

Remington College

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Bobby Clark, IT Project Manager, Remington College

Challenge

- Thousands of students and faculty require high bandwidth connectivity, indoors and out
- 20 campuses nationwide to be managed from a central office
- Only one IT Manager available part-time to manage entire network
- Budget constraints preclude multiple wireless controllers

Results

- All campuses managed seamlessly over the web
- Hassle-free plug and play deployment of wireless access points – one day for each campus
- Superior control and reporting functionality ease IT burden
- Guest access options protect campus security



When Chuck Farraj became the Chief Information Officer at Remington College, he set out to revamp technology in the classroom and beyond. “Students are interested in better technology on campus,” he said. “So we made it a strategic initiative to improve that.”

To support the 10,000 students and 1,400 faculty and staff across 20 campuses in the Southeast United States and Hawaii, Farraj wanted a new data center, a new wide area network, and a wireless LAN for every campus. With busy IT Project Manager Bobby Clark as his sole staff member handling the wireless, Farraj needed centralized management of the entire network from his corporate headquarters in Florida.

Some of Remington’s campuses had Cisco access points (APs), others had consumer-grade APs, and still others had no wireless at all. There was no centralized management and no consistency across the different campuses; each wireless network was managed by a local campus technician.

Concentrating on price and ease of management, Farraj and Clark evaluated solutions from Aruba, HP, and Cisco. After reading about Meraki in Campus Technology, Farraj and Clark were eager to try it out.

“We were immediately impressed with the Meraki Cloud Controller and how we could manage everything through it,” Farraj said. “It’s by far the most user-friendly dashboard of all the vendors we evaluated. I really like the Web 2.0 aspect of it. We were able to learn the product and figure everything out on our own.”

In the end, Farraj and Clark chose Meraki’s solution for its transparent dashboard as well as its ease of implementation and management. “With Meraki, we didn’t have to hire a full-time person to manage the wireless or someone to certify another third-party or anything like that,” Clark said.

“For me, the simplified centralized management and the lack of need for a physical controller device at each campus were

standout features,” Farraj said. “It made the price point more reasonable, and it fits our distributed campus model much better than the other vendors.”

In total, Remington College deployed 315 Meraki MR14 APs, with Enterprise Cloud Controller licenses for each, to provide wireless across all 20 campuses. Farraj began by piloting the solution with 15 APs in Remington’s headquarters and a nursing school. After that proved successful, he purchased an additional 300 APs to roll out nationwide. Remington’s larger campuses required up to 23 APs each, while smaller campuses were covered with as few as two. “In the locations where we have outdoor seating for students to take breaks, the MR14s reached out there with no issues.”

The deployment “went flawlessly,” according to Farraj. “It took exactly the time allocated, and it was the easiest thing in the world. Hanging the wireless APs in the right place was simplified by the mounting brackets, so it was very straightforward. The back-end configuration was easy as well. I did it myself.”

Now the students and faculty at Remington College are able to connect to the wireless network automatically, moving seamlessly from one room or building to another. Every week approximately 700 Gigabytes are transferred across the multi-site network. Meanwhile, the small IT staff has managed the entire network distribution with ease, Farraj said.

“Our network manager finds his ability to manage the wireless environment extremely powerful—how the dashboard gives him access to every campus from one interface,” he said. “It’s been a very rewarding experience for me to see him be so excited about what he can do, what he can control, and especially what we’re able to report on. Lack of reporting was one of the big problems we wanted to solve, and Meraki has given us all the reporting we want.”

Soon after Remington’s deployment, Meraki introduced a new feature for guest access and offered it to Remington to beta-test. “It addressed our needs exactly,” Farraj said.

Clark also praised Meraki’s responsiveness to its customers. “Meraki is always adding features that customers have asked for,” he said. “That’s why we like working with up-and-coming companies—they’re hungrier and do a better job.”

Farraj and Clark said they recommend Meraki every chance they get. “I actually like talking about it to people, especially about the Cloud Controller,” Clark said. “I think it’s a great product and an ingenious way to approach wireless enterprise.”