankings, yet only includes economics journal articles and not books, chapters or publications in other disciplinary journals. AA has the advantage of including other publications (and awards and grants) and can capture interdisciplinary work but has a weighting of contributions that is not reflective of how the economics discipline defines academic excellence. For example, “Awards” are weighted twice that of “Articles” and “Books” and “Chapters” combined carry more weight than “Articles.” And absent the filter for “Top 100 journals” there are no indicators of quality other than citations and awards. AA analysis is broader but has weights and includes categories of academic excellence in research that few economists would say determine the reputation of the field. As with the Shanghai World Rankings, AA was designed for university-wide indicators and applies criteria to compare across very different disciplines.

Subsequent Analyses Provided by Department of Economics

The above analyses were shared initially with Tom Maloney, chair of the Department of Economics; Michelle Camacho, dean of the College of Social and Behavioral Science (CSBS); and Claudia Geist, associate dean of CSBS. The analyses were then shared with Provost Mitzi Montoya, who requested (after including QAMO in these analyses) that they be shared with Scott Schaefer, chair of the Division of QAMO, and Kirk Dirks, dean of the David Eccles School of Business.

Following the expanded distribution, Maloney submitted additional analyses—see Appendix C: Department of Economics Additional Notes on Research Productivity. His report summarizes the issue noted about RePEc data omitting valuable interdisciplinary publications, provides statements regarding impact equivalency of omitted publications by Economics faculty and provides count data using AA data of: articles per faculty member (Economics is 3rd among AAU publics), share of faculty with an article (tied for 1st), books per faculty member (7th), share of faculty with a book (4th), chapters per faculty member (3rd), share of faculty with a chapter (1st), citations per faculty member (25th), and share of faculty with a citation (32nd). This analysis is then extended to all AA data, recognizing the U was not in the AAU until 2012 and how the productivity of faculty in Economics has improved in the last decade.

While this additional analysis is also informative, it does not incorporate a quality assessment of publication outlets. Measures of publication quality are instead reflected in the analyses of faculty H-Index scores for both Economics and QAMO, using data from Web of Science and Google Scholar. The document also highlights a broader set of success metrics, including interdisciplinary scholarship, faculty leadership positions in the field, applications to their Ph.D. program, time to complete Ph.D. by students and placement.

Phase 2: Taskforce Engagement and Faculty Input

After meeting with Camacho, Dirks and me, Montoya commissioned a taskforce on July 29 that included Maloney, Schaefer and me. Our charge was to provide recommendations on how best to “explore new opportunities to advance our scholarly reputation in the field of economics at the U, inclusive of the Department of Economics and QAMO,” with an explicit directive “to elevate research excellence amongst AAU public universities within the core areas of economics with an emphasis on publication in top-ranked economics peer review journals” and “with full appreciation of academic freedom and interdisciplinary research, both of which we continue to value highly alongside this effort.” The three of us met weekly and were asked to submit this report within one month.

First, we recognized the necessity of faculty input in this process. Maloney, Schaefer and I, with input from Camacho and Dirks, drafted a request for survey feedback from both Economics and QAMO faculty, approved by Montoya. A copy of the request is below:

Dear Colleagues,

With the support of President Taylor Randall and Provost Mitzi Montoya we are exploring new opportunities to advance our scholarly reputation in the field of economics at the U, inclusive of the Department of Economics and QAMO. Our charge is to elevate research excellence amongst AAU public universities within the core areas of economics with an emphasis on publication in top ranked economics peer-review journals. This charge is with full appreciation of academic freedom and interdisciplinary research, both of which we continue to value highly alongside this effort. This advancement will come with investment and a sincere desire for every faculty member in our units to succeed.

We are only in the beginning of this effort.

We have asked Tom Maloney and Scott Schaefer to explore a set of options and resources needed to reach this goal, inclusive of pros/cons, to help inform our path forward.

We are asking for your expertise to help guide this effort by providing us with your candid feedback to this survey no later than August 14, 2024. Responses will be aggregated without attribution to individual names. Your ideas will be important in this process, and we thank you for your timely and thoughtful completion of this feedback.

*Michelle M. Camacho
Dean, College of Social and Behavioral Sciences*

*Kurt Dirks
Dean, David Eccles School of Business*

Survey questions were vetted by Montoya, Camacho, Dirks, Maloney, Schaefer and me and included the following open-ended items:

- 1) *Thinking first about your personal research production function: Discuss crucial inputs, constraints, shadow values, etc to help the University of Utah understand what it can do to enhance your ability to publish in top-ranked, peer-reviewed economics journals.*
- 2) *Thinking now about faculty compensation: Describe how the University of Utah might change incentives to increase your ability to publish in top-ranked, peer-reviewed economics journals. Think broadly here about pay but also non-pay forms of compensation.*
- 3) *Thinking now about research culture: Describe how the University of Utah might improve its economics research culture in such a way as to improve your ability to publish in top-ranked, peer-reviewed economics journals.*
- 4) *How can the University of Utah improve its ability to hire economists who will publish in top-ranked, peer-reviewed economics journals? Think broadly here about pay and incentives but also hiring strategies that can be applied to identify good matches and combat adverse selection.*
- 5) *The University of Utah's economists are currently spread across two colleges. What organizational structures will best support an effort to hire economists who will publish in top-ranked, peer-reviewed economics journals?*
- 6) *What other suggestions, recommendations, or ideas do you have to improve the University's ability to publish in top-ranked, peer-reviewed economics journals while continuing to fully appreciate academic freedom and interdisciplinary research?*
- 7) *What other information should University of Utah upper administration, deans, and department chairs consider as we attempt to carry out this charge?*

Survey Findings and Plan Overviews

Anonymous faculty feedback by unit is presented here in Appendix D: Economics Faculty Survey Responses and Appendix E: QAMO Faculty Survey Responses. This important faculty input formed the basis of the plans developed by each unit chair to address the charge.

We decided each unit chair would each prepare a high-level plan to achieve the goals within their unit and to offer suggestions for better alignment between the two units. Each was also asked to discuss the pros and cons of: 1) maintaining the current structure of two units; or, 2) some form of combination of their units. Each unit chair's plan was shared with the other and each provides a commentary on the other's plan. These are represented in Appendix F: Econ High-Level Plan, Appendix G: Plan for Excellence in Economics by QAMO, Appendix H: Response to "Economics High-Level Plan" from QAMO, and Appendix I: Economics Response to QAMO Proposals.

My observations based on data analyses of faculty research productivity, the faculty survey responses by unit and comparing the two high-level plans and associated commentary can be summarized as follows:

	Economics	QAMO
Alignment with the goal of publishing in top-ranked peer-reviewed economics journals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Faculty generally feel they are publishing in top journals, despite RePEc analyses. • Many question the goal of publishing in top-ranked economics journals. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Faculty are already working under the goal of publishing in top-ranked economics journals. • Many express a need for scale – more colleagues with the same goals being

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Productivity/quantity is often cited as the goal they've been working under historically, regardless of quality assessment of publication outlet. • Many see pursuit of publishing in top-ranked economics journals coming at the expense of publishing quantity/time to publication. • Many see the pursuit of this goal as harmful to morale of the unit and historic breadth of research. • Interdisciplinary research and academic freedom are frequently mentioned objections that are counter to the goal of publishing in top-ranked economics journals. • Existing procedure of Graduate Council Review (which has been conducted) appears to be ignored by this process. 	synergistic to current faculty research and the achievement of this goal.
Top priorities of separate unit plans	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hiring (7 faculty) in areas of applied macroeconomics, applied microeconomics and econometrics/data science (initial thoughts) • Post-doc positions, particularly in research centers • Expansion of Ph.D. program and enhanced research and teaching assistant funding. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Change QAMO name to include "economics." • Reaching critical mass of 25 faculty in a single unit using cluster hires (18 new faculty) in 4 areas among public economics, industrial organization, behavioral, political economics, labor, healthcare, education or urban economics. • Define journal quality goals, support with incentives, accountability and research funding.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Marketing efforts aimed at the profession, press, national economic policy constituents and Utah residents.
Opportunities for collaboration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Collaborative research seminars and workshop series for 2nd and 3rd year Ph.D. students. Distinguished lecture speakers twice per year of interest to both faculty. Joint conferences. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Change QAMO name to include “economics” to gain overall visibility of economics within the U. Shared research seminars and joint conferences. Expanded graduate teaching by QAMO faculty, explore new degrees. Shared masters and Ph.D. programs.
One unit vs. two	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strong objection to “merger” of the two units 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strong objection to “merger” of the two units as is. Phased one-unit structure under DESB. Establish goals for research success, bring untenured faculty from CSBS into new unit with reduced teaching loads and potentially extended tenure clocks to enable transition to new standards. Tenured faculty to move to new tenure homes (within the new unit or elsewhere) on an individual basis. Over time move all career line, staff and programs to new unit with consideration of tuition differentials and undergraduate major.

Commentary on the other unit chair’s plan was met with concern, which can be summarized as follows:

QAMO Concerns over Economics Plan	Economics Concerns over QAMO Plan
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Will faculty in Economics be able to hire well? Concerns over goal alignment, 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strong objection to proposed phased one-unit plan by QAMO. Current structure works and QAMO is new, so wait and see.

<p>adverse selection and networks needed to achieve hires.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Governance concerns over implementing RPT standards, TFR standards and how 7 new hires will mesh with existing 21 faculty who have different values and have been operating under different performance criteria. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Phased one-unit plan devalues interdisciplinary and critical work. • Economics faculty have strong networks to hire faculty focused on publishing in top-ranked economics journals, counter to QAMO belief. • Existing diversity within the unit has not prevented collective decisions thus far (no governance concerns).
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RePEc Analysis of AAUs

Amy Hillman, Ph.D.
Arizona State University

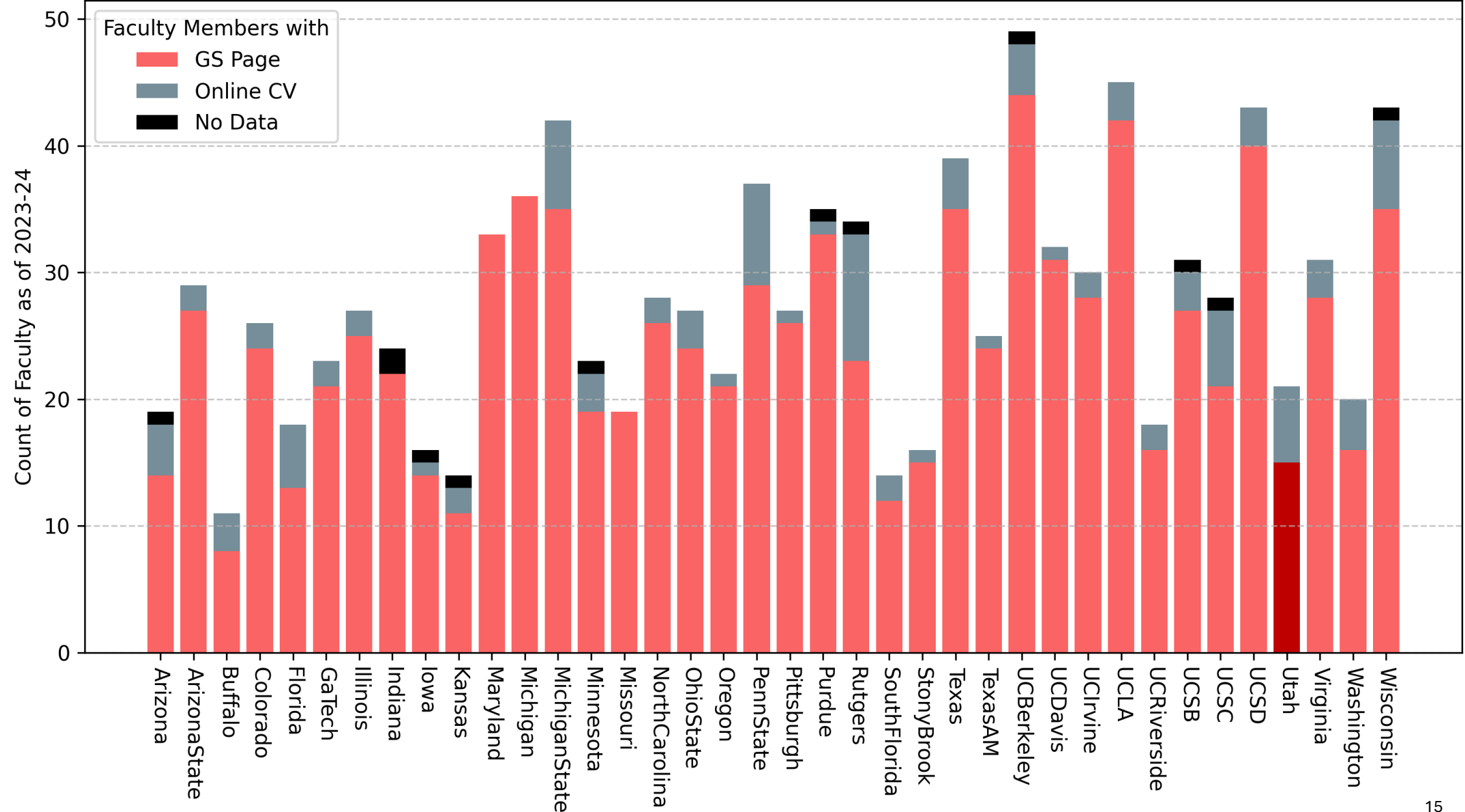
Goal

- Analyze tenure-line faculty research productivity at AAU publics
- Faculty from institution webpages
- Download CV if available online
- Identify Google Scholar pages
- Scrape Google Scholar pages for publications
- If no Google Scholar page, extract publications from CV using ChatGPT
- Match journal names to RePEc rankings of 3,200 econ journals
- Track publications from Jan 2000 to May 2024

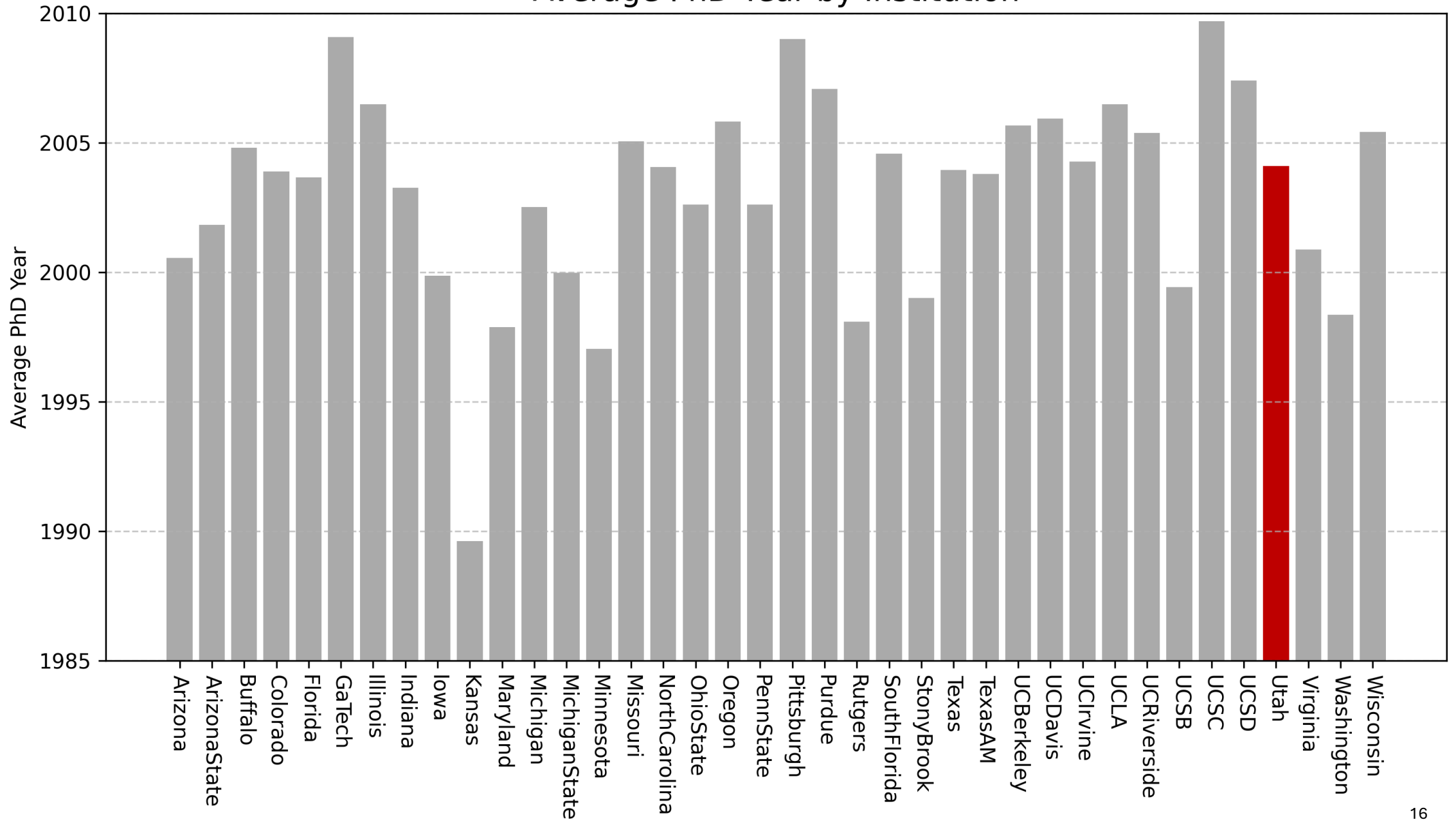
Summary Statistics

Institutions			38	
Tenure-Line Faculty			1055	
With Google Scholar page			932	88.3%
No Google Scholar page but found online cv			111	10.5%
No Google Scholar page or online cv			12	1.1%

Count of Faculty by Data Availability



Average PhD Year by Institution



Unit of Comparison

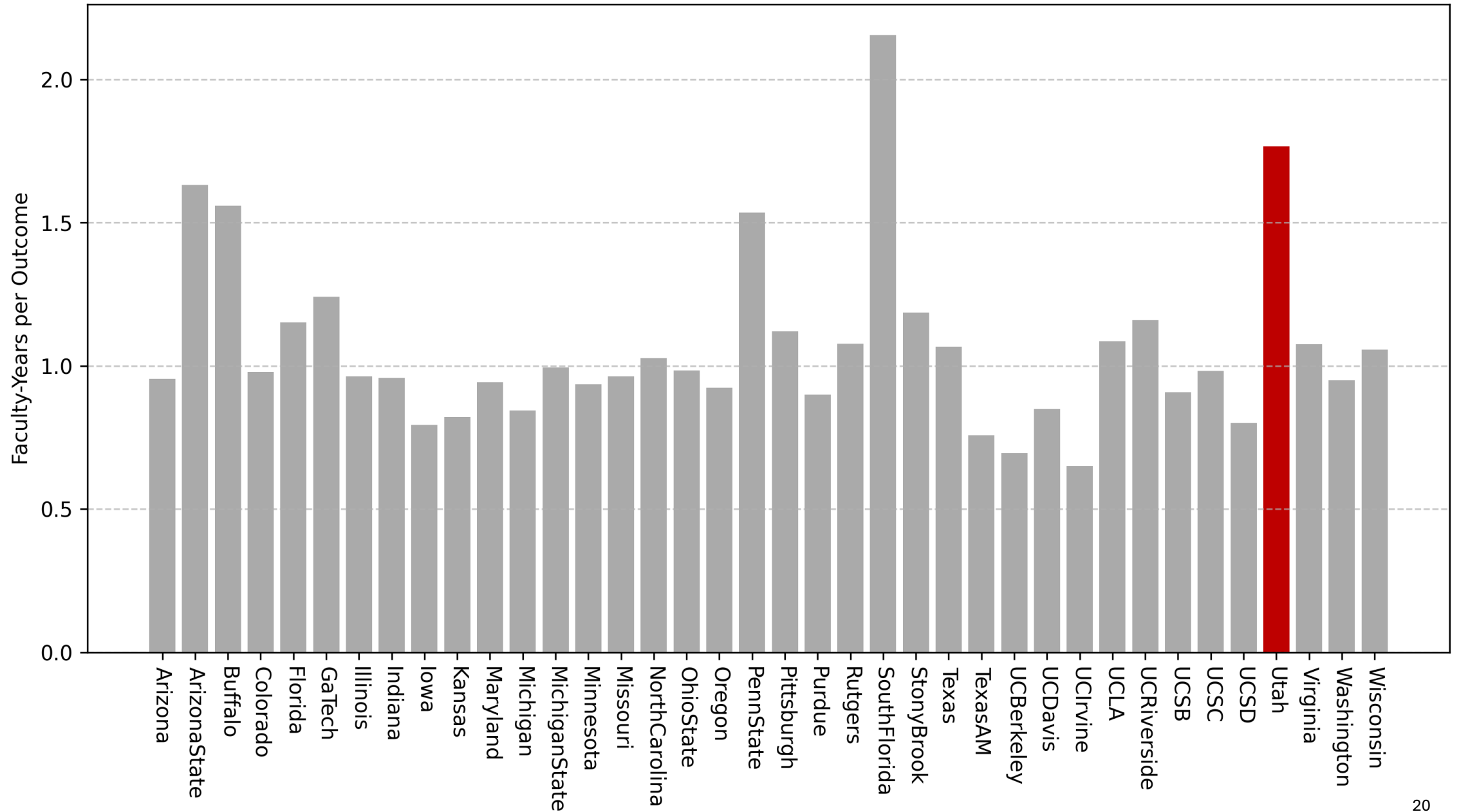
- Analyze career productivity of current faculty
- Unit of comparison: Faculty-years per research event
- Illustration:
 - Professor X earned PhD in 2015 and has been employed by ABC University since 2020. Has published 11 papers since 2015.
 - Professor Y earned PhD in 1992 and has been employed at ABC since 2002. Has published 15 papers since 2000.
 - ABC University faculty have published $11+15 = 26$ papers in $9+24=33$ years.
 - Years divided by papers is $33/26 = 1.26$ faculty-years per paper.

