

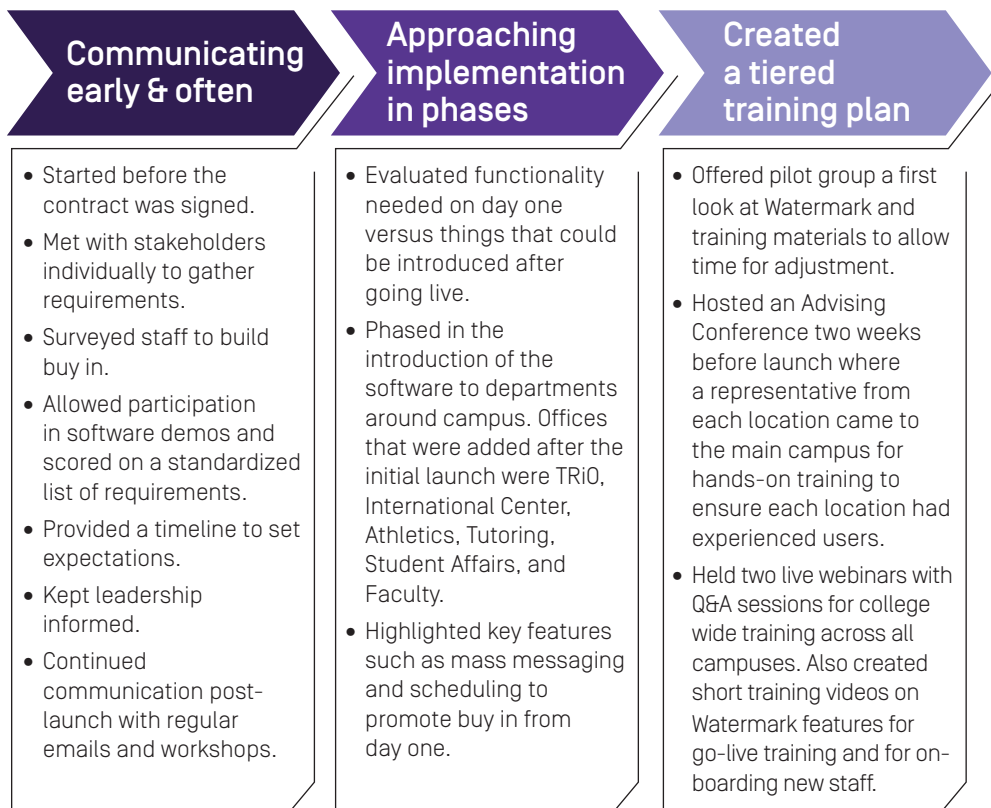


Scale or Fail: Deploying Student Success Software at Columbia College

When an institution invests in a student success solution, a clear plan for implementation and adoption is vital for the software to make a significant impact on its retention metrics. Columbia College successfully scaled Watermark across their traditional campus, an additional 30+ venues nationwide and its fully online programs. This case study explores how to successfully implement a student success software and how to keep momentum on campus post launch.

People

In 2018, Columbia College set out to implement Watermark in four months with the goal of having staff stop using their legacy system on a specific day and start using Watermark the next business day. To ensure success, the project manager gathered requirements with individual meetings and online surveys from all areas of the college pre-implementation to promote buy-in. Representatives from each area participated in all software demos and scored each on a standardized list of requirements. Once Watermark was chosen, a project implementation team was established that included nationwide leadership, Academic Advisors (traditional day and non-traditional nationwide locations), the Director of Student Success, and members of Technology Services to ensure that a variety of areas would have their voices represented during the configuration process.



Institution snapshot

Columbia College
Columbia, Missouri

Institution Type:
Master's College / University
Private/Not-for-profit

Enrollment: 8,300+

Full-time faculty: 68

Number of campuses: 2



watermark

Technology

Online documentation:

Technology helps to combine human intelligence, artificial intelligence and data to more efficiently communicate with students and provide the most impactful interventions. It can also assist with departmental collaboration to work together more effectively. The use of the software allows for documentation of student interactions to share essential information. Communication and documentation were key for Columbia College. An overall guide and individual documents for each part of the software were saved in their employee documentation library. At least once a month, email announcements are sent with reminders and tips. This ongoing communication in many different formats keeps their usage up and campus buy-in high.

Watermark user group:

Columbia College created a team of experts on Watermark that meets weekly to answer questions, track issues, and log enhancement requests. They track these requests in an online ticketing system. This group then works with leadership to determine expectations of use and weighs in on each new functionality released over time.

Results

Documenting a mass message in their legacy system for 100 students required about 600 keystrokes or close to 2 hours. In Watermark, the same communication only took 6 keystrokes and mere minutes to complete the entire process of documentation and mass messaging for 100 students. Showing this ease of process, improvement and effort to make life and day to day work easier for staff helped increase buy-in for the platform. It was important for Columbia College to achieve results that impacted campus culture and student success. Being able to show their progress, increase in usage, and intentionality with students was very important and made what they were doing with the system meaningful.



1,770 meetings
were scheduled in
Watermark within the first
three months



Note usage increased from
37,000 in previous system to
83,000 in Watermark
within the first three months



40% of their
departments were
using Watermark
within the first three months

“The Watermark product itself made it really easy for us to get buy-in across the college. Features such as mass messaging, notes integrations, external links, tags, and the integration with our SIS and LMS have changed the way our staff engage with students.”

Kathy Heckmaster, PMP
Director of Student Relationship Management
Columbia College



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