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## FAMU program plugs in students Safety now at their fingertips

By Daniela Velazquez  
DEMOCRAT STAFF WRITER

If there's a hurricane warning or a robbery, Florida A&M University students will now be able to get the notice almost instantly on their cell phones through a new text-message system.

FAMU's Department of Safety adopted a new notification system Sept. 1 that enables the school to send urgent news to people who sign up for the e2Campus program, Officer Sherri Luke of the FAMU Police Department said. It may expand to include more specialized information such as breaking sports scores.

"We know how students love their cell phones, so now we can reach them with important information that may end up saving their lives," she said.

As of Friday, the system had 605 unique users. Each person who signs up can get messages to two phone numbers and two e-mail addresses. The program has been funded through a \$19,000 homeland security grant through the U.S. Department of Education. That will pay for the program for two years, Luke said.

The system can send 18,000 messages in a second, said Bryan Crum, marketing director for e2campus' parent company, Omnilet. The instantaneous communication is what makes e2Campus unique, he said.

"Students aren't checking e-mail as much as they used to," Crum said. "Right now mobile phones are the big thing. They can't answer a phone in class but can look down and read a text message."

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FAMU is the only Tallahassee institution to implement the

system. Other schools in the state are Florida Gulf Coast Community College in Fort Myers and Florida Atlantic University in Boca Raton, Crum said. Penn State University recently signed up for the e2Campus and more than 20 other universities have it.

Luke said two alerts have gone out: a message at the College of Law in Orlando on Sept. 1, saying that the campus would be closed because of a storm, and a robbery alert on Sept. 5 in Tallahassee.

Not only is the system an efficient way to send out information, it's also a crime-prevention tool, Luke said.

"Ninety percent of it is being aware," she said. "If you know that there was a robbery at this intersection, you know you need to watch for this."

**Contact reporter Daniela Velazquez at (850) 599-2161 or [dvelazquez@tallahassee.com](mailto:dvelazquez@tallahassee.com).**

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