Journal Rankings

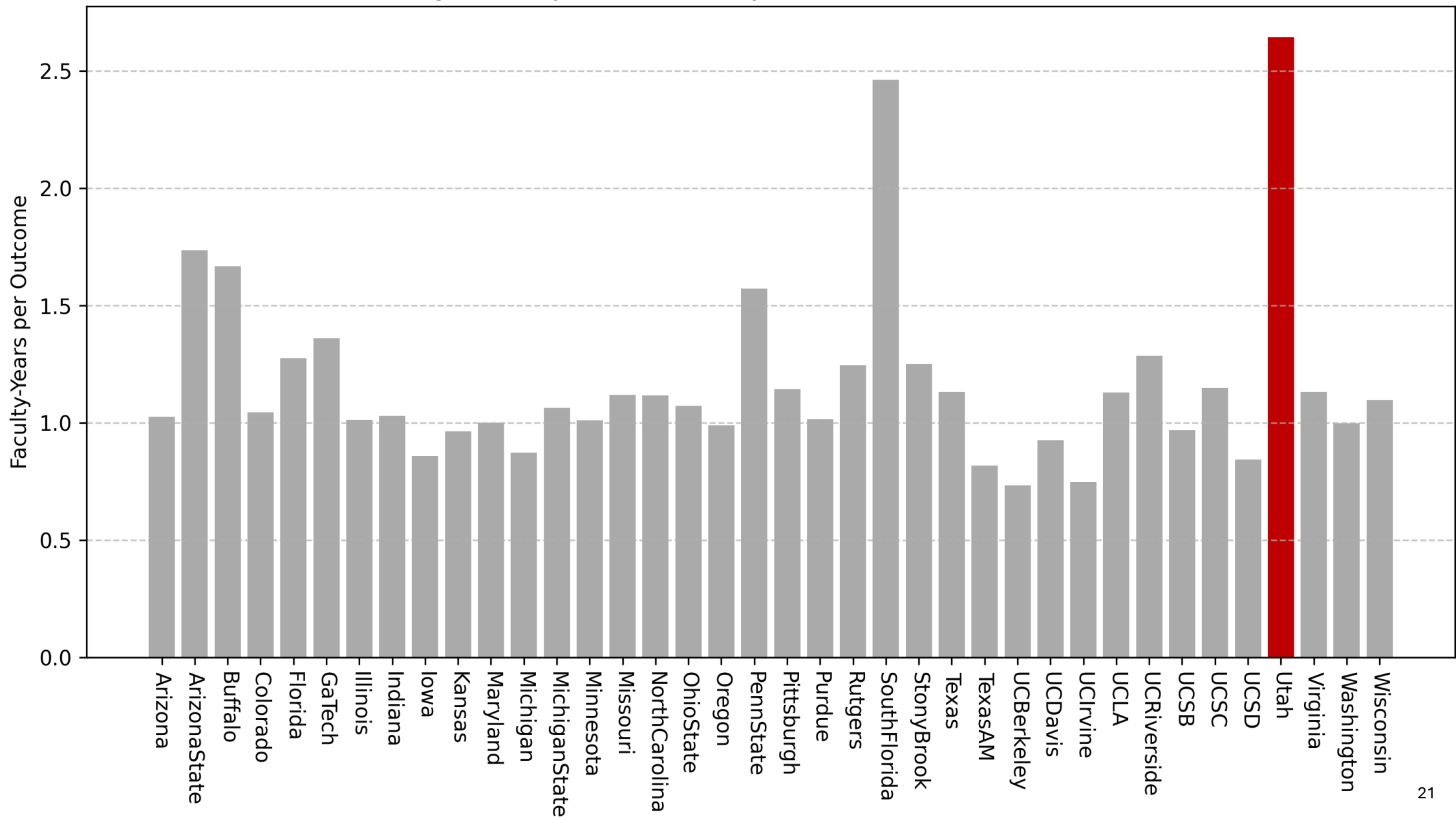
- <https://ideas.repec.org/top/top.journals.all.html>
- Separately classify “Top 5” econ journals as
 - American Economic Review
 - Econometrica
 - Journal of Political Economy
 - Quarterly Journal of Economics
 - Review of Economic Studies

			All Public AAU			University of Utah	
			Count	Faculty-Years Per		Count	Faculty-Years Per
All RePEc Publications			17,251	0.98		184	1.77
Top 500 RePEc Journals			15,985	1.06		123	2.64
Top 250 RePEc Journals			14,208	1.19		56	5.80
Top 100 RePEc Journals			10,594	1.59		27	12.04
Top 25 RePEc Journals			5,012	3.37		1	325.00
Top 5 Journals			1,828	9.23		0	
Number of Faculty			1,043			21	
Faculty-Years			16,881			325	
Institutions			38			1	

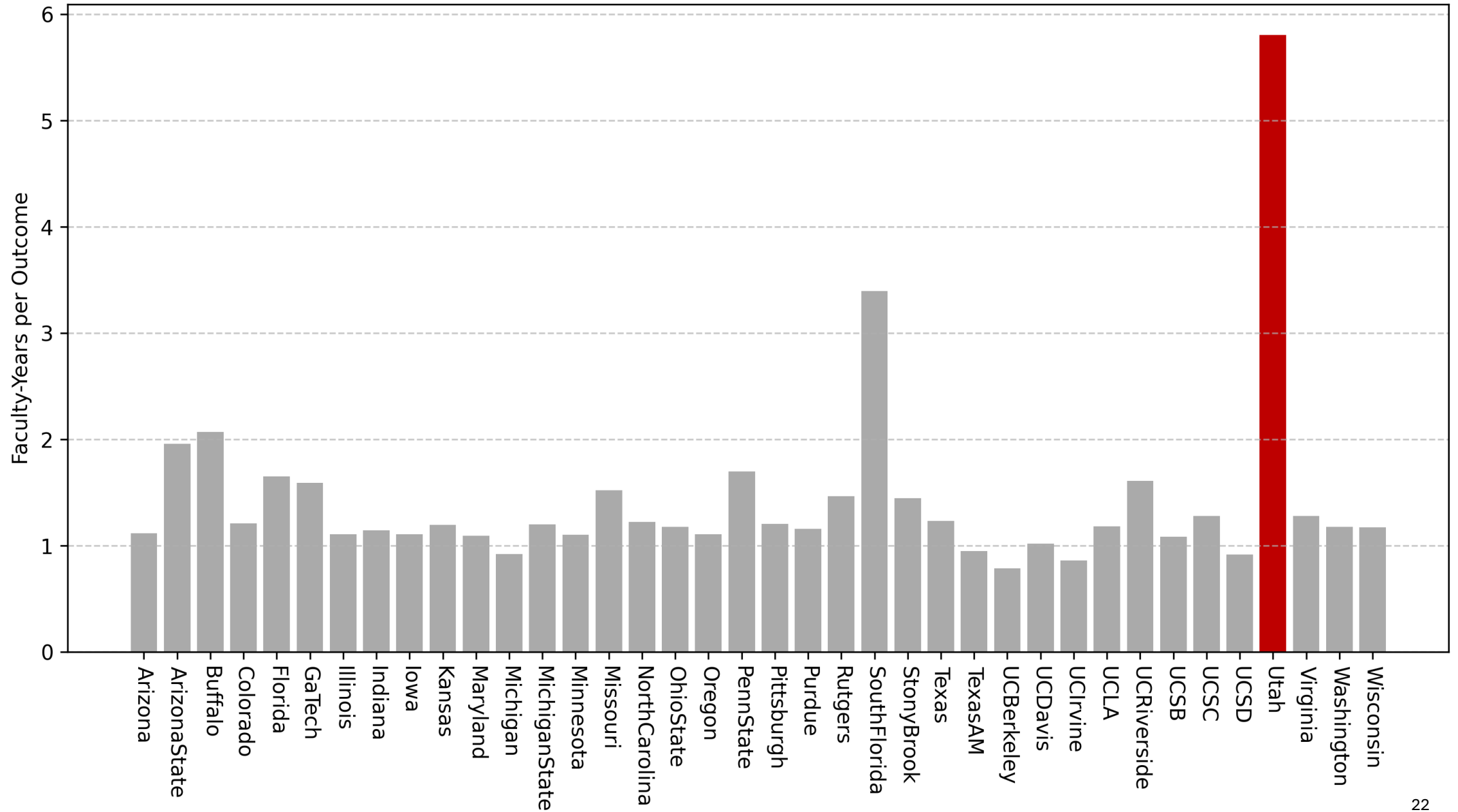
Faculty-Years per RePEc Publication since 2000



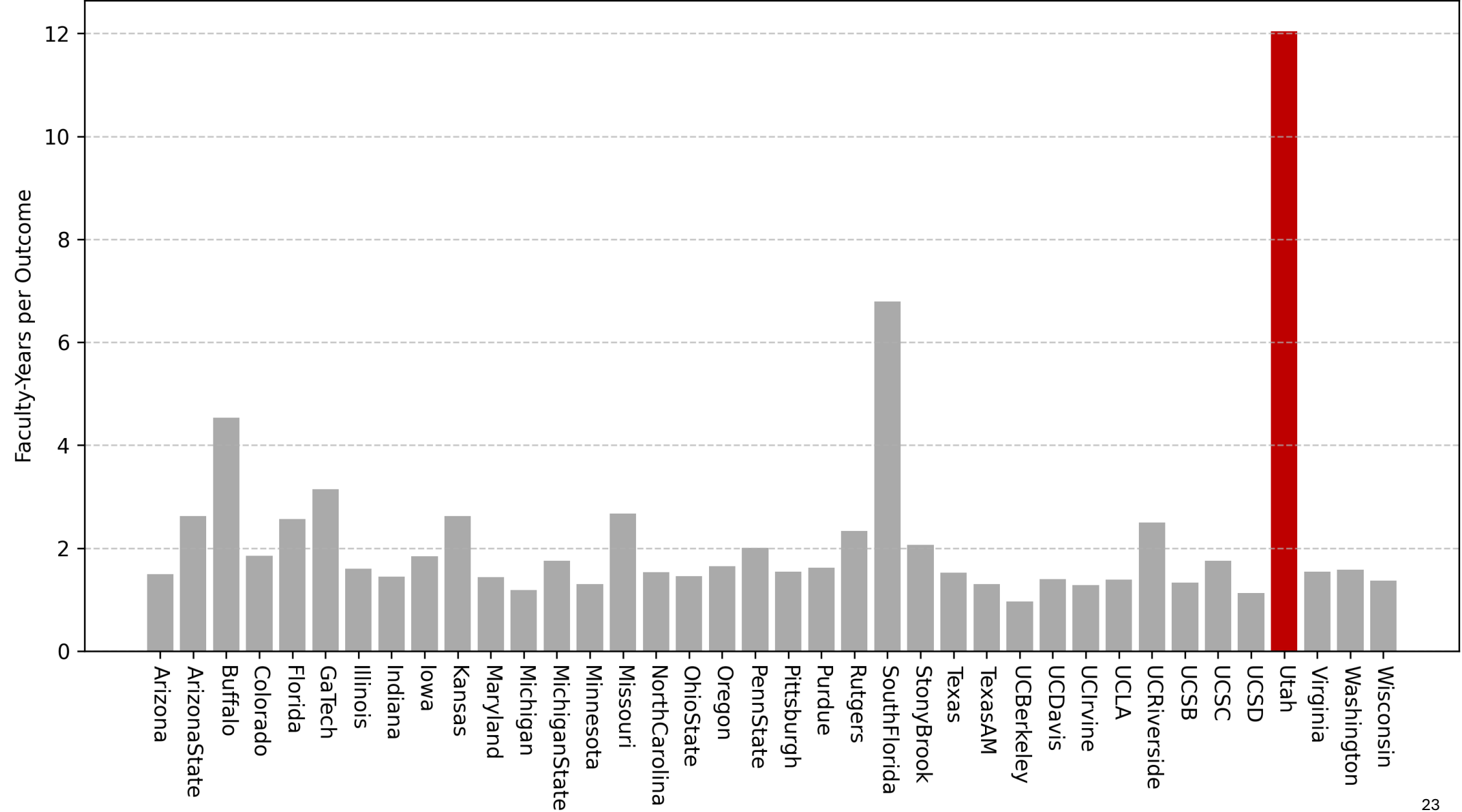
Faculty-Years per RePEc Top 500 Publication since 2000



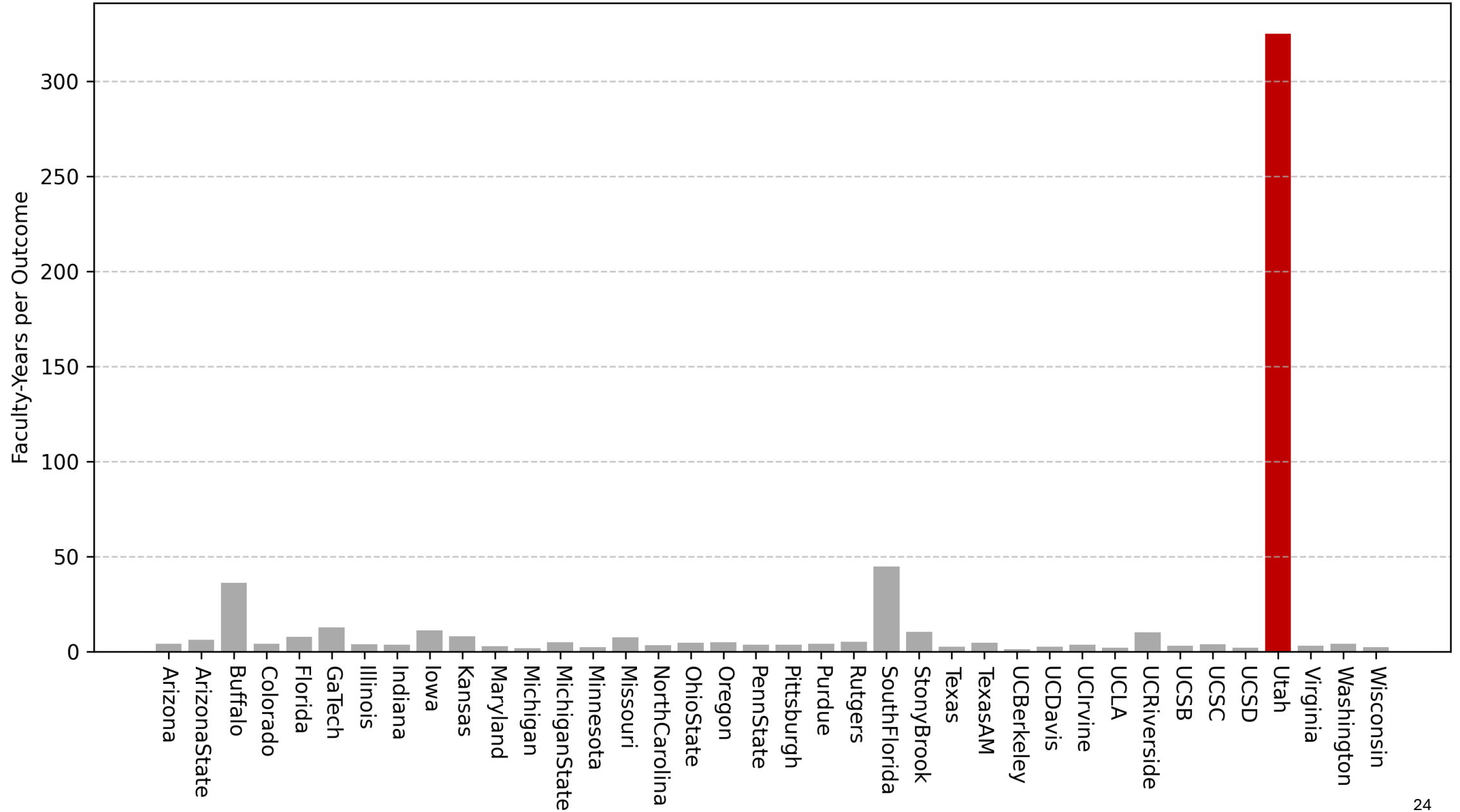
Faculty-Years per RePEc Top 250 Publication since 2000



