

The Essential Guide to Faculty Activity Reporting



Having the proper processes in place for faculty activity reporting is foundational to both the success of your faculty and institution. Reports are used to demonstrate how faculty members are advancing in their careers and impacting their students and fields of study, which in turn illustrates the success of a department, school, college, or university. These reports are used in several key processes:

- ✓ **Credentialing and Faculty Qualifications.** Faculty are deemed qualified to teach their courses based on their degrees earned within specific disciplines. In some cases, alternative qualifications are required, but all of these must also be documented for accreditation.
- ✓ **Faculty Activities.** This involves tracking faculty contributions at an institution [teaching, research, and service]. Accomplishments can be highlighted and shared with key stakeholders and also promoted in marketing efforts.
- ✓ **Performance Reviews, Reappointment, Promotion & Tenure.** Faculty must regularly submit materials including details of their activities to peers and supervisors for feedback. This process may result in a pay raise, a better title, or an extension to their employment term.

Telling Your Institution's Story

Faculty activity reporting often focuses on numbers: how many courses were taught, how many students were advised, averages from course evaluations, or how many articles were published.

But the less tangible, difficult-to-quantify impact that your faculty makes is also an important part of your institution's story. And with increasing pressure to boost enrollment and secure much-needed funding, it's important to be able to tell your school's story clearly and in a compelling way.

There are three main focus areas for faculty activity reporting:

- 1 Teaching, Advising, and Mentorship.** What did you achieve in the classroom? Often, insights from student and peer reviews are included here.
- 2 Scholarship.** How did you contribute to your field of study? This can include published peer-reviewed articles, book awards and reviews, journal rankings, and impact factors. Professional recognition received and professional development activities pursued are also important to consider.
- 3 Service.** How did you make the school a better place? This is less concrete and it can be difficult to define what "counts" as service. Some options include advising student organizations, serving on committees, contributing to curriculum development, or leading campus outreach.

Faculty activity reporting also contributes to building your institutional narrative, which is made up of many facets. Multiple faculty stories contribute to the overall narrative, and so it's important to combine data with storytelling. What work is being done in and out of the classroom? How are faculty advancing your institution's mission? What are the benefits of this work?

There are many audiences invested in this narrative:

- ▶ Current and prospective students
- ▶ Parents
- ▶ Donors
- ▶ State legislators
- ▶ Faculty at other institutions (prospective hires, research partners)

It's also important to share this information broadly with faculty and staff at YOUR institution to provide inspiration, create a sense of pride, and help prioritize key initiatives.



Who on campus needs faculty activity information?

Several audiences on campus regularly require reports on faculty activities.



Campus leaders and decision makers—including presidents, provosts, chancellors, department heads, and other administrators—who need to analyze all of the faculty activity information and distill it to make critical decisions and comply with requests from internal and external constituents.



Institutional research and effectiveness leaders who are tasked with collecting and organizing faculty activity information, and providing meaningful reports to campus leaders and other internal audiences, such as program review and accreditation self-study committees and marketing and IT departments for campus websites.



Faculty members who are keeping track of their ongoing professional activities in the form of CVs for a number of purposes, not the least of which are career advancement, merit increases, promotions, tenure, grants, and scholarship opportunities.

Faculty contribute to their institution and campus community in a variety of ways. Here are some examples of contributions that could be featured in faculty profiles.



Common Challenges

Maintaining an up-to-date curriculum vitae [CV]—the most valuable source for accurate faculty activity information—is often an infrequent priority for faculty members. This leaves administrative and data management staff to generate reports based on a patchwork of incomplete or outdated information, meaning campus leaders are unable to truly make data-backed decisions. Decentralized data management systems only make it more inefficient.

▶ **Producing Faculty Activity Reports from Scattered Data Sources**

Campus leaders, administrators, institutional research offices, and faculty rarely have ready access to a repository of all faculty activity data, and it can be overwhelming to sort through volumes of information collected from scattered sources, and, even more challenging to organize it into a cohesive, analytical report.

