

TECHNOLOGY SOLUTIONS CASE STUDY



Watermark Tools Support Meaningful Assessment and Outcomes at Reynolds Community College

CASE STUDY HIGHLIGHTS

The Institution: Reynolds Community College is a public two-year institution located in Richmond, Virginia, serving over 13,000 students in 2024-25. The college offers a wide range of academic programs, including associate degrees, certificates, and workforce development courses.

The Challenge: Reynolds faced inefficiencies in its accreditation management software, including time-consuming, tedious processes for student learning outcomes assessment and course evaluation.

The Solution: In 2022 and 2023, Reynolds transitioned to Watermark Planning & Self-Study to streamline its accreditation and student learning outcome assessment processes. Later, it adopted Watermark's Course Evaluations & Surveys tool. Both Watermark solutions offered seamless integration with the college's Instructure Canvas LMS (learning management system).

The Result: The college's transition to Watermark Planning & Self-Study and Course Evaluations & Surveys has significantly improved data integration and efficiency in academic operations. The tools have simplified identifying and assessing student learning outcomes and distributing and completing course evaluations. Watermark's tools are supporting the college's culture of continuous improvement and helping the college demonstrate outcomes achievement for internal effectiveness and accreditation compliance.

REYNOLDS COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Founded in 1972, Reynolds Community College is part of the Virginia Community College System (VCCS) and serves over 13,000 students. Reynolds offers over 80 programs of study across its campuses and online to serve the Greater Richmond area. The college is committed to providing accessible and high-quality educational pathways to baccalaureate degrees and high-demand careers.

PROVIDING OPTIMAL TOOLS TO SUPPORT ACADEMIC OPERATIONS

Timothy Merrill, Associate Vice President of Institutional Effectiveness at Reynolds Community College, highlighted that Reynolds has used software to support academic program accreditation and student learning assessment for many years. Approximately five years ago, Merrill and his team supported Reynolds' faculty in transitioning to a new platform, TaskStream Accountability Management System (AMS), which improved the college's academic technology infrastructure and processes.

A few years later, Watermark purchased TaskStream, communicating the company's plans to support the tool for a period before its eventual sunset. Reynolds took the opportunity to re-evaluate product options, performing a thorough evaluation of the available accreditation management solutions, including Watermark's new Planning & Self Study product.

After its evaluation, in 2022, Reynolds decided to adopt Watermark's new Planning & Self-Study tool. The solution offered better integration to streamline information management and workflows for identifying and tracking student learning outcomes. It also supported the college's strategic goal of engaging faculty in transparent and meaningful student learning outcomes assessment.

TRANSITIONING TO WATERMARK PLANNING & SELF-STUDY

According to Merrill, Watermark provided implementation support and helped Merrill engage different college stakeholders for optimal integration, security, and workflows. Integrating Reynolds' Canvas LMS with the Watermark platform was a smooth process since several VCCS colleges utilized Watermark solutions and had already developed the integration between Watermark's platform and Canvas.

The college spent a year transitioning from TaskStream AMS, rolling out and piloting the Planning & Self Study solution with a handful of campus stakeholders before launching it to the broader group of approximately 40 faculty department chairs. For the broader rollout,



Merrill worked closely with the faculty department chairs to communicate why the transition was needed, how the new solution offered improvements, and what changes to expect.

Watermark provided a thorough onboarding and training process for the faculty chairs. Merrill has also been meeting with faculty chairs individually and in small groups to understand their needs and preferences, which ensures he facilitates meaningful training sessions. Additionally, he has supplemented the in-person training with recorded how-to videos to walk department chairs through carrying out specific tasks in the Watermark system.

IMPLEMENTING COURSE EVALUATIONS & SURVEYS

Merrill says that later in 2024, Reynolds began evaluating its options to improve course evaluation workflows because the college was using labor-intensive, error-prone processes for creating, distributing, and analyzing surveys. Reynolds found that the Watermark Course Evaluation & Surveys tool could offer significant efficiencies by integrating with Canvas.

Investing in another Watermark tool also provided the benefit of consolidating interrelated information and processes on the same technology platform. Reynolds invested in Watermark's Course Evaluations & Surveys tool in the summer of 2024. The college's goals for the tool were to minimize hours spent developing and administering course surveys and to provide more time for faculty to analyze and apply insights from their survey feedback.

SUPPORTING DEPARTMENT CHAIRS AND FACULTY WITH MEANINGFUL EVALUATION

Reynolds is in its third year of leveraging Watermark Planning & Self Study and its first year of leveraging Course Evaluations & Surveys. Merrill highlighted several strategic goals that the tools are helping the college achieve.