Faculty-Years per RePEc Top 100 Publication since 2000

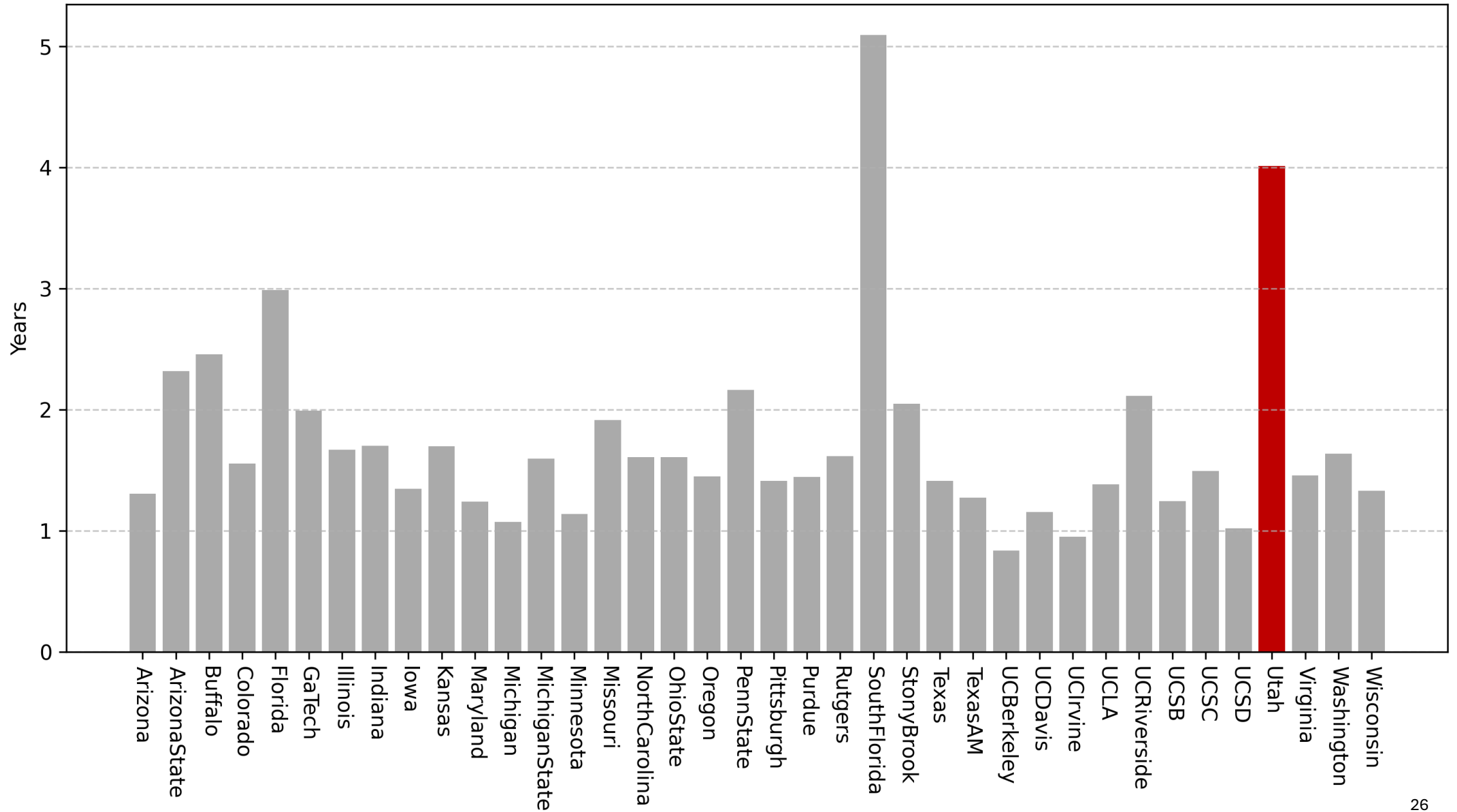


Faculty-Years per RePEc Top 25 Publication since 2000

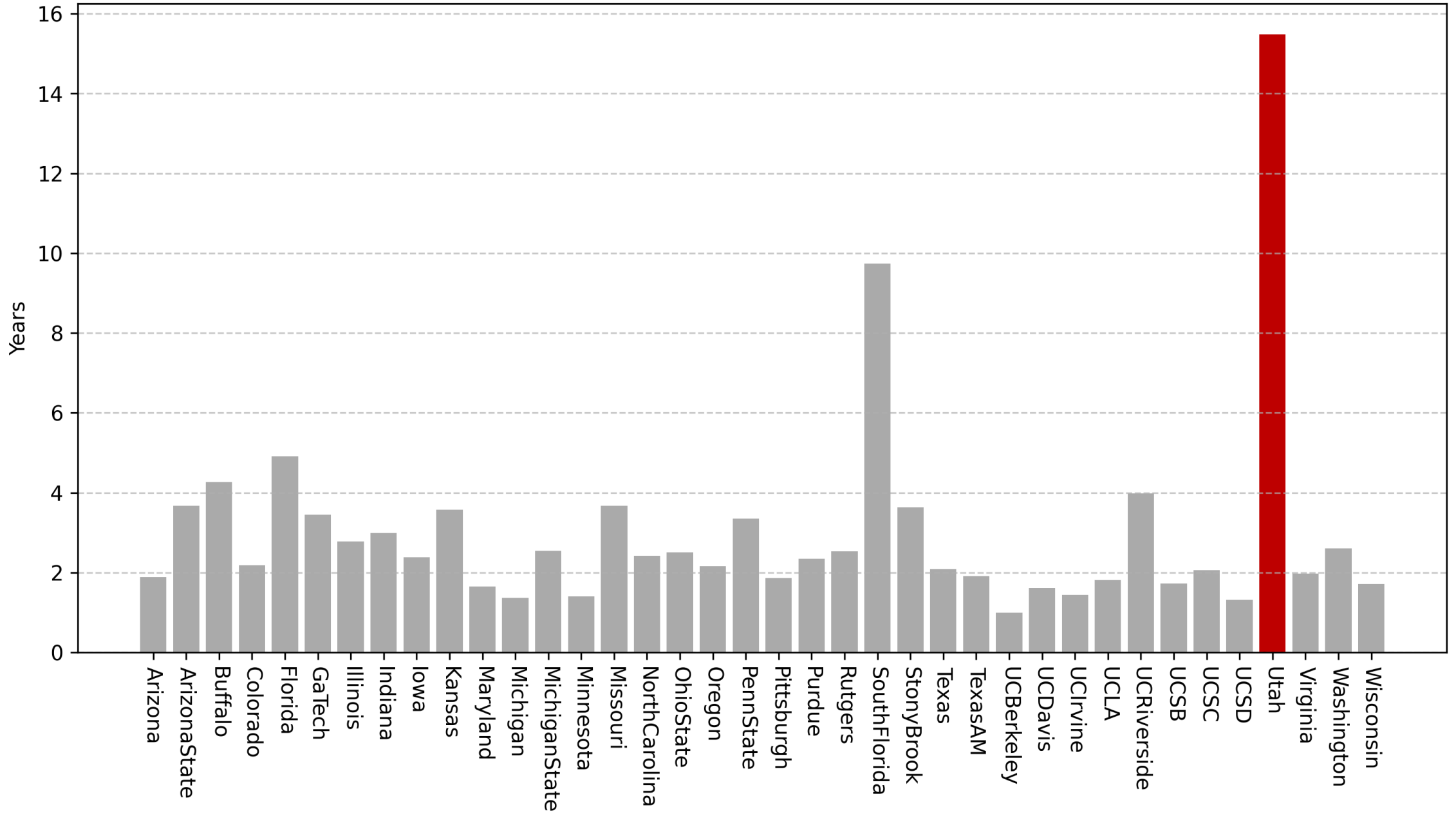


			All Public AAU		University of Utah	
			Count	Faculty-Years Per	Count	Faculty-Years Per
All RePEc Publications			17,251	0.98	184	1.77
With more than 20 Google Scholar citations			11,833	1.43	81	4.01
With more than 50 Google Scholar citations			8,239	2.05	21	15.48
With more than 100 Google Scholar citations			5,392	3.13	7	46.43
With more than 250 Google Scholar citations			2,451	6.89	3	108.33
Number of Faculty			1,043		21	
Faculty-Years			16,881		325	
Institutions			38		1	

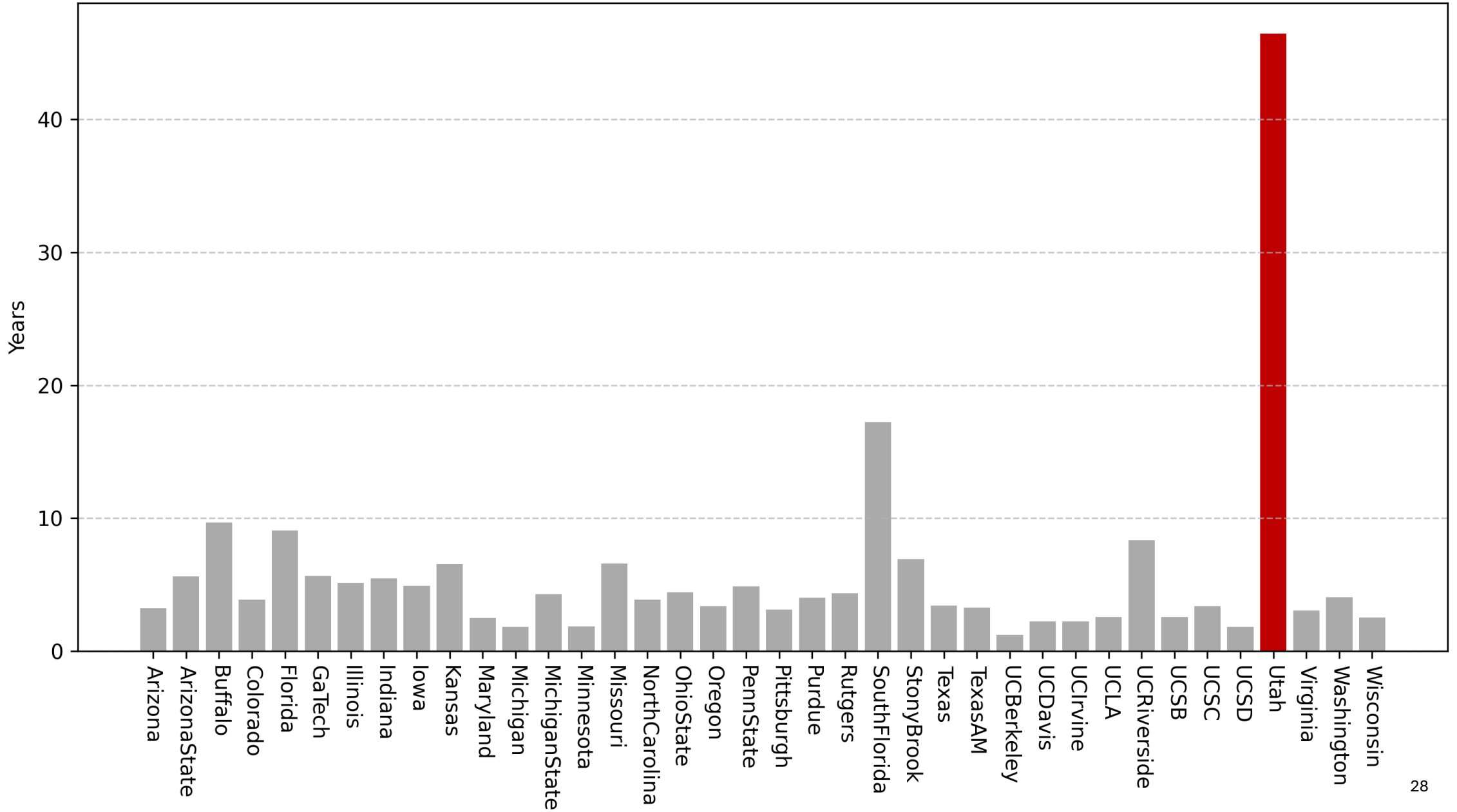
Faculty-Years per Paper with more than 20 Cites since 2000



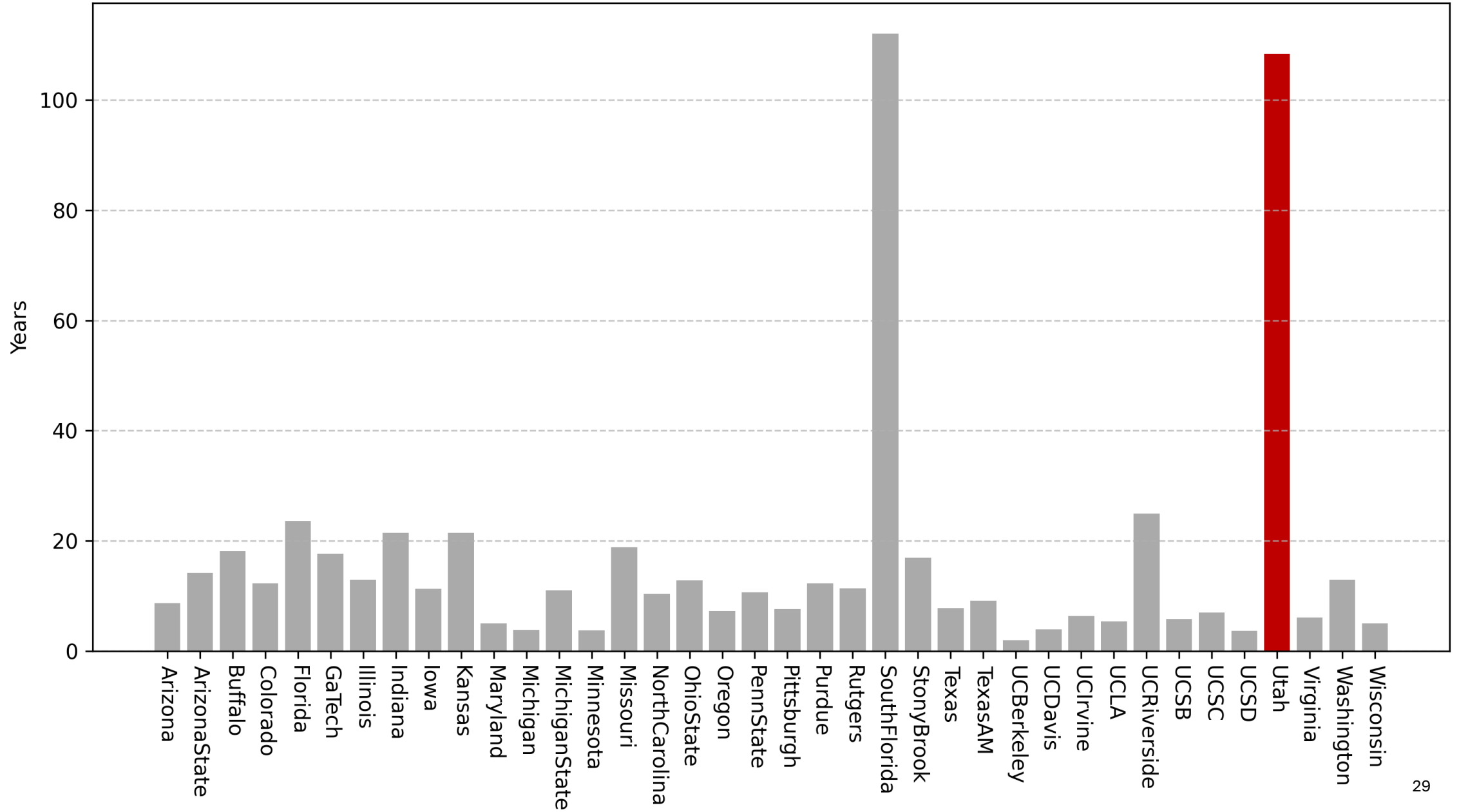
Faculty-Years per Paper with more than 50 Cites since 2000



Faculty-Years per Paper with more than 100 Cites since 2000



Faculty-Years per Paper with more than 250 Cites since 2000



Academic Analytics Analysis of AAUs

Amy Hillman, Ph.D.
Arizona State University

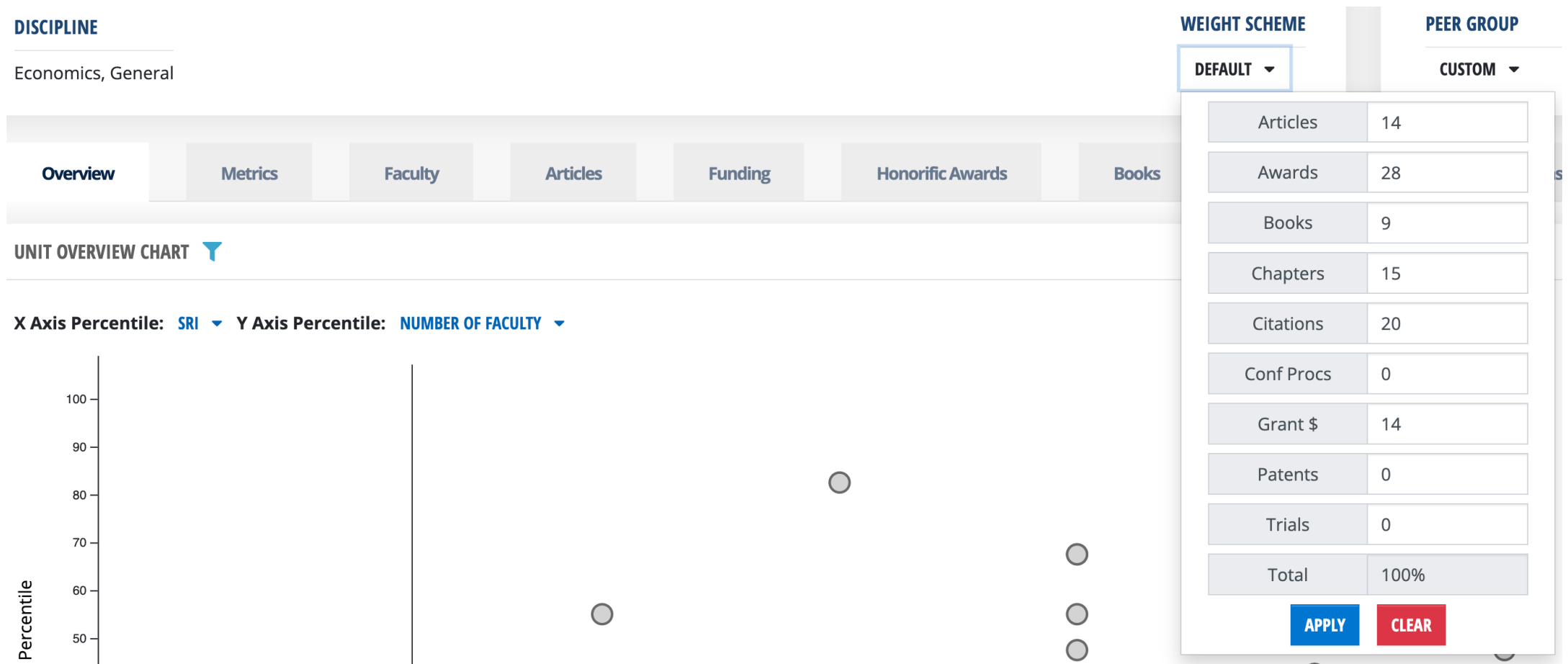
Goal

- Discuss how Academic Analytics (AA) ranks departments
- Identify sources of differences with other analysis

Choices Academic Analytics makes

1. Default weighting system places heavy weight on books and chapters
2. Counts publications outside of economics (medical journals, specifically)
 - A paper in *American Economic Review* counts the same for Academic Analytics rankings as a paper in *International Journal of Cardiology*
3. Does not weight journal quality within economics
 - A paper in *Econometrica* (ranked first by RePEc) counts the same for Academic Analytics rankings as a paper in *Comparative Economic Studies* (ranked 500)

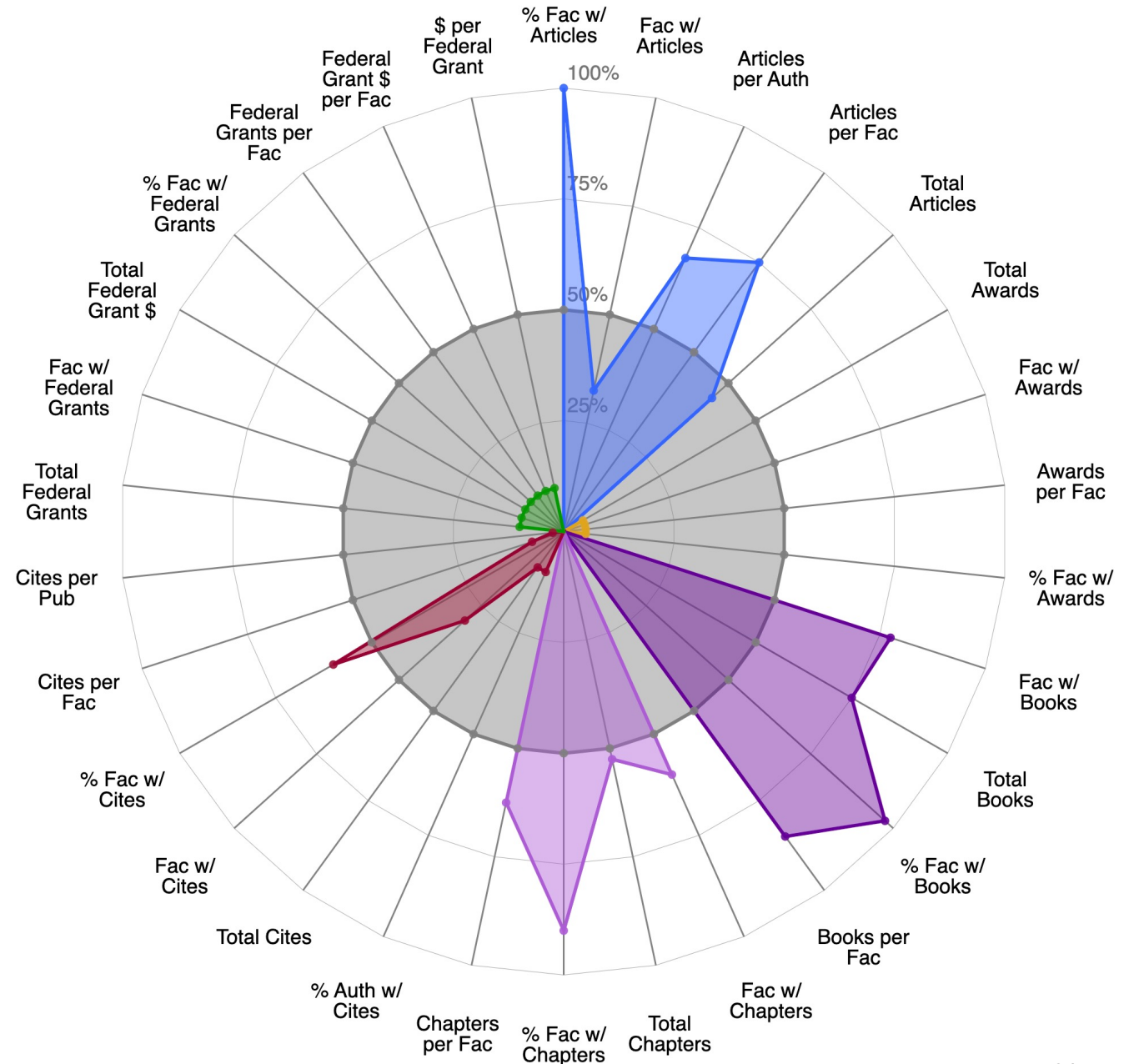
AA Default Weights for Economics



U's Department of Economics ("Economics") in AA using default rankings


Above median AAU public on books, chapters and articles – far below on citations




Books and chapters for Economics are mostly edited volumes; does the profession value these outlets highly?








