



Roanoke-Chowan Nearly Triples Course Evaluation Response Rates with Watermark

The Challenge

Course evaluation response rates at Roanoke-Chowan Community College were hovering around 35%, and the school's institutional effectiveness team was concerned. Even with a digital course evaluation solution that was integrated with their Moodle learning management system, students weren't completing the questionnaire. "The evaluation link was on the Moodle home page, but students don't spend a lot of time there," said Melanie Temple, Director of Distance Learning. "They just couldn't find it."

Thinking a new solution might help, the school used SurveyMonkey to run course evaluations for a semester. They quickly realized that a course evaluation solution designed for higher education was necessary and went back to their legacy tool, but began a search for a new solution. "I wanted to be sure we were using an instrument that would generate a significant response rate, because our students' feedback is critical to continuous improvement," said Dr. Murray J. Williams, College President.

The Solution

Roanoke-Chowan reviewed several software solutions and ultimately chose Watermark Course Evaluations & Surveys. The implementation process began during the summer and the solution was up and running for fall course evaluations, starting six weeks after the term began. Watermark helped Roanoke-Chowan integrate Course Evaluations & Surveys with Moodle, creating evaluation templates that can be applied to specific courses and reused each semester. "The product is flexible enough that I can go back in and make adjustments during the evaluation period, if needed," said Temple.

The Wins

Response rate nearly tripled: "Last spring, our response rates were in the 30% range. Our first semester using Course Evaluations & Surveys, we were at 83%," said Jami Woods, Vice President of Instruction and Student Services. "The only thing that changed was the technology."

Pop-up notifications put evaluation front-and-center for students: "What stood out when we looked at Watermark was the pop-up in Moodle. That really gets the student's attention. There's no reason for them not to see it – no more excuses!" said Temple. "We also hide the 'come back to it later' button about halfway through the survey period, to catch them before they stop going into Moodle regularly."

Communication features keep evaluations top of mind: "I can set up a series of communications on a schedule that remind instructors to encourage students to fill out the evaluation, along with sending reminders directly to nonrespondents," said Temple. "It's easy to adjust the timing throughout the survey period so we don't overwhelm people with messages."

More control over survey structure: "With our previous solution, we felt like we didn't have much control," said Temple. "It's easy to change questions, copy over a survey project, and change the communications schedule."

Effortless reporting for administrators and faculty: Faculty receive an email a few days after the evaluation closes with a link that goes directly to results for their class. Course Evaluations & Surveys also allows administrators to batch reports and easily compile data to view trends for specific instructors and within a program. "People can pull the information that's relevant to their department and include the information in a faculty member's portfolio as part of professional development," said Woods. "This gets them in the habit of knowing where they stand."

Institution snapshot

Roanoke-Chowan
Community College
Ahoskie, North Carolina

Institution Type: Public
Associate's College

Enrollment: 525

Instructional Staff: 95

Number of campuses: 1

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