"Extending Academic and Library Services to Mobile Devices"

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Executive Summary

This poster session will provide an overview of how Baruch College (City University of New York), a large public university with more than 15,000 students consisting entirely of commuters, leveraged mobile phones as a powerful platform for building community and providing access to academic and library services anytime, anywhere.

In fall 2005, Baruch College launched the AirBaruch program powered by Rave Wireless, providing students with a wide range of Baruch services on their mobile phones. The voluntary program was so popular that one third of Baruch students notified of the program enrolled immediately, and the university is already planning to expand the program.

Situation Analysis

Baruch College (City University of New York), a large public university with more than 15,000 students, struggled with building a strong community feeling while providing superior service to a geographically-distributed base of commuter students.

- 15,000 students
- Located in the heart of New York City
- 100% commuters and very little campus space
- Many students work full-time and study
- Heavy use of Blackboard, with more than 1,200 active courses
- The institution seeks to differentiate itself through superior student services
- Administrators are evaluated based on the ratings that students give to their services
- 97% of students own mobile phones
- Students checking personal email twice as often as university email

Challenges

Baruch College administrators faced several challenges particular to an urban campus that serves primarily commuter students.

- Improving communication with students who are very mobile and tend to use their personal mobile phone and personal email rather than university-provided phones or email
- Improving services in an environment where the school doesn't control the transportation and communication infrastructure
- Enabling commuter students to determine in real-time what university resources are available for use
- Building community with a small campus space

Solution

In fall 2005, Baruch College launched AirBaruch, its mobile campus services program powered by Rave Wireless. The program is voluntary and allows students to use their existing mobile phones, or to purchase a new mobile phone through a newly-created AirBaruch retail store on campus.

Services provided to Baruch students through their mobile phones:

- Alerts from the university (e.g., class cancellations, mass transit strikes)
- Blackboard course alerts
- Campus calendar
- Campus event notifications
- Email access
- Emergency numbers
- Faculty and staff directory (searchable with click-to-call)
- Laptops available for check-out
- Study rooms available for reservation

Results

The AirBaruch program powered by Rave Wireless proved to be an instant success.

- One third of students notified about the program enrolled immediately, providing their mobile number to the university
- Nearly 2,000 students voluntarily enrolled in AirBaruch program as of May 2006

The early success of the AirBaruch program has prompted campus officials to expand and further market the program for the 2006-2007 academic year.

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