Durham College & Ontario Tech University —

Location: Oshawa, Ontario, Canada
Combined Campus Populations: 40K+
Campus Type: Public, Urban
College Type: Post-Secondary

Overview

Durham College of Applied Arts and Technology (Durham College) and Ontario Tech University (Ontario Tech U) are partnered, post-secondary institutions located parallel to each other in Oshawa, Ontario, Canada. Between their campuses, Durham College and Ontario Tech U's student and staff population is about 40,000. Both institutions offer a range of programs and maintain a vibrant campus community, with many housing options, health and medical clinics, food establishments, sporting fields, facilities, and much more. Through the partnership, students at Durham can qualify for advanced standing in programs offered by Ontario Tech U.

Challenge

In 2011, a bomb threat occurred at Durham's Oshawa campus. Leadership issued emergency notifications over the college's PA system and through emails to evacuate everyone on campus. However, the incident made them realize they needed a more comprehensive mass notification system to alert the community of threats and emergencies faster. To extend their communication reach and find a one-touch activation solution, Both Durham and Ontario Tech U began utilizing the Alertus System in 2015.

Solution

"Alertus checked all of our boxes on the mass notification solutions we needed," said Thomas Bezruki, Manager of Emergency Management for both Durham and Ontario

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

Tech U. "Alertus provides one-touch solutions that are interoperable among both Durham College and Ontario Tech U. Alertus' tech support is top-notch and runs tests for us daily to provide reports to confirm everything is working properly."

Durham College conducts semi-annual tests to ensure full-system readiness and emergency response exercises in which they hold full campus exercises while testing all horn operability. They also work with Ontario Tech to test their system and hold campus-wide drills (e.g. Secure and Hold, Lockdowns, etc.).

Fulfilling Ontario's AODA Compliance

The Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) establishes accessibility standards to make institutions in Ontario more accessible and inclusive for those with disabilities. Together, Durham and Ontario Tech U leverage the Alertus Activator App, IP Speakers, Alert Beacons, LED Marquees, horns, Digital Signage Override, and RSS Feed. "With these solutions, we can reach all areas of both campuses through audible-visual modes, and fulfill the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act requirements," said Bezruki. AODA Compliance is expected to be strictly enforced in 2025, and Bezruki is working diligently to position Durham and Ontario Tech U to be completely compliant.

Alertus LED Marquee provides visual alerting for indoor or outdoor public areas with emergency notifications

24/7 Notification Coverage

Durham College and Ontario Tech U campuses are open to the public, so they must be aware of all visitors who may be attending clinics or getting on the main regional bus stop, for example. "Because we serve the general public, having Alertus solutions positioned throughout the campus provides a sense of security and ease of mind," said Bezruki.

Bezruki also noted that three employees in his office are in charge of activating alerts through the Alertus Activator App. "We can be anywhere around the world and activate notifications through the app, so the accessibility and cost for this app are great," he said. "Alertus is a true one-button solution that simplifies our process and allows us to separate our notification lists into groups. The one-touch solution and ease of use beat more complex, expensive systems." The Office of Campus Safety has also incorporated emergency services and 911 dispatch to a specific group providing instantaneous emergency notification information to emergency services and dispatch.

On future plans, Durham College and Ontario Tech U are looking into Alertus' High Power Speaker Arrays (HPSA) and Rapid Response Console for further one-touch activation and notification reach.