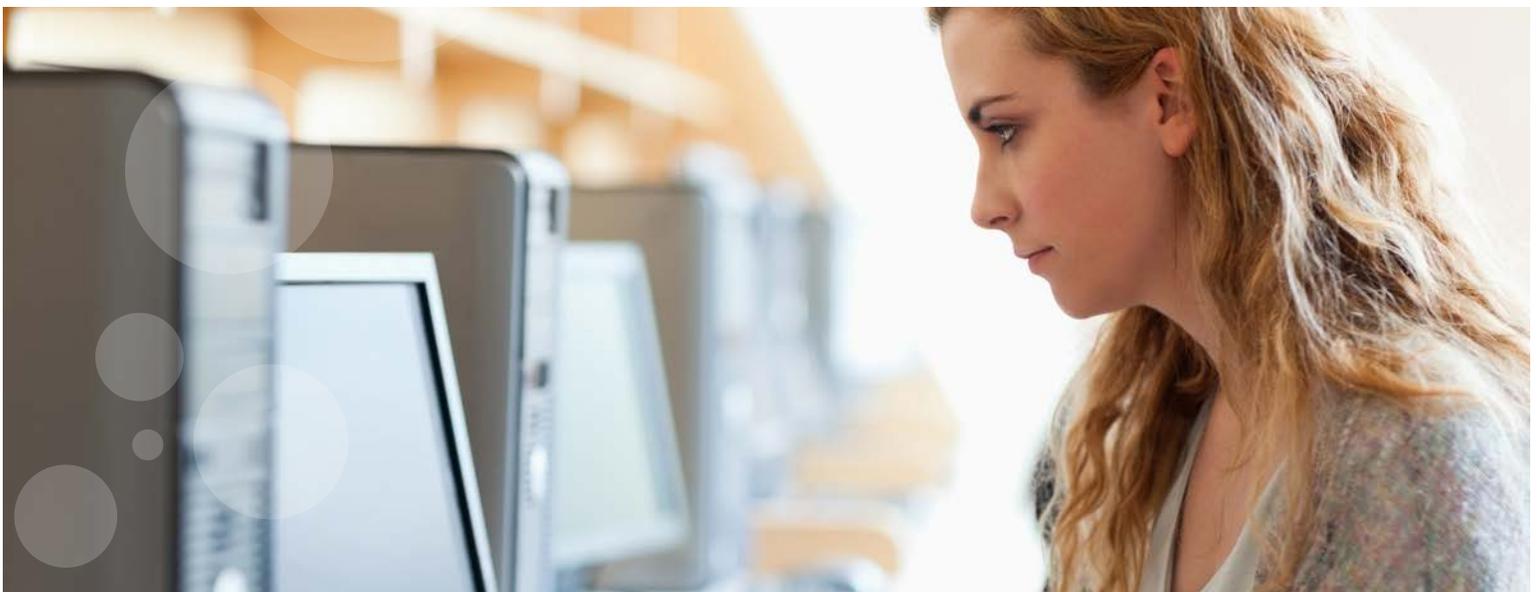# CASE STUDY: DISSERTATIONS PUBLISHING PROGRAM

North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University

ProQuest®

Originally an 1890 land-grant institution, today North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University is heavily focussed on delivering research excellence across a range of areas, including agriculture, engineering, natural and physical sciences, and education. The institution offers 30 master's degree programs and 9 doctoral degree programs. Researchers at North Carolina A & T also work closely with the U.S. Department of Defence, the Department of Education, and the National Institutes of Health (NIH).

With a significant output of research, it was unsurprising that the institution began to look for a solution to streamline their dissertations and theses handling, and towards the middle of 2012 made the decision to join ProQuest's dissertations publishing program. "Prior to joining ProQuest we were by and large handling our documents in house through our library archive system," said Ayanna Boyd-Williams, Assistant Dean at the University. "This was just not the most efficient way of really getting our students work the broadest exposure, so we began talking with Marlene Coles at ProQuest and exploring their system. I don't really know what took us so long!"

Prior to joining the dissertations publishing program, students at the institution would bring in multiple hard copies of their documents for staff to review. Thanks to the easy to use interface of the ProQuest Electronic Theses and Dissertations Administrator Tool, dissertations and theses can now be easily submitted, cutting back on administrative time by staff and saving students many hours of collating paper copies of all their research.

"It's just a very easy, streamlined process of communicating with the students electronically, and we find that we're able to do things a lot faster than we were able to in the past," agreed Ayanna.

Once uploaded, the documents are then included in ProQuest's Dissertations and Theses Database which means that research becomes much more visible and is more easily discoverable by an international audience. "As well as streamlining our processes for dissertations and theses, being involved with ProQuest allows our research to reach a broader audience. It was important to us to raise the profile of our students work so that in itself was a key benefit. At the same time, we felt that inclusion in the database would spark some interest in the kinds of research we're doing which would then lead to opportunities for collaboration."

North Carolina A & T is already convinced of the benefits of being part of a national repository for scholarly research, and is excited by the potential of what a global repository might bring. As Ayanna commented, "I think the possibilities are really huge. As a university, we're about the business of essentially creating new knowledge sets, so the sense that you can access to global repository of dissertations gives scope for more and richer critique and collaborative opportunities. It's something I'd be very excited about!"

Another benefit of joining an established program such as ProQuest means institutions are not left reinventing the wheel when it comes to setting up systems to handle electronic publishing of their scholarly research. North Carolina A & T has used the service since late 2012, but of course the program has been available for many years.

"One thing I really appreciated from ProQuest was the support they gave us. They worked with us through each step, providing us with information about how other institutions were doing things so that we were able to benefit from prior experience. We were able to use some of these practicalities in our set up, which meant we were able to move things along much faster in terms of the implementation … and avoid a number of the challenges we would have faced, had we started from scratch."

As with any system, there are areas where Ayanna would like to learn more to be able to get the most out of the system, such as generating more focused reports. But overall, the experience of the dissertations publishing program and working with ProQuest has been extremely positive. And as Ayanna comments, "From my experience, I just think it's just the nature of the people I've been working with at ProQuest to do what they can to provide support. For example, if we have any questions, they're answered immediately." As well as extensive customer and technical support, customers can also view the FAQ section on the website to learn more about how to submit dissertations and the guidelines that need to be followed. "The students and staff really like the FAQ section. We use it in part of our training to students and they use it to solve queries they might have."

As North Caroline A & T had such a good experience of working with ProQuest, my final question was "Would they recommend the program to others?" "Of course, and I am doing that," was Ayanna's reply. "I talk with colleagues as there are some within the North Carolina state system that are not using ProQuest, and I tell them about our experience and how I don't know what took us so long, and that they should consider the program too!"