



MOUNTAIN PASS

What should we look for in a faculty affairs management solution?

Comparison Criteria and Key Questions for Higher Education Institutions Evaluating Faculty Management Software

Overview & Common Challenges

The hiring, retention, and promotion of quality faculty is critical to the long-term success of higher education institutions. For this reason, colleges and universities utilize intensive review processes to ensure that only the most qualified candidates are hired and promoted. The large number of stakeholders and intensity of review drive both complexity and effort – for example, an appointment process for a large university may easily include over 40 process steps, 10 stakeholder roles, and 30 participants. Without a digital platform, these processes create hundreds of hours of low-value work for staff, faculty, and leadership.

Beyond managing complex processes, colleges face a second daunting problem. How do we effectively capture, manage, and generate insights from important data relating to our faculty? Whether it's their career achievements, their effort allocations, or their title and time in rank, how does a college keep this information centralized and available for accreditation reporting or internal analyses?

Despite detailed tracking requirements and documentation demands, many higher education institutions continue to “make-do” with outdated, disparate tools.

This approach presents several important challenges. Chief among them are:

- **Quality** – Incorrect or incomplete submissions can occur that are often not caught until late in the process. This causes significant rework, delays, and frustration.
- **Lack of automation** – Soliciting evaluation letters, for example, is an incredibly time-consuming process that can be automated to drive efficiencies.
- **Lack of visibility and accountability** – The people involved often don't know what their status in the process is and if anything is required of them. After an appointment or promotion, it is difficult to access records that show who made decisions and on which documents they made those decisions.

Solution Priorities

A faculty management solution that is purpose-built for the needs of higher education institutions should not only address the challenges of quality, automation, and visibility, but also do so in a cost-effective way. When evaluating faculty management software, consider these 8 key priority areas for success:

1. **Faculty Processes** – The solution should be able to address key faculty-related processes such as appointment, annual review, promotion, and tenure review. It should also be able to support as-needed credentialing, enrollment, immigration, and virtually any of a wide variety of faculty-related processes.
2. **Configurability** – It is critical that the solution can be easily configured to support specific workflow policies of each institution. College and title/rank variations are necessary for processes such as review, appointment, tenure, and promotion. The right software will work with your institution's existing workflows.
3. **Faculty Information** – The solution should utilize a roster to track each faculty, by title and rank, and all career events they have completed or that are in process. It should provide the ability to capture CV-related information such as patents, publications, and grants. Finally, it should allow the tracking of almost any other relevant faculty information that may not belong to a CV (e.g., demographic and bio data).
4. **Dashboards and Notifications** – The solution should include the ability to set up custom notifications that inform stakeholders when an action is required on their part. Dashboards should organize such notices for each stakeholder who is involved in these processes on a regular basis.
5. **Communication Tools** – Automated tools should help facilitate tedious communication, such as the solicitation and review of internal and external evaluator letters.
6. **Quality** – The system should ensure that information is captured correctly the first time. When there are issues, the system should help minimize the rework and delay associated with those issues.
7. **Audit Trail** – The system should provide a comprehensive audit trail that tracks activity and decisions by date and stakeholder. It should also store key documents associated with these actions and decisions.
8. **Flexible Web-Based Access** – A secure, cloud-based solution will ensure the best accessibility and the best cost performance. The solution should use web services and APIs where needed to interface with other solutions.

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