It is possible to adjust Academic Analytics to rank departments using only its “Top 100” economics journals.

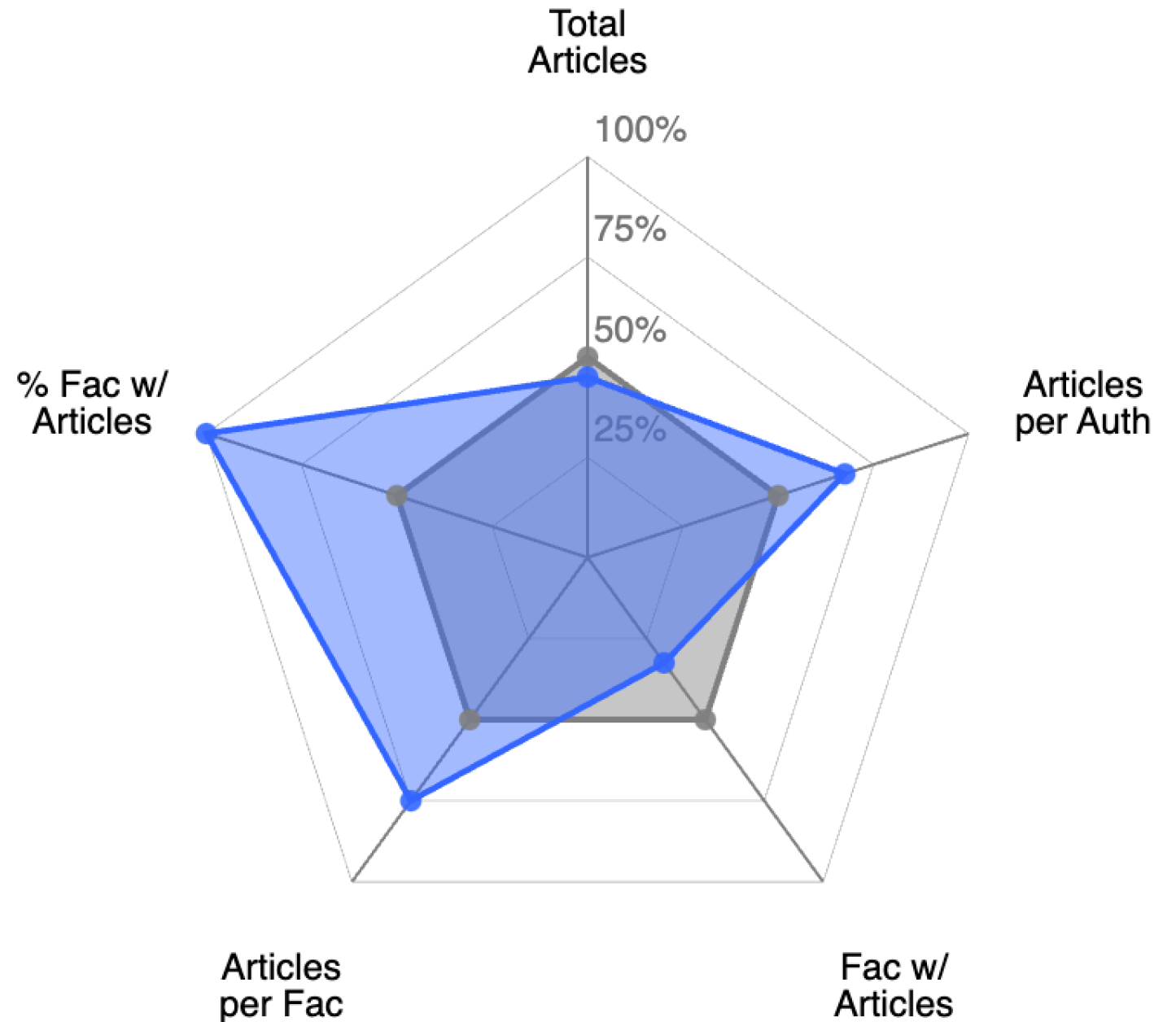
Click Journals then apply the Top 100 filter

JOURNALS 

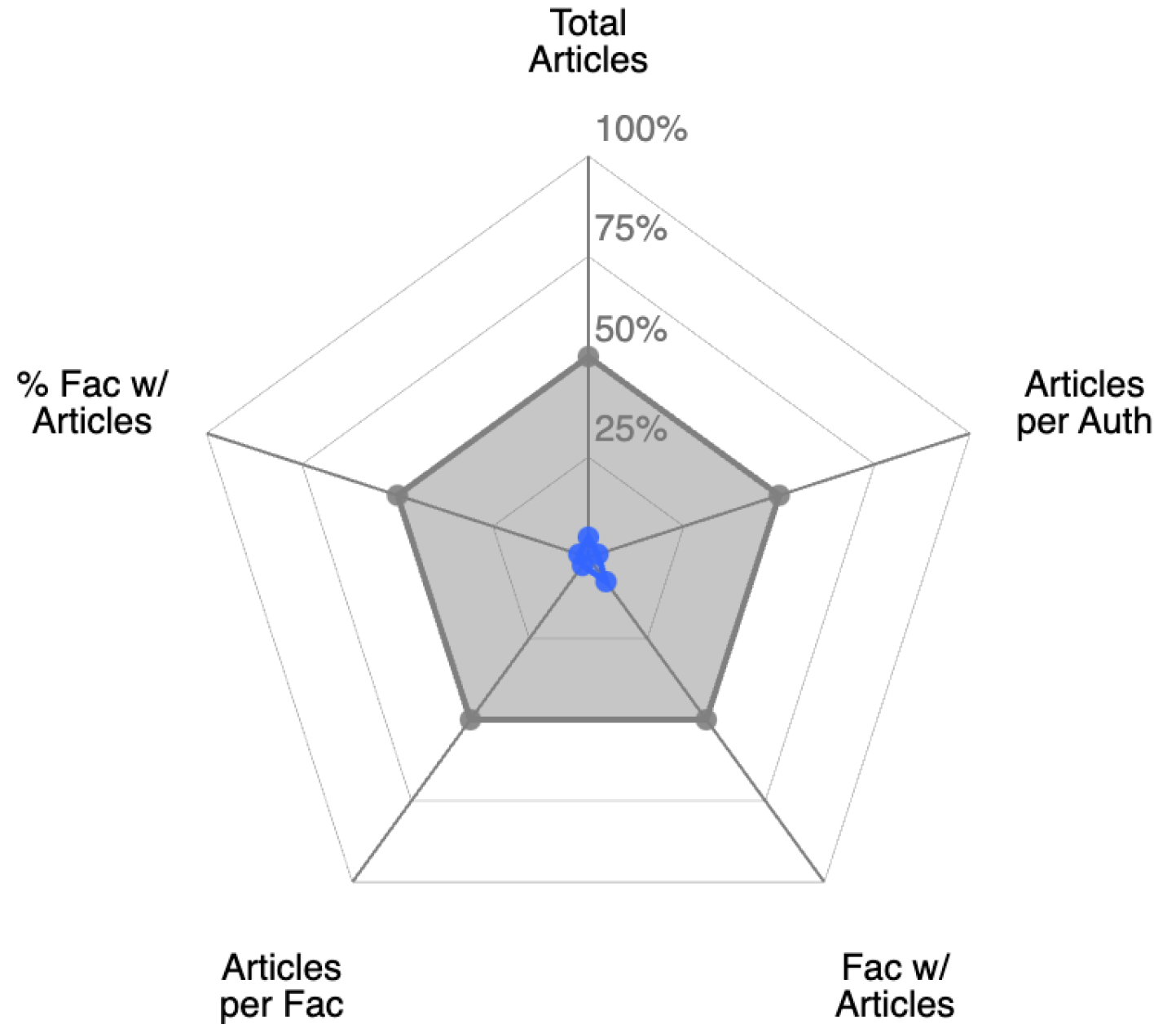
Search Within Results  **TOP 100**  **APPLY** **SAVED FILTERS** 

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 	Journal Name 	Articles 	Peer Articles 	Peer Disc Citation Rate 
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Review of Industrial Organization	4	60	1.1
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Economic Inquiry	3	144	2.3
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	American Journal of Agricultural Economics	3	34	1.9
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Health Affairs	3	30	2.2
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Economics Letters	2	329	0.8
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Games and Economic Behavior	2	267	1.7
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	European Economic Review	2	155	3.5
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	PLoS ONE	2	83	6.9
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Southern Economic Journal	2	80	1.0
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Journal of Policy Analysis and Management	2	65	3.9
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Journal of Economic Behavior and Organization	1	273	2.5
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	International Economic Review	1	191	2.1

Economics is well above the median AAU public in “Articles per Faculty” when counting all articles



Economics is far below the median AAU public in “Articles per Faculty” when we count articles in Top 100 econ journals



University of Utah
Department of Economics
Additional Notes on Research Productivity
By Tom Maloney

Economics Department Research Productivity

Below we provide notes on

- What's missing from the REPEC data
- What the more inclusive Academic Analytics data indicate
- How our research productivity and visibility have changed over the last decade
- How we compare to the QAMO group in Web of Science and Google Scholar H-index measures
- How our approach has attracted a growing number of high-quality doctoral students who are placing well on the job market

Concerns about REPEC Analysis

- While REPEC contains a great deal of material, inclusion depends on publishers providing reference information to the archive.
- Many of our faculty work on interdisciplinary topics and publish in interdisciplinary journals associated with medicine, law, and education, among other fields. The publishers of these journals do not provide information to REPEC, so much of our work is not reflected there.
- In fact, over 200 articles published by our faculty since 2000 are not contained in REPEC (that is, more than half are missing). Again, this is not based on any evaluation of journal or publication quality. It simply reflects the fact that some interdisciplinary publishers do not provide publication information to this economics-specific archive.
- Below we provide a few examples of the extent of the problem...

Prof. Norman Waitzman (PhD American University 1988)

- Credited with 1 publication and 1 citation since 2000 in the data used in the REPEC analysis.
- Scopus indicates Waitzman has roughly 35 publications and over 1500 citations in this period.
- Omitted publications include articles in Journal of Aging and Health, Preventive Medicine, Pediatrics, the Annals of Family Medicine, and many more.

Prof. Eunice Han (PhD Harvard 2013):

- Credited with 6 publications and 59 cites in REPEC analysis
- Google Scholar indicates Han has 22 publications and roughly 450 cites over this period.
- Omitted publications include articles in the American Journal of Education, Educational Policy, AERA Open, and many more.

Prof. Fernando Wilson (PhD Chicago 2006)

- Credited with 13 publications and 704 cites in REPEC analysis.
- Scopus and Google Scholar indicate roughly 135 publications and over 2000 citations.
- Omitted publications include articles in Nature Medicine, JAMA Open, Health Affairs, and many more.

Concerns about REPEC Analysis

Overall, economics faculty have at least

- 18 publications with impact factors equivalent to the “top 5”
- 14 additional publications with impact factors equivalent to the top 50
- 46 additional publications with impact factors equivalent to the top 100

which are not cataloged in REPEC

Spring 2024 AA Database

Academic Analytics provides a more consistent and comprehensive set of information on publications and citations.

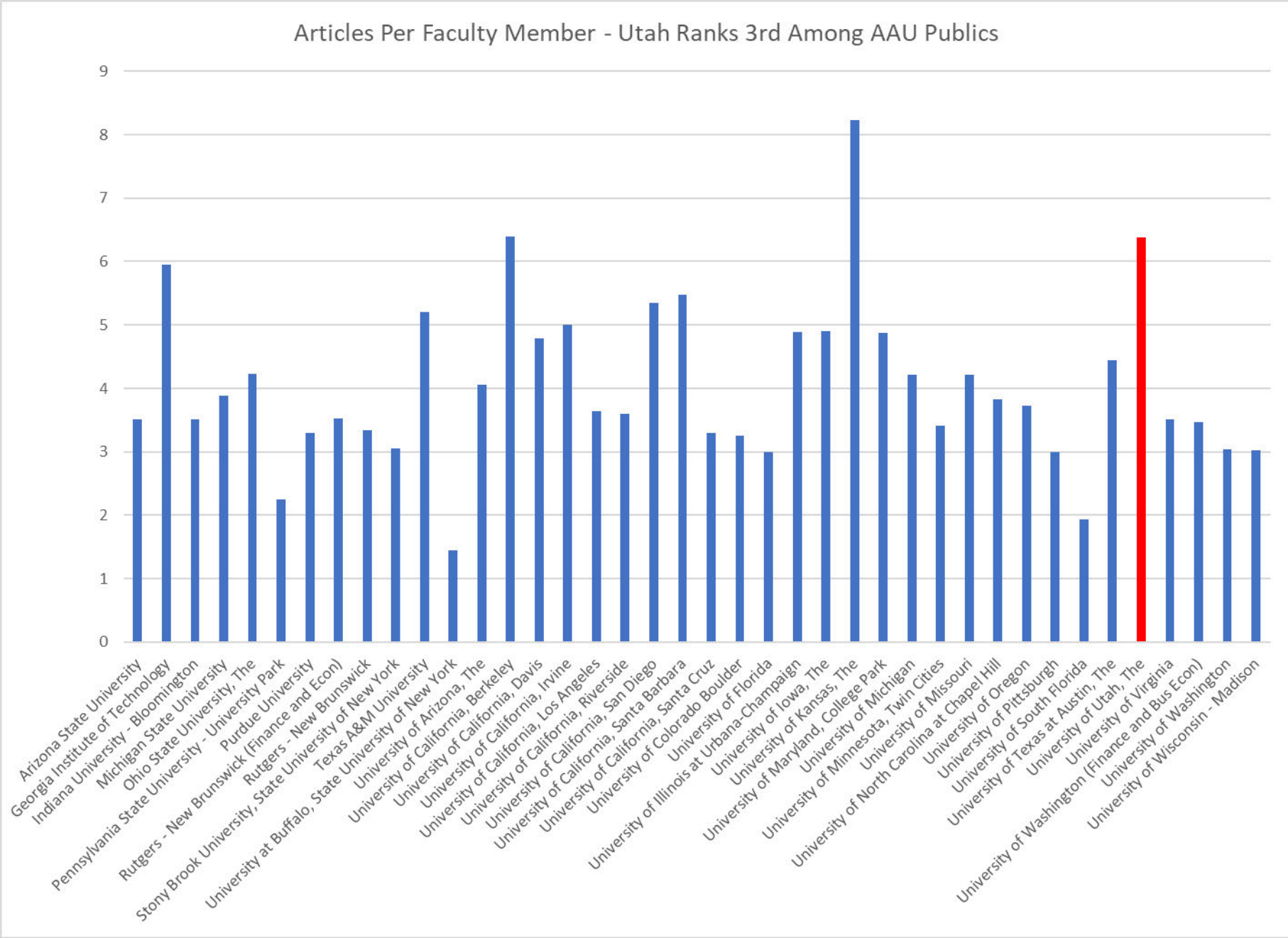
Below we present counts of articles, books, chapters, and citations based on the most recent Academic Analytics data. These are simple, unweighted counts.

Comparison is to AAU Publics. Database includes

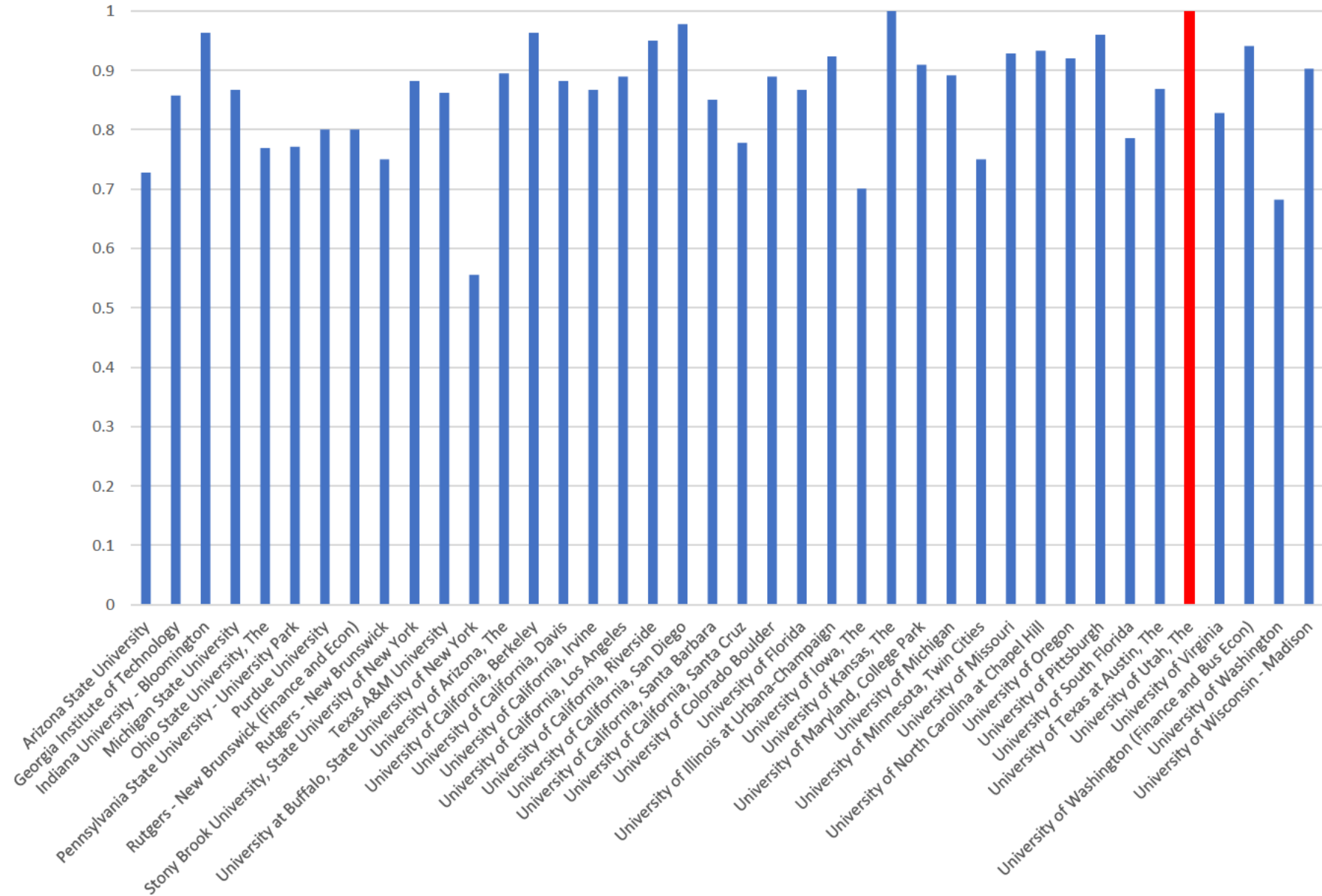
- Articles and chapters published 2019-22
- Books Published 2013-22
- Citations 2018-22

