

# James Sprunt & Nash Community Colleges

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Mitch Evans, NCC Network Administrator

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## Challenge

Rural community colleges needed reliable campus wireless coverage for students

Existing Ethernet runs between buildings could not be used

Limited budget

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## Results

Entire network deployed in 3 days at less than 1/2 the cost of traditional wireless solutions

James Sprunt Community College (JSCC) is a rural community college in south eastern North Carolina. Like many other educational institutions, as they have grown they have discovered the need for wireless connectivity throughout their campus. In fact, students demanded it.

The college wanted a wireless network that was completely segmented from their core “in house” network to alleviate any possible security concerns.

After several site surveys by different integrators using equipment such as Colubris™ and Cisco™, JSCC discovered that covering their campus was going to be expensive. Jason Ginn, JSCC's Network Administrator was beginning to wonder if there was an affordable solution out there for his needs.

Jason finally got in touch with Approach Communications, a Meraki Meraki Partner, and found the solution he was looking for. A lower cost WiFi network that he could keep completely separate from his main network.

The challenge, however, was that Approach could not use the existing Ethernet line connecting each building and most of the buildings were too far apart for most Meraki units to mesh together. Approach Communications integrated specialty 5GHz backhaul links tying all of the buildings together allowing all but two of the Meraki units to act as gateways. “The students are very happy now, as are a lot of the staff who also use our new wireless internet network,” said Jason, “It has made accessing the Internet much more convenient for both faculty and staff. And I have complete control over the network through the Meraki Dashboard which is an invaluable tool.”

Nash Community College (NCC) is a sizable community college in north eastern North Carolina. Though they had a select few wireless hot spots, over the past several years the demand for campus wide coverage grew.

Nash had looked in to a Cisco™ solution, but it was way over their budget. The Cisco equipment also couldn't operate separately from the main university network, which created headaches for their IT staff.

Jason Ginn of James Sprunt Community College suggested to Mitch Evans of NCC that he contact Approach Communications.

As with JSCC, the primary challenge was linking several of the building together into one wireless network. Approach accomplished this by using several 5GHz backhaul links to avoid expensive hard-wire solutions. These backhaul links, combined with the Meraki access points, made for a strong network with a wide area of coverage. All of the wireless access traffic was also kept off of the core school network.

Mitch Evans, NCC's Network Administrator said, “Our campus went from “not hot spot” to “hot spot” in less than 3 days. The Meraki solution has not only been very cost effective, but it has taken a lot of stress off of our primary campus network. It's been easy to manage and we have not had issues with the system even after power outages. The alerts and real-time dashboard let us monitor the health of our network. We covered our campus for less than half of what traditional wireless systems would cost.”

