Mountain Pass

COLLEGE OF
MEDICINE
CENTRAL MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY

Case Study:

Faculty Evaluations in a Remote Setting

CLIENT

Central Michigan University ("CMU") is a 130+ year old University in Mount Pleasant, Michigan. The University offers over 300 undergraduate and graduate programs with an enrollment exceeding 24,000. In 2010, CMU opened a College of Medicine with two campuses, one on CMU's main campus and one in Saginaw, MI that provides residency and training through two health systems. Since its inception, the College of Medicine has added three branch campuses and has partnered with a large pediatric research group in Detroit.

OPPORTUNITY

For many years, CMU's Medical School utilized a home-grown Sharepoint solution for managing faculty affairs workflows and had no system for managing CVs. While built with the best of intentions, the Sharepoint solution simply didn't create a strong management system for the faculty affairs team. "While Sharepoint automated some features, it didn't automate them all, so we relied on paper forms alongside the system," noted Georgette Russell, PHR, MSM, FACHE, Assistant Dean, Faculty & Staff Affairs, College of Medicine. "Sharepoint itself was difficult to access and difficult to use, so it was not widely utilized by the faculty. In the end, we still had paper, we still had many inquiries about status, and we didn't have a handle on the state of the workflows."

SOLUTION

SmartPath™ for Both Workflows and CV

To create a paperless and automated environment, CMU implemented SmartPath™ for both faculty life cycle workflows and faculty CV management. They started with appointment, reappointment, promotion, tenure, post-tenure review and faculty evaluation workflows.

> **It became very clear that the configurable nature of the product allowed us to automate many different workflows. And we found that, when we dared to asked for support of specific workflow and data needs at CMU, the product was able to accommodate them so that we did not have to compromise.**

Platform Supports a Geographically Dispersed Team

College of Medicine Faculty & Staff Affairs is required to support two campuses that are over 50 miles apart not including their branch campuses and external partners. The 1400 faculty of the College are at many different levels, including community educators, and most are offsite, with faculty practicing and teaching across the state. The organization chart includes dual reporting for some faculty. The implementation process took these needs into account and Mountain Pass included workflow consulting to optimize the process. Both CMU and Mountain Pass worked closely together to ensure needs were met. The Mountain Pass implementation team configured the workflows based on the needs of the faculty and those managing the faculty lifecycle. Training was provided not just to the system administrators and faculty affairs staff but also to the department chairs, which empowered them to utilize the system and take advantage of its features. When implementation was completed, SmartPath provided CMU with a platform that supports a geographically dispersed faculty and specific workflow needs through a fully automated and online solution.

100% Digital Solution for Seamless Completion of Evaluations

In 2021, with COVID restrictions requiring remote work, Mountain Pass implemented the faculty evaluation process in SmartPath in just one month, providing a 100% digital solution that allowed the college to seamlessly complete evaluations for all faculty within the normal timeframe. In this workflow, using a SmartPath SmartForm, faculty members provide their CV (already built in SmartPath), capture their achievements and upload supporting documentation. When finished, this information is routed to Chairs and reviewers for their review, evaluation, and comments. This information is then routed back to the faculty member for their final comments and for their attestation to completing the evaluation. Any required face-to-face meetings are completed through video conferencing, so the entire workflow is truly digital. Signatures, which can be very difficult (if not impossible) to obtain in a remote environment, are securely captured right inside the workflow. Notifications are automated through workflows, avoiding the need to write individual messages.

RESULTS

Remote Administration of Faculty Evaluation Process

Through SmartPath, remote administration of the faculty evaluation process was made easy. Through a dashboard, workflows can be "watched" in real-time. **"This was huge," noted Georgette. "Faculty want to know where their applications and reviews are while being processed. They could see their applications and reviews simply by logging in. This was impossible with paper but with SmartPath it's completely transparent and visible."** In parallel, it helped discipline chairs prompt their faculty to act if necessary. They could take the lead on reminding faculty to complete their steps, which took that burden off my staff. And we eliminated the need for "The Chase" – we no longer had to track down who's completed their evaluation and who has not. It was all presented to us," continued Georgette. Faculty also noted that collecting the data required for an evaluation was much easier with SmartPath as all requirements were laid out and uploading was simple.

Reduced Number of Support Calls

With SmartPath implemented, support calls to the Faculty and Staff Affairs Department were substantially reduced as they tended to be about two topics: status on a workflow and reminders on how workflows were structured. With SmartPath, anyone with proper access can monitor the workflows in real-time to know status and the system displays each step in the process, acting as a guide throughout the workflow. **"The guidance that SmartPath provided was really important. People generally need a refresher each year on steps and actions. SmartPath makes that completely visible and transparent,"** noted Georgette.

Improved On-Time Submissions

After that first year, CMU did notice that **on-time submissions actually improved from the prior year, despite being in a remote working environment**. "It was great to see that, when using a strong system and a digital workflow, the work to finish evaluations was just much easier," said Georgette.

Georgette has noted that overall, everyone involved in the evaluation process (faculty, administration, faculty affairs) are now much happier as the system easily guides users, creating full transparency and allowing for remote usage. Faculty and staff affairs staff can spend more time on higher-level, more productive work. Consistency abounds. "Even now that we are back to in-person work, SmartPath continues to make it easy. We look forward to seeing what else we can do with the product," said Georgette.

About Mountain Pass

Mountain Pass is driven by a singular mission – help faculty departments and academic institutions streamline their operations, drive efficiencies, and use their data to create new insights.

Request a demo today to learn how our Faculty Information System, SmartPath, can help your organization.

Mountain Pass