



MOUNTAIN PASS

# Mountain Pass Solutions Case Study:

Oakland University William Beaumont School of Medicine

## The Customer

Oakland University William Beaumont School of Medicine (OUWB) is a privately funded medical school within south-eastern Michigan's Oakland University, a nationally recognized public doctoral research institution. Clinically affiliated with William Beaumont Hospitals, OUWB is recognized as a collaborative, diverse, inclusive, and technologically advanced learning community, dedicated to enabling students to become skillful, ethical, and

compassionate physicians, inquisitive scientists, and effective medical educators. OUWB attracts world-class faculty members and community physician partners who encourage students in transdisciplinary scholarship and serve as mentors to prepare the medical professionals of the future.

**Deirdre Pitts, MAOM, IPMA-CP, is Interim Associate Dean for Academic, Faculty**

**Affairs and Diversity & Inclusion** at OUWB. As the founding director of Faculty Affairs, Deirdre helped establish policies and procedures related to the faculty lifecycle for OUWB, including the development of faculty recruitment criteria for the school's 1,400+ faculty appointments. The Office of Faculty Affairs coordinates the promotion and tenure process, faculty appointments, reappointments, and faculty human resources.



## The Problem

As faculty appointments increased, managing faculty information became a difficult task. With over one thousand clinical and biomedical science faculty appointments, and no way to include non-employed faculty in Oakland University's data tracking system, Deirdre and the faculty affairs team saw the need for a dedicated medical school **faculty database**. "Here we were in a quandary because we were maintaining faculty information—types of degrees held, ethnicity, appointment dates and timeframes, and so forth—in an Excel spreadsheet. It was not functional. The amount of human error that can occur on a 1,400 line-item spreadsheet is insurmountable." **Reporting** presented another trouble spot. "Some

*of the work we oversaw was managed under the operations component of the school. Bi-annual LCME reporting requires an updated summary of each faculty unit, and because that information was being managed on the operations side, we had no control over the data we were reporting."*

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In addition, OUWB needed a solution to **streamline and digitize faculty processes**. Faculty promotion was an

*urgent need: "Promotion was a time-consuming, costly annual process. Clinical faculty would email the components of a physician's dossier, sometimes 200 pages, and we would have to print and compile them into 4-inch binders, then manually distribute them to the review committee, plus mailing large packets to external reviewers. With 30 promotion cases on average and often up to 10 reviewers, paper, gas, mileage, postage, and time really added up. At one point, we tried to facilitate the process through a cloud-based file sharing system, but that was a catastrophe. The year we had over 600 individuals eligible for promotion—we knew we had to find a solution, or we would be in a lot of trouble."*

## The Evaluation

When the associate dean recommended a faculty management software product called **SmartPath™ by Mountain Pass Solutions**, the faculty affairs team was intrigued by the fact that that SmartPath was designed specifically for higher education institutions. *“At the time, we did not have funding to purchase software, but after taking a peek at SmartPath, we knew this was something to explore further. We decided to take the steps to document our need, establish a budget, and begin the RFP process, putting out a bid proposal for a data tracking system that would facilitate all of our faculty processes and data.”*

After demoing several products, the team felt certain that SmartPath was by far the best choice. *“Mountain Pass, the creator of SmartPath, really understood the academic process. Other organizations*

*had attempted to develop a data tracking product for higher education, but they didn't have a clue how our functions worked and were trying to sell us an off-the-shelf product. **We wanted a product that could***

**“THE SMARTPATH SYSTEM IS SO INTUITIVE. IT'S LIKE A FACULTY DATA SYSTEM FOR DUMMIES!”**

*meet our needs immediately, because we didn't have time to teach another company what our needs were. Mountain Pass supported us with a dedicated implementation manager who is an expert in higher education—specifically medical school higher education—and that was*

*very impactful for us. Plus, their system allowed for easy personalization and customization. Quite frankly, Mountain Pass didn't have to make many adjustments to what we were asking for because their product already did it.”*

A simple cost-benefit analysis gave them the buy-in they needed: *“SmartPath wasn't the cheapest product, but we knew it would be well worth the money. We created a spreadsheet to outline what Mountain Pass could do immediately, compared to the other companies. **Over 60% of the items that we wanted would have needed configuring by the other vendor organizations we evaluated, while SmartPath could do most everything on day one, so we were easily able to sell it from that perspective.”***

## Implementation

An internal team was assembled to manage the new SmartPath system, including **Janine DeWitte, M.Ed., PHR, Manager of Faculty Affairs & Professional Development** and **Brian December, Faculty Affairs Coordinator**. Brian had extensive experience assisting department chairs with the appointment process, re-appointments, and meaningful participation (a system for tracking faculty appointment credits). Both Janine and Brian would be SmartPath liaisons between the School of Medicine and Beaumont. Janine, with her vast expertise in academic HR software implementation, was given the role of project manager for the SmartPath system.

