

School System Improves Campus Safety with Notification System

Kentucky Community and Technical College System implements Cisco Notifi-ED solution to assist in crisis management.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
<p>KENTUCKY COMMUNITY AND TECHNICAL COLLEGE SYSTEM</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Higher Education • Versailles, Kentucky • 16 colleges across 68 campuses; with over 106,000 students and 9500 faculty and staff
<p>BUSINESS CHALLENGE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide cost-effective emergency notification system compliant with overarching crisis management plan • Leverage existing network infrastructure to deploy notification service that reaches all students during an emergency
<p>NETWORK SOLUTION</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement Cisco Unified Communications platform with Notifi-ED partner solutions from SchoolMessenger and Singlewire
<p>BUSINESS RESULTS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved communication capabilities to major stakeholders through notification system • Increased campus awareness of safety campaigns • Managed statewide notification initiative across thousands of miles and multiple time zones

Business Challenge

The Kentucky Community and Technical College System (KCTCS) is the newest statewide, two-year college system in the Commonwealth. It caters to over 106,000 students and consists of 16 colleges across 68 campuses, each of which is deeply rooted in the educational history and tradition of Kentucky. Over the past eleven years, KCTCS has become the largest provider of postsecondary education and workforce training in Kentucky.

KCTCS is built on a framework that encourages collaboration among the different colleges to make higher education accessible and beneficial to the largest number of individuals possible. As such, the system had long considered implementing a comprehensive notification service to reach all of its campuses in the event of emergencies, outages, severe weather, chemical spills, and the like. However, officials felt that installing this type of solution would not be cost effective or efficient for

such a large organization that spreads across an area of more than 40,000 square miles and spans two time zones.

In the wake of the tragic events at a college campus in southern Virginia in 2007, KCTCS immediately developed a crisis management plan for all its 16 colleges and made finding a notification solution its top priority. Unlike other colleges, KCTCS needed to deploy a system that was unique to its blueprint. With no dormitories or residential buildings located on the campus, it was essential for KCTCS to install a cost-effective solution that provides exceptional reach to its students, faculty, and staff, regardless of their location in the state.

“We made the decision to invest in a notification system to help ensure that we reached every individual, in every county across the state of Kentucky during a state of



emergency. The safety of our students, faculty, and staff is the number-one priority of KCTCS,” says Dr. Michael McCall, president of KCTCS.

Network Solution

The first step for selecting the notification solution involved forming a committee that understood how to turn the KCTCS’ crisis management plan objectives into a reality. KCTCS established a broad-based review board from several disciplines across the organization to do just this. After some initial discussion, the committee turned to Cisco’s Notifi-ED solution for its answer. Because KCTCS previously installed a unified communications network from Cisco, it made perfect sense to deploy a solution that could leverage its existing infrastructure in a cost-effective manner.

The Cisco[®] Notifi-ED solution is designed to improve communications for schools, colleges, and universities. By using its unified communications infrastructure, including 7200 phones and partner solutions from SchoolMessenger and Singlewire, KCTCS provided a dynamic collaboration platform for better efficiency and safety.

“The Notifi-ED solution is powerful, flexible, and cost effective. The easy-to-use solution allows us to increase awareness of our safety campaigns across the entire state and give our students peace of mind during emergency situations.”

—Bob Hammonds, System Director, Crisis Management Environmental Health and Safety, KCTCS

KCTCS administrators can now send internal notifications to IP devices, including paging and desktops from a centralized location, as well as Short Message Service (SMS) text messages and voice call notifications to cell phones and land lines. The combined solution allows the system to reach tens of thousands of people at any device in seconds. Messages can be targeted to a specific building or group of students, or broadcast to the entire statewide community.

Once the solution was in place, KCTCS held a campuswide contest to name the notification service. Today, it is known and marketed to well over 30,000 individuals across the college system as the Safety Notification Alert Process, or SNAP.

“I live in Clarksville, and when the website was down and the school phones were not working, without the SNAP message I would not have known classes were canceled that day and driven all the way down there for no reason. I really love this system and appreciate it,” says a KCTCS student in response to the ice storm in January 2009.

Business Results

A key factor in the success of the implementation of the notification service was making it part of a larger emergency response plan. In the first nine months alone, KCTCS sent over 250,000 emergency notifications relating to power outages, chemical alerts, and weather conditions. It has since increased this number to over 500,000.

KCTCS performed an emergency response practice drill at one of the colleges. Officials reported that the teachers, faculty, and students were notified of the mock disaster in one minute. This “fire” drill served as good preparation for what would come next.

In January 2009, the new system was put to the test when a severe ice storm devastated the state of Kentucky. Over 700,000 Kentucky residents lost power during the height of the storm, including 100,000 without power for more than one week. Kentucky Governor Steve Beshear called it “the biggest natural disaster that this state has ever experienced in modern history” during an interview on CNN.

PRODUCT LIST

Voice and IP Communications

- Cisco Unified Communications
- Singlewire InformaCast Solution
- SchoolMessenger CommSuite

Fortunately for KCTCS, its notification system was operational. Officials were able to communicate directly with students, faculty, and staff during the “IceQuake 2009,” keeping them informed of school and road closing, updates on weather, and other safety matters issued by the state government. Some students

reported that the messages sent from KCTCS administrative offices were the only communications that they received during the entire storm.

“I think the SNAP system is great,” says another appreciative KCTCS student. “During the ice storm I did not have to worry about finding out whether classes were canceled, because I knew I would get a text message. Thanks to the SNAP system, I had one less thing to worry about during the bad weather because the information would come to me. I did not have to call anywhere or get online.”

“The Notifi-ED solution is powerful, flexible, and cost effective,” says Rick Chlopan, chief information officer for KCTCS. “The easy-to-use solution allows us to increase awareness of our safety campaigns across the entire state and give our students peace of mind during emergency situations, such as the ice storm earlier this year.”

For More Information

To find out more about the Cisco’s U.S. Education solutions, go to:
<http://www.cisco.com/go/education>.



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