



EBOOK

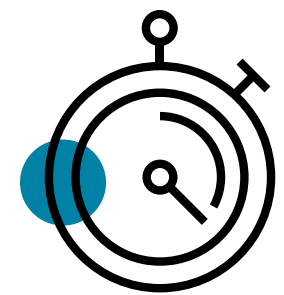
5 Ways

Critical Communications Keeps
Higher Ed Communities Connected

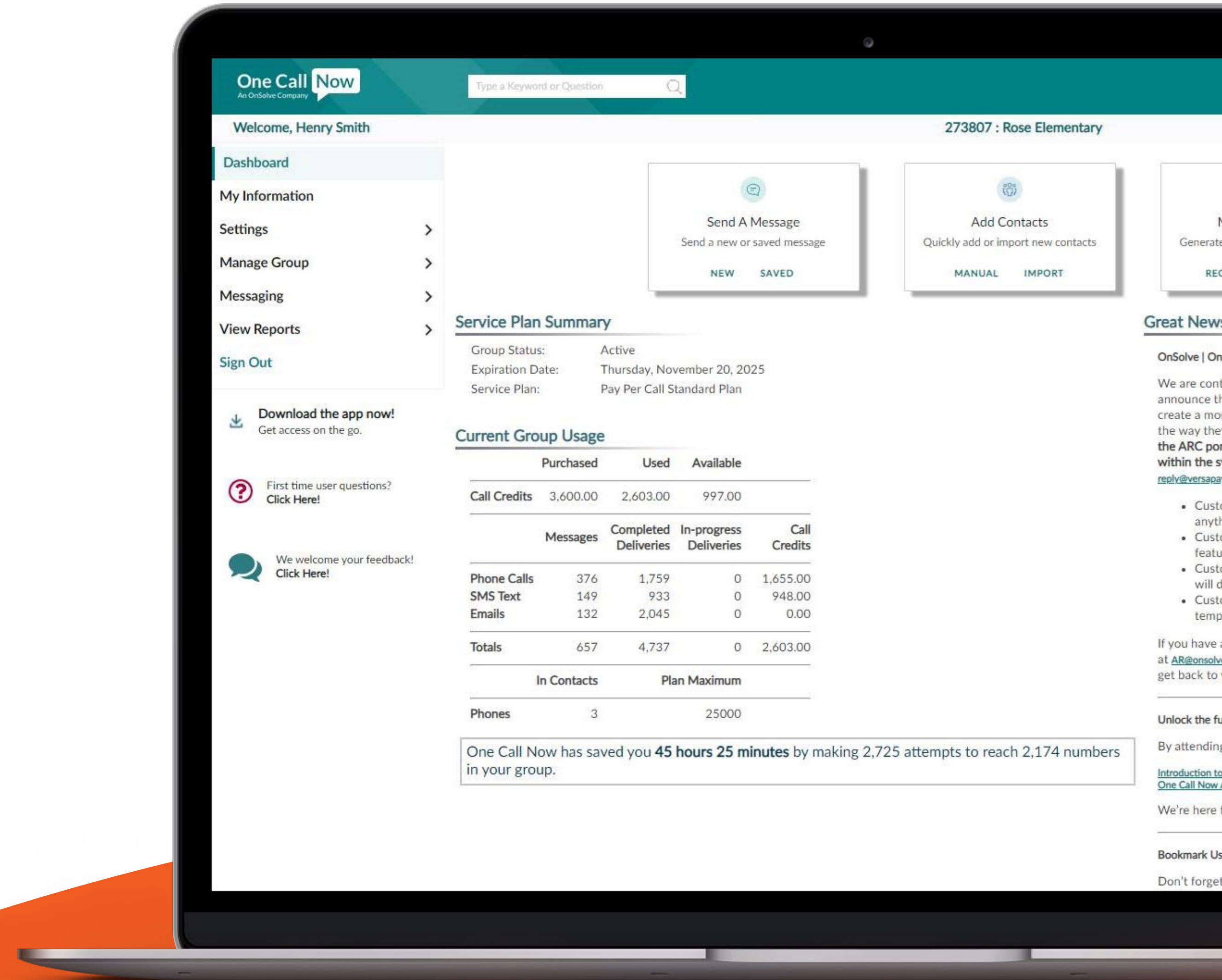


Higher education institutions pose a unique challenge when it comes to implementing effective mass communication. Campuses are essentially microcosms of broader society, and administrators must be prepared for a wide range of potential crisis scenarios by having systems in place to contact students, faculty, staff and visitors in case of both emergency and routine situations.

