

Oklahoma Panhandle State University

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Howard Henderson, Director of IT, Oklahoma Panhandle State University

Challenge

Residents of faculty and married student housing were clamoring for WiFi

Students could not afford ADSL from the local phone company

University's own copper infrastructure did not extend to the housing development

Cisco solution was too expensive and did not work in critical deployments

Results

Student housing is blanketed in free WiFi

140 users transferring 15 gigabytes per day

Success of the network inspired OPSU to deploy Meraki in the football stadium, activities center and museum



Howard Henderson was getting an earful from faculty and students living in a housing development abutting the campus of Oklahoma Panhandle State University. They had become accustomed to using their laptops and PDAs on local WiFi channels, but the OPSU campus housing was signal-free.

Henderson, the director of IT for OPSU, needed to find a solution that would serve the 4 city blocks of houses and duplexes, but also not break the bank for his small public university budget.

The first challenge was that the campus' own copper infrastructure didn't extend to the student housing area. Henderson bought a few Cisco access points and played with a directional antenna to see how far he could extend the signal, but found limited success. "Even if it had worked," he said, "We didn't have the budget to roll out an entire Cisco mesh solution."

With a little research Henderson found Meraki. The price was right, so he ordered 20 Meraki Outdoors and started putting them up around campus and in the housing areas. "It worked right away, which was kind of unusual," he said. "It definitely cured some of the people who were hollering about not having wireless."



Henderson and his staff experimented with various locations to deploy the radios, and used directional antennas to blanket the housing area with a signal. He found he even had several Meraki Outdoors left over when the job was done. In the museum, where the Cisco access point had simply stopped working, he unplugged the Cisco unit and plugged in a Meraki Outdoor in its place. "It worked instantly," he said.

Henderson and his team have been experimenting with other deployments around campus, including one that is providing the entire football stadium with connectivity during games. "We put access ports up and connected them to the fiber and usage just exploded," he says. And now the campus activity center is also online for conferences and special events, and Henderson keeps extra radios on hand in case an event requires greater coverage.

As Henderson continues experimenting with deployments in select classroom locations, the sound of no one complaining about dropped or weak signal is practically deafening. "For the most part it's been quiet, and in my line of work, quiet is good!"