

Gallaudet University

Location: Washington, D.C.

Campus Type: Urban

Enrollment: 2,032

Faculty: 909

Campus Size: 99 acres

Building Count: 50

Established: 1864

“In an age of improvement like the present, society does not rest satisfied with the achievement of mere essentials. The genius of civilization demands progress until absolute perfection is attained.”
– Edward Miner Gallaudet, 1867

When Edward Gallaudet, first president of Gallaudet University, helped create the world’s first and (still to this day) only higher education institution for the deaf and hard of hearing, he advanced civilization closer to the absolute perfection that he spoke of. Like Edward Gallaudet, the founders of Alertus Technologies refused to be satisfied with the current perception of what was possible.

Alertus created a system that pushed the boundaries of technology to create a one of a kind emergency notification solution. When Gallaudet University sought out a system capable of meeting their unique challenges for emergency notification, the Alertus solution was a perfect fit.

Challenge

With a campus population comprised of mostly deaf and hard-of-hearing individuals, it was critical for Gallaudet University to have a notification system



non-reliant on sound to attract attention or convey important information during times of emergency. Previous efforts at emergency notification required students and faculty to be on a computer to see alerts or voluntarily check for emergency emails. Gallaudet sought a system that would draw attention regardless of where individuals were.

Fabienne Collson, manager of communication services at Gallaudet University, discusses the universities unique challenge and solution.



The wall-mounted Alertus Alert Beacon® sounds, flashes, and displays an alert message in the event of an emergency.

Why Alertus?

I was involved in the research to determine whether we wanted to use the Alertus system. We went out to the University of Maryland to watch the system at work, and after that we knew that we wanted to implement Alertus for our emergency notification. We started out small and put in 13 Alert Beacons in originally, and we've been expanding ever since. We have several new buildings under construction, and we make sure that Alertus is part of every new building from the beginning.

We really never found another system that could provide what the Alert Beacon could do. In terms of our previous systems, emergency desktop broadcast and email alerts, both systems depended on people being at their desk to either see the pop-up or read their email. The Alert Beacon notifies the whole building. If people aren't at their desk, they'll still get that vital information and can pass that message along to others. It's also easy for a dispatcher to pick a pre-selected message or type their own in. The ease of use, the method of delivery; even still, no other system comes close. We have our email alert system tied in so we can send email alerts through the Alertus interface. There are so many add-ons from Alertus that can expand the system, and we've been working to implement each one of those along the way. The ability to send all these different types of alerts from one interface was a huge selling point.

ADA Compliant

Well obviously we needed something that had very visible, visual alerting. Having the flashing lights and the ability to customize the patterns of the lights flashing for different types of emergencies was very important for us. The Alert Beacon with its bright yellow case stands out even when its not activated. The ability to put a text message on the display that people can read is great too. Alertus' ability to quickly send alerts that are highly visible is critical for us.



Notification Coverage

Being able to implement the Alertus system in phases is a definite benefit to us because of cost. Our department actually paid for the first several phases of deployment, and since that time people have gotten so interested that we now have contributions from different departments that want Alert Beacons in their classrooms and office areas.



Alertus Desktop Notification can deliver a facility-wide emergency notification in a matter of seconds.

Since getting Alertus, we've also installed the Alertus Desktop Notification software on computers, which we got for free through the Alertus Desktop Grant Initiative. Alertus Desktop Notification gives us redundancy; the more methods to notify people, the better.

Notifying the campus from inside our facility gives us complete and quick control over the dissemination of information on campus. Our communications center handles sending alerts, and they always have the most current and up-to-date information about activity on campus. Alertus lets us get that current information out quickly by sending a uniform message to the entire campus. If we get information that's updated in relation to handling the crisis, then we can instantly send another message to give the campus updated instructions on how to handle the emergency.

Location-Based Alerting

The Alertus interface allows us to have each Alert Beacon assigned to a location—the student academic center, Starbucks, individual dormitories, etc. It's a great feature that allows us to set up groups so we can send messages to just the locations that we need to.

A while back, we had a suspicious package near a building; we were able to send one message to that building and a different message to the surrounding buildings. Situations like that require sending different information to different places on campus, so it's very important to be able to isolate specific locations. Alertus allows us to do that and more with ease.