▶ **Decision Making Suffers Without Timely Access to Data**

Faculty activity reporting is least effective when it's done at the last minute. Many schools wait until the end of term or academic year, or right before an accreditation review, to start gathering information. This not only leads to faculty frustration but ultimately leaves little time for reflection and data analysis.

▶ **Decreasing Resources, Increasing Needs**

Everyone is looking for ways to save time, and often administrators and staff find themselves doing the job of two—or three—people. This makes efficiency more critical than ever, particularly when reporting needs have increased as greater accountability and transparency is expected or mandated. Gathering information from several sources creates more work and often results in inaccurate information.

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▶ **Faculty Are Often a Bottleneck**

Faculty members regularly provide reports on their activities and accomplishments to a variety of internal and external constituents (in fact, we've found they typically field 8-12 requests per year). However, maintaining an up-to-date CV often appears near the bottom of their priority list. And when their activity information lives in multiple locations (on their computer, in piles on their office floor, in filing cabinets in the office or at home, or exclusively in their head), it's difficult for them—and you—to easily access details on demand. (But don't worry—we have some tips to get buy-in later in this guide!)



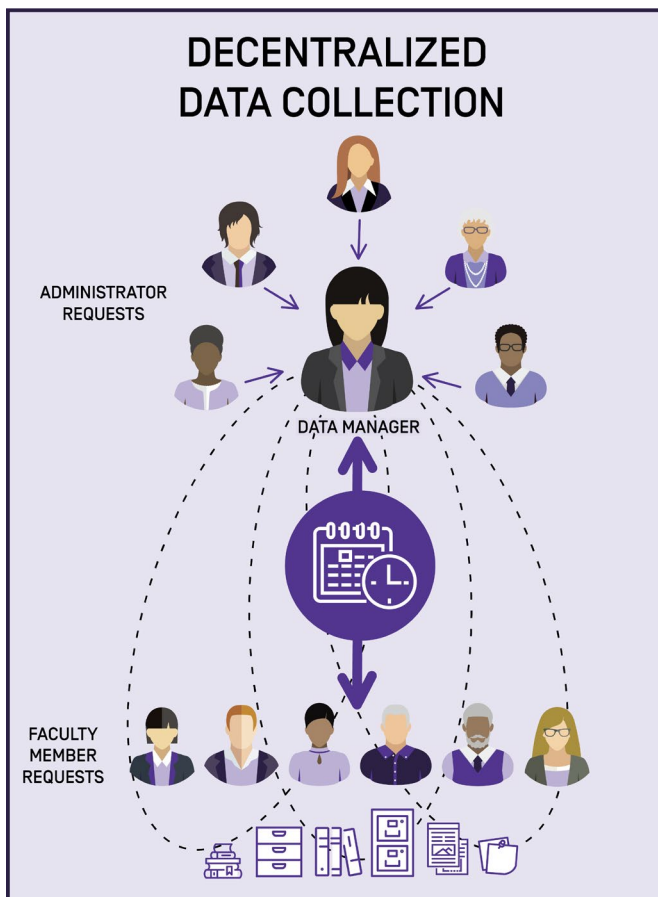
The Solution: A Centralized Faculty Activity Reporting System

A centralized digital faculty activity reporting solution makes everyone's life easier and enables users across campus to focus on using reports instead of preparing them. Here's how.

Faculty can use the system as a repository to record activities over time, which means they won't be scrambling to update their CV and associated documents every time a reporting need arises. They will also be freed from having to fill in a variety of report templates and checking to see if their information is up to date on the school's website.

Administrators can simply pull requisite data from the system and generate needed reports, including reports that demonstrate the makeup, qualifications, and achievements of their faculty to institutional and programmatic accreditors.

With a centralized system featuring pre-configured report templates, producing reports is a matter of a few clicks, eliminating time spent chasing faculty down and aggregating information from disparate, unstructured, and inconsistent documents. When campus leaders have easy access to all of the information they need (whether through search or reports), they're able to quickly make decisions, allocate resources, and summarize faculty activities.



