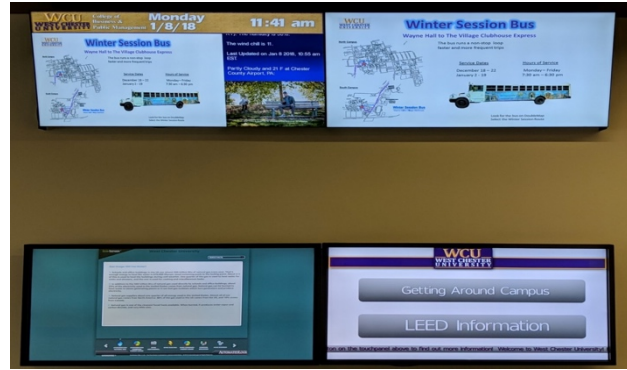


The Evolution of Digital Signage at WCU

JT Singh, Mike Kalinowski and Teresa Hudson
Information Services & Technology Division

Digital signage helps institutions to provide timely communications to internal and external constituents with a consistent tone and brand. At West Chester University of Pennsylvania (WCU), we've been developing, leveraging, and evolving our digital signage platform over the past eight years with the following goals in mind:

- Increase student engagement and thereby student success.
- Create and display dynamic multimedia content to highlight important campus news and events.
- Enhance emergency messaging.



The Information Services and Technology Division first began researching digital signage solutions back in 2009, conducted a proof of concept, and finalized a solution that would be cost effective, scalable, secure, and easy to use, deploy, and support. We began our first implementation in select academic buildings but have since grown to 62 locations throughout the campus. A content manager server in the university data centers communicates with the individual player PCs for each display connected via the campus network. Customized framesets can be created for departments depending on the size of the monitors ranging from 46" – 80" with Tiny PC's securely rear mounted. Training is provided to departmental staff on how to create and upload content to their specific playlist to only be displayed on those building(s) monitors and there is also a University wide playlist with content that is displayed across all locations. This empowers every department on campus to effectively participate in the process of disseminating information.

The use of digital signage encourages students to watch and interact with the information. Curating and sharing student-generated content, for example, excites students who see their groups and interests on various campus platforms. This exposure makes them momentary campus "celebrities", which encourages them to engage more. The programs like WCU Weekly and Ram Center are considered the number one source of information on campus! We have also used digital signage for managed livestreaming of certain events like President's State of the University Address, Pennsylvania State Athletic Conference (PSAC) games and Commencement ceremonies. The Quad, which is the student news service of WCU creates mobile journalism video content which is displayed on digital signage systems and West Chester Community Television (WCCTV) station in Chester County.

We're also pleased by how the digital signage systems have enhanced emergency messaging. Our WCU Alert communication program has proven to be effective in distributing emergency messages to the university community and also the public and visitors not registered with the university's emergency notification system. The SMS created by the Department of Public Safety is automatically displayed on all digital signage screens on campus with information or instructions to follow in the event of an emergency.

We recently began deploying monitors with touch screen capabilities, which engages users utilizing the wayfinding feature to navigate through a building or elsewhere on campus, as well as view building LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environment Design) information as part of our sustainability initiative. We continue to seek new and innovative ways of advancing digital communications to attain our goal of fostering a well-informed, highly engaged campus population.

