



Emergency Communications on a Campus-Wide Scale

Concern over safety on campus has increased across higher education in recent years. Questioned by students and parents, pressured by federal laws and obligated to publicly report crime statistics, university administrators have assessed and addressed safety on campus more than ever before. The administration and staff at Slippery Rock University, in Slippery Rock, PA have made that challenge a central focus.

Slippery Rock University has a long-standing commitment to innovative uses of technology to address the many facets of student life. University President Robert Smith's goal was to use the latest technology to create an especially safe campus and use this safe environment to differentiate SRU from other schools.

A Solution with Speed and Accuracy

In early 2009, the SRU administration began to explore more effective solutions for campus-wide emergency notification. The goal was to add another layer to the emergency notification plan, improving the ability to rapidly communicate actionable alerts and instructions to everyone on campus. After issuing an RFP and receiving presentations from various vendors, university administrators chose the Metis Secure platform.

The Metis Secure notification solution was a good fit because it filled the emergency communication gaps—enabling SRU to communicate alerts and instructions to specific locations in seconds. And, the system featured an additional benefit: the ability for anyone on campus to press a button on a Metis Secure Help Station and immediately reach University Police.

In 2010, 201 Metis Secure Emergency Help Stations were installed in 20 academic buildings on the 650 acre campus, and Metis Secure's browser-based Command Center became a new and powerful tool for campus police dispatchers.

Using the Command Center from a screen in the police department, dispatchers can see the real time status of the system and quickly respond to location-identified help calls. They can also alert everyone on campus, or for more contained events, only those in one building, floor, or room.

The system also serves some building management functions—instantly and automatically reporting power outages so facilities management can rapidly address problems and minimize disruption to classes or other campus operations.

System Gains Immediate Approval

Rita Abent, executive director of university public relations, was a key proponent of the Metis Secure system, since alerting the campus population is one of her many responsibilities. Abent had the following to say about the system: "It was a huge enhancement to our emergency notification plan. We didn't have the ability to send messages to people in specific locations on campus. This targeted approach to emergency communication allows us to communicate to those individuals in need of help without alarming everyone else on campus not affected by a situation."

Within one month of the system going live, university officials heard the following from one parent: "We've been to five other schools, nobody has the safety program that you do." Robert Smith, Slippery Rock University President, had met his goal of differentiating his university with a uniquely strong safety program.

"The safety of our students, faculty and staff is a responsibility that we take very seriously at Slippery Rock. So, when I first learned of the innovative technology in the Metis Secure system that provides an unprecedented level of safety and security, I knew it was an investment that the university needed to make to protect our campus population."

Robert M. Smith
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