✓ Accelerate Data Entry

The amount of time it takes to enter accurate data into a system can be one of the biggest barriers to adoption and use. Instead, use a digital solution that simplifies the data entry process so that there are no excuses.

Watermark's patent-pending CV Imports tool allows faculty to capture data from their most trusted source—their own CV. Users **spend 80% less time entering faculty activity data** into Watermark Faculty Success. After uploading the CV file, it takes mere minutes to verify the information and map it to predefined fields, rather than manually copying and pasting information into the system. Faculty Success can also integrate with and import data from your LMS and HR systems. The imported data can then be refined and supplemented with information from integrated online repositories such as Crossref, PubMed, Web of Science, Scopus, and ORCID.

✓ Make Review Simple

To keep faculty activity reporting on track, it's essential to make it as easy as possible for faculty and reviewers to participate. A digital process makes it possible for reviewers to **access digitized materials via secure login (no binders needed!) and complete their review at a time and place convenient for them.**

The system allows you to set deadlines and automatically send email notifications to keep the process on track while monitoring progress of submissions. By taking advantage of the data that already lives in Watermark Faculty Success, faculty spend less time entering information into the system.

✓ Easily Maintain Web Profiles

Faculty web profiles rank among the three most-read sections of any university's website, so it's critical to keep them up to date. Rather than making this one more item on an administrative to-do list, **make it an automated process** so they're always current.

Watermark Faculty Success allows you to maintain web profiles directly from the system with minimal IT support. Faculty can control what information to share on their profile with a single click, which ensures their profiles reflect the teaching, research, and service they want to publicize.

✓ Simplify Management of Faculty Review Processes

Simplify the faculty review process for everyone involved. Build-out is easy with tools to visually map out your institution's evaluation, reappointment, promotion, or tenure process. Add branches for conditional rules, steps for rebuttals, define feedback forms and instructions for participants, and pull activity reports and course evaluations in automatically so faculty can focus on reflecting instead of compiling.

✓ Level Up with Integrated Course Evaluation Data

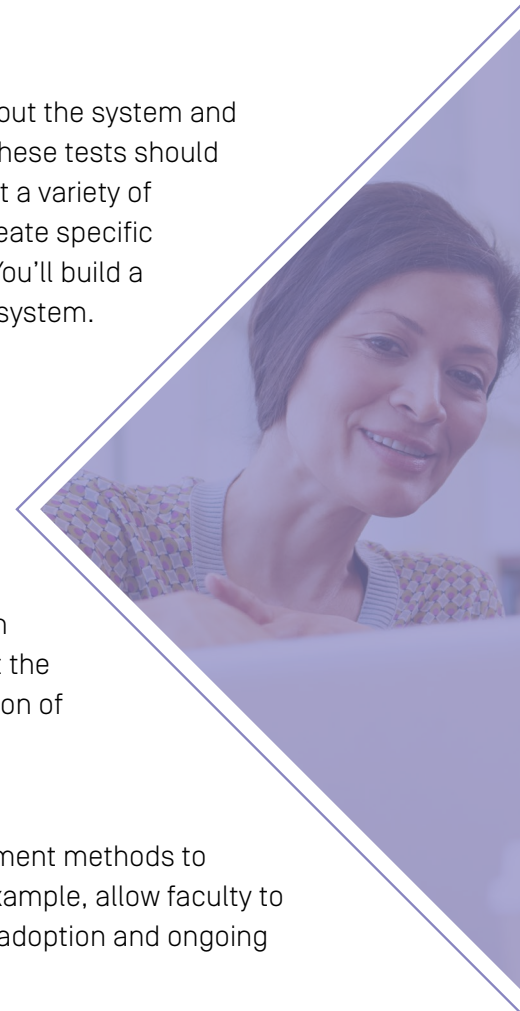
When you're reporting on faculty teaching activities, it's critical to get the full picture. By incorporating course evaluation data into the faculty review process, you're able to **easily view results alongside activities and accomplishments** and use that data as evidence for annual review, promotion and tenure. Seamless integration between Watermark Course Evaluations & Surveys and Faculty Success manages the mapping of course evaluation results to courses listed in faculty activity records, so there's no need to copy and paste, hunt for files, or switch back and forth between screens to bring the information together. You can streamline the process further by importing results for multiple courses at a time.

