Alertus Emergency Notification Software

General

Account/Department
CONTRACTS - RISK MGMT

Priority
Based on steering committee score

Created
Mon 3/5/18 11:38 AM

Dates/Times Resources Not Available
None.

Divisional VP
Doug Dawes - Administrative Affairs

Estimated initial costs
0

Estimated on-going costs
0

Explanation of evidence of impact.
As this is a public safety project, there is no direct, immediately verifiable impact on student success or efficiency, and it will be incredibly difficult to measure its efficacy.

We are requesting this project as it represents the current best practices and recommendations in emergency information dissemination. Dr. Dennis Mileti with the University of Colorado, Boulder notes that "There never has been, there never will be, a silver bullet for disseminating warnings. One technology is inefficient." He notes that it takes two to three notifications/confirmations before individuals will take decisive action in the face of an emergency (https://hazdoc.colorado.edu/handle/10590/4508 - although this document deals with dams and levee breaks, he notes the notification principles apply across all-hazards). Additionally, Troy Nicolini (NOAA) and Lori Dengler (HSU), as part of the Redwood Coast Tsunami Workgroup, are in agreement.

As such, although this project will not directly impact student success or efficiency, it will improve public safety and increase the chance of saving lives during an emergency by providing yet another
emergency notification option, providing the campus community with another layer of alerts and spurring them into action sooner.

It would be possible to partially measure the impact by testing the text alert system across campus, and randomly selecting certain buildings to receive a desktop alert in addition to the text. Then, we would survey recipients on when/if/how they received the test message(s) and if they would be take action after receiving such a notification, looking to verify those receiving the desktop notification received alerts faster, more reliably, with a greater potential to act upon the information received. However, it would be difficult to accurately assess the improvement Alertus provides outside of a real emergency.

**Funding Availability?**
No Hard Costs

**Need to Know**
Cade Webb

**Portfolio Type**
Business Services: Activities involving HSU business admin, financial, and logistical operations.

**Portfolio Type Alignment**
The project is public safety-focused and will be mostly utilized by Emergency Management, University Police, and MarComm.

**Project Champion**
William Bence

**Primary Customer(s)**
Campus-wide

**What problem are you looking to solve?**
In the event of a life-threatening emergency present on campus, HSU is legally and morally obligated to inform the campus community of the hazard and any protective action they may need to take. Currently, we have several tools to do this, but they still do not provide completely comprehensive notification capabilities. Additionally, mass emergency communication experts have begun to recommend redundant communication methods to provide the public with multiple alerts, as many individual will seek 2 or even 3 alerts to confirm the danger before taking action.

Rave Alert is the campus emergency text alert system, and is currently the best way to provide notifications to campus. However, this still only represents one piece of information and many individuals receiving the texts will look for confirmation before taking protective action. The other primary emergency alert system, the campus Emergency Public Alert System, consists of a series of flashing strobe lights and speakers strategically placed around campus. This system has the capability to reach most of the campus; however, there still does exist the possibility of those unable to hear the broadcast warning, whether due to a hearing impairment, use of headphones, or being in a “dead spot”
Alertus is a software that will allow us to issue pop-up notifications on all desktop computers on campus, allowing HSU to reach a much wider spectrum of the campus community, while also building in redundancies in our emergency communication capabilities. It will provide another wave of alerts, so to speak, acting as confirmation to the text/EPAS alert, convincing the campus to take action in an emergency and potentially saving lives.

**Which departments or processes are affected?**
All users of HSU-owned computers on campus. This includes staff and faculty work computers, and any classroom or lab spaces where HSU computers are in use by students, faculty, or staff.

**What is the consequence of not doing this project?**
As stated above, there currently exists the possibility of a failure to notify the entirety of the campus community of the presence of a life-threatening emergency on campus. While there is no way to ensure with complete certainty that everyone will be notified, Alertus would help to ensure a greater portion of people on campus at any given time will receive the messaging.

Also, as stated above, most people will seek 2 - 3 alert warning before taking action, looking to confirm the emergency before doing anything. Alertus will provide another layer to our notification procedures and will result in more decisive action in case of emergency.

Finally, per the Clery Act, Title IX institutions are legally mandated to alert their campuses of these life-threatening emergencies immediately, and can face fines of up to 55,000 per individual, per incident they did not receive notification of. Alertus would help us in preventing and/or greatly reducing the risk of such Clery audit findings.

**What would a successful solution look like?**
Utilizing this grant-funded opportunity for the implementation of Alertus software throughout campus. This means identifying and setting up a dedicated server; installing Alertus on the server, setting up automated client installations for all HSU-owned computers, and integration of the Alertus platform with the Rave Alert console.

**How else might you solve this problem?**
The recommendation from last year’s request was to mandate sign-ups for Rave Alert - we have cleared this option with legal and are currently working with Rave to look at best practices for switching from opt-in to opt-out text systems. HSU has other emergency notification options - social media, KHSU, the INFO line, and the emergency website. However, these are all passive notification methods (people need to seek these out, rather than being sent to the individuals, like a text or siren), and this represents one of the best and least costly active notification methods.

**What resources will this project require?**
Support from ITS to identify server resources, install Alertus on HSU servers and computers, and provide support for initial testing of the system, once installed. HSU Emergency Management will be responsible for the ongoing testing, monitoring, and reporting going forward after the project. Staff from MarCom will be needed to support reworking emergency messaging in the Alertus system.

And is your deadline a hard deadline?
No

Why must the project be completed by this date?
No reason. This project is flexible and can be supported whenever ITS resources are available.

Explanation of annual estimates
Alertus is a grant-funded software that requires no startup or ongoing maintenance costs, other than HSU Staff time to identify and set up the server, install the Alertus to the server and all HSU-owned computers, and help manage the acceptance testing when the product is first installed. The integration with the Rave service is covered by Rave staff and will have no cost associated with it.

Type
New

Affected or Related Systems/Modules
Other

Other Affected or Related Systems/Modules
Rave Alert System

Considerations / dependencies
None.

Information Technology (IT) Feasibility Statement
The documentation of the server requirements for Alertus, has been reviewed and deemed feasible by ITS System Administrators/Programmers (Breck Robinson, Cade Webb, and Gary Noar) with relevant server installation and integration experience. All of the Alertus specifications requirements documentation is attached in the “Files” section of this project request, and have been reviewed by key technical staff during the last year’s project prioritization process.

The main components of this request are:
1. Identify/Set Up Virtual Server Resource (Includes configuring, setting up monitoring, installing ALERTUS)
2. Set Up/Configuration of Automated Client Installations (including NON-installation of MARCOM, UPD, EOC and Tower) using SCCM for all HSU-owned computers.
3. Create Test Process for pre-test and Campus-wide release. (to determine what to include in Campus Communications, AND target October 2018 "Shakeout" Event for Campus-wide test.
4. Create and Execute Campus Communications for October 2018 Campus-wide Test.