

Crisis communications system installed

A new system designed to improve communications across campus in the event of a crisis is now in place.

The system, which was tested for the first time during Spring Break, is part of a series of steps YSU is taking to respond to potential emergency situations on campus, said Cynthia Anderson, vice president for student affairs.

"While we all hope that we never have to confront a crisis like those we have seen at other campuses, it is imperative that we are prepared in the event that such a situation does arise," Anderson said.

"This new communications system, in addition to other steps we are taking, will put us in a position to effectively respond to such crises."

The new system, provided by SimplexGrinnell, a national leader in alarm and communications devices, allows YSU police to broadcast emergency announcements in specific buildings on campus from one central location.

For instance, if there is an emergency in DeBartolo Hall, campus police can broadcast a specific message to that specific building, providing instructions on

how students, faculty and staff should respond to the situation, said Mike Orto, manager of facilities. The system allows for messages to be broadcast both inside and outside the buildings.

Orto said the project also included upgrading fire alarm systems in all campus buildings.

"I can sleep better at night knowing that we have the latest, greatest equipment to address any situation that should arise," he said.

The system was tested in every campus
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YSU takes lead in intramural video-gaming

Video-gamers are leaving their darkened computer rooms behind to compete in YSU's Intramural Sports program, now that Madden football, NBA 2K9 basketball and Halo 3 games are part of the intramural league lineup.

Campus Recreation and Intramural Sports organizers decided last fall to try adding video-gaming leagues to YSU's intramural schedule, a roster previously reserved for basketball, football, volleyball and other athletics.

"Intramural participation in traditional sports has gone up 37 percent in two years at YSU, so we were looking for ways to reach out to a different demographic," said Joe Conroy, intramural coordinator.

The experiment has been a success on several levels. Video-gaming participation numbers are taking off, and the gamers are attracting crowds of shouting, cheering supporters.

"We're always trying to get students to stay on campus after class," Conroy explained, "and this is really working."

YSU's new video-gaming leagues are

also attracting calls for advice from Ohio State, Michigan State, Bowling Green State and other universities looking to

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The efforts of Joe Conroy, left, YSU intramural coordinator, and students Ben Dooley and Dennis Pixley to start video-gaming as an intramural sport at YSU has garnered recognition across the Midwest.

Student's passion leads to filmmaking group

YSU junior Jason Newman has a passion for directors, actors, scripts and everything film.

But when he enrolled at YSU, the creative writing major had no outlet for his filmmaking pursuits. So, he did something about it – he created the Student Filmmaking Association.

“The Student Filmmaking Association is dedicated to the art of film and what’s behind it,” Newman said. “The film classes here are more book-based and not hands-on, so this is the best thing we’ve got.”

Formed last semester, SFA has eight or nine members who consistently attend the Tuesday meetings in Kilcawley Center, where group members analyze a variety of films, from David Lynch’s “Eraserhead”

(for its abstract nature) to Brian De Palma’s “Scarface” (for Al Pacino’s acting). The group is also in the process of scheduling a special effects workshop with a makeup artist from Precinct 13 Entertainment, a Crestline, Ohio, company run by acclaimed makeup artist Robert Kurtzman.

Eventually, the students plan to hold numerous fundraisers, like bake sales and cult film nights, to support the production of their own films. Newman said that, although many of the SFA members have been writing their own full-length films, he believes that the group will start with smaller projects and shorter films. By combining a number of short films into a larger compilation film like George Romero’s “Creepshow,” Newman feels that the group’s members and view-

points will be well represented.

“I believe it’s a much better idea to make several short, 10- to 30-minute films to get everyone’s feet wet,” he said. “It would be a neat idea to do a compilation type of film, with different members of the group playing different roles in each of the short pieces to complete the larger puzzle.”

Once they make a film, the students have big plans. “It would be awesome to submit the films to film festivals or have some kind of on-campus premiere,” Newman said. “The best case scenario would be that we get some kind of distribution deal.”

The Student Filmmaking Association meets every Tuesday at 7 p.m. For more information, contact Newman at 330-727-8943. ■

Story by Britta Snowberger

Top Five

Jason Newman, founder of the Student Filmmaking Association at YSU, lists his five favorite films:

1. **American Psycho** – “This adaptation of Bret Easton Ellis’ novel is so spot on with tone, it’s ridiculous. Christian Bale’s portrayal of Patrick Bateman is stellar, and the movie wouldn’t work without him.”
2. **Ghostbusters** – “Ivan Reitman’s comedy will never be topped. I quote it all the time. If they remake this, my life will truly be ruined.”
3. **Pulp Fiction** – “I hate to be commercial by choosing Tarantino’s most successful film, but I really enjoy this. The way the characters intertwine is superb, and the storyline is compelling and involved.”
4. **Lost Highway** – “You really have to understand the mind in order to get David Lynch. The psychology behind this film is very deep, and it makes my head spin.”
5. **Psycho** – “There is a reason why Alfred Hitchcock is the master of suspense. He is also the grandfather of slasher horror. If Norman Bates would have never donned the wig and dress and killed Janet Leigh in the shower, Freddy, Jason, Michael and Leatherface probably would not exist at all.”



With popcorn at the ready, YSU junior Jason Newman stands in front of an image from one of his favorite movies – the famous shower scene in Alfred Hitchcock’s “Psycho.”

Project will streamline Web site content

Keeping the content current on YSU's network of some 85 department Web sites is about to get easier.

Members of the YSU Web Team and the Department of Media and Academic Computing have begun moving the university's academic, administrative and service department Web sites into a new content management system.