By marrying course evaluation and faculty activity data, you're able to **surface more valuable insights** and drive meaningful improvement by adding more dimension to faculty records.

Best Practices for Faculty Buy-in

Data entry is at the bottom of the to-do list for faculty. Here are some tips to get them on board with a digital faculty activity reporting system.

- 1 Get faculty involved from day one.** While academic affairs and IT representatives will take ownership of structuring and supporting the software, it's important to get feedback from faculty throughout the implementation process to understand their needs and potential roadblocks. Consider creating an advisory council of faculty and program leadership from various schools and staff from different departments, or, at the very least, a review and feedback process to gut-check key decisions.
- 2 Run pilot tests with multiple groups.** As you're building out the system and refining processes, it's essential to run pilot tests prior to launch. These tests should be conducted with new, incoming faculty and existing faculty to get a variety of perspectives. This will also help you identify different needs and create specific resources and training materials to align with them. Side benefit? You'll build a group of advocates who are supportive and excited about the new system.
- 3 Communicate early, often... and everywhere.** Create a communication strategy that starts well before the go-live date and uses various channels and methods, including newsletters, email, presentations, and videos. Give as much notice as possible and solicit questions and input along the way. It's also important to share information from multiple sources, from university leadership to department heads. This makes it clear that the entire organization is invested in improving efficiency and recognition of faculty contributions.
- 4 Socialize the system.** To help get buy-in, try various engagement methods to create a sense of ownership and investment in the platform. For example, allow faculty to share what features they're most excited to utilize, or reward early adoption and ongoing system usage with prizes.
- 5 Make it easy... and offer a quick win.** Your digital solution should make it easier for faculty to complete key reporting tasks. Importing as much historical information as possible will get the chore of data entry accomplished quickly. By using the solution to recognize faculty contributions – through a review process, populating web profiles, or another valued need – faculty will see a clear return on their invested effort.



- 6 **Outline clear expectations.** Specific directions make it easier for faculty to help get the system off the ground. Define how far back they need to go in their initial data entry, and specify exactly what to enter and why (for example, degrees, awards and honors, institutional service, and a biography, spanning the last five years). It's also helpful to share an accurate estimate of the time commitment required and to establish reasonable deadlines for getting information into the system.
- 7 **Don't forget about leadership.** Make sure your leadership team knows what kind of access they have to the system, including what they can do with it and how they can use it for reporting. By giving them access and the ability to pull data themselves, they can be more active in getting faculty involved and encouraging them to fill in any gaps.

Lessons Learned: Walden University

Go Campus-Wide: When [Walden University](#) implemented Watermark Faculty Success, they decided to roll it out across all programs from the start to provide faculty a quick return on their invested effort.

Promote Early Wins: Walden recommends celebrating small victories and sharing them with stakeholders who may need more encouragement. This helps motivate faculty and leadership and keeps the positive momentum going.

Over-Communicate: In addition to promoting early wins, the Walden team constantly updated stakeholders on new features and capabilities, benefits and achievements, and new tools to promote the system. And don't be afraid to get creative: Walden created a brief FIT commercial for the faculty newsletter to present the tool in a fun and visual way.

The Bottom Line

By treating faculty activity reporting as routine and simply checking the box, you're missing the opportunity to tell your story in a meaningful way, particularly to the audiences you most want to attract. A centralized data management system can make reporting on faculty members' activities quicker, more efficient, and significantly more accurate. A digital solution puts reports and analysis into the hands of those who need it most: campus leaders, administrative staff, and faculty.



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