When it comes to emergencies, every second is critical. If there is an active shooter on campus, administrators need a way to rapidly alert everyone to steer clear of the area or evacuate or take cover if they are in the line of fire. In the case of severe weather, students and employees need to know if classes are canceled, whether the route to campus is safe and whether they should seek shelter.



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Critical communications systems are also helpful to communicate everyday needs of students, staff and administrators. From employee announcements to tuition payment reminders, a centralized system can ensure information reaches the right people in a timely manner.

The good news is many colleges and universities across the country already have at least one critical communications system in place, according to [Campus Safety's 2020 Emergency Notification Survey](#). Perhaps in part because of the [Clery Act](#), which requires institutions to deliver timely warnings about threats to students and employees, most colleges and universities understand the importance of emergency communications and do their best to alert stakeholders amid crisis. Unfortunately, not every critical communications system is created equal. The act of getting the right information to the right people may sound simple, but delivering a clear and actionable message to a variety of stakeholders on their preferred device too often ends up being inefficient or ineffective.

If your institution is relying on outdated or rudimentary technology such as alarms or phone trees, there's a good chance of mass confusion during an emergency. And if your system cannot handle the strain of communicating with thousands of stakeholders, your crisis management plan could be hobbled from the start. For those looking to improve their campus crisis communications, follow these best practices:



01. Prepare for All Scenarios

From wildfires and pandemics to active shooters and winter storms, campuses need to be prepared for all manner of crises.



02. Craft Clear and Actionable Messages

Make sure all messages are clear, concise and actionable. Recipients should know who sent the message, what the situation is, how they should respond and when they can expect further information. In addition to creating a template library, it's a good idea to create subgroups of recipients so administrators can send more targeted messages to students and faculty, for example.

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03. Maintain Accurate Contact Data

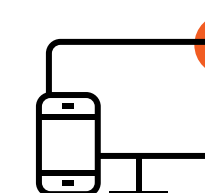
A critical communications system is only as good as the data it has to work with. In order to ensure all stakeholders will receive urgent messages, consider making your system opt-out instead of opt-in.



04. Choose the Appropriate Communication Channel

According to a *Campus Safety 2019* Emergency Notification Survey, 71 percent of campuses use mobile phone text alert systems. Also [according to Campus Safety](#), 51 percent of the colleges and universities with text alert systems have more than 80 percent of their students signed up.

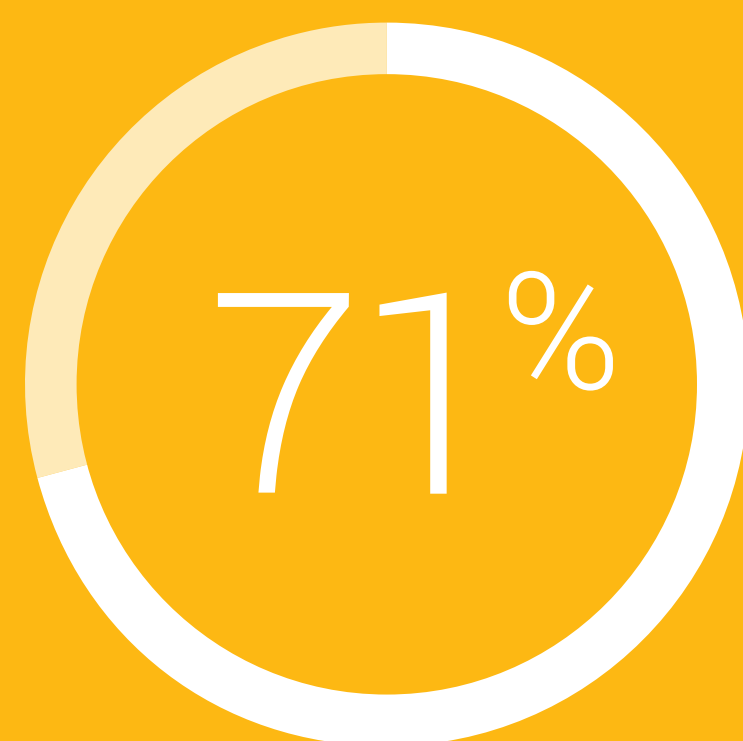
Your critical communications system should definitely incorporate text messaging, but it's also important to remember that students aren't the only ones on campus. Some faculty and staff members may prefer email or phone calls, so you should aim to send alerts across a variety of channels.