- 1. Improved identification of student learning outcomes in academic programs:** Watermark Planning & Self-Study's digital workflows help department chairs take more ownership of aligning the student learning outcomes their academic programs aim to provide with program curriculum. "The Planning & Self-Study tools help us confirm meaningful learning outcomes and clearly map those outcomes to the curriculum," says Merrill.

"The Planning & Self-Study tools help us confirm meaningful learning outcomes and clearly map those outcomes to the curriculum," says Merrill.

2. **Support for identifying and collecting analysis of student learning artifacts:** Watermark Planning & Self-Study's Canvas integration pulls in aggregate assignment scores from Canvas scoring rubrics. Faculty use the tool to comprehensively track aggregate scores from their assignments, including papers, presentations, and projects, measuring students' progress toward their expected learning outcomes.
3. **Enhanced faculty engagement with course evaluation:** Faculty now operate the Watermark Course Evaluations & Surveys solution directly through Canvas, providing them with on-demand access to custom dashboards that show their course survey results. This has empowered faculty by replacing the previous process that required an administrator to aggregate course evaluation data into PDF reports and email them to faculty.
4. **Higher course evaluation response rates:** Integrating course evaluations within Canvas has also encouraged greater student participation, replacing previously emailed invitations with Canvas's pop-up reminders to take course evaluation surveys. Merrill notes that since implementing the reminders in Canvas, students' course evaluation response rates have more than doubled.

FACILITATING COLLABORATION WITH FACULTY AROUND CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

Merrill emphasizes that Watermark's tools have provided the technology infrastructure for faculty to engage more deeply with student learning outcomes and program reviews, fostering a culture of continuous improvement. Introducing faculty to the new tools has facilitated meaningful conversations around care and attention to student learning. For example, the Course Evaluations & Surveys tool enables Merrill to work with faculty in optimizing how they consider student feedback so they can adjust course content if students are not meeting expectations.

According to Merrill, "While the Watermark tool has enabled efficiencies in our work, my greater goal is to encourage cultural change. We want faculty to own student learning outcomes measurement as a positive part of optimizing their teaching approaches. Implementing the new technology has been a great way for me to have conversations with faculty around continuous improvement. Faculty are engaging with the Watermark tools to help facilitate transparent, inclusive, and constructive discussions about student learning."

When it comes to Reynolds' relationship with Watermark, Merrill says that he has found its representatives to be very responsive, and he is working with them to facilitate a regular Watermark user group meeting among its VCCS clients. He envisions that the local user

group will help colleges share best practices, while providing regular opportunities to engage directly with Watermark for troubleshooting and exploring new opportunities.

REFERENCES

Tambellini interviewed Timothy Merrill, Associate Vice President of Institutional Effectiveness at Reynolds Community College for this research. Tambellini also used publicly available information.



Photo Credits
Pages 1: Commencement, © Reynolds Community College, reynolds.edu.

FUTURE CAMPUS IMPACTS

The Future Campus™ Framework is Tambellini's innovative tool for generating strategic-level conversations and action for appropriate investments and divestments across the four key pillars of people, process, data, and technology. The Framework is scored across ten key higher education workspaces.

With the support of Watermark's Planning & Self Study and Course Evaluations & Surveys solutions, Reynolds Community College has addressed the following Future Campus workspaces.

Outcomes

The Watermark tools have supported Reynolds in improving identification of student learning outcomes in academic programs, identifying and collecting analysis of student learning artifacts, enhancing faculty engagement with course evaluation, and encouraging students to evaluate their courses.

Operations

Implementing Watermark solutions and integrating them with the college's Canvas LMS has streamlined academic assessment management and workflows for faculty, department chairs, students, and other stakeholders.

Governance

Watermark solutions are supporting the college's strategic goals of ensuring student learning outcomes assessment and accreditation are transparent, meaningful, and beneficial for faculty, while helping the institution comply with the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges' (SACSCOC) accreditation requirements.

Innovate

Watermark tools have helped Reynolds enhance the college's culture of continuous improvement and provide a solid technology infrastructure to support continued academic innovation and growth..



ABOUT TAMBELLINI GROUP

The Tambellini Group has been the leading provider of unbiased and proprietary research and advisory services to higher education since 2001. Our mission is to equip educational institutions with the impartial insights, tools, and market predictions needed to make informed technology decisions while maximizing return-on-investment and constituent experience. We empower institutions to overcome challenges, seize opportunities, and pave the way toward a brighter future for higher education.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The purpose of this report is to provide higher education institutions with information about the objectives, solutions, and outcomes related to the utilization of technology in colleges and universities across the US.

The Tambellini Group thanks Reynolds Community College for approving this report and the quotes herein. We thank everyone who has participated in making this report available.