The system will streamline the process for updating information, said Robert Tupaj, university Web site manager. Staff members in each department will be trained to add and revise content instead of having to wait for help from the university's Web team or Media and Academic Computing.

"People are thrilled," Tupaj said. "We're giving them a tool so they won't have to wait in line anymore. This will eliminate the bottlenecks considerably."

Maintaining up-to-date content on YSU

department sites is important for student recruitment, he said, and a uniform appearance from site to site also reflects positively on the university.

Department Web sites already moved to the content management system include: Career and Counseling Services, Graduate Studies and Research, the Williamson College of Business Administration, Geological and Environmental Sciences, Human Resources, the Center for Student Progress, Undergraduate Admissions, University Development, and the Rich Center for Autism.

The Web designers expect to have a good portion of campus sites connected by year's end.

"The beauty of this is that it's a very user-friendly system," said Jonelle Beatrice, director of the Center for Student Progress. "It's extremely easy, even for someone who's not proficient in Web development."

Beatrice said the center's revamped site will go online soon, but not until staff is trained and the Web team completes the transfer of content from the old site to the new one.

Web designers have created a standard home page template modeled after the university's newly-redesigned home page which is available to every department, but they're also offering custom-designed options. "We're not taking a cookie cutter approach," said Tupaj, explaining that departments will have creative freedom in their page content.

YSU's content management system uses OU Campus, a Web-hosting solution and product of California-based OmniUpdate. Designed specifically for colleges and universities and serving more than 500 schools nationwide, OU Campus was selected last year by a Web site advisory committee that considered several competing systems. ■

Faculty member wins statewide Outstanding Educator honor



Regina Rees

Regina Rees taught English language arts for nearly 20 years to students in grades four through 12 in local school districts before coming to YSU in 2004.

Five years later, she is being honored by the Ohio Council of Teachers of English

Language Arts with the Outstanding English Language Arts Educator Award in the university category.

"It's nice to be recognized by one's peers, especially since I'm new to university teaching, and I'm doing this late in life," she said.

Rees, assistant professor of teacher education at YSU, earned bachelor's and master's degrees from YSU and a Ph.D. in curriculum and instruction from the University of Akron in 2005. Before beginning work at YSU, she taught elementary through high school students at Warren

City Schools and the Catholic Diocese of Youngstown.

A lifelong instructor, Rees believes she was called to teach. "I really enjoyed working with the students in the public schools, finding ways to motivate them to be lifelong learners," she said. "Now, I enjoy teaching students who are going to be teachers, and I enjoy their motivation."

Rees, state coordinator for the Ohio Council of Reading Teachers and president of OCTELA, said she is not unique and that she is only as passionate as the next teacher, but her students say otherwise.

"She's a fabulous teacher. She truly loves what she does, and she really cares about her students," said Tracy Pinter, a December 2008 graduate in middle childhood education. "She's all about making her students into good teachers."

Rees will be honored at the OCTELA spring conference March 28 at the Crowne Plaza North on OCTELA or past award winners, visit www.octela.org. ■

eUpdate exclusives

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Youngstown STATE UNIVERSITY

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Crisis communications

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building during Spring Break, and YSU police were trained during Spring Break on how to use the system.

“This system is so far ahead of what we had, you cannot begin to imagine,” YSU Police Lt. Mike Cretella said. “It’s a big step forward in protecting our students and employees.”

Anderson said her office is developing several other programs to help address emergency situations on campus, including:

- A system that would notify all students via cell phone text messages in the event of a campus emergency.
- A new Threat Assessment Team, designed to identify and assess potential risks (i.e. troubled students) and to be proactive in providing assistance.
- Mental Health Training, Response and Awareness on Campus, workshops designed to make faculty and staff more aware of mental illness issues on college campuses. The workshops started last fall. The next session is planned for October.
- An effort led by Student Government to quickly replace burnt out lights on campus. An around-the-clock automated



telephone hot line has been established to report outages. The number is 330-941-2628. ■

YSU Police Sgt. Shawn Varso tests the new campus-wide emergency communications system at campus police headquarters. Looking on are Police Dispatcher Diane Popadak and Wayne Marshall, a representative from SimplexGrinnell.

Intramural

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incorporate video game leagues into their intramural programs.

Student interns Ben Dooley and Dennis Pixley were the first to propose that the intramural program try sponsoring a video game tournament during exam week in spring 2008.

“It was the single most successful intramural event anybody can remember,” said Dooley, a senior math and earth science major from Austintown. “We had 64 students signed up, plus 12 alternates, and the place was packed with people just watching the games.”

That success led to creating intramural

video game leagues, and now YSU is a leader among university and college intramural planners in the Midwest.

Dooley and Pixley, a junior finance major from Youngstown and avid gamer, made a presentation on YSU’s video game intramural leagues in February at a regional conference of the National Intramural-Recreational Sports Association at the University of Illinois.

YSU was the only university represented at the conference that was already offering intramural video-gaming, said Pixley. The students’ presentation brought a steady stream of calls and e-mails from other col-

leges and universities wanting to make the same change.

Jack Rigney, director of Campus Recreation and Intramural Sports, said intramural leagues and tournaments attract about 3,800 students per semester at YSU. Promoting the games on Facebook and other online social networking sites has helped get the word out, and increased participation by international students on campus has also added to the numbers, especially in table tennis, soccer and volleyball.

“We had a table tennis tournament going last spring with eight students playing,” Rigney recalled, “and every one of those players was from a different country.” ■

“We’re always trying to get students to stay on campus after class and this is really working.”

— Joe Conroy —