

Community College Consolidates Emergency Alerts into One System with InformaCast Fusion



The Challenge

Centralia College in Centralia, Wash., had outdated phones and four separate systems for sending emergency alerts. Neither was ideal for a campus that needed to send alerts quickly to a large campus population in the event of a dangerous situation.

The Solution

Centralia College updated its phone system to VOIP and implemented InformaCast Fusion throughout its campus to send mass notifications with critical safety information, eliminating the need for its other systems, and greatly increasing the speed and reach of its emergency messages.

Reducing Four Separate Systems to One Unified Solution

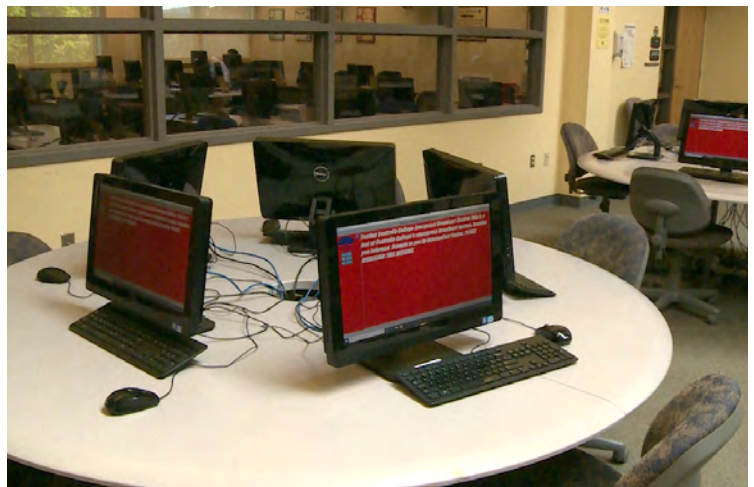
Founded in 1925, Centralia College is the oldest community college in Washington. Upwards of 600 staff and faculty and 6,000 students are on the campus every day. As the college has evolved, in recent years it has taken to renovating and constructing new buildings on campus. However, as the campus evolved, some of its technology was not keeping pace. Steve Ward, vice president of administration and finance recognized a need to update the college's phones to a VOIP system.

The college turned to Ednetics for help updating its phone system, and was introduced to InformaCast.

“Ednetics was helping us install new Cisco phones throughout campus,” said Ward. “At the time, we were also looking for a mass notification system that could be integrated with our VOIP system.”

Since InformaCast came baked into the Cisco IP phones the college was installing, Ward and Sam Small, director of information technology at Centralia, began exploring InformaCast as a possible solution.

“We had four different systems for mass notification,” said Small. “One system was used for email alerts, one for mass SMS text messaging, one for alerts on desktop computers, and another for audible alerts.”



However, these separate systems required their own log ins, had to be accessed from a desktop computer, and couldn't integrate with each other. This impeded the college's ability to quickly send out alerts during an emergency.

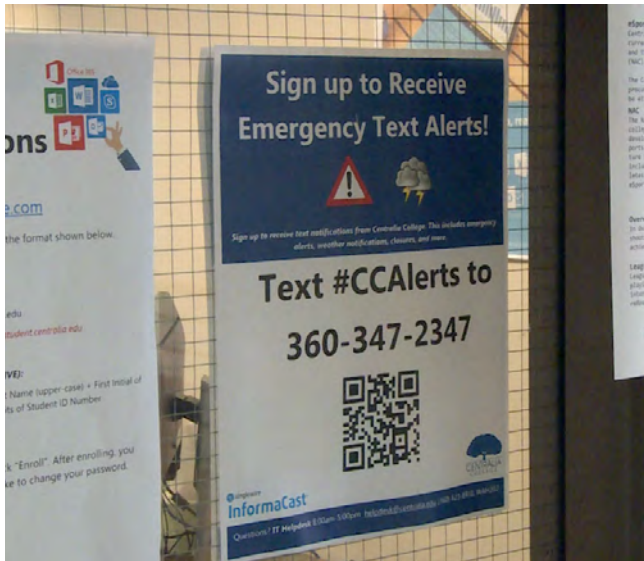
"We performed a needs analysis, and looked at what we wanted to replace, along with our existing technology and infrastructure," said Ward. "After looking at the API and mapping different integrations, we realized with InformaCast Fusion, we were able to find an answer to everything we were looking for."

The college was able to eliminate its other four notification systems using InformaCast Fusion. Centralia is able to hit digital signage, mobile phones, desk phones, email, speakers, and more to reach its entire campus population with emergency alerts.

From Life and Limb to Severe Weather

In addition to being able to reach a large number of devices and people with InformaCast Fusion, Centralia is also leveraging the system for a wide range of safety related events.

"We saw what has been happening around the country, and our faculty, staff, students and trustees were all concerned about how we would respond to an emergency event happening on our campus," said Small. "Now we have message templates built for a number of scenarios, and know we can reach everyone we need to with the push of a button."



The two primary use cases Centralia leverages InformaCast for are life and limb emergencies, and school closures due to weather.

"We don't often get snow, so when we do it can cause major disruptions," said Ward. "We have some students driving anywhere from 30 to 60 minutes to get to campus, so it's important that we can quickly alert them if campus is going to be closed. With InformaCast, I can trigger a weather notification that reaches the entire campus population right from a mobile app."

But for Small, the biggest reason the campus is benefitting from using InformaCast goes beyond weather interruptions.

"We have InformaCast because it will save lives," said Small.

When there's a life and limb emergency, administrators don't need to worry about being near their office or desktop computer to launch a message. With the mobile app on their phone, officials can record audio and type a short text message anywhere there is cell network or WiFi access. When they hit send, their message is immediately broadcast to digital signage systems on campus, display screens on VOIP phones, mobile phones, desktop computers, overhead paging systems and more. InformaCast ties these systems together, centrally manages the login permission access, and broadcasts the alert.

"It's just good stewardship to let your constituents, whether they are on campus or not, know what is happening," said Ward. "InformaCast Fusion gives us a quick and easy way to do that."

Visit www.singlewire.com/informacast-higher-education to learn more about how InformaCast can be deployed in higher education environments.