



Ashland University

- After an incident occurred in the dorms, the school needed improved cameras
- Deployed one hundred security cameras across campus
- Students now feel safer and more secure since the new cameras were deployed



With more than 6,000 students spread across five campuses and online programs, Ashland University aims to prepare students for exciting and comprehensive careers. This mid-sized private school located in Ashland, Ohio, with campuses in Columbus, Mansfield, Cleveland, and

Detroit, takes multi-campus safety very seriously. From protecting the 2,600+ students who live on campus for the duration of their education, to the thousands of students commuting to remote campuses, to the teachers and staff who support daily operations, the university aims to make all campus inhabitants feel safe, no matter where they are. Therefore, when an unidentifiable male made his way into an all girls dormitory, and the security team was unable to track down the suspect due to poor video quality, the school administration knew it was time for a major security upgrade.

MOVING AWAY FROM “JUST FOR SHOW”

Beyond poor video quality, Donald Tharp, Chief of Information Technology at Ashland University, and the IT and security teams had several issues with their original security camera solution. They were originally deployed more for show than for capturing video, leading to several cameras not recording video at any given time and leaving gaps in security coverage. The video they did capture had to be stored on campus in clunky servers in every building, requiring significant maintenance and making video difficult to retrieve and review. Tharp and the IT team wanted a new solution that would remove the need for on-premises storage, reliably capture important incidents, and allow for faster video review and response.

Working with their local partner, the team quickly decided to move forward with Cisco Meraki MV security cameras for several reasons. After the dorm incident occurred, the team needed a solution that they could purchase and deploy extremely quickly to ensure the

“In the past, finding certain footage was a big problem because we only had 2 team members who would have to travel to the servers in different locations. Now, being able to do motion searches on the MV has freed up man hours and allowed those guys to do other activities.”

— Donald Tharp, Chief of Information Technology

safety of their students. With MV, they were able to deploy over 150 indoor and outdoor cameras in just a few months across their campus, ensuring the dorms, parking lots, and campus buildings were secured. They were also excited to learn that all video was stored directly on the camera, eliminating the need for servers and extra software. Tharp was able to remove all of the legacy servers, freeing up campus space and removing the need for onsite maintenance. The improved video quality and ease of access has enabled the security team to solve incidents timely and with accuracy, improving overall campus safety.

SMARTER CAMERAS SOLVE MORE INCIDENTS

Since deploying MV, the IT and security teams have been able to keep students safer and close many more cases. They can quickly search video footage to find any incident in question with just the location or time period, leading to faster response times. For example, a student vandalized a dorm building, and the security team was able to identify the person at fault and address the situation accordingly. Since several campus buildings are located in remote areas, the team takes several precautions to make sure students and staff feel safe, especially at night. The security team receives a text or email if there is motion after hours in several outdoor locations and they often monitor the parking lot cameras in the evenings to make sure everyone gets to their cars safely. During the day, students working the front desk and security personnel will monitor the cameras and can change views or zoom in on situations as needed. Right before graduation, the school received several security threats. To combat this, they simply moved several cameras to strategic locations around the ceremony, and had a security guard monitor the scene. Luckily, graduation went on without any issues.

Overall, the security and IT teams have saved an immeasurable of time and effort thanks to Meraki MV. Instead of driving to distributed buildings to access complex servers and search through hours of footage, the team can log into the Meraki dashboard and immediately view footage from anywhere. This has freed up the team's time to work on more impactful projects and focus on other areas to continue improving security.

According to a recent informal university survey, students now feel safer in their dorms and in the evenings because of the new cameras. Don explained, “The students get a question “how do you feel about your safety and security” and their response was rated higher this year than the year before, and some of the comments said that the cameras made them feel protected.” Students feel much safer and more secure with the freedom to go to their dorms, walk around campus, and leave the library after hours with this added level of protection.