05. Test the System and Train Stakeholders

It's crucial to test the system in advance to make sure everyone is receiving the alerts and knows what to do in each situation.

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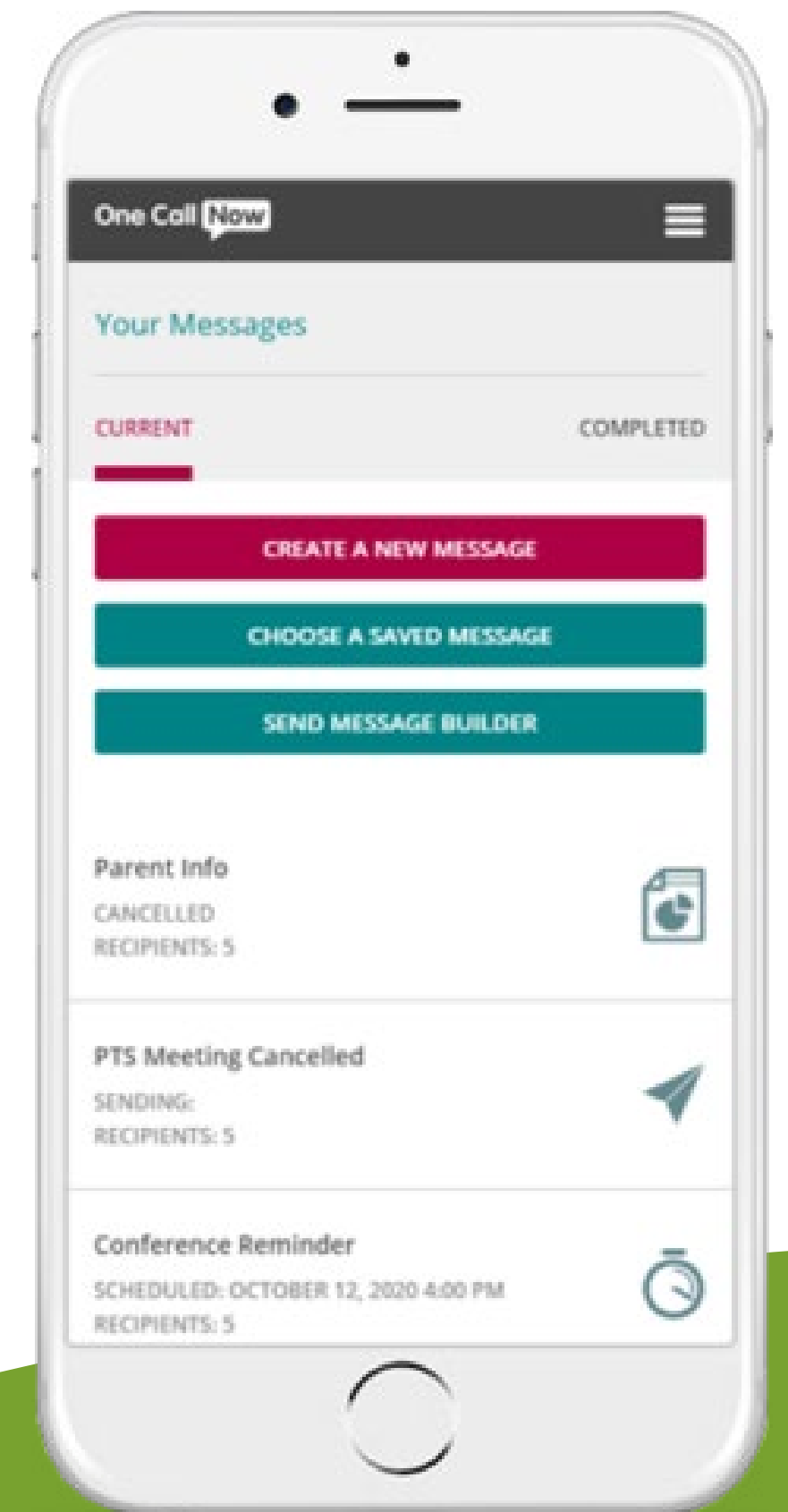
What Can OnSolve® One Call Now® Do for Your Campus?