SmartPath implementation went smoothly, and the faculty affairs team appreciated Mountain Pass' consultative role in the planning and setup. *“Mountain Pass understood our workflow and knew exactly which questions to ask. They sat down with us to take a closer look at our processes and helped us find ways to make things more efficient. They were able to translate our tactical needs into technical aspects for the developers, to ensure the program would fit with our workflow.”*

## The Solution

OUIB has been using SmartPath for faculty promotion since 2016. By **automating manual processes**, the team has saved valuable time and resources. One of the features they really value is the ability to manage external evaluations. Deirdre, Brian, and Janine equate it with an online mailing system: *“SmartPath automatically emails the person who's been asked to evaluate the candidate. It automatically sends the dossier packet and the evaluation criteria. The reviewer opens up the document, and there's a letter from me asking them to do the evaluation, and when they get done, they just upload it into our system, and then, 'Bing!' it sends a notice that the evaluation has been received. It is so helpful.”*

**“MOUNTAIN PASS REALLY UNDERSTANDS THE NEEDS OF HIGHER EDUCATION.”**

Janine loves how easy it is to get **real-time progress updates**: *“I am in the SmartPath system daily checking on status—where people are, what they've done, what they're missing, and how the reviews are going. There is instant visibility and accountability.”* She also appreciates having **convenient web-based access** to all of the important

details. *“SmartPath has the information I need at a glance. For example, in the promotion process, I can instantly see how long a faculty member has been in their current rank or role. That's incredibly handy as opposed to trying to go to a spreadsheet and look at an original hire date, figure out time served, and find out if they are eligible to apply for promotion. The fact that SmartPath dynamically updates and manages all these records and does the job of recording and calculating for you, it allows you to move through the workflow more efficiently.”*

SmartPath has **streamlined communications** for the OUIB team. *“Before*

SmartPath, we had so many paper forms: one to initiate a faculty appointment, one for recommendation letters, one for departmental reviews, one for the committee review, one for reviewer evaluation, just to name a few! All those forms are now housed in the SmartPath system, and it's a paperless process. The emails we used to receive with PDF documents that we had to print out and create hundreds of review packets... SmartPath has eliminated that. There's no need to manually copy anything because everything is housed in the system." The team notes that instead of using binders, they now hand out iPads at committee meetings, and committee members can review the packets online.

OUIB is pleased with SmartPath's **ease-of-use**. Janine says, "All I have to do is send an email to committee members explaining where to go. The format looks familiar to them—like the paper process, just online. It's very user friendly. Promotion candidates have needed a bit of training on the CV module and basic system use, and department admins have needed assistance and training, but this was an expected part of the process. Once I've

walked them through the system, they are easily able to access everything without needing my help." Deirdre agrees: "I am not a technical person, but I can sign in and understand exactly where to go. The SmartPath system is so intuitive. It's like a faculty data system for dummies!"

“**WE'VE BEEN ROLLING THIS OUT ONE STEP AT A TIME, AND EACH NEW PIECE ADDS MORE BENEFITS.**”

In the coming months, OUIB plans to go live with the reappointment process, and then with the faculty evaluation process. Brian, who has extensive experience in these areas, is looking forward to the upcoming integration of these new modules. "We've been rolling this out one step at a time, and each new piece adds more benefits. The appointment module has reduced the number of phone calls I get each day about where everyone is in the

process. People are able to see everything online, which saves time for them and for me. For changes in rank, focus, secondary appointments, or other items, I am able to direct individuals to SmartPath where they are able to easily find out exactly what they need to do."

With SmartPath, OUIB now has clear **oversight and insight** into faculty data. "We have a better comfort level of what we are reporting to the LCME. As we implement more SmartPath modules, reporting will become a matter of pushing a button as opposed to managing an unwieldy Excel spreadsheet."

Deirdre believes that academic institutions looking for a better way to manage faculty affairs would benefit from evaluating Mountain Pass Solutions' SmartPath faculty management system. "It's online, it's paperless, and it tracks the whole faculty life cycle from start to finish. Mountain Pass really understands the needs of higher education. Talk with them, give them your points, and I think you'll be blown away."



## About Mountain Pass

Mountain Pass delivers higher education faculty management solutions for academic hospitals, health systems, medical schools, dental schools, and any academic school within a university.

Contact us to learn how Mountain Pass can help your school, university, or health system simplify faculty lifecycle management, improve data quality, and reduce administrative burdens with our SmartPath™ academic faculty affairs management software.

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