

# Lord Fairfax Community College Makes a “Seamless” Switch to Rave Alert™



## HIGHER EDUCATION

Rave Alert™

**10,600+** members of campus community, including students, faculty, staff, parents and temporary visitors, receive notifications

*Implementing a mass notification system can be a challenging project for colleges and universities. It's time-consuming to get everyone in the campus community into the system, as well as to maintain this information. And when a higher education institution has to switch to another system, it can seem like a daunting task but it doesn't have to be that way.*

Lord Fairfax Community College (LFCC) went through this transition in 2016, when it needed to switch systems after its original notification vendor was bought out and the system then in place would no longer be supported. Richard Crim, Lord Fairfax's CIO, wanted to take the college's mass notification system to “the next level” and integrate it with other systems and applications, including digital signage and social media, which were already in use. He also wanted to make sure the next vendor LFCC selected had a history of working with higher education institutions.

“When an incident happens, there's a call for an institution to communicate as fast as possible,” Crim said. “Rave Mobile Safety really shows that you can send out messages in seconds and it doesn't matter what carrier it is. An incident is over after three or four minutes. Rave Alert's very quick and it doesn't break the bank.”

LFCC, which is part of the Virginia Community College System, is located in Northern Virginia. It has three campuses located within 45 minutes of each other, as well as small learning centers throughout the region. The community college initially had about 7,700 users in Rave Alert, but it now has more than 10,600 community members in the system.

These members include LFCC students, faculty, staff and temporary visitors, as well as parents of students and administrators in a nearby local middle school. The community receives alerts about various situations, including Clery Act notifications, severe weather conditions, power outages, hazardous material spills, active shooter or intruder incidents, water main breaks and Code Adam, a state law in Virginia that mandates each state building that's open to the public have a missing child safety program.

The community college initially had about **7,700 users** in Rave Alert, but it now has more than **10,600 community members** in the system.

“We want to be open to everyone and serve our community,” Crim said. “We want to be transparent with all groups in our community. If something happens on one of our campuses, we want everyone to know about it.”



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**RICHARD CRIM**  
CHIEF INFORMATION OFFICER  
LORD FAIRFAX COMMUNITY COLLEGE

### **A quick and seamless transition**

Implementing LFCC Alert, Lord Fairfax's brand name for Rave Alert, and loading information about students and others into the new system “proved to be seamless,” Crim said. “The Rave Alert implementation took only four hours; it was so quick. The site was up, and we did a little bit of branding, some testing with a small group, and then we messaged everyone.”

“The whole process was superfast and there were no issues,” he continued. “I dealt with program management, customer success and customer support early on in the relationship. It was a single voice and it made me feel secure.”

When the initial announcement and registration went out to about 7,700 community members, Crim said he didn't receive any negative responses. In fact, one person responded, saying “love the new setup, it's so easy to do.”

Everyone from the campus community is on the LFCC distribution alert, and they only can opt out of text notifications, but not email notifications.

“Anyone who unsubscribes to email alerts is removed automatically, so I can focus on the management system and it can manage itself,” he said.

Previously, Crim was responsible for manually deleting anyone who wanted to unsubscribe or needed to be removed from the list. “We have about 2,000 students who transition out every year. Compared to the previous vendor, Rave has saved me about four hours manually cleaning out the system,” he said.

The college encourages enrollment into LFCC Alert twice a year, including right before the winter. The IT department has used this message to encourage enrollment:

***“Sign up for LFCC Alert. Find out when school’s closed.”***

According to Crim, there’s generally high enrollment numbers for LFCC Alert around this time.

### **A reliable system**

Keeping mass notification systems working in all kinds of situations is vital to a campus community. These systems are part of a higher education institution’s infrastructure, so it’s imperative these systems don’t experience outages, especially during adverse events.

For Crim, knowing LFCC Alert was going to be hosted through Rave alleviated any concerns.



***“Now I can send out a message and know I can get it on my phone in two seconds. I know it’s a success because I can send out 10,000 alerts and I won’t hear anything back.”***

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“I’ve never had an outage with Rave and there are so many ways to send out an alert,” he said. “It’s cloud-hosted off of us, so we don’t have to worry about it. With our previous vendor, we hosted a domain piece of it. So if there was a geographical-area storm, there was a risk of an outage.”

“With Rave, we have no issue with a local outage and we don’t have to worry about an alert going out,” Crim added. “A 30-second delay is a lifetime. There’s a level of urgency. It takes five seconds to shut the door in the event of an active threat, and 10 seconds to barricade it. You can’t have a delay alerting.”

LFCC Alert’s reliability and unlimited administrators, messaging and reach are a relief for Crim. In addition to Crim, there are 10 authorized administrators who can send out notifications. Student information is automatically synced each semester, and LFCC Alert can be scaled to send out unlimited messages.



CASE STUDY Lord Fairfax Community College

LFCC's previous mass notification vendor would charge for the amount of messages and recipients.

"With our prior system, we would hear from someone if they didn't receive an alert, and it would take us a lot of time to figure out why," Crim said. "It was super random and it's worrisome to hear. It's a lot of responsibility to get the messages out and we'd look into why it wouldn't get out. Were they in an area where there wasn't any service? Was a message denied? Or was it timed out? Often times, it was carrier versus vendor."

"Now I can send out a message and know I can get it on my phone in two seconds," he continued. "I know it's a success because I can send out 10,000 alerts and I won't hear anything back."

### **Genuine partnership**

Along with the flexibility of the Rave mass notification system, Crim appreciates the ability to give feedback and discuss new features.

"I know what's going on in the technology, and the platform can tap into any device," he said. "It's important to be available on any device no matter what and you don't have to worry about the interface. Rave is focused on that."

"I'll get a call from Rave, and they want to make sure I'm using all the functionality and leveraging what I already have," he added. "They want to continue the relationship."