

# Unlocking the Power of Data at Wichita State University with Anthology Illuminate

By adopting Anthology Illuminate, Wichita State University empowered its teams to easily access, understand, and share its data, leading to critical insights and a more data-informed culture.



## A Focus on Student Success and Applied Learning

Wichita State University (WSU) is a public research university in Wichita, Kansas, committed to providing students with transformative educational experiences. With a strong emphasis on innovation and applied learning, WSU offers more than 200 areas of study to a diverse student body. The university is dedicated to providing hands-on opportunities and fostering strategic partnerships that allow students to gain practical experience, preparing them for successful careers and empowering them to make a positive impact in their communities.

### INSTITUTION TYPE:

FOUR-YEAR PUBLIC RESEARCH

### LOCATION:

WICHITA, KANSAS

### POPULATION:

17,000+

### ANTHOLOGY SOLUTIONS:

ANTHOLOGY ILLUMINATE

BLACKBOARD LEARN



## The Challenge

### A Wealth of Data, But Out of Reach

Wichita State University was rich with data in their learning management system, Blackboard®. However, accessing and interpreting that data was a significant hurdle. “There is so much data in Blackboard and everyone wants access to it,” explained Rachel Bastian, instructional design lead and system administrator at WSU. “The instructors want access to it, the admins want access to it, we want access to it.”

The problem was that the technical skills required to extract this information created a major bottleneck. “Of all of us, there’s maybe one or two people who really know how to get that data, to get it in the right way to get the answer to the question,” Bastian noted. This small team, including a “floating” data person who wasn’t always available, couldn’t keep up with the demand. The result was that valuable insights into how instructors and students were using educational tools remained largely untapped, and the ability to make data-informed decisions was limited.



## The Solution

### Data for Everyone, No SQL Required

WSU needed a solution that could democratize data access. The goal was to find a tool that was powerful yet intuitive for a wide range of users. “It was important for us to have it be user friendly, not for somebody who knows SQL, not for somebody who knows data very well, but for somebody who might not know that,” said Bastian. “That was something we were looking for and that was something we definitely found in Illuminate.”

Anthology® Illuminate empowered users to get answers through natural language. “The thing that’s been the most helpful for us is the Q&A option to ask a question and to have Illuminate come up with an answer,” Bastian said. This feature, combined with advanced custom reporting and sharing capabilities unlocked with Illuminate Premium, allowed the WSU team to move beyond their resource limitations and serve the needs of faculty and administrators efficiently.

*“We wanted to be able to create custom reports...and we wanted to have more advanced sharing options. That was really important to us to be able to share the data that we are getting and to share the reports that we create.”*



**Rachel Bastian**

*Instructional Design Lead, Wichita State University*



## Insights Delivered

### From Granular Feedback to a Holistic Student View

With Illuminate, WSU teams can now quickly answer critical questions for various stakeholders, from individual instructors to senior leadership. “Our administrators love us having Illuminate because they get the data that they need faster and in a simpler way,” Bastian said. “They need that data so that they can share what we’re doing at our university to meet the needs of the community.”

#### The impact is felt at every level:

- **Empowering Instructors:** In one powerful example, an instructor conducting research on feedback effectiveness needed to know if students were viewing her comments. “Using Illuminate, we were able to get that information for an instructor that she couldn’t have gotten another way,” Bastian said. Another instructor was able to analyze student performance by individual rubric criteria, giving her deep insight into her teaching effectiveness and the rubric’s design.
- **Supporting Student Success:** By looking beyond just co-curricular engagement, the student success team can now get a more holistic picture of a student’s journey. “Understanding how students are doing in their classes can help them to figure out how they can reach them more and how they can help them be more engaged in the university in general,” Bastian explained.
- **Making Data Digestible:** A key benefit has been Illuminate’s data visualization capabilities. “The visualization from Illuminate helps to make that data digestible,” Bastian said. “It’s not just a bunch of figures on a page, but...there are colors, there are graphs and there are charts. And that helps make that data more meaningful.”





## Epilogue

For Wichita State, implementing Illuminate has transformed the conversation around data from a technical challenge to a strategic opportunity. The platform has not only eased the workload on the technical team but has also sparked new ideas and avenues for inquiry. “Asking a question really spurs other questions,” Bastian reflected.

Looking ahead, WSU is excited to continue exploring the platform’s potential, particularly by integrating student engagement data from Anthology® Engage to create an even more comprehensive view. The possibilities feel limitless. “That’s what makes this tool so cool is that you’re not bound...It’s possible to do whatever you can think of,” Bastian concluded. “There’s no ceiling to it.”

Her advice to other institutions facing similar data challenges is clear. “I would tell someone who was overworked and needed help with data to consider Illuminate...It is something that can help speed along that process, make it simpler, and make it easier for someone who’s not deep in the weeds...to get the answers that you need.”

*“Taking a question from someone with natural language and being able to give them the answer is the best. They love it, we love it.”*



**Rachel Bastian**

*Instructional Design Lead, Wichita State University*



**Rachel Batian, Instructional Design Lead, Wichita State University** on Anthology Blackboard and Illuminate



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Products highlighted in this customer case study:

**Blackboard** **Illuminate**

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