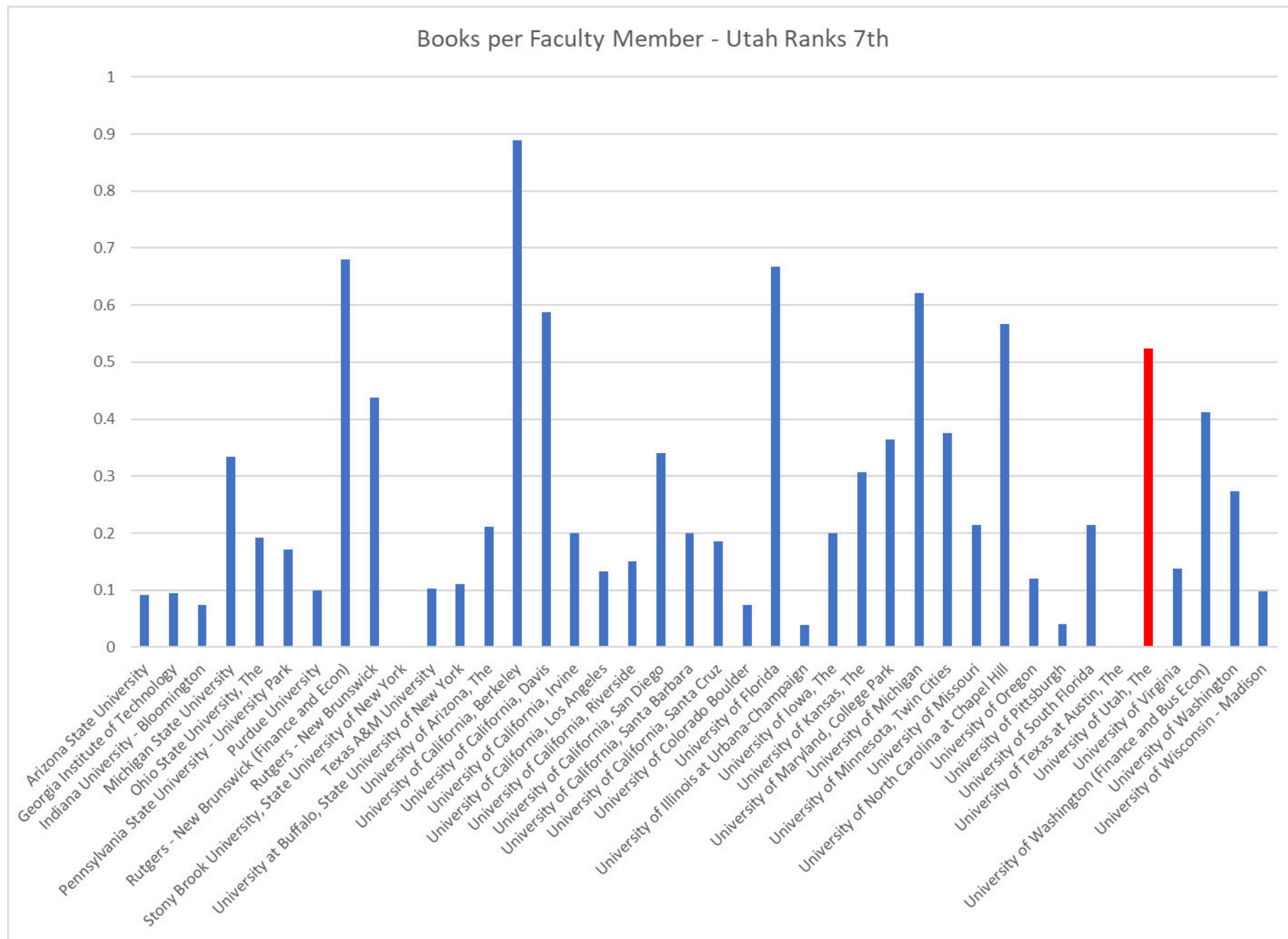
College Homes of Programs in Economics at AAU Publics

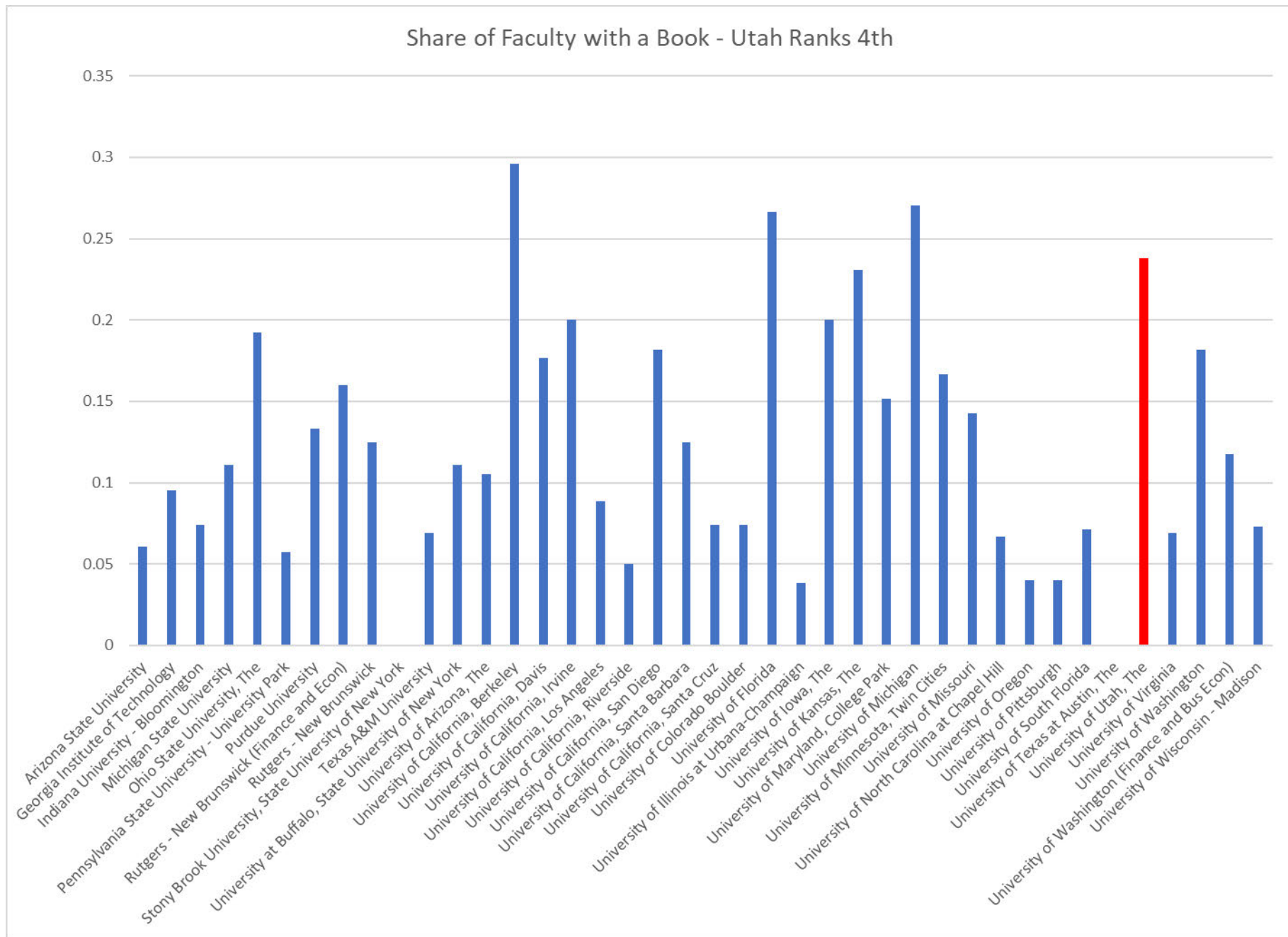
- Arts & Sciences, Liberal Arts, Social Sciences: Indiana, Ohio State, Rutgers (Econ), Stony Brook, TAMU, Buffalo, Colorado, Florida, Illinois, Missouri, North Carolina, Pitt, South Florida, UVa, Washington (Econ), Maryland, Utah, UC-Riverside, UC-Berkeley, UC-Davis, Santa Barbara, Wisconsin, Georgia Tech, Penn Stat, Minnesota, Texas, Kansas, Michigan, Michigan State, UC-Irvine, UCLA, UCSD, UC Santa Cruz, Oregon
- Business and Management: ASU, Purdue, Rutgers (Finance and Econ), Iowa, Washington (Business and Econ)

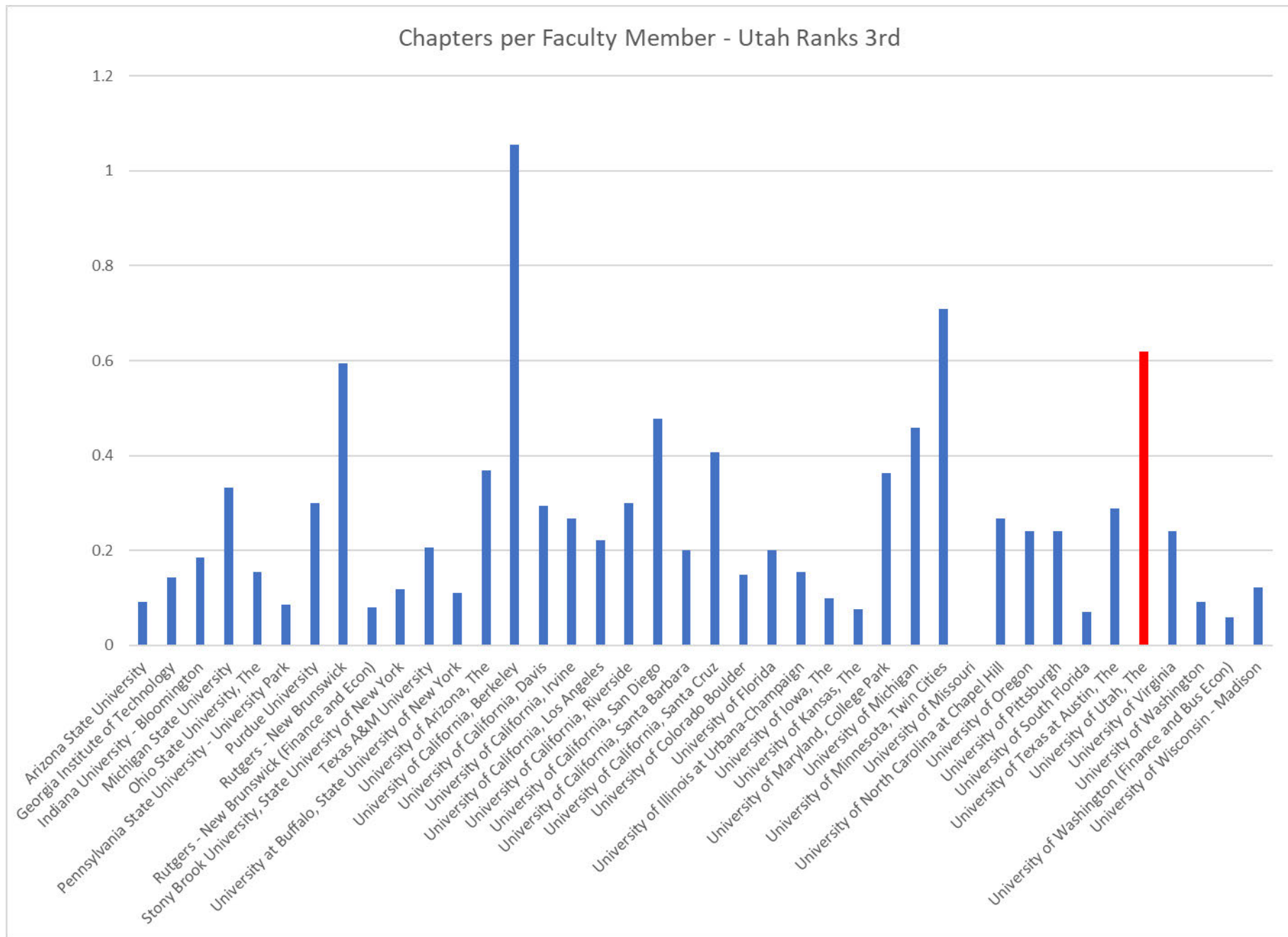


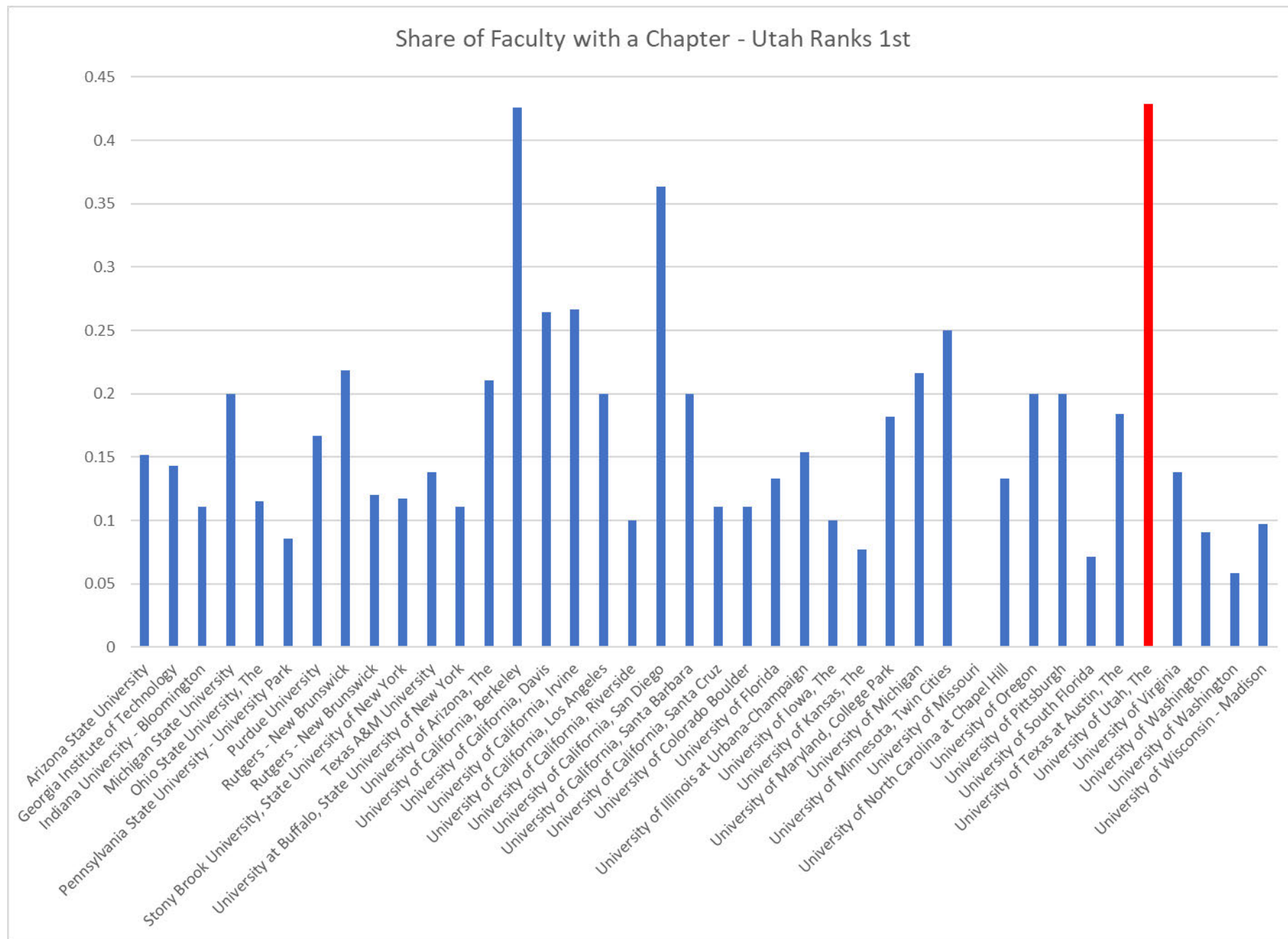
Share of Faculty with an Article - Utah Tied for First (All Faculty Published)

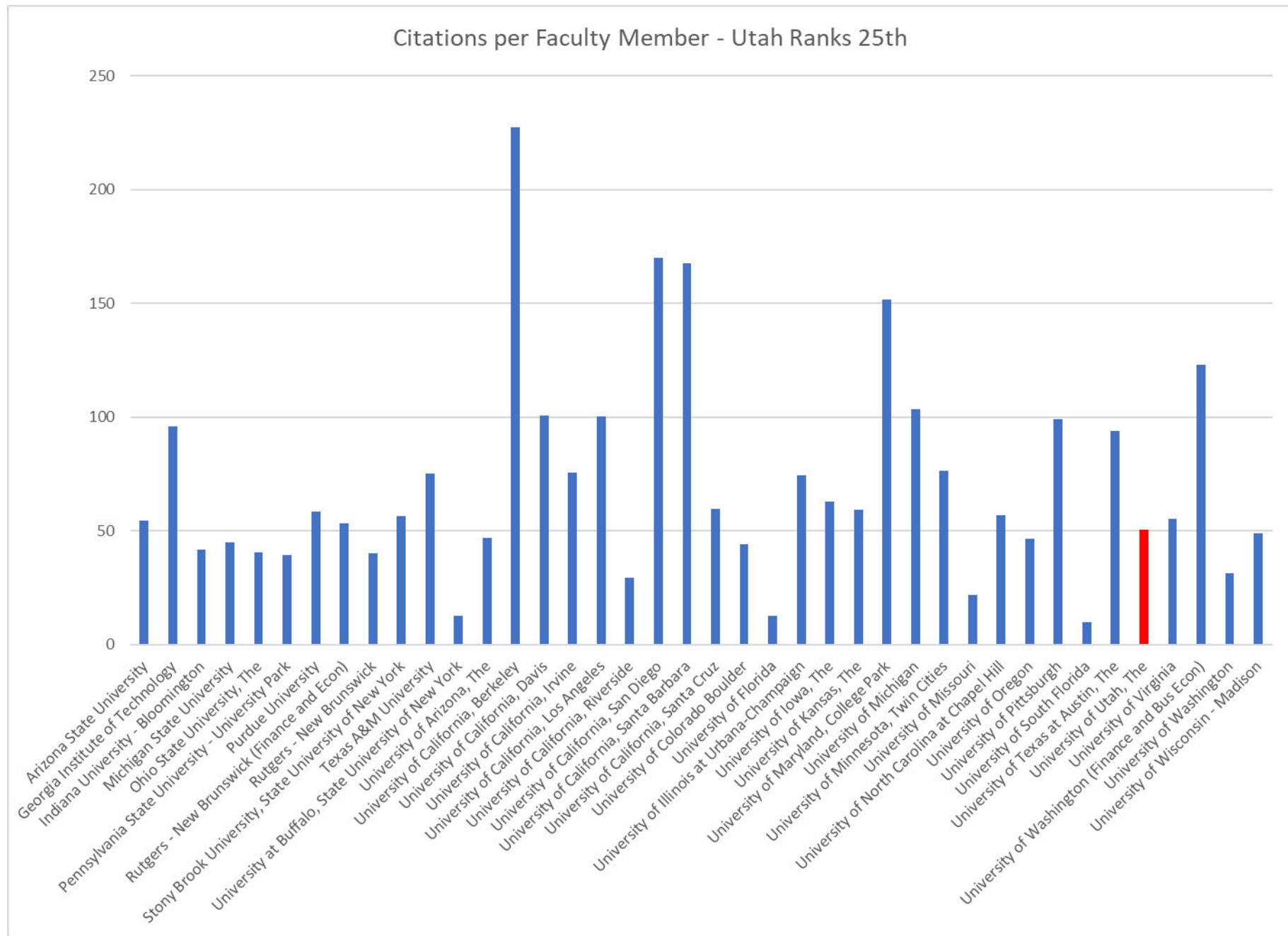


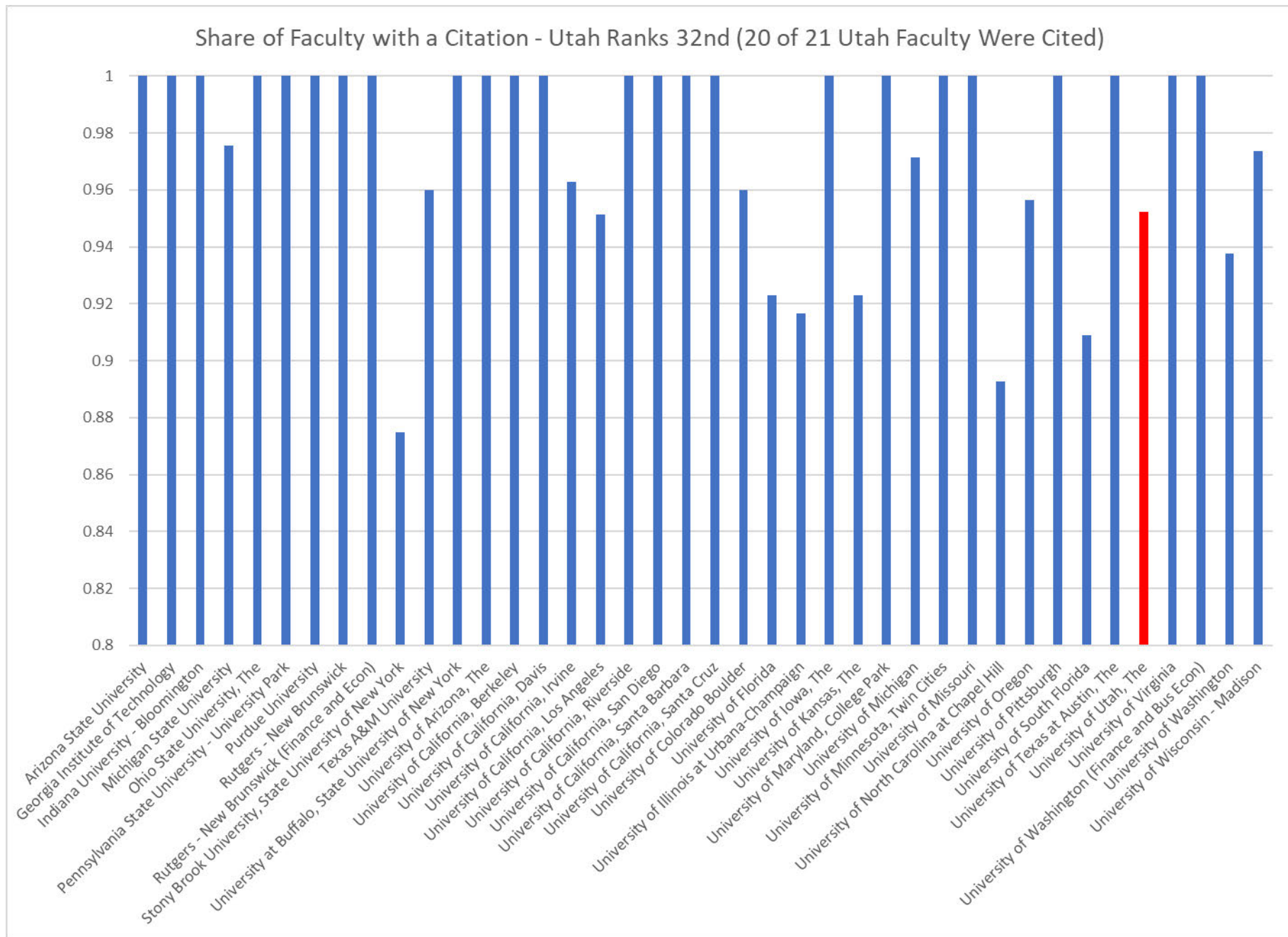












- Utah has a **high rate of publication** across all forms (articles, books, chapters).
- Utah has **broad participation across all faculty** in this research program, with high shares of faculty publishing. We are 1 of only 2 departments among AAU publics, and 1 of only 19 across all 243 departments in the Academic Analytics data, in which all faculty published an article in the relevant window.
- Among AAU publics, **only Utah and Cal-Berkeley** rank in the top ten in articles per faculty, share of faculty with an article, books per faculty, share of faculty with a book, chapters per faculty, and share of faculty with a chapter.
- While Utah ranks lower in citations per faculty, our citations per faculty **comfortably exceeded those at Washington (Economics), Indiana, Michigan State, and Ohio State and were comparable to Virginia and Wisconsin.**