[One Call Now from OnSolve](#) provides a user-friendly way to simply and effectively deliver both critical and routine messages to all stakeholders. Messages can be rapidly sent out using a range of communication channels, including text, phone calls, SMS, email and push notifications.

How to Get the Most Out of One Call Now

OnSolve One Call Now is indispensable during emergency situations, but many colleges and universities are realizing the technology's full potential by also using it to solve important, nonemergency challenges. From boosting season ticket sales and reminding students about tuition payments to keeping in touch with alumni and increasing attendance at campus events, the possibilities are nearly endless. Here are a few case studies from colleges and universities across the country that illustrate the versatility of OnSolve One Call Now.

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Case Study

Sending Out Tuition Payment Reminders

College students have plenty going on, and keeping track of important deadlines can be challenging. At some colleges, a missed tuition payment can cause a student to be dropped from a class, which is bad news for both the student and the college.

The Challenge

A midwestern community college with four satellite campuses provides associate degree programs to more than 5,000 students.

The college faced a challenge: Despite administrative efforts to communicate effectively, students continued to miss special events and important deadlines. For example, each semester, a large number of registrants were dropped from classes as a result of missed tuition payments. The school tried using various communication methods, including direct mail reminders and calls from staff members, but both were costly and time consuming. The school needed an efficient, inexpensive and effective means of student communication.

The Solution

Fortunately, the college discovered OnSolve One Call Now. The school started using One Call Now with a voice call campaign reminding current students of important events and tuition payment deadlines. The results were so positive that calls were extended to prospective students as well.

The college was thrilled with the results. By utilizing One Call Now, the school saw an immediate 33 percent reduction in students dropped from classes due to missed tuition payments. And more than \$115,000 in tuition was kept!

The service has also saved the school time and money by freeing staff from making calls and reduced dissatisfaction among students. By taking a proactive approach to communication, the college helped make students and prospective students feel welcome, informed and important. The service saves the college from losing students and tuition dollars, saves staff hours and has more than paid for itself.



Case Study

Keeping in Touch with Alumni

Colleges and universities have good reasons for keeping in touch with alumni. Alumni can provide both financial and developmental support for higher learning institutions and current students, but maintaining contact with thousands of globally dispersed individuals is not an easy task.

The Challenge

A southern private research university with more than 15,000 students from around the world has everything to gain by staying in touch with its vibrant and diverse alumni. The university comprises 12 schools and colleges serving undergraduate and graduate students in more than 180 majors and programs.

Its office of alumni relations prides itself on outstanding customer service, which often includes personal outreach regarding local and regional alumni programs. In order to maximize efficiency and human resources, the limited

staff was working to balance the expectation of a high standard of customer service with the responsibility of making such a large volume of calls. They needed a better way to get information out to thousands of alumni without increasing costs.

The Solution

The director of alumni programs heard about One Call Now from a colleague and implemented the system to help streamline alumni communication. She quickly began to see results.

