Barry
University

(Main) Campus Location: Miami Shores, Florida
Enrollment: 7,000+
Campus Type: Private
Campus Size: 129 Acres
Number of Buildings: 23

In November 2022, an incident occurred on Barry University's main campus in Miami Shores, FL: a student walking outside of an administrative building heard popping noises that sounded like gunfire and immediately reported it to campus safety officials and called 911. Barry University's Public Safety team sprung into action by distributing emergency alerts to inform the community of the active shooter threat and locked down the campus as they searched buildings, reviewed cameras, and interviewed students and faculty. The campus safety team discovered that the sound was a result of helium balloons being popped in Thompson Hall during an event. After concluding that it was a false alarm, Barry University issued an "All-Clear" to the community, and the campus resumed operations the next day.

John Buhrmaster, Director of Public Safety and Emergency Management at Barry University, noted that the student followed protocol for reporting a threat accurately and swiftly. "Barry University holds an annual active shooter training led by Miami Shores Police, and our most recent event was in August, so she did the right thing in reporting what she heard," said Buhrmaster.

Buhrmaster is a retired law enforcement officer of 41 years. When he first joined the university eight years ago, he evaluated the alert system that they had at the time. He found that many systems were faulty or broken, and they encountered many delays in receiving proper and timely maintenance. With 1,500 students living on campus, and 4,000 to 5,000 students commuting daily for classes, he

Alertus HPSA provides intelligible and effective notification to widespread, outdoor areas

decided to terminate the agreement with their previous company and find a new system that would better fit Barry's needs.

"When we started looking into other mass notification companies, we found that most of the time, the companies would give empty promises on products and services they could provide, and couldn't integrate with the systems we wanted to keep," said Buhrmaster.

"So when Alertus arrived, they came out to Miami Shores prepared with outdoor equipment and a demo for us. We were pleased that Alertus could provide seamless integrations with our computer system, and with an older speaker system that was situated on top of our library," said Buhrmaster.

Buhrmaster and his team added Alertus' High Power Speaker Array (HPSA) to the West End of their campus with Alertus' Text-to-Speech Technology. They also have USB Panic Buttons that simply plug and play into desktop computers and added wall-mounted, customized hardwired panic buttons to the dispatch center of their main campus.

Alertus Text-to-Speech Interface provides clear spoken voice output of message text

While Barry University's main campus is in Miami Shores, they also have many satellite locations like their School of Law located in Orlando, FL; where they also installed another Alertus High Power Speaker Array (HPSA) and hardwired panic buttons in their Dean's office and security office, which has about 750-800 students. Other class locations can be found throughout Florida, and they also have programs in Pembroke Pines, Hollywood, Jacksonville, Melbourne, Tampa, and Palm Beach Gardens making their total student count approximately 15,000.

"We are extremely happy with the Alertus System," said Buhrmaster. "It is always up and running and self-checks itself. We test the system every month and can turn the systems on and off no matter where we are, via our cell phones."

Anyone registered with the university, from employees to students, must register their name and phone information into the system so they are alerted of an emergency. "This is important so we can reach our multitude of commuter students," said Buhrmaster. "This is the best way to keep everyone informed, whether it is an active shooter threat, weather emergency, medical issue, or a fire, so they can stay away from campus until it is safe to come."

On the importance of having a mass notification solution, Buhrmaster says, "our academic buildings and dorms are scattered across campus over 128 acres, so it is critical to have a mass notification system in case something happens to alert everyone."