

The Essential Guide: How To Be a Technology Champion



Using technology to support continuous improvement and faculty and student success initiatives has been shown to improve student learning outcomes and increase institutional impact, as well as save significant administrative time for faculty and staff. But it can often feel daunting to find, fund, and implement new solutions. This may provoke higher education professionals to question technology's validity, become overwhelmed by the work involved in purchasing and adopting new tech, and feel bogged down by the red tape surrounding any investment in new software.

But it doesn't have to be difficult. Knowing where to start is the first hurdle when investing in new technology. Here at Watermark, we believe in guiding you through the process of investing in new technology and navigating the complex budgeting and purchasing process. It all starts with recognizing who the champions of technology are on your campus (and knowing that you have what it takes to become one yourself!).

Why does your campus need a technology champion?

- 1 Evolution**
Technology can improve operational efficiencies for faculty, staff, and students. Having a champion who is focused on pushing the evolution of technology will accelerate digital transformation on your campus.
- 2 Inspiration**
Technology champions inspire positive growth and change in your institution's faculty and the overall work culture.
- 3 Strength**
Champions take on the heavy lifting of technology implementation on campus. This frees up faculty and staff to spend their time on more meaningful work (teaching and curriculum development), which in turn helps improve student outcomes and experiences across campus.
- 4 Adaptability**
Using technology can be difficult for some individuals at your institution, as everyone has different learning styles. Having a champion who can focus on developing a training plan that will resonate with all users and can align their teaching methods to different stakeholders is essential.
- 5 Communication**
Champions can act as liaisons with IT to support a smooth implementation of the new technology.

What is a technology champion?

A technology champion is a visionary that recognizes how using technology can reduce stress, strengthen connections between people, and ease the burdens of some of our most important processes. They're passionate about using technology to amplify the strengths of others and propel them toward their goals.

Technology champions in higher education are a pioneering force on campus. They are individuals (or a team of people) who are bought into the idea of using software to carry out a shared vision. Leading the charge of implementing and evolving technology-based solutions campus-wide, they offer support and user guidance throughout the process.

Who can be a technology champion?

Chief information & technology officers help manage and implement technology on campus, and their main goal is to drive innovation and demonstrate the value of tech investments. CIOs are natural-born tech champions!

Assessment coordinators & teams develop and shape the assessment process, which can include meticulous and time-consuming data collection and alignment. This team is focused on streamlining and improving the process while staying on top of critical tasks and often working with limited resources. Because their roles are directly tied to student success, assessment teams are crucial technology champions.

Institutional research teams are the data stewards of the higher education world. These small teams are often called upon to produce quick, accurate answers, so they frequently lean on technology to power their work. They know what great data solutions look like and are familiar with the needs of academic units, so as champions, they have a leg up on understanding what their school might be looking for with technology (as well as how to address their concerns).

Faculty & staff are shaping the next generation through meaningful learning experiences. They are truly invested in the student experience and focused on continually evolving the learning environment. In our ever-changing world, technology has become key to capturing student data and acting on insights. As champions, faculty and staff act as catalysts for change by influencing each other to accept tech as a form of aid.

Students may not be your first thought when it comes to tech champions on your campus, but they are often advocates for innovation, particularly when it comes to ePortfolios. According to the Association of American Colleges and Universities, ePortfolios help students organize their learning, preserve their learning artifacts, and reflect on their progress.¹ As students are invested in their own learning experiences, they are consistently pushing for better technology resources to enhance their experiences. Students are ultra-aware of the benefits of technology and uniquely equipped to speak of technology as a must-have. Their feedback and buy-in is essential and influential!

What makes a good technology champion?

A successful driver for new technology often possesses the following traits:



Key responsibilities of a tech champion

- 1 • Assess campus needs and build a team**

What problems need to be addressed? This is the first question technology champions should ask themselves when determining which technology solutions they need. They then build a team or committee of different stakeholders to help guide the process.
- 2 • Attain technology solutions**

Champions of technology always start by navigating budgeting conversations and pooling their resources when necessary. Part of this process is deciding when to purchase their tools and how to stagger those purchases when they're implementing more than one new technology solution. Champions should know **why** the tech is worth the investment and **when** it should be procured to achieve maximum impact. An important part of this step is clearly documenting and communicating that investment rationale to budget authorities.

3

Aggregate tools

The next step for a successful champion is to identify how their tools interact with and support one another. This helps when they are strategizing how best to onboard users of each new solution. Champions recognize that their technology tools are part of a collective set, and that introducing them as a unified system to faculty and staff makes their role easier.

4

Alert the community

Champions recognize and minimize any onboarding burdens for their users by creating helpful training and onboarding materials. Making themselves available to faculty and staff members to support and answer questions goes a long way toward a successful onboarding.