Change over time

- Over the last decade, our research productivity on all of these dimensions has improved markedly.
- Below, we compare our metrics in the 2012 Academic Analytics database to the most recent data (which contain information through Spring 2022).
- We indicate ranks relative to all programs in the database, not just the AAU, as Utah was not in the AAU in 2012 and as AAU composition has changed over time.

Utah Ranking in Full 2012 and 2024 Academic Analytics Data

	2024 AA Data		2012 AA Data	
	N	Rank (Out of 243)	N	Rank (Out of 207)
Articles per Faculty Member	6.38	26	1.9	179
Share of Faculty with an Article	100%	1	76%	119
Books per Faculty Member	0.52	53	0.53	88
Share of Faculty with a Book	24%	40	29%	61
Citations per Faculty Member	50.5	103	5.1	184
Share of Faculty with a Cite	95%	34	71%	129

Note the 2012 Academic Analytics database contains evidence on publications a decade prior to the 2024 database – papers published 2009-2012, etc.

These rankings are relative to the full AA database, not just AAU publics. Note also that the number of departments included in the data has risen from 207 to 243.

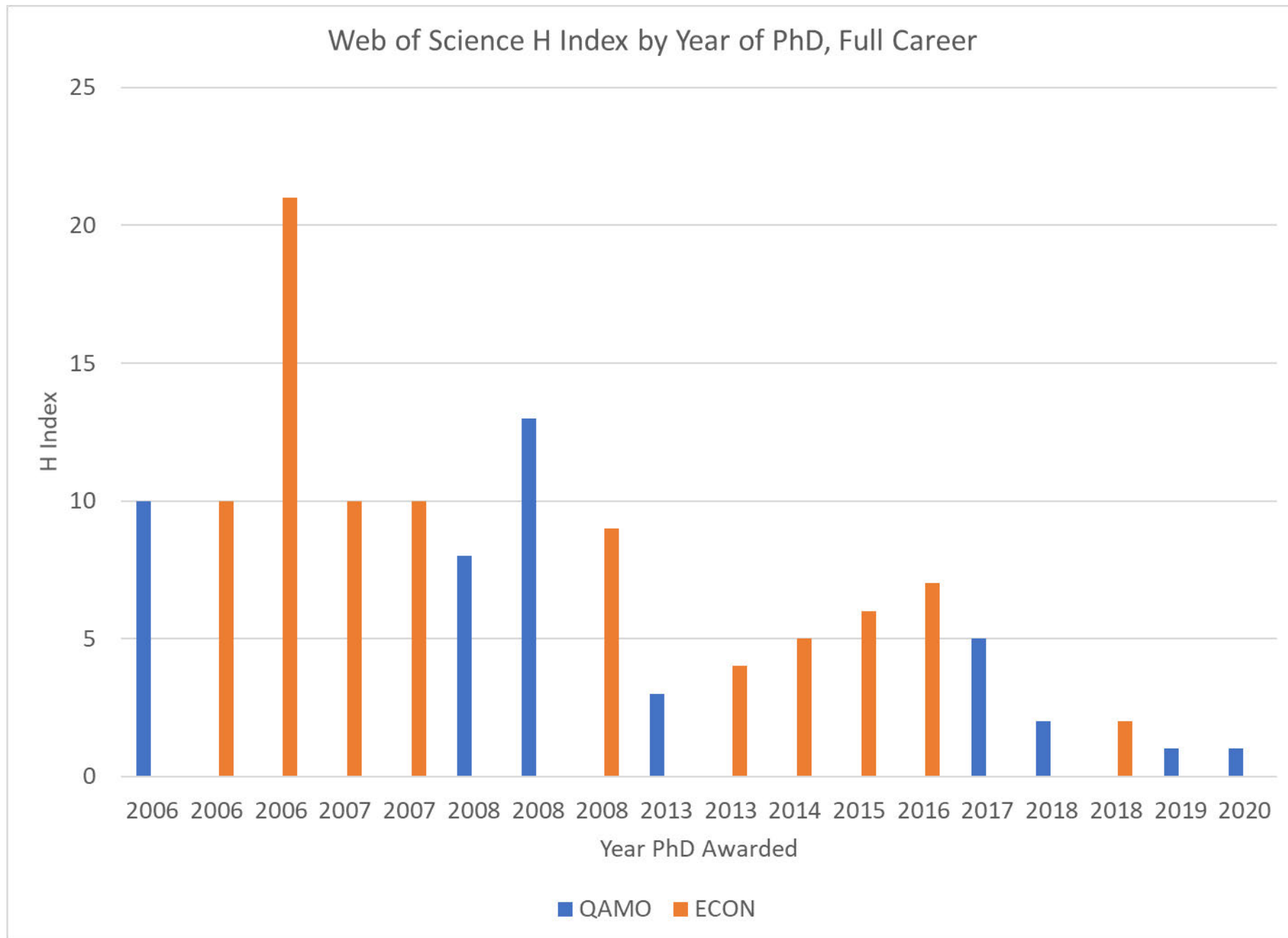
- Peer-reviewed journal articles per faculty member tripled over the decade.
- Citations per article also tripled.
- As a result, citations per faculty member increased by over 9 times.
- We expect the very substantial growth in our research productivity in the past decade will result in increased visibility of our program, rising rates of citation, and greater opportunities for awards in the coming years.

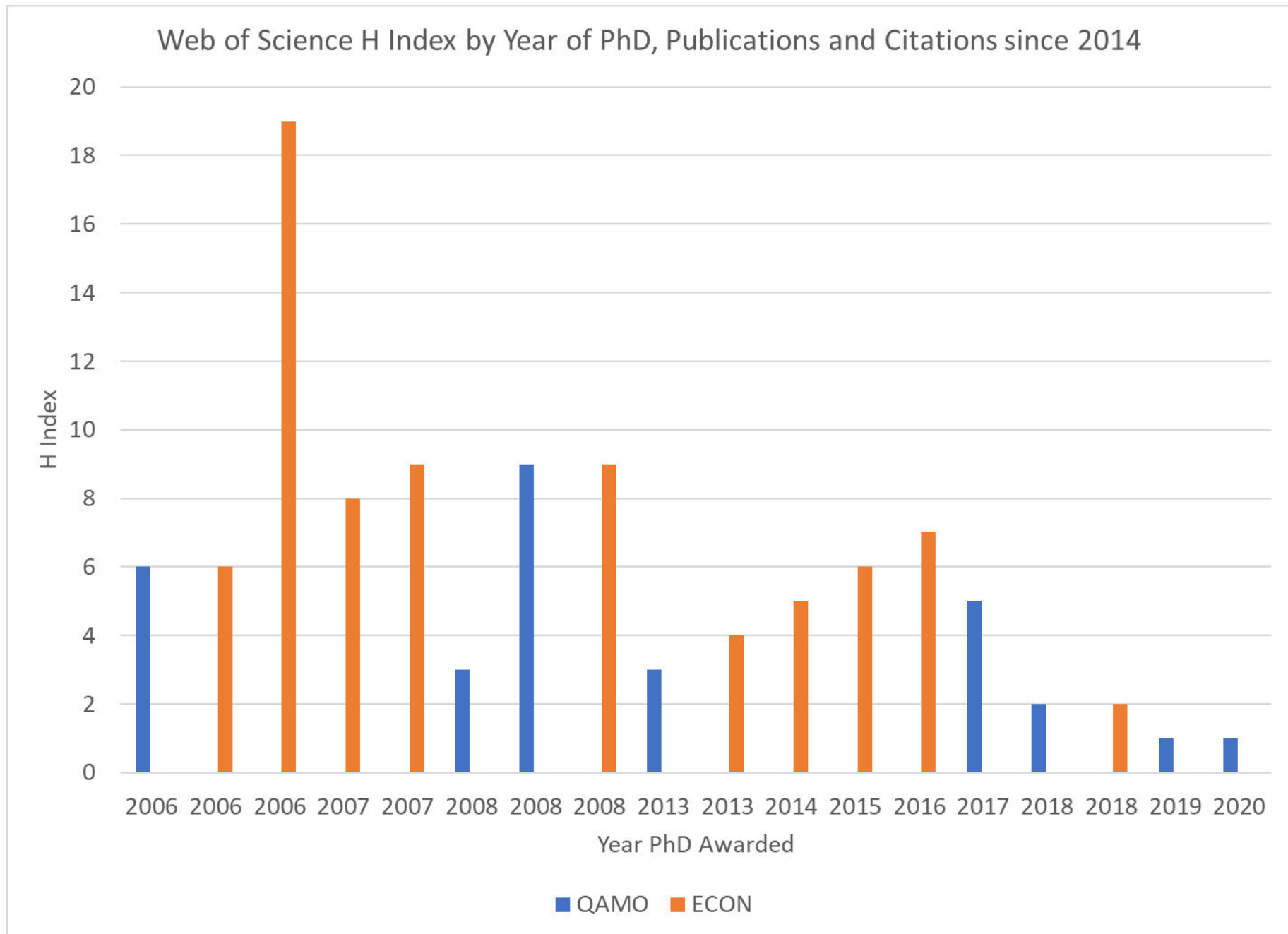
Comparison to QAMO Group – H Indexes

- Because there is concern that Economics has favored “quantity over quality,” we present H Indexes for Economics and QAMO faculty.
- An advantage of the H index is that it reflects citations of individual publications themselves, rather than the impact factors of journals in which they appear. Relative to a total citation count, the H index is less affected by a “big hit,” giving more of a sense of how the researcher’s broader body of work is being received.
- Below we provide evidence on H Indexes by year of PhD for faculty in the Economics Department and QAMO, using two different sources: Web of Science and Google Scholar. The “H index” is the largest number N such that N publications by the researcher have at least N cites. So an H index of 10 means that the researcher has 10 articles with at least 10 cites but does not have 11 articles with at least 11 cites.

H-Indexes from Web of Science Core Collection

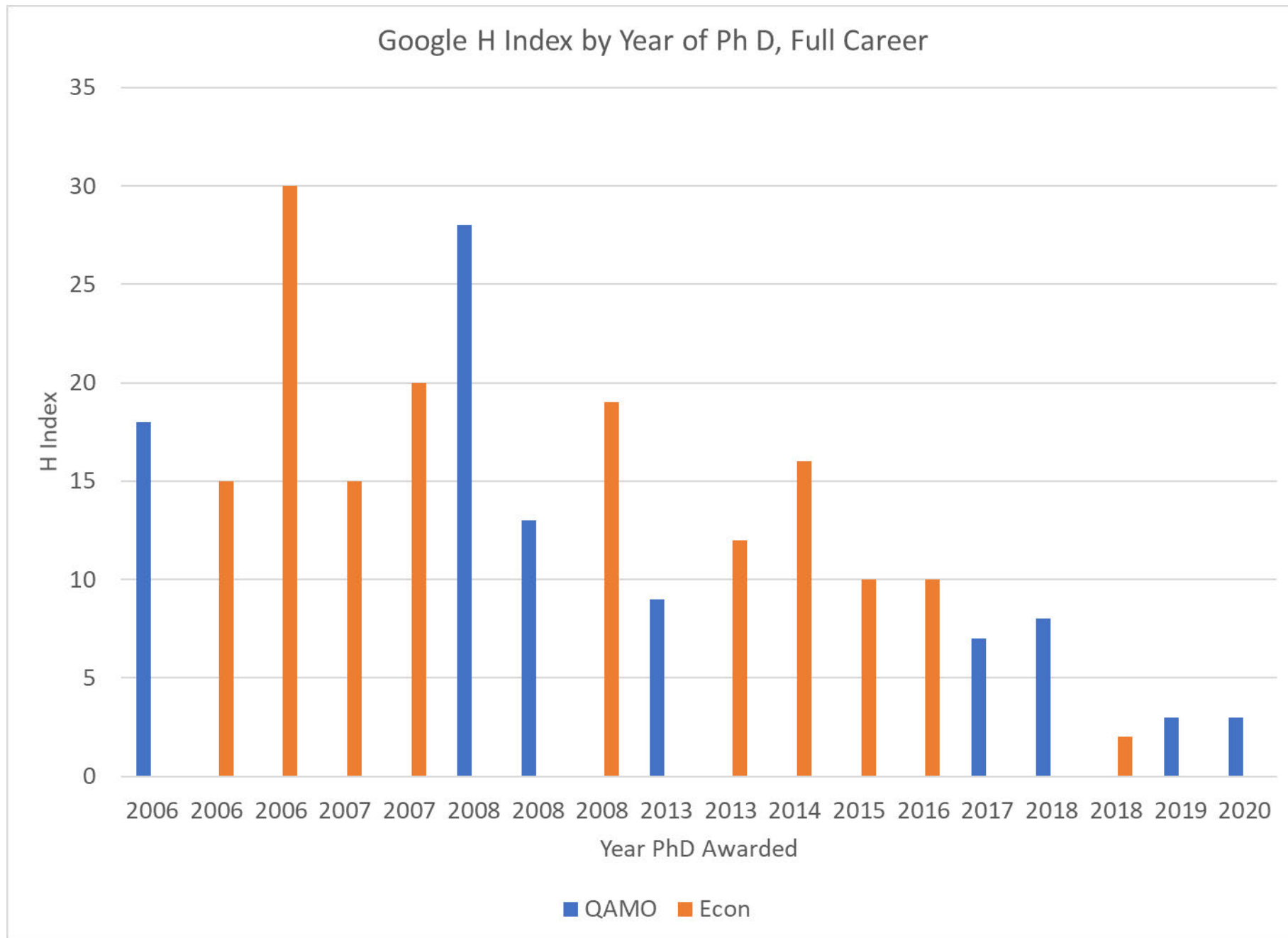
- The Web of Science Core is a curated collection, so total cites and H-indexes will be lower than in other sources: “Independent, in-house editorial experts evaluate and select journals to provide you with a dataset of the world’s leading journals that is free from potential industry bias or conflict of interest. Rigorous selection and curation processes guard against the inclusion of untrustworthy titles.”
- Indexes organized by year of PhD for individuals awarded a PhD between 2006 and 2020 (this is the group for which we have complete information).
- We provide one set of indexes based on each faculty member’s full career, and one based on articles published in the last decade (since 2014), to give a sense of recent performance.
- There is no obvious dominance of one program over the other in this evidence.

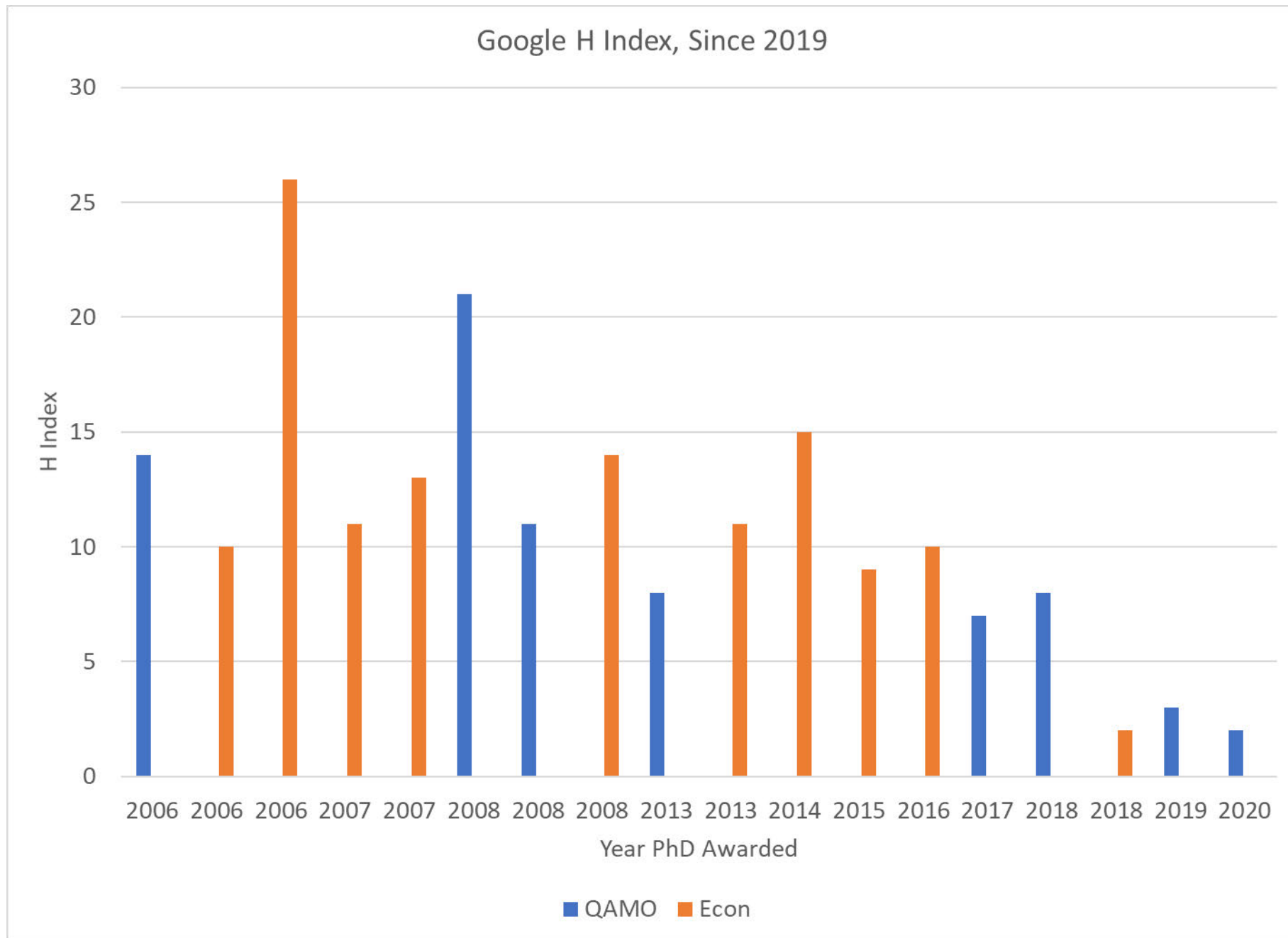




H-Indexes from Google Scholar

- Google Scholar is more inclusive in the publications and citations it counts. The “full career” graph from Google Scholar is based on all citations of all of a researcher’s publications. The “2019+” index includes all citations occurring from 2019 on, regardless of when the original article was published.
- We present indexes for individuals awarded PhDs between 2006 and 2020.
- Again, the two programs have similar H-Index distributions conditional on PhD year.





