



How Kent State University Enhances Cybersecurity and Plans for the Future

John Rathje and Jim Raber of Kent State University knew they needed help. Rathje, Vice President of IT and CIO, and Raber, Associate CIO, are responsible for ensuring that the university continuously improves its cybersecurity posture.

They recognized that higher education is a prime target for cybercriminals and that cyber criminals have increasingly targeted educational institutions for ransomware attacks. When Kent State's Chief Information Security Officer (CISO) announced his departure, John and Jim knew proactive steps were necessary to maintain the progress of their security program.

They turned to Chris Schreiber of CampusCISO. Initially approached for an interim CISO role, Chris instead proposed a **CISO coaching program** that would leverage the strengths of Kent State's entire IT team. Through this program, CampusCISO provided both technical and operational guidance rooted in decades of higher education cybersecurity experience.

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“Chris was uniquely positioned to provide an assessment of where Kent State was in relation to our peers and to identify potential steps forward,” said Rathje. “Unlike others in the cybersecurity market, he has a deep understanding of both industry and higher ed and knows what is pragmatic and actionable.”

Chris worked with John and Jim to evaluate Kent State's existing cybersecurity capabilities, using the CYBER HEAT MAP assessment tool to identify and prioritize improvements. Through recurring CISO coaching sessions, the Kent State team gained the confidence needed to deliver cybersecurity services and plan for the future.

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“I was simply blown away by the comprehensive nature of the CampusCISO application,” said Raber. “It combines security tools, staff proficiencies, utilization levels, and compliance mapping into a unified view. It's an inside-out approach that goes far beyond the typical ‘check-the-box’ assessments and gives us a high level of confidence in what needs to be done.”

A Living Cybersecurity Assessment

CampusCISO provides **online assessment and planning tools designed specifically for higher education institutions**, transforming cybersecurity assessments from one-time exercises into **living documents** that remain relevant over time.

Chris also collaborated with Jim and John to develop a **security program summary report**, ensuring consistent, repeatable reporting and metrics for discussions with university leadership and the board. This report has since been incorporated into the CampusCISO web portal, making it available to other institutions as well.

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“The visibility provided by CampusCISO gives us another benefit—attesting to controls in place for cybersecurity insurance,” noted Rathje. “This would be essential if the university ever needed to secure a settlement. I’ve never worked with anyone like Chris, who is comfortable discussing cybersecurity at all levels—from engineers and analysts to executives and board members.”

Strengthening Cybersecurity in Higher Education

Higher education faces unique cybersecurity challenges due to its decentralized nature and constantly evolving technologies. Understanding which security solutions are in use and how they interconnect is essential for strengthening defenses. Using **CampusCISO’s CYBER HEAT MAP** assessment and planning tools, Kent State now has a **comprehensive view of its security posture**, enabling it to identify and address gaps effectively.

CampusCISO and Kent State have laid the foundation for a robust, adaptable cybersecurity strategy.

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“I’ve never seen another security tool that delivers the benefits CampusCISO has provided us,” said Raber. “Chris has a passion for higher education security, and he’s going to help many other institutions just like he has helped Kent State.”

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