5

Assess whether solutions still work

Champions periodically reassess their solutions to see if they are still helpful in continuing to drive evolution on campus. They also offer extra refresher courses and training to ensure all the most helpful features of their technology solutions are being taken advantage of by users.

Quick tips for a successful technology implementation

Establish a committee

- ☉ Select five or fewer stakeholders from each impacted department.
- ☉ Choose committee members who know what their team needs most from the new tool.
- ☉ This group will help approve changes to the system during and after implementation.

Talk to IT

- ☉ Create a plan for data imports and single sign-on (SSO) access.
- ☉ Learn more about other technology systems on campus and the IT infrastructure.

Create training and communication opportunities

Watermark offers:

- ☉ **Launch Success Kits** that are tailored and detailed for each product. Each kit includes materials to help train the trainer such as planning guides, PowerPoint decks, skills checklists, etc.
- ☉ **Client Resource Kits** that include templates and best practices for communicating about your product.
- ☉ **Implementation Services** packages with different levels of training and support resources for your faculty and staff. Contact your implementation specialist to learn more.

More learning opportunities

Watermark is here to support our technology champions. We offer many additional resources to help you teach others at your institution about our solutions.

▶ [Watch Our Free Webinars](#)

Register to attend upcoming presentations, product demos, and access on-demand recordings.

▶ [Bookmark the Academy](#)

After implementation, enhance your product knowledge through training sessions and certifications.

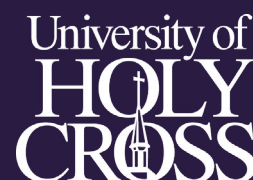
▶ [Use the Help Center](#)

Watermark's Help Center includes articles, setup guides, tips, and resources to help you make the most of your Watermark solutions.

Success snapshot: University of Holy Cross

When the University of Holy Cross began planning the data collection process for their Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP), they were facing the possibility of going through piles of paper copies of rubrics, manually tallying scores, and creating endless Excel spreadsheets. And to further complicate the situation, their Institutional Effectiveness Plans (IEPs) were also non-digital, creating even more stacks of paper and folders of PDFs. The team recognized that a new technology-based solution could save time and effort, but it would be challenging to get faculty on board. **They needed a champion to kick off the initiative and encourage faculty and staff to see the greater purpose.**

Read the full [case study](#) to learn more about University of Holy Cross' experience.



Testimonials from technology champions

If you're thinking there has to be a better way, you're not alone! Take a look at what inspired other technology champions to adopt new solutions that support campus processes.

“The first year I was at Columbus State University, someone rolled a cart full of binders into my office. I knew we needed to move into a more dynamic and electronic process. Spring promotion and tenure was a great opportunity for us to move fully into Watermark Faculty Success because the restrictions of the pandemic meant we could not move forward with binders. We needed that electronic platform to access and review the materials remotely.”

Dr. Deborah Bordelon, *Provost and Executive Vice President at Columbus State University*

“The associate dean spent months creating faculty bibliographies and manually formatting them. They wanted something that was very standardized so that they would know where things always were. It's a digital age, and no one wants to keep all of these forms in a filing cabinet somewhere.”

Whitten Smart, *Special Assistant to the Vice President of Information Technology at Texas State University*

“Watermark Curriculum Strategy is streamlining the process for curricular change. All the workflows for our deans and our chairs, it's more of a seamless process now. We used to have lots of binders, files, and folders to house these things. We are now able to use Curriculum Strategy to look into archived files and see all of our curricular changes. And what's really great about that, too, is that it's a seamless process for moving those curricular changes right into the catalog. It's been a blessing to have both the catalog and the Curriculum Strategy working together.”

Tasha Taylor, *Executive Assistant to the Provost at West Liberty University*

“Watermark Student Success & Engagement is allowing the advisor to focus on decisions — not tedious tasks like, 'I need to send 25 emails.' They can easily drag and drop, so what used to take them a day is now taking 30 or 40 minutes. Now they're able to really focus on building those relationships that are key to the retention efforts that we're making.”

Zachary Kendra-Dill, *Ed.D., Director of Advising and Testing Services at Gaston College*

The bottom line

Adopting new technology is much easier with a champion on your side. Watermark is here to support you as you build your case for new software, create the right solution set for your institution, and get key stakeholders on board.

With this guide and our solutions, you'll be well on your way to realizing a shared technology vision that will revolutionize your processes, build strong faculty work culture, and boost student success.



At Watermark, insights inspire progress. Watermark's software gives higher education institutions the insights they need to improve, evolve, and empower student success. Watermark's integrated digital solutions support assessment and accreditation, faculty activity reporting, course evaluation and surveys, and catalog and curriculum development for more than 1,700 higher education institutions around the world.

To learn more, visit www.watermarkinsights.com.