Alumni receiving calls gave the office a great deal of positive feedback about how they liked hearing a familiar voice in the message. The response rate increased immediately. Overall, the director is pleased with the ability to reach so many people simultaneously without having to make all their calls manually and without losing the important intimacy of a personal voice.



Case Study

Boosting Season Ticket Renewals

Athletics are a huge moneymaker for many colleges and universities, and it's crucial to maintain attendance levels at sporting events.

The Challenge

For the University of Cincinnati Athletics department, communicating with season ticket holders regarding renewals, special offers and event announcements was a challenge.

Employing students to make season ticket renewal calls was ineffective and time consuming. The students didn't reliably follow the prescribed phone script, so information given to season ticket holders was often inconsistent.

The Solution

Since implementing One Call Now, the web-based, critical communications system for email and text alerts, the ticket office has been able to quickly send consistent and informative messages to its season ticket holders. The results: substantial improvements in ticket renewal rates and season ticket holder satisfaction.



“The price we pay to One Call Now is a drop in the bucket compared to the time we have saved and the value we receive. It helps us ensure that everyone gets the same message. We use messages from our coaches to encourage our season ticket holders to renew so they don't miss out on our exciting brand of Bearcat football and basketball.”

— Associate Athletic Director/Ticket Operations,
University of Cincinnati

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Increasing Attendance at Campus Events

College students typically have jam-packed social calendars, and keeping track of when every campus event is being held is nearly impossible.

The Challenge

Walden University, a distinctive online learning community, was founded in 1970. Walden's online learning community is made up of students and faculty, alumni and friends, national experts and visiting scholars and a growing list of academic, corporate and government partners who share a commitment to transforming the world through higher education.

Communicating information about upcoming university events is critical for Walden University's enrollment success. That responsibility falls on University Marketing Events Team Regional Manager Christina Cantu. She realized that too much employee time was wasted making weekly individual calls to remind prospective students and guests of upcoming university events.

The Solution

Frustrations with the manual calling approach had created a perfect opportunity to try something new, and a Walden marketing team member suggested using One Call Now from OnSolve.

Implementation of the system turned out to be seamless, and Cantu appreciates that the service was "so easy and straightforward to set up and teach — it's great and simple!"



"These manual calls created tremendous potential for human error and inconsistency," Cantu said. "Manual calling was a time suck; people just have way too much on their plates." Walden University needed a way to ensure that all communication with prospective students and guests was consistent, professional and completed in a timely manner.



Cantu easily taught the One Call Now process to a representative, who now simply records a message outlining university event information and reaches all prospective students and guests with no additional effort or time required.

Walden University's prospective students appreciate the event reminders, and Cantu thinks they make all the difference in event turnout. "I can't gush about it enough. We adore the system, and there has definitely been a correlation between using reminder calls and increased attendance. It has really made an impact on event performance," she said. Cantu estimates that Walden University sends notifications every week and values how One Call Now has become "integral to the event process."

Now Walden University's event communication is consistent and professional without requiring a large time commitment.

Embracing Communication Technology While Avoiding Overuse

The above case studies illustrate the wide range of uses for critical communications systems. Products like OnSolve One Call Now can be used to warn about inclement weather, inform students about upcoming events and free health clinics, make thousands of automated calls to alumni and sports fans, remind students of tuition payment deadlines and so much more.

Colleges and universities are wise to get the most out of their critical communications systems, but it's also important to avoid overuse. Institutions should aim to strike a balance somewhere between neglecting and abusing the technology. If you send out too many messages, students and employees may start to ignore them. But if you underuse the technology, the entire campus is missing out.

Make a Difference on Your Campus

If your higher education institution doesn't have an easy way to communicate with staff and students, it's time to bring your critical communications into the twenty-first century. By doing so, you enhance the university experience while introducing more efficiency into your school's day-to-day operations.

Colleges and universities around the country rely on OnSolve One Call Now for their critical communications needs. Interested in learning more? Schedule a demo of One Call Now today to learn more about what you can do to improve the higher education experience on campus.

[Request a Demo](#)

