InformaCast Delivers Connected Campus Security Solution

The Challenge

Northcentral Technical College (NTC) serves about 30,000 students across 10 counties on various campuses in Wisconsin. The security and IT team needed a way to send messages to everyone and lockdown buildings in case of an emergency.

The Solution

NTC uses InformaCast, in conjunction with other technology solutions, to provide a safe and secure campus that gets critical information to the people who need it, quickly.

Keeping People Out of Harm's Way

A commuter campus faces challenges that other colleges might not have to be as concerned about. For example, they need to protect the people who are on campus, prevent anyone from coming to a dangerous situation.

Nathan Harder, Director of Technical Services at Northcentral Technical College in Wausau, Wis., uses InformaCast to help keep students and staff safe and informed at various campuses across northern Wisconsin. With six campuses that serve upwards of 30,000 students and nearly 500 employees, being able to reach everyone quickly is crucial.

"We use InformaCast to set up panic buttons on all Cisco phones located throughout our buildings," said Harder. "This is a discreet way for staff to alert the security team that they need assistance. Text messages and phone calls are sent out and include the area of the campus that is requesting assistance."

Harder integrates InformaCast with another communication app, SchoolMessenger, along with other technologies, to provide a single solution that ties all of the college's communication and safety solutions together. Harder can reach every campus simultaneously, and each campus is able to customize InformaCast to respond to specific emergency and lockdown situations they might encounter. This includes events taking place on campus and events nearby that may pose a danger to students and staff.

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Securing Classrooms

One of the features the technology team has worked on at NTC to improve process and procedures, is installing room displays outside of all rooms. This lets people know if a room is occupied, for how long, and at what other points throughout the day the room is in use.

Harder saw an opportunity to use InformaCast to add additional safety features by integrating the displays with the notification system. "During a situation where you have an intruder on campus, or an active shooter, you don't want to let that person know where others are," explained Harder. "So we use InformaCast to turn off the room displays when certain emergency notifications are activated."

Integration Provides Security

At NTC, InformaCast works in tandem with other security technologies to provide campuses with a complete solution. Harder ties in Genetec security systems to all the door locks and the camera system. Pushing a button on a Cisco desk phone or through the Genetec mobile app will lock all the doors, restrict key card access points, and shut off the room displays. Prerecorded emergency messages play on telephones and overhead speakers throughout campus. Prerecorded audio is also utilized in the event of severe weather.

Text and phone calls are sent to all security personnel and students via the SchoolMessenger plug-in. Emails are sent via SchoolMessenger, and include text and audio depending on the situation. Harder only grants a select group of upper management and security personnel access to the system to trigger alerts.

The tight integration with Cisco phone systems meant the college saved money not needing to buy any additional hardware, and its ability to send accurate information quickly, makes it easy for personnel to use, even during stressful situations.

Harder has also helped make it easy to facilitate emergency responders when 911 is called from buildings on campus. The phone location gets sent to the 911 dispatcher and the campus security teams meets responders to guide them to the area they are needed.

NTC has come a long way from only using InformaCast for overhead paging in 2005. In the future, Harder is looking to add additional buttons so more people are able to trigger lockdowns.

InformaCast helps colleges across the country with emergency notification, security, safety and more to provide safe and secure learning environments.

Visit www.singlewire.com/informacast-higher-education for more information about how to implement InformaCast on college campuses.