



# Middle Tennessee State's 4-Step Strategy to Drive User Adoption

## The Challenge

Middle Tennessee State University (MTSU) was in search of a software solution that could check off all the boxes: bolster faculty effectiveness and student success, host ePortfolios to assist with tenure and promotion processes, streamline course evaluations, and give students the ability to provide constructive course feedback. Though this was a tall order, MTSU was happy to find that Watermark Course Evaluations & Surveys and Faculty Success not only met these requirements, they exceeded them.

However, finding the right solution was just the beginning of MTSU's journey. Adopting this technology posed a number of significant challenges for the institution, exacerbated by administrative turnover, communication barriers, and a lack of faculty buy-in. If that wasn't difficult enough, they were hit with another obstacle, the COVID-19 pandemic. This public health crisis forced MTSU to close their campus, which required faculty to incorporate new technology overnight and teach their courses remotely. Shortly after, the team in charge of launching Course Evaluations & Surveys and Faculty Success dissolved due to departing leadership. Amidst all these hurdles, the implementation of the new Watermark platforms temporarily stalled.

Despite these challenges, MTSU recognized how valuable the Watermark tools were to the success of the institution's initiatives. So they reset their expectations, rebuilt their adoption strategy, and relaunched their implementation efforts.

## The Solution

MTSU established a new team to lead the adoption of Course Evaluations & Surveys and Faculty Success, creating a simple four-step strategy for removing obstacles to user adoption:

- 1. Cleanup, reset, and damage control.** They fixed confusing internal naming conventions, created a data dictionary of their technical jargon, and streamlined workflows.
- 2. Clarify communications and messaging.** They engaged campus stakeholders, listened to their concerns, and formulated straightforward, informative, and understandable messaging addressing these issues.
- 3. Embed technology into existing processes.** The team created a single-sign-on (SSO) protocol and improved technical configurations inherited from earlier administrators.
- 4. Training and continued support.** They trained faculty and listened to their concerns to ensure the systems worked continuously, effectively, and intuitively.

## The Wins

**Integrations:** The new configurations allowed for the easy sharing of data and information between Course Evaluations & Surveys and Faculty Success, making evaluation, tenure, and promotion processes seamless.

**User experience:** They streamlined workflows in both platforms to be simple, clear, concise, intuitive, and easy to navigate. This led to skyrocketing course evaluation rates, jumping from just 20% to 70%-90%.

**Effectiveness:** Faculty can now see their recommendations for improving the system integrated into campus workflows.



Course evaluation rates skyrocketed from 20% to 70-90%

## Institution snapshot

Middle Tennessee State University  
Murfreesboro, TN

Institution Type:  
Doctoral University/Public

Total full-time students:  
20,857

Total full-time faculty:  
900

Number of campuses:  
1

"Watermark technologies are already powerful and they continue to evolve. But when it comes to implementation, technology is always only a small piece of the puzzle. The people and process are really the bedrock of any technology initiative. At MTSU, careful attention to building solid foundations in these areas has allowed us to leverage CES and Faculty Success over the past year. And now we have the data and the campus feedback to tell a great success story."

Brian P. Hinote  
Professor & Associate Vice  
Provost for Data Analytics &  
Student Success



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