SUMMARY:
A Wi-Fi Roadmap for Growth, Now and in the Future

Visit Ithaca College in Ithaca, New York, today and you'll find a world-class Wi-Fi network that is used by students, teachers and guests for everything, everywhere. But it wasn't always like this. Learn how Ithaca teamed with Apogee to map out a progressive path for technology and how the 10+ year partnership has positively impacted student satisfaction, productivity and the bottom line.

PROBLEM: DROWNING IN A SEA OF STUDENT DEVICES, APPS, VIRUS & MORE

In the early '90s, Ithaca College started building an in-house residential network so students could connect their computers to the campus network for free. As technologies evolved and advanced in the years that followed, Ithaca faced increased challenges servicing the college's 29 residence halls and 4,400 connections.

By the early 2000s, Ithaca realized that its legacy in-house ResNet, which had weathered the '90s and Y2K admirably, was being overwhelmed by students' accelerated devices adoption, everything from laptops, smartphones, tablets, and game consoles to disruptive apps like peer-to-peer sharing. Rampant piracy while using such applications also created the need to educate students on etiquette and legal ramifications on the proper use of a shared network. Ithaca's IT staff found it nearly impossible to handle the thousands of hand-written forms for residential activation, not to mention the hassle of dealing with copyright holder complaints and student infractions due to peer-to-peer sharing.

As if this wasn't enough, Ithaca was hit by the 2003 worldwide Blaster virus which brought down the campus network, just as students were moving in. Internet access was down for seven days. The timing and delay angered many students and their parents–some enough to ask for tuition refunds.

The multitude of issues led Ithaca to question whether maintaining their in-house ResNet was the best use of their resources. Would it be better to outsource to a third-party to improve service and support while allowing Information Technology Services (ITS) more time to attend to other priorities?

SOLUTION: FROM RESNET MAYHEM TO MODEL OF EFFICIENCY

In June 2004, Ithaca College made the decision to outsource, and in doing so became one of the first colleges to use a third-party provider for ResNet services. They selected Apogee as the company stood out among others as one who understood the academic market and the law. In a span of four months, Apogee and Ithaca had achieved the goals they had set out to accomplish.

- Creation of a tiered service internet connection plan including a no-cost option for students.
- On-site technical support and 24/7 phone support for all students living in the 29 residence halls.
- Increased bandwidth that scales as technologies advance and the college continues to grow and expand.
- Creation of a network architecture that would not be affected by viruses, worms and Trojans.
- The establishment of a collaborative relationship and partnership with an experienced partner who understood not only the academic market but also the law when it came to piracy.

"We were not equipped nor chartered to be an ISP. Turning that business over was a good business decision for Ithaca College."

-Ed Fuller,
Director of Information Technology

In late 2014, Ithaca felt they needed to expand the wireless infrastructure from ResNet Wi-Fi to campus-wide Wi-Fi as dramatic increases in usage and the number of Wi-Fi enabled devices brought to campus were creating new demands outside the ResNet. Students, faculty and staff were voicing concerns about spotty connectivity and dropped connections in academic and administrative areas. Students asked for the same Wi-Fi capabilities on the administrative network that they were already experiencing on the residential network.

After conducting listening sessions to gain the perspectives of faculty, students, and others, Ithaca formed a wireless remediation committee to upgrade the wireless infrastructure. The committee was made up of representatives from the IT department, faculty, administrative staff, and Apogee. The committee gathered data, perspectives, and current challenges, and created a plan on how to deliver seamless and reliable wireless coverage throughout its 670 acres. The result: 29 academic, student-centered, and administrative spaces across campus were included in the wireless remediation and expansion project. Additional upgraded switches, cabling, and infrastructure were installed to create a more robust Wi-Fi experience for everyone on campus.

RESULTS: A FUTURE-PROOF NETWORK TO STAY AHEAD OF DEMAND

Through its partnership with Apogee, Ithaca has been able to foster an understanding of where the higher education industry is going, as well as how technology advancements impact student life and learning.

Today, Ithaca enjoys:

- Stable, predictable costs
- Greater efficiency
- Data-driven decision making
- Risk assessment
- Process automation
- Tools to prevent human error

"IT and facilities planning are now inextricably linked. Sometimes a specialist provider in these domains should be brought in when they bring with them true value, in addition to positively impacting productivity and the bottom line. I want a partner that works along with Ithaca to bring innovative ideas; one that takes the time to think through how to do things better, and helps the school meet and anticipate student needs. Apogee is such a partner."

-Gerald Hector,
Vice President, Finance and Administration

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