



Vanderbilt University Law School

When administrators at this 125 year old university went shopping for a secure and flexible wireless network for use in its prestigious law school, a judgment was quickly made in favor of a Bluesocket solution. The system keeps pace with classroom activities, and is a model for future wireless initiatives.

Located just a few minutes from downtown Nashville on a national arboretum, Vanderbilt University is one of area's most noted landmarks as well as a respected research and educational institution. The university is no stranger to wired and wireless networks, with systems presently serving its college of arts and science, medicine and other disciplines. However, when deciding on a wireless network for its law school, administrators selected a Bluesocket solution as the best and most flexible alternative.



BLUESOCKET DEPLOYMENT AT VANDERBILT UNIVERSITY LAW SCHOOL

- Wireless network based on a Bluesocket WG-2100 wireless gateway and 25 Cisco Aironet access points
- 802.11a/b/g technology located in a single building as part of a wireless pilot project
- Bluesocket solution controls student access to wireless network and the Internet
- Faculty controls access through a management portal, with the ability to turn access on and off within minutes
- Law School's wireless network operates independently, but is connected to university's existing wired and wireless networks
- Bluesocket gateway is compatible with custom programming, designed to manage class activities and schedules

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Nearly everyone recognizes Nashville, TN as the world's center for country music and entertainment, and a location easily bears the title "Athens of the South" because of its many cultural diversions. What many people may not know, however, is that the Nashville is also home to some 14 colleges and universities, and each year hosts more than 30,000 students from around the world.

Nearly one-third of these students attend Vanderbilt University, a unique and diversified research and learning institution that is located about five minutes from the heart of Nashville and is consistently rated as one of the top universities in the nation. In fact, this private institution consists of 10 different schools and a variety advanced learning tracks, ranging from music and engineering to medicine and law. The university also maintains strong partnerships with neighboring schools, businesses and the community.

The Challenge for Vanderbilt University Law School

Late last year, Vanderbilt University Law School decided to expand its existing wireless networks by adding a secure wireless network

to the 125 year old institution that presently boasts more than 660 future attorneys and 50 faculty members.

After reviewing systems from several manufacturers, law school IT administrators decided on a Bluesocket WG-2100 gateway solution since it could easily meet all of the goals associated with coordinating more than 80 individual classes and courses held within a dozen classrooms throughout each semester.

The current law school wireless system, which is a pilot project, consists of 25 Cisco Aironet access points that are carefully positioned throughout the building. The system supports 802.11a/b/g communications technologies and is independently connected to other buildings and schools at the university through fiber and individual wireless networks.

"While Bluesocket offers a variety of gateways depending on user-load and bandwidth, the WG-2100 provided us with ample support for the current student body with plenty of room for growth," says Jason Bradley, Senior Systems Administrator for Vanderbilt University Law School.

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Senior Systems Administrator
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For more information, visit our Website at www.bluesocket.com

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The Bluesocket Solution

The Bluesocket gateway could also be used to block students from randomly wandering Internet sites during class times, which was a key objective in choosing the right solution. It also offered the law school faculty the ability to selectively allow wireless access for single classes, multiple classes, or for meetings related to individual courses, points out Bradley. Another benefit of the Bluesocket solution is that it was easily integrated into Vanderbilt's existing legacy networks and LDAP authentication system, which is relied on for centralized user log-ins across each of the school's campuses.

“We deliberately didn't want everyone to have separate and multiple log-ins that they had to remember, so they use LDAP authentication, which is done over SSL connections to assure that it is not trapped in any form or fashion,” explains Bradley. “Once they are recognized, there is no further need for authentication.”

While wireless security is an increasingly important concern at the university, administrators and faculty were more immediately interested in managing and controlling wireless and Internet access to make better and more productive use of class time.

When a student attempts to access the law school wireless system, for example, they are now directed to a customized log-in screen that is provided by the Bluesocket network. Once they are authenticated, the student is allowed unrestricted Internet access to check email and surf the Web until a designated class begins. Once the class starts, the student is automatically logged off and allowed back on through another log-on screen which restricts access to predetermined Websites.

“The idea was to cut out email, instant messaging and that kind of thing, but not to block the students use of our own in-house course management system and approved information resources,” says Bradley.

While the Bluesocket WG-2100 gateway is now viewed as a model for future wireless activities at the university, the selection and implementation of the system actually occurred over a 30-day period. Jason Bradley and team were first told about the project on July 1, 2004, and the system went live on August 1st just weeks before classes were scheduled to begin.

Teachers and instructors were generally pleased with the system from the very beginning, particularly since wireless access to the Internet could be allowed or blocked within minutes during a class through an administrative Website. In fact, the instructors at the school make frequent use of this capability, as well as the systems flexibility in handling multiple types of data. “Whenever some faculty members use it, and get positive feedback from students, they quickly let other faculty members know about it,” says Bradley.

The system is evolving with new features and software upgrades that keep pace with the changing requirements of the school and its administrative and student body.

“It will always be able to adapt to our needs here, be they different authentication methods or security restrictions, bandwidth regulations, or whatever,” says Senior Systems Administrator Bradley. “It's a very fluid product that we really like from that standpoint.”