

UNC Greensboro Goes Campus-Wide with Veoci for Emergency Management and Continuity

UNCG moves day-to-day and emergency response operations to Veoci and rolls the platform out to the entire campus seamlessly.

Overview

The Need

A user-friendly tool to build solutions for daily operations and emergency response.

The Solution

A virtual platform for tracking data and facilitating processes, and one that encourages all personnel to participate in emergency response and continuity planning.

The Benefit

A tool that personnel across campus actively use, and enhances planning, response, and administrative operations.

Enhancing Operations

The University of North Carolina public university school system consists of 17 higher education institutions across North Carolina. One of the largest universities in that system is UNC Greensboro (UNCG), with an annual student body of about 20,000.

Because of the school's location in the southern US, UNCG needs a robust emergency management program to ensure the university is ready to respond to not only hurricanes, but other disasters when they occur.

Zachary Smith, MPA, CEM, Director of the Office of Emergency Management at UNCG, was looking for a solution for his office, one that could facilitate not only emergency response operations, but support daily operations, such as program and project management.

Veoci filled those gaps for Smith's office, providing a collaborative and intuitive platform for emergency management, incident response, and the office's daily operations needs, particularly those of program and project management.

Specifically, the UNCG Office of Emergency Management employs Veoci solutions for tracking exercises and corrective actions, managing mitigation programs, repetitive loss logging, training and exercise management, stakeholder management, and managing the university's emergency management accreditation program (EMAP) compliance progress. Continuity planning, another function of Smith's office, is also moving to Veoci.

Prior to using Veoci, Smith's office used a combination of spreadsheets, manual processes, and other softwares to perform all of these functions. This system, however, was not straightforward; it made collaborating with other departments a hassle, and ultimately put a lot of work back onto Smith's office. "The system we had before — we couldn't get folks to go in and use it."

While Veoci greatly facilitates these operations, one of the platform's biggest benefits for the office is its tracking capabilities. "If we can track it, it's being tracked in Veoci," Smith says. Data goes a long way; having all this data on hand with Veoci not only helps Smith's office make more informed decisions throughout the course of operations, it helps them secure support from leadership and set expectations.

Smith has been able to make this impact on the UNCG campus using Veoci partly due to the platform's configurability. The flexibility of Veoci allows Smith and his office to create the solutions they need not only for their office, but other departments across campus. Veoci enables Smith to use his creativity as part of the daily problem-solving his role at the university requires.

COVID-19 and UNCG

When the COVID-19 pandemic started in the U.S., Veoci again displayed how it makes a difference. The public health emergency forced many organizations into unique situations, including UNCG. Smith's office had been using Veoci for close to a year prior to this incident, and immediately knew how to deploy Veoci to respond to the pandemic.

Normally, Smith's office interfaces with a group of extended stakeholders for emergencies called the Emergency Planning and Response Team, a group of about 50 people representing departments across campus. All of these stakeholders have been involved in the university's response to the pandemic as well.

"We have, in essence, rolled Veoci out to every department on campus," Smith says. Veoci provides not only the space for all of the departments to collaborate together and work virtually as the pandemic necessitated, it made doing so easy.

As the initial events of the pandemic passed and the university started exploring the return-to-work process, Smith was able to use Veoci to create a virtual portal to streamline the process. Each department's COVID-19 liaison just needs to visit this Dashboard and fill in a Form to create their department's return-to-work plan.

Smith's colleagues working on the university's continuity planning are doing similarly to promote more participation in the process across the organization.

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Pushing these processes across campus would typically be a difficult process. Disaster and continuity planning is a challenging task, especially so for those whose focuses aren't in emergency management and continuity. Smith attributes the high participation in these processes across the UNCG campus to the user-friendly design of Veoci.

"It's very intuitive. You can click around and figure out what you need to do. Veoci has been very well received [on campus]... They're not challenged with trying to figure out how to use it."

As a result of Veoci solutions, Smith and the Office of Emergency Management at UNCG can ensure they track and collect the data they need, continue to improve their university's emergency preparedness, and get the support and participation they need to make their programs effective.

"Folks are finding value in how they can use it in their day-to-day departmental operations... People are using the system; they're in it every day, they're monitoring it, they're engaged. The reason: it's easy to use."