



New Two-Way Communication Channel Increases Collaboration Between Students and Police, Improves Campus Safety

University of Florida Case Study – Spring 2014

Student-centered mobile solution keeps University of Florida students safe and encourages information sharing to prevent and deter crimes on campus.

Executive Summary

Making college campuses a safe place for students, faculty, staff and visitors is a primary concern for campus administrators worldwide. With 50,000+ students, faculty and staff sprawled over a 2,000-acre campus; the University of Florida (UF) sought a solution that delivered pervasive and ubiquitous security across their main campus and several satellite locations throughout Gainesville, Florida.

The University of Florida commissioned a competitive bid to evaluate potential security solutions that would resonate with the college-aged demographic of today, utilize robust and proven technology that could easily integrate into Campus Police infrastructure, and help overcome the stationary limitations of traditional methods of emergency reporting on campus such as emergency blue light phones or call boxes. After evaluating the safety application market, the University selected TapShield, a student-centered safety solution, for its ability to resonate with today's college demographic and increase regular communication between students and police.

Customer Need

The University wanted to make available a mobile application to all students, staff and faculty that encouraged information sharing between the campus community to prevent and deter crimes.

Traditional methods of emergency reporting on campus were limited to blue light emergency phones, emergency call boxes and ten-digit campus police phone numbers. Typical calls to police using mobile phones lack accurate location data and critical caller information, and can delay emergency response by up to 2 or 3 minutes as responders collect basic information before dispatching help. Additionally, emergency phones and call boxes have stationary limitations, requiring a caller to locate a box and remain in a single location throughout the duration of the call.

Aside from the technical limitations found in traditional methods of emergency reporting, students reported that the antiquated methods did not resonate with their technology-centered lifestyles that include smartphones and social networking. Students at the University reported behaviors that show they are more likely to text message rather than place a phone call, and that blue light emergency phones on campus are rarely used in a real emergency. The University of Florida has over 350 blue light phones installed throughout campus.

Solution

In order to obtain the multi-functionality and relevant technology to today's students, the University performed significant due diligence to ensure the safety solution they selected could live up to the rigorous standards set forth by the administration. After an extensive evaluation, the University of Florida selected TapShield to provide its mobile solution for student, staff and faculty safety on campus. The TapShield mobile safety app was made available to students, staff and faculty, and UF Police Department use Shield Command, a cloud-based system that helps dispatch personnel to monitor, manage and respond to threats within campus boundaries.

"THE TAPSHIELD SOLUTION IS EASY TO USE AND ALLOWS OUR DISPATCHERS TO QUICKLY VIEW GPS LOCATION AND KEY CALLER IDENTIFICATION SO EMERGENCY REPORTING IS FAST AND EFFICIENT. I BELIEVE THIS HELPS OUR DEPARTMENT PROVIDE PERVERSIVE SECURITY IN A WAY WHICH RESONATES WITH OUR STUDENTS."

-CHIEF LINDA STUMP, UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA POLICE DEPARTMENT

With a single tap, the TapShield app enables any student with a smartphone to share GPS-tagged video, photos, audio and text to a secure Web-based dashboard monitored by campus security teams. Students can also summon help in one tap, which automatically sends caller GPS location, and profile information, while simultaneously connecting the caller via phone call to UF Police Dispatchers for on-going communication during an emergency. Free for students, the University of Florida customized the app by layering branding elements to deliver consistency throughout the app. TapShield also integrated university resources into the app such as the Emergency Management website and mass notification messages from a legacy system.

TapShield's web-based incident management platform called Shield Command, helps dispatch personnel, and monitor, manage and respond to threats within campus boundaries. Dispatchers can view tips shared by students, staff and faculty or view crime data from municipal police reports in and around their campus.

Patent-pending features such as Yank™ allows students to instantly send an Alert when the headphones are pulled from the phone's audio port on purpose or by force. Additional features of the application provide a student's route and estimated time of arrival to friends, family and police when traveling across campus alone. The TapShield mobile security solution can be used both within the university campus and outside campus boundaries, alerting the appropriate emergency services such as 911 when summoning help while away from campus.

“THE USE OF TECHNOLOGY LIKE TAPSHIELD TO ASSIST THE PUBLIC AND TO EXPEDITE LAW ENFORCEMENT IS A BENEFIT FOR OUR COMMUNITY.”

-MAJOR BRAD BARBER, UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA POLICE DEPARTMENT

Customer Benefits

- TapShield app provides a new two-way channel for critical communication, allowing students to collaborate with police more effectively and frequently.
- TapShield's resonates with today's student lifestyle and has been highly adopted by over 20,000 students on campus.
- Incoming caller identification and real-time GPS location contribute to reduced time-to-action for police dispatchers, resulting in up to 47 percent improvement in response times.
- Collaboration among students and campus police has increased significantly. Non-emergency tips are frequently submitted with user profile information or reported anonymously.
- University of Florida Police were able to easily deploy and learn how to operate the system without formal training, hardware or software installation.
- “GREAT support team!” Resolved issues - even non TapShield-related.

About TapShield

TapShield provides a student-centered mobile safety solution that encourages information sharing to prevent and deter crimes. Through a personal safety app linked to a cloud-based dashboard, TapShield creates a new two-way channel of communication that empowers both students and police to identify potential threats on college campuses. TapShield also provides users the ability to send real-time location information to police in distress situations. With TapShield, safety officials are able to lower critical barriers to communication, identify and assess threats, prevent crimes and save lives. Gartner recognized TapShield as a “2014 Cool Vendor” due to the company’s innovative approach to crowd-sourcing public safety. For more information visit www.tapshield.com.

