

From Paperwork to Pedagogy: providing formative assessment and meaningful feedback in real time with ePortfolios

Key challenges

As enrollment in Gonzaga's Teacher Education programs expanded, managing the many complexities around tracking candidates' progress and coordinating field placements and assessments became increasingly difficult. Their long-standing approach to assessment involved paper-based processes that had become inefficient, cumbersome, and unsustainable.

For example, the simple act of scripting observational data in a field notebook while evaluating teaching lessons in the field took the reviewer's focus away from the teaching practice being observed in the classroom. Having to transcribe the observations to document the assessments placed an enormous burden on faculty back on campus.

Additionally, the SOE's paper-based processes didn't provide the opportunity to give feedback in real time or intervene at crucial times—such as when a candidate was at risk of failing to meet the program and State expectations.

The SOE realized that to support teacher candidates, university supervisors, and cooperating teachers and manage critical assessment activities more effectively, they would need to transition to a more systematic and efficient approach.

The solution

Gonzaga's SOE developed an initiative to implement an assessment management system that would improve and manage activities in the field and better support teacher candidates, university supervisors, and cooperating teachers on- and off-campus. To ensure the right fit for their programs' needs, SOE staff identified several features and capabilities that would address their specific needs. The SOE began searching for solutions with the following criteria:

- Secure, online platform with a user-friendly interface and built-in reporting
- Functionality to observe candidates, log evaluation data efficiently, and provide immediate feedback
- Data archiving for historical reference and tracking students' progress over time

After considering several products, the SOE decided to implement Student Learning & Licensure (formerly known as Via) in all Teacher Education certification programs. The platform's field experience management tools would give Gonzaga's SOE an effective, efficient, and more scalable way to manage field placements and gauge candidate performance; coordinate activities among supervisors, cooperating teachers, and site staff; and organize student evidence for State certification.

About Gonzaga University

Home to five teacher certification programs, Gonzaga University School of Education prepares candidates to become reflective learners and exemplary practitioners by assessing their performance in their teacher certification courses that incorporate experiential learning activities in a variety of school settings as a cornerstone of the curriculum.



The win

Fostering a culture of improvement

Transitioning to a more systematic approach using Student Learning & Licensure helped the SOE develop an environment that supported 'closing the loop' on assessment. By empowering faculty, university supervisors, and cooperating teachers with user-friendly tools in an online system, evaluators were able to simultaneously observe and assess teacher candidates in the classroom.

Following their observations, faculty could then use Student Learning & Licensure to provide formative assessment and share meaningful feedback in real time. This enriched the learning experience and helped advance the assessment process by allowing students to reflect more deeply and improve their practice.

Simplifying documentation of evidence

Adopting Student Learning & Licensure to manage field experience activities also gave faculty, teacher candidates, and administrators a simpler way to manage important documents without having to keep track of multiple pieces of paper. The secure, online platform systematically captured, organized, and preserved documentation required by the State for teacher certification and program approval.

Notably, the SOE used Student Learning & Licensure to track and log candidate placement hours. Rather than manually entering time logs, SOE staff saved time, increased accuracy, and ensured completion of this requirement with the help of tools in Student Learning & Licensure. This enabled them to intervene proactively if students fell behind. All faculty and staff, including

advisors and cooperating teachers, could easily access these data and coordinate efforts to provide the necessary support.

Looking ahead

Following the successful adoption of Student Learning & Licensure in Gonzaga's teacher certification programs, the SOE implemented the platform to support edTPA submissions. Additionally, they are examining how to expand their use of portfolios available in Student Learning & Licensure to manage faculty tenure and promotion as well as all documentation required for State licensure. The SOE is also exploring the use of showcase portfolios as a way to promote a culture of reflection and richer learning experiences across the entire SOE community.

Over time, the SOE will leverage Student Learning & Licensure's deep reporting capabilities to gauge outcomes achievement and gain insights to inform continuous improvement.

“ The students have to turn in a time log for all of the hours that they spend in the field. And that was happening on paper, and handed in at the end of the semester. Our field director pointed out to me that now she has the ability to actually go in, any time during the semester and see if the students are on track. Because she can monitor it again in real time instead of waiting to the end, and then having to break it to the student that you've only actually collected half of the hours that you needed. ”

Shannan Palomba
Assessment Coordinator

About us

Watermark's mission is to put better data into the hands of administrators, faculty, and learners everywhere and empower them to connect information and gain insights into learning that will drive meaningful improvements. Through its innovative educational intelligence platform, Watermark supports institutions in developing an intentional approach to learning and development based on data they can trust. For more information, visit www.watermarkinsights.com.