TERMS OF USE

This report contains confidential, proprietary and trade secret information by The Tambellini Group, LLC. Unauthorized distribution is strictly prohibited. All rights reserved. No portion of this report and strategic analysis may be reproduced, given, lent, resold or disclosed in whole or in part without the written permission of and attribution to The Tambellini Group, LLC. Only the person, institution, school, company or organization that has licensed this report may access and use the report. You may print and use this report inside your institution, school, organization or company as part of an institution, school, organization or company license. You may not distribute this report, in whole or part, to others outside of your institution, school, organization, or company unless you have specifically licensed the rights to distribute the report for external use. The Tambellini Group offers no specific guarantee regarding the accuracy or completeness of the information presented, but The Tambellini Group makes every reasonable effort to present the most reliable information available. The Tambellini Group assumes no liability for errors, omissions or discrepancies in the information contained in this report.

The research for this report is not sponsored, and The Tambellini Group relies on fees from its Peertelligent® and Market InsightsSM subscription services for publication. As such, The Tambellini Group issues each copy of the report to the institution, school, organization or company that licenses it. Trade secret and other violations are therefore enforced to the fullest extent.

The Tambellini Group and The Tambellini Group logo are trademarks or service marks of The Tambellini Group, and may be registered in the U.S., other countries or both. Other third-party trademarks or service marks are property of their respective owners.

DISCLAIMER

The Tambellini Group does not recommend or endorse any vendor solutions for higher education. The Tambellini

Group is an independent research firm. The Tambellini Group provides selected information about vendors based on research. The Tambellini Group makes every effort to validate all of the information presented in this report and performs all research in good faith. The Tambellini Group relies on publicly available information, interviews with higher education institutions and vendor feedback in order to prepare and publish reports which contain timely and helpful points of interest. By using information in this report, you acknowledge that you do so at your own risk. No information contained in this report shall create any warranty or liability. You should obtain any additional information necessary to make an informed decision prior to taking any actions related to the material in this report.

You assume all responsibility in connection with selecting a vendor solution, whether or not you obtained information about such solution through this report. The Tambellini Group and its officers, contractors and affiliates assume no (and hereby disclaims all) responsibility of any kind, for any advice, treatment or other services rendered by any vendor or for any other claims that may arise directly or indirectly from such advice or other services.

THIS REPORT IS PROVIDED ON AN "AS IS" AND "AS AVAILABLE" BASIS, AND IS INTENDED FOR INFORMATIONAL PURPOSES ONLY. WHILE WE STRIVE TO PROVIDE THE MOST UP TO DATE INFORMATION AVAILABLE, THE REPORT MAY CONTAIN TECHNICAL OR OTHER INACCURACIES OR TYPOGRAPHICAL ERRORS, AND MAY BE CHANGED OR UPDATED WITHOUT NOTICE.

WAIVER OF WARRANTIES. THE TAMBELLINI GROUP MAKES NO REPRESENTATIONS OR WARRANTIES WITH RESPECT TO THE REPORT AND ANY AND ALL THE TAMBELLINI GROUP SERVICES PROVIDED TO YOU. THE TAMBELLINI GROUP HEREBY EXPRESSLY DISCLAIMS ANY AND ALL WARRANTIES, WHETHER EXPRESS, IMPLIED, OR STATUTORY, INCLUDING WITHOUT LIMITATION, ANY IMPLIED WARRANTIES OF MERCHANTABILITY, FITNESS FOR A PARTICULAR PURPOSE, NON-INFRINGEMENT, AND ANY WARRANTIES CONCERNING THE AVAILABILITY, RELIABILITY, COMPLETENESS, AND/OR QUALITY WITH REGARD TO THE REPORT AND ANY AND ALL THE TAMBELLINI GROUP SERVICES PROVIDED TO YOU.

The terms in this report will be governed by and interpreted in accordance with the laws of the Commonwealth of Virginia, without regard to the conflict of laws and rules thereof, and may be amended only in writing signed by The Tambellini Group. You agree any violation of the trade secret provisions herein may cause irreparable harm and damage to The Tambellini Group. For this reason, you agree The Tambellini Group may seek injunctive relief for your breach, in addition to other remedies at law or in equity, without having to prove damages or post bond. In all court proceedings brought in connection with this report and/or The Tambellini Group's services provided to you, the parties hereto irrevocably consent to exclusive personal jurisdiction by, and venue in, the courts of the City of Richmond, Virginia and the United States District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia.



TAMBELLINI GROUP
TRUSTED MARKET ADVISORS®

TECHNOLOGY SOLUTIONS CASE STUDY

Confidential and Proprietary. Contains Trade Secrets. Unauthorized Distribution is Strictly Prohibited. The Tambellini Group, LLC.

39E374FA-699F-47E5-B907-291B63609549