Interdisciplinarity and Leadership

- Our extensive health-related scholarship demonstrates our leadership in building a “**OneUtah**” research enterprise connecting the university’s strong medical campus with expertise in social science. Similarly, our research in law and economics, much of which has appeared in leading law journals (which are not included in REPEC), demonstrates our commitment to interdisciplinarity as well as simply the demand for our expertise in multiple areas across campus. Other areas of our interdisciplinary engagement include research on school performance and student outcomes, quantitative social history, and gender inequality and feminist thought.
- Our leadership in these areas is made evident both in our scholarship and in **editorial and advisory positions held by our faculty** in these areas, including editing and editorial board positions at Feminist Economics, the Antitrust Bulletin, the Journal of Economic History, Metroeconomica, the Journal of Evolutionary Economics, Structural Change and Economic Dynamics, and the Journal of Economic Surveys; and advisory and fellow positions at the Economic Policy Institute and the National Education Policy Center.

Growing Appeal to Highly Successful Doctoral Students

- Our approach to economic research – applied, interdisciplinary, and pluralistic/critical – is attracting a **growing number of applications for our doctoral program**: In the period covered by our graduate council review (2016-22), applications rose from 84 to 136. In the 2024 admission cycle, they approached 200. Our “yield rate” (the share of funding offers accepted) has also risen, from 29% in 2022 to 43% in 2023 and 58% in 2024.
- The students attracted by this model of economic research are succeeding in their studies and in the labor market. As is documented in our graduate program review, **time to completion for our PhD students** has fallen from about 7 years for the 2010 entering cohort to 5 for the 2017 entering cohort. This is below the average time to completion in the discipline reported by the Survey of Earned Doctorates.

Doctoral Student Placement

- The breadth, critical approach, and quantitative rigor of **our program has helped our students place well in academic positions as well as in policy work.** Recent alumni hold tenure track positions at institutions including the University of Rhode Island, St. John's University, Gonzaga University, Cal State San Bernadino, Dennison University, the University of Tulsa, and Ithaca College. Our alumni have also served locally as the Senior Economist for the Governor's Office of Planning and Budget, the Director of Research and Analysis for the Utah Commission on Criminal and Juvenile Justice, and in numerous research positions in other state offices and at the Gardner Policy Institute.

Department of Economics Faculty Survey Responses

Question 1: Thinking first about your personal research production function: Discuss crucial inputs, constraints, shadow values, etc to help the University of Utah understand what it can do to enhance your ability to publish in top-ranked, peer-reviewed economics journals.

[illegible]

1

2

3

4

5

6

[REDACTED]

Question 2: Thinking now about faculty compensation: Describe how the University of Utah might change incentives to increase your ability to publish in top-ranked, peer-reviewed economics journals. Think broadly here about pay but also non-pay forms of compensation.

[REDACTED]

1

1

1

1

1

[REDACTED]

■

[REDACTED]

■

[REDACTED]

■

■

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Question 3: Thinking now about research culture: Describe how the University of Utah might improve its economics research culture in such a way as to improve your ability to publish in top-ranked, peer-reviewed economics journals.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Question 4: How can the University of Utah improve its ability to hire economists who will publish in top-ranked, peer-reviewed economics journals? Think broadly here about pay and incentives

but also hiring strategies that can be applied to identify good matches and combat adverse selection.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Question 5: The University of Utah's economists are currently spread across two colleges. What organizational structures will best support an effort to hire economists who will publish in top-ranked, peer-reviewed economics journals?

[REDACTED]

[illegible]

[REDACTED]

Question 6: What other suggestions, recommendations, or ideas do you have to improve the University's ability to publish in top-ranked, peer-reviewed economics journals while continuing to fully appreciate academic freedom and interdisciplinary research?

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Question 7: What other information should University of Utah upper administration, deans, and department chairs consider as we attempt to carry out this charge?

[REDACTED]

1

1

1

1

1

[REDACTED]

QAMO Faculty Survey Responses

Question 1: Thinking first about your personal research production function: Discuss crucial inputs, constraints, shadow values, etc to help the University of Utah understand what it can do to enhance your ability to publish in top-ranked, peer-reviewed economics journals.

[Redacted response text]

[REDACTED]

Question 2: Thinking now about faculty compensation: Describe how the University of Utah might change incentives to increase your ability to publish in top-ranked, peer-reviewed economics journals. Think broadly here about pay but also non-pay forms of compensation.

[REDACTED]

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■

[REDACTED]

Question 4: How can the University of Utah improve its ability to hire economists who will publish in top-ranked, peer-reviewed economics journals? Think broadly here about pay and incentives but also hiring strategies that can be applied to identify good matches and combat adverse selection.

[REDACTED]

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[REDACTED]

Question 5: The University of Utah's economists are currently spread across two colleges. What organizational structures will best support an effort to hire economists who will publish in top-ranked, peer-reviewed economics journals?

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Question 6: What other suggestions, recommendations, or ideas do you have to improve the University's ability to publish in top-ranked, peer-reviewed economics journals while continuing to fully appreciate academic freedom and interdisciplinary research?

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Question 7: What other information should University of Utah upper administration, deans, and department chairs consider as we attempt to carry out this charge?

[REDACTED]

Econ High-Level Plan:

Drawing on the responses to the survey, our graduate council review, and discussion at our faculty retreat, we would focus on the following paths for “advancing excellence.”

Current markers of excellence:

- Over the past decade, the Department of Economics has added outstanding faculty with productive research programs, particularly in labor and competition, education economics, health economics, behavioral/experimental economics, and econometric methods.
- We have also experienced greater research engagement among more senior faculty. As a result, we are 1 of only 2 departments among AAU publics, and 1 of only 19 departments across all 243 PhD-granting units in the Academic Analytics (AA) database, in which all faculty have journal publications recorded over the most recent AA window (2019-22).
- This has not involved a sacrifice of quality in favor of quantity: our citations-per-article tripled between 2012 and 2022 (the most recently available AA window), even as our articles-per-faculty-member tripled (so that citations-per-faculty-member grew by about 9 times).
- Our faculty’s research leadership is also reflected in the editorial positions they hold or have held at leading journals (including Feminist Economics, the Antitrust Bulletin, the Journal of Economic History, Metroeconomica, the Journal of Evolutionary Economics, Structural Change and Economic Dynamics, and the Journal of Economic Surveys), and the advisory positions they hold with important research centers, including the Economic Policy Institute and the National Education Policy Center.
- As our research profile has risen, we have continued to offer doctoral students an unusually rich training in both rigorous mainstream theory and methods and interdisciplinary and critical approaches. As a result, we have attracted a rapidly growing number of doctoral program applications (rising from 84 in 2016 to roughly 200 in 2024).
- Our ability to attract the best students from this pool has also risen, with our yield rate increasing to 58% in 2024.
- The rising quality of our students and the vibrancy and relevance of our faculty members’ research they are exposed and connected to is demonstrated in their improved time-to-completion in the PhD program, now at 5 years (shorter than the industry standard in economics), and in our very strong PhD placement record, including recent tenure-track placements at St. John’s, the University of Rhode Island, Gonzaga University, Cal State San Bernardino, Denison University, University of Tulsa, and Ithaca College.

In sum, we have, particularly over the past decade, developed a highly productive, unusually diverse research community. Both our faculty and our students select into our program because it is distinctive.

We are excited about the possibility of making new investments to increase our presence in important debates in the profession, particularly through high-impact publications in highly-ranked core journals. We believe the following investments will serve this goal, enhancing our visibility while maintaining our distinct approach, valuing academic freedom and interdisciplinary work.

Key Investments for Building on This Success:

(1) An aggressive hiring program in the areas of applied macroeconomics, applied microeconomics, and econometrics.

We propose to hire at least seven new faculty over the next few years, with a focus on applied macroeconomics, applied microeconomics, and econometrics. (Specific fields of hire should be considered tentative, conditional on approval by faculty vote.)

We currently have an excellent research group who work on applied macro topics related to distribution and economic growth. We believe this is a topic area ripe for connecting key strengths to mainstream and highly visible research. We propose 2 hires in this area.

We will also target researchers in applied microeconomics, whose work will connect to our productive faculty in industrial organization, competition, and labor. We propose 2 hires in this area

Finally, we will target hires in econometrics and data science. We propose to add three faculty to enable adding strong data science and artificial intelligence competencies in both research and teaching. Scholars in this area will generate positive synergies with other departments across the university: with the U's Federal Statistical Research Data Center and active scientific and social scientific research programs across both lower and upper campus. Moreover, these hires will enhance the pursuit of university initiatives in artificial intelligence. Artificial intelligence depends fundamentally on the tools of statistical inference, so only researchers with deep understanding of statistical methodology will be able to both develop new AI techniques and also identify AI shortcomings and mitigations for those shortcomings.

These hires will require substantial resources, including salaries well above our current levels. As is discussed in the survey and also in our graduate program review, our salary structure remains below the average for our peers and aspirational peers, despite substantial progress in raising salaries over the last half-decade. Our assistant and associate professor salaries are at about 90% of those of tier 5 universities (ranked 50 and higher, according to National Research Council rankings of institutions), and our full professor salaries are at about 82% of this level. Compared to tier 3 institutions (ranked 16 to 30), we are at 60-66% for associate and assistant salaries and 50% for full professor salaries. Attracting the faculty we are intending to target in this effort will require salaries at at least the tier 3 level.

We expect these to be net additions to our faculty, beyond retirement or other replacements.

(2) Support for post-doctoral positions, particularly in our research centers.

We have established or incorporated several research centers in the department in recent years: the Economic Evaluation Unit, the Center for Antitrust and Consumer Protection, the Health Economics Core and the Matheson Center for Health Care Studies. These centers provide enhanced visibility for our research, and our faculty and students, through conferences and networking. For example, our 2018 conference on inequality generated a volume co-edited by Nobel Laureate Joseph Stiglitz as well as closer ties to funders such as INET (the Institute for New Economic Thinking). Increased grants from INET and other sources have supported faculty research, graduate student stipends, and the development of the Antitrust Center.

Post-doctoral positions in these centers would include responsibilities for supporting daily operations and also developing a high-visibility research program connected to this work. Post-doctoral positions

can also be effective tools for broadening networks, as fellows from various home universities rotate through these positions, and for identifying potential candidates for faculty positions.

(3) Expansion of the PhD program and enhanced research and teaching assistant funding.

Both our internal and external review reports advocate for modest expansion of our entering PhD cohorts, to 8 or 10 students (from 6). Additional Research and Teaching Assistantships could provide more uninterrupted time for faculty to devote to their research (a key point raised by many survey respondents). This would also be consistent with the university's broader emphasis on expanding externally funded research (which will benefit from additional RAs) and undergraduate enrollment (which will require more graduate student instructors).

Economics Department Position on Structure and Linkages:

The Economics Faculty do not support pursuing any formal “merger” with QAMO, though we believe there are many opportunities to enhance linkages between the units.

It is important to note that none of the respondents to the recent survey of Economics and QAMO faculty voiced support for the idea of a merger.

Moreover, throughout the development of the QAMO program, the Eccles Institute, and the QAMO division, faculty in the business school have emphasized the value of having multiple units housing economists. See excerpts from these documents below.

We believe it would be counterproductive to force a merger on two groups of academics who are opposed to this idea, and who have spent the better part of a decade working on institutional structures built around complementarity and distinctiveness. Such a move would demonstrate a lack of respect for the expertise of faculty regarding their own programs and would likely generate persistent challenges in departmental decision-making.

Moreover, it would be a mistake to undertake such a complicated process while also carrying out aggressive searches for large numbers of new faculty in both units. Trying to attract and integrate these faculty in the midst of a massive and unpopular structural change will undermine the likelihood of our success in these searches.

The QAMO division has existed for just one year as an autonomous unit. The Economics department has undergone a substantial generational transformation over the past decade, resulting in much higher rates of research engagement and publication with much-improved visibility and citation rates. We should allow these changes to play out, along with our planned hiring program, before considering further structural change.

In sum, we should embrace the distinct approaches to economics as a social science and economics as a business discipline embodied in our two units. But we should do a better job of promoting understanding and collaboration, in an institutionalized way, in order to take best advantage of our relative strengths.

We propose institutionalizing more engagement between our students and QAMO faculty, through research seminars and through our workshop series for 2nd and 3rd year students. This might result in more opportunities for interested QAMO faculty to serve on dissertation committees. One simple way to facilitate this would be to have staff implement a joint Economics and QAMO web calendar for paper presentations, to serve as a convenient, one-stop information source for all of the economics-related talks on campus. We propose to ask the Departments of Finance and of Family and Consumer Studies to add all of their economics-related talks to this calendar as well; not all of the U’s PhD’s in economics or economics-related fields are in the Economics and QAMO departments. We would also propose establishing a twice-per-year distinguished lecture bringing to campus a very high-profile academic economist of interest to both faculties (perhaps rotating responsibility for the invitation semester-by-semester). As some survey respondents noted, these kinds of person-to-person engagements can build

reputation and visibility and also help faculty learn about potential “diamonds in the rough” among potential job candidates.

We would also support efforts to collaborate on high-visibility joint conferences in areas of overlapping interest, as we did this past June in co-sponsoring the “Utah Public Finance Invitational” conference organized out of the Department of Finance. In that case, we provided a substantial amount of financial support and also organized two “policy roundtables” on the first day of the conference, featuring Norman Waitzman (Economics), Fernando Wilson (Economics), and Jaewhan Kim (Econ PhD alum, now faculty in the School of Medicine), as well as other panelists from the Utah School of Medicine, the University of Michigan, the University of Arkansas, and the Gardner Policy Institute.

QAMO/Business School Statements on the Value of Multiple Economics Units

QAMO/BEA Major Proposal, Summer 2016:

“Economics is an unusually broad field, and business economics is a growing subfield within economics. Leading MBA programs typically employ dozens of economics PhDs who teach and conduct research at the intersection of economics and business. Increasingly, universities are offering “business economics” as an undergraduate major. In some cases, such majors are collaborations between an economics department and a business school, while in other cases the majors are housed solely within a school of business.”

Cornell University offers an “Economics” major through its College of Arts and Sciences and an “Applied Economics and Management” major through the Charles Dyson School of Applied Economics and Management.

Washington University offers an “Economics” major through its Faculty of Arts & Sciences and an “Economics and Strategy” major through the Olin Business School.

The University of Pennsylvania offers an “Economics” major through its School of Arts and Sciences and a “Business Economics and Public Policy” major through the Wharton School of Business.

Indiana University offers an “Economics” major through its College of Arts and Sciences and an “Economic Consulting” major through the Kelley School of Business.

New York University offers an “Economics” major through its College of Arts and Sciences and an “Economics” major through the Stern School of Business.”

Eccles Institute Proposal for Permanent Status, 2020

“In 2017, the University recognized the value in establishing a strong presence in Business Economics at the David Eccles School of Business. Economics is both a foundational social science and a valuable toolkit for business decision making and policy analysis. This is why we find multiple economics departments and programs in many universities, given the breadth and

diversity of economic inquiry and education across disciplines. Students with these tools are highly valued in a diverse set of industries. "

QAMO Division proposal September 2022:

"Second, while this new Division will consist of scholars who identify as economists, we aim to differentiate clearly from the University of Utah's Department of Economics (with whom we enjoy positive relations and collaborate, as discussed below, on the QAMO major). The proposed Division is not a full-service economics department, and makes no effort to cover the many important fields of modern economics. Instead, the Division will focus teaching efforts on the applications of economics to business decision-making (in QAMO and the Eccles School's various MBA programs) and to the needs of PhD students in the various Eccles School departments."

"It is not unusual for Tier 1 institutions to have multiple departments consisting of scholars who identify as economists. The University of Chicago, for example, has both a top-rated economics department (within the social sciences) and a large economics department in the Booth School of Business. Notably, the two departments at Chicago recently began to collaborate on an undergraduate business economics major, using a similar structure to that devised for QAMO at the University of Utah. Cornell, University of Pennsylvania, and Washington University in St. Louis also feature multiple economics departments (one in business and one in the social sciences) each offering differentiated undergraduate majors."

In addition, the QAMO and Economics leadership have repeatedly emphasized the value of focusing on complementarity and distinctiveness between their programs, in a series of MOU's, including most recently the **MOU regarding the establishment of the QAMO division, in January 2023.**

"Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the David Eccles School of Business (DESB) and the College of Social Behavioral Science (CSBS) regarding the creation of a Division of Quantitative Analysis of Markets and Organization (QAMO):

This MOU establishes facets of agreement between the DESB and the CSBS with the establishment of the QAMO Division within the David Eccles School of Business. We acknowledge:

- 1) The shared QAMO major/Business Economics Analysis (BEA) emphasis between the departments of finance in the DESB and the department of economics in CSBS has been a successful and worthwhile cooperative arrangement and will not be jeopardized by the new Division. The MOU regarding the major and emphasis will remain in place and be amended only upon mutual agreement of the DESB and the CSBS.*
- 2) The DESB and Department of Finance recognize that the economics department is a full-service economics department in the senses that a) it provides the full array of undergraduate and graduate programs in economics (BA, BS, MA, PhD) and b) provides courses covering the major theoretical and applied fields in economics. There is no intent or interest in duplicating programs and offerings in the economics department with the establishment of the QAMO Division.*

3) There is no interest or intent to use the word “economics” in renaming the QAMO Division in the future nor changing the status of that Division to a Department.

4) CSBS has no intent or interest in preventing the QAMO division from serving the mission of the David Eccles School of Business in applications of economics through its class and programmatic offerings provided they do not dilute the commitments in 2) above.

5) The QAMO Division and department of Economics look forward to developing further cooperative endeavors that take advantage of the shared interest in economics.”

Plan for Excellence in Economics by QAMO

University of Utah upper administration requests plans for achieving excellence in the field of economics.

Executive Summary

We present our analysis into two pieces: (1) what actions to pursue, and (2) how to organize economics. We offer five recommended actions and then discuss two possible organizational structures.

Recommended Actions:

We recommend these actions be pursued regardless of organizational choices:

- (1) Ensure that QAMO faculty drive hiring decisions as part of this initiative.
- (2) Achieve a critical mass of 25 faculty in a single unit who pursue publication success in top journals.
- (3) Motivate and support research excellence as defined in part by journal quality with appropriate incentives, accountability and research funding.
- (4) Invest directly in marketing efforts to build reputation of Utah Economics.
- (5) Using a cluster-hire-by-subfield strategy, attempt to hire early/mid-career scholars with a track record of success but whose best work is ahead of them.

How to Organize Economics:

We discuss two ways to organize economics to pursue this goal. Under each, we offer a series of recommended actions specific to that organizational structure.

- (1) Retain a two-unit structure with both QAMO and CSBS Econ:
 - a. Change QAMO unit name to include the word economics.
 - b. Improve research collaboration between QAMO and CSBS Econ where shared interests are present.
 - c. Pursue strategies to expand graduate teaching opportunities for QAMO faculty.
- (2) Pursue a one-unit structure with a single economics department:
 - a. Adopt the following essential aims: Ensure that all faculty and staff are retained at the University in similar roles; create paths for all graduate students to complete their studies; maintain appropriate staffing for undergraduate programs at all times; structure the new unit to avoid dysfunction.
 - b. Place single unit in David Eccles School of Business.
 - c. Over an expedited time period, reduce teaching load and extend tenure clock for all untenured CSBS Econ tenure-line faculty; allow these faculty to search for new departmental homes, either within the new economics unit or elsewhere in the University; codify a “clean slate” so that past formal and informal reviews will not be used in subsequent RPT processes.
 - d. Over an appropriate time period, allow CSBS Econ tenured faculty to search for new departmental homes, either within the new economics unit or elsewhere in the University.
 - e. Over an appropriate time period, shift career-line and adjunct faculty, staff, and programs to new unit, giving future consideration to questions regarding business differential tuition and structure of undergraduate major.

Recommended Actions:

We recommend five actions be pursued regardless of organizational choices. Below, we list the recommendations and offer detail on each of these proposed actions.

Recommendation 1: Ensure that QAMO faculty drive hiring decisions as part of this initiative.

Our reasons for making this recommendation are the following:

- (1) QAMO faculty are aligned with and in support of the goal of achieving excellence in the field of economics as measured by citations and publications top-ranked peer-reviewed journals. (See faculty survey responses for evidence.)
- (2) QAMO has developed a strong research culture that pursues publications top-ranked peer-reviewed journals. (Again see survey responses.)
- (3) QAMO faculty have a track record of success in publishing in top-ranked peer-reviewed econ journals. (See AAU public comparison for evidence.)
- (4) QAMO has a track record of success in hiring faculty who publish in top-ranked peer-reviewed econ journals.
- (5) QAMO has developed and maintained strong professional networks among faculty at other institutions who publish in top journals.

Recommendation 2: Achieve a critical mass of 25 faculty in a single unit who pursue publication success in top journals.

To suggest this number, we examined the economics departments at peer AAU econ departments. Top departments have 25 or more faculty pursuing publication success in top journals. There are economies of scale in reputational heft, spreading service burden, and seminar and conference participation.

Recommendation 3: Motivate and support research excellence as defined in part by journal quality with appropriate incentives, accountability and research funding.

Top AAU public departments publish frequently in the top 100 econ journals, regularly in the top 25, and place their best work in the top 5. They achieve this impact by hiring ambitious and creative scholars, providing research resources, and designing appropriate incentives/accountability. We must align tenure standards, faculty raises, summer funding, etc to measures of research excellence in which journal quality and citations are weighed (as under current DESB policy). Provide funds for strategic research investments (as under MSE Institute); solidify funding for Wasatch Census RDC; invest in grant-writing support.

Recommendation 4: Invest directly in marketing efforts to build reputation of Utah Economics.

Pursue a national media blitz announcing cluster hires and U of Utah investment in economics. Seek concurrent departmental naming gift, similar to School of Computing. Specific reputation initiatives: (1) To economics profession: Announcement of cluster hires will make big splash and communicate new approach; Double the number of already-successful winter conferences to cover all fields of cluster hires; (2) To national press: Professional marketing of all research and policy efforts; (3) To national economics policy audience: Develop regularly released, nationally branded economic information product along the lines of Michigan Consumer Sentiment Survey; (4) To Utah residents: Differentiate from Gardner by developing "why" products.

Recommendation 5: Using a cluster-hire-by-subfield strategy, attempt to hire early/mid-career scholars with a track record of success but whose best work is ahead of them.

We believe a successful hiring strategy can be constructed as follows:

- Select four subfields of economics in which to build a critical mass of scholars through a cluster-hire strategy. Example: “University of Utah seeks to hire three new faculty members in the field of Industrial Organization Economics.”
- Choose these subfields to complement existing faculty strengths; build excellence in a few areas as opposed to attempting to cover all of the many subfields in economics.
- Seek outstanding early/mid-career scholars with a track record of publishing in top 5/top 30 and whose best work is yet to come.
- Rely on professional networks to identify scholars who will be good departmental citizens and who will help us build broad strength into the future.
- Years one through three: Hire 12 early/mid-career scholars using cluster-hire in four subfields strategy.
- Years four through six: Hire 4 outstanding “rookie” faculty members (who will be attracted by the more senior hires from years one through three.)
- Given existing QAMO faculty strengths, we could execute a cluster-hiring strategy in the following fields: (1) Public Economics, (2) Industrial Organization Economics, (3) Behavioral Economics, (4) Political Economy, (5) Labor Economics, (6) Economics of Healthcare Markets, (7) Economics of Education, (8) Urban Economics.

How to Organize Economics:

We offer two suggestions for organizing economics. Below, we list these proposed structures and offer recommendations of actions to be pursued under each.

Organizational Structure 1: Retain a two-unit structure with both QAMO and CSBS Econ.

If the University pursues this organizational structure, then we recommend the following additional actions:

- a. **Change QAMO unit name to include the word economics.** QAMO has succeeded in building a program and hiring faculty while ceding use of the term economics to the CSBS Department. This arrangement has worked fine given the past objectives of the University. However, if the University hopes to advance its reputation within the field of economics, then we should be sure to attach the word economics to the outstanding research being done by QAMO faculty.
- b. **Improve research collaboration between QAMO and CSBS Econ where shared interests are present.** This step presents challenges due to the markedly different missions being pursued by the two units; to succeed in any endeavor, collaborators must share at least some common goals. At a minimum, the units should invite each other to research seminars and conferences.
- c. **Pursue strategies to expand graduate teaching opportunities for QAMO faculty.** Under this plan CSBS Economics will continue to staff programs. This then raises the question of what classes will be taught by QAMO faculty. Demand for QAMO undergrad major is increasing but will not require 25 tenure-line faculty, even assuming growth in U of U enrollments. We recommend the following:
 - i. Expand economics elective course offerings in Eccles MBA programs.
 - ii. Expand economics elective course offerings in Eccles one-year masters programs. (This may require organizational changes; these programs are currently “departmental” in nature and departments set degree requirements to protect turf.)
 - iii. Explore whether a “business economics” masters program could be created.
 - iv. Share masters and PhD programs with CSBS Econ; if the University expands hiring of economists who publish in top-ranked peer-reviewed journals, then we should ensure graduate students have access to these scholars.

Organizational Structure 2: Pursue a one-unit structure with a single economics department.

This structure would be complicated to implement for the following reason: QAMO and CSBS Econ do not share values, goals and culture, and hence simply merging the units would create a dysfunctional department that could not achieve the University's aims. The plan below attempts to create a single unit that could then pursue excellence in economics as defined by publication in top-ranked peer-reviewed journals. If the University pursues this organizational structure, then we recommend the following additional actions:

- a. Adopt the following essential aims:** (1) Ensure that all faculty and staff are retained at the University in similar roles; (2) create paths for all graduate students to complete their studies; (3) maintain appropriate staffing for undergraduate programs at all times; (4) structure the new unit to avoid dysfunction.

These aims treat stakeholders fairly while also pushing toward excellence. To pursue excellence and avoid dysfunction, the new unit must be structured to:

- i. Allow faculty to reach consensus on important departmental decisions.
 - ii. Build a research culture to support efforts to publish in top journals.
 - iii. Apply RPT and TFR standards that will motivate faculty to pursue publication in top journals.
- b. Place single unit in David Eccles School of Business.** Existing School of Business RPT, workload, and summer funding policies will motivate faculty to direct efforts toward publishing in leading journals.
- c. Manage untenured CSBS Econ tenure-line faculty on an expedited timeline.** We recommend the following steps:
- i. Resolve issues quickly so junior faculty receive clarity on new tenure expectations as soon as possible.
 - ii. Reduce teaching load, increase research budgets, and extend tenure clock for all untenured CSBS Econ tenure-line faculty.
 - iii. Allow faculty to search for new departmental homes, within new economics unit or elsewhere in the University.
 - iv. Codify a "clean slate" so that past formal and informal reviews will not be used in subsequent RPT processes.
 - v. See "Transition Options" on next page for detail.
- d. Over an appropriate time period, allow CSBS Econ tenured faculty to search for new departmental homes, either within the new economics unit or elsewhere in the University.** See "Transition Options" on next page for how this could be accomplished.
- e. Over an appropriate time period, shift career-line and adjunct faculty, staff and programs to new unit, giving future consideration to questions regarding business differential tuition and structure of undergraduate major.** See "Transition Options" on next page for discussion.

Moving to a One-Unit Structure: Transition Options

Essential aims of this transition options offered below: (1) Ensure that all faculty and staff are retained at the University in similar roles; (2) create paths for all graduate students to complete their studies; (3) maintain appropriate staffing for undergraduate programs at all times; (4) structure the new unit to avoid dysfunction.

Option 1: Three-Year Department Transition:

AS OF 7/1/2025:

- QAMO Division renamed “Dept of Economics”, remains in DESB. Existing CSBS Dept is renamed.
- Programs remain in CSBS. Grad admissions are frozen.

BETWEEN 7/1/2025 and 7/1/2026:

- Untenured tenure-line CSBS faculty explore possible matches with other departments, including DESB Economics. Where there is mutual interest and approval from deans and upper administration, faculty appointments are moved. Tenure clocks extended and teaching loads reduced; tenure expectations are reset to clean slate given new departmental home; past formal and informal reviews are not be considered as part of RPT process going forward.

AS OF 7/1/2026:

- Untenured tenure-line faculty who have not matched with a new home will have their appointments distributed to other departments in the University at the discretion of the SVPAA.

BETWEEN 7/1/2025 and 7/1/2028:

- CSBS tenured faculty explore possible matches with other U of U departments, including DESB Economics. Where there is mutual interest and approval from deans and upper administration, faculty appointments are moved.

AS OF 7/1/2028:

- CSBS Department dissolved; grad programs moved to DESB.
- Tenured faculty who have not matched with a new home will have their tenured appointments distributed to other departments in the University at the discretion of the SVPAA.
- Career-line and adjunct faculty will have their appointments moved to DESB Department.
- Remaining staff are re-assigned to comparable roles in CSBS or DESB.

Option 2: Three-Year Department Transition with Immediate Undergraduate Program Transition.

AS OF 7/1/2025:

- Undergraduate program is moved to DESB Economics.
- CSBS faculty and doctoral students continue to teach in economics undergraduate program, and are given adjunct status in DESB when so doing.

BETWEEN 7/1/2025 and 7/1/2028:

- Faculty explore matches as above.

AS OF 7/1/2028:

- All career-line and adjunct faculty, staff and graduate programs move to DESB.

Issues to Resolve Regarding Future of Undergraduate Economics

To What Extent Will Economics be a “Business” major?

- The success of the QAMO program shows that some students are interested in an economics-focused business major.
- However, other students are interested in applications of economics that are unrelated to business.
- Given this, should the University charge business differential tuition for all economics students? Or just some?
- Arizona State’s economics department is housed in the School of Business but teaches two different majors: (1) a “business econ” major housed in the School of Business, and (2) a “non-business” econ major housed in another college. Is it possible/advisable to do something similar here?

Response to “Economics High-Level Plan” from QAMO

This document is a response to CSBS Econ’s proposed plan for investment. The CSBS document begins with a list of “Current Markers of Excellence,” then proposes three initiatives: (1) hiring, (2) post-docs, and (3) PhD program.

Below, we will focus our comments on the hiring plan. We will leave it to university leadership to assess the markers of excellence. The post-docs and PhD proposals are fine, but we see these as tertiary issues.

CSBS Econ proposes to hire seven faculty. Our two concerns are around hiring and governance.

- Will CSBS Econ be able to hire well?
- How will CSBS Econ govern itself when combining 21 current faculty with seven new faculty, when the seven new are expected to lead us toward excellence in economics as measured by publication success in top-ranked peer-reviewed economics journals?

Concerns around hiring:

- Hiring requires bilateral matching. But why would a scholar with a track record of publishing in top-ranked peer-reviewed economics journals choose to join the current CSBS department? The scholars we hope to attract have options; why would they join CSBS Econ rather than going to another AAU-level economics department, where they will be surrounded by colleagues who also value publication success in leading journals?
- Hiring decisions suffer from potential adverse selection. Due to the factors mentioned above, CSBS Econ risks hiring scholars who are (a) unhappy where they are, and (b) unable to secure a position at another AAU-level economics department. This is a recipe for attracting people who have good CVs, but who will not be good departmental citizens, and who lack the professional standing needed to help the university grow its reputation in economics.
- Hiring success comes from networks. When hiring, we must access our professional networks to identify good matches and avoid bad ones. Candidates access their networks as well; when considering taking a new job, candidates will ask around their networks to learn about the culture, values, and expectations of another institution. CSBS Econ is not well connected to other AAU-level departments, and lacks this vital resource.

Suppose CSBS Econ succeeds in hiring seven new faculty members. We have concerns about governance:

- How will the department implement RPT standards? Will the department continue to be a place where all refereed publications are treated equally? Or will the department adopt standards more in line with AAU public economics departments? The seven new faculty members may well have very different views, and it is unclear how this department will reach consensus.
- How will this department implement TFR standards? At least some current faculty members argue (in survey responses) that raising expectations regarding journal quality infringes on academic freedom, and that referees of top journals are unqualified to assess their work. How will this view co-exist with new faculty members who are tasked with leading us to a new standard?
- Anticipation of these issues will feed back to exacerbate the hiring problems listed above. Any scholar with high journal-quality standards will anticipate a decade’s worth of battles over these issues. Who would want this job?

Response to “Economics Department Position on Structure and Linkages” Document

The CSB Econ document discusses the idea of “merging the departments in a way that includes all current faculty members.” Their document begins with reasons not to combine departments, then suggests some paths to collaboration, then concludes with quotes from past QAMO documents.

The document begins with several reasons why the university should not combine departments. To summarize the points:

- Faculty surveys do not support this change
- QAMO has, in the past, emphasized value of distinct perspectives in economics
- A merger may undermine future governance and hiring
- The university has recently made structural changes (by creating the QAMO unit) and should wait to assess results

The QAMO position is the following:

- QAMO faculty do not think a merger that includes all current faculty members of both departments would be productive. However, we will support a plan like the one we proposed where departments are merged in a way that allows some faculty to seek other departmental homes.
- Our reasoning is that QAMO faculty have the network, track record, and culture needed to achieve the university’s goals; CSBS Economics does not. The university will maximize its chances of success by placing future hiring decisions in the hands of QAMO. While a full merger would dilute culture and create governance challenges, a merger along the lines of our proposal could work.
- It is true that QAMO has, in the past, emphasized value of distinct perspectives in economics. However, the task of this committee has been to chart a path toward excellence defined as publication success in top-ranked peer-reviewed economics journals. This has not, in the past, been a priority of university administration, and it should surprise no one that our proposals change in response to changes in priorities set by university leadership.
- Our view is that an “invest-in-both and wait-and-see” approach is unlikely to achieve the university’s ambitious goals, due to the challenges CSBS Econ will face in hiring and governance.

The document then lists several proposals for how the two departments might collaborate better. To summarize:

- Invite QAMO faculty to participate in workshops for Econ doctoral students
- Combine seminar calendars
- Invite distinguished lecturers

The QAMO view is:

- These are fine ideas.
- However, we do not think these initiatives will substantially move the university toward its goal of excellence defined as publication success in top-ranked peer-reviewed economics journals. The key to that goal is solving problems around hiring and governance.

The document concludes with several quotations from past QAMO proposals. As we noted above, the university was not, at that time, emphasizing publication success in top-ranked peer-reviewed economics journals. Our statements would have been very different had that been the stated goal.

Economics Response to QAMO Proposals 8/28/24:

QAMO's "Two-Unit" Proposal:

The QAMO "two-unit" proposal broadly matches our preferences in general, and we of course have no objection to QAMO adding, and hopefully retaining, excellent faculty in their group. However, we are not clear on what they mean when they say that we must "ensure that QAMO faculty drive hiring decisions" under this structure. We anticipate several retirements over the next few years, and we have experienced 31% growth in headcount enrollment over the last five years. We will need to hire in order to deal with these pressures, beyond this particular investment program. We do not think that our hiring should be subject to QAMO approval, in general or in particular under this initiative.

Throughout this conversation about identifying new opportunities for investing in economics, we have been told that interdisciplinary and critical work continues to be valued, but that it should be supplemented by more visible mainstream work. That is what we are proposing to do, and we are excited that funds may be available to make this possible. The QAMO response to our proposal indicates that they are skeptical of our ability to accomplish this task due to a lack of connections in suitable networks. Our faculty hold degrees from the following AAU universities: Stanford, UC – Santa Barbara, Harvard, Arizona, Chicago, Michigan, and Brown. At our recent antitrust and inequality conferences, we have hosted panelists including Susan Athey, Chief Economist at the Department of Justice; Nancy Rose (MIT); Ioana Marinescu (Penn); Nobel Laureate Joseph Stiglitz (Columbia); Susan Dynarski (Harvard); and Tim Smeeding (Wisconsin). We are well-connected with economists in top departments, and we are very confident in our ability to use those networks to attract excellent faculty who will publish in highly visible core journals and will fit well in the culture of the department. The investments we understand the administration to be considering, which would allow us to offer salaries and teaching loads to new hires commensurate with what is available at other AAU schools (and to what is already available to the QAMO faculty), will of course make this easier.¹

The QAMO response also argues that, even if we are able to make these hires, we will not be able to effectively incorporate the new faculty and make collective decisions. However, our department already includes colleagues trained in diverse approaches and methods and who aim at different publication outlets. We have always found this diversity to be invigorating and useful, and we have not generally struggled in departmental decision-making as a result.

In their proposal, the QAMO group indicates a desire to be more engaged in graduate training in economics. We are happy to discuss with QAMO faculty opportunities for them to engage more with our

¹ On the other hand, we note that some survey responses provide reasons to be concerned about the likely success of QAMO's hiring plans. Their current faculty describe a lack of mentoring and a "toxicity" within the department, and one respondent indicates that they are hesitant to encourage people in their network to apply for positions with the group:

"There isn't currently a lot of senior-junior faculty research mentoring. The more that senior faculty engage in this, the more successful junior faculty will be. "

"The most disruption I've seen in my tenure at the U has been interpersonal conflict amongst faculty -- this conflict is toxic and depresses everyone's productivity."

"People have to be willing to use their networks and vouch for the quality of the institution. It is hard for me to justify using my network given that in prior years we have not acted professionally towards those who would have liked to work for us."

master's and doctoral students, whether through formal course offerings, research workshops, or thesis and dissertation committees. We certainly do not discourage this kind of engagement under the current arrangement, and we are open to considering adjustments in our "program of study" requirements to make formal classroom connections more feasible for our students.

QAMO's "One-Unit" Proposals:

We understand the QAMO "one-unit" proposals to be plans to dissolve our department. Their description of the process they have in mind is pretty straightforward: Under option 1, department activities will gradually wind down, QAMO faculty will decide whether to allow tenured and tenure-line Economics faculty to join their unit (if those Economics faculty wish to do so), and our unit will cease to exist on 7/1/28; under option 2, our unit will be shut down at the end of the current academic year (7/1/25), and Economics faculty will be allowed to continue to teach as adjuncts in the QAMO unit, until they can find a permanent home. It will come as no surprise that we object to these plans.

As we indicate in our proposal, we believe that the diversity and complementarity of the existing units is of benefit to the university. We have not seen any evidence that the current structure is a hindrance to elevating the reputation of economics at our university. (What is a hindrance is the persistent mischaracterization of our work by a few members of the university community, as is described by our colleagues in their survey responses and as is discussed by external reviewers in our recent Graduate Program Review.)

In considering how to elevate the reputation of economics at Utah, we should keep in mind that CSBS Economics has undergone a substantial generational transition in the last decade, tripling our publications-per-faculty member and also tripling citations -per-publication. We expect there are gains in visibility still to come from this transition. In addition, the QAMO program as an autonomous unit has only existed for one year. Moreover, only two of the "top 5" publications listed on the CVs of QAMO faculty (Snowberg and co-authors, ReSTUD forthcoming, and Snyder and co-authors, JPE 2017) appear to reflect work done at Utah, based on the affiliations listed on the published papers. (Some senior QAMO faculty who have been at Utah for a decade or more have top 5 publications from their prior universities but none since arriving at Utah.) We think it would be disruptive and wasteful to undertake a substantial restructuring of these units when there is so little evidence in hand regarding the long-run prospects of the current structure.

While the well-being of students has not been a very prominent part of our discussion throughout this process, we would emphasize that the current arrangement allows undergraduates of varied interests to pursue the diverse topics and avenues of thought available in our discipline. In particular, it allows them to do so without paying differential tuition, if they prefer. Moving to a "one-unit" structure would deprive students of these options.

Finally, we note again that the university has established procedures for reviewing departmental quality. For us, this process involves site visits by distinguished economists and U of U faculty from other disciplines, arduous reviews of research, curriculum, and student outcomes, and further discussion and evaluation by campus administrators. We have been reviewed very favorably through the standard process, including in our most recent review, and we stand by that record. We remain uncertain as to

how the current, ad hoc process of review and potential restructuring intersects with the forms of review provided for in university policy.