

Colleges and Universities at Risk for Cyber-Attacks as School Year Starts

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It's a busy time for colleges and universities as the fall semester starts and campuses are bustling with activity. It's also the perfect time for cyber criminals to create mayhem for institutions of higher education with a cyber-attack.

That is exactly what happened to Regis University in Denver, Colorado. The university had to shut down its computer system, telephone system and all email services this week because of a cyber-attack that it believes was instigated from an attacker outside of the United States.

Although it sounds like a ransomware attack, the university is not publicly admitting that a ransom was requested. The university set up a separate website to communicate with faculty, staff and students while an investigation is ongoing.

We [previously reported](#) that several school systems in Louisiana were hit with a cyber-attack, and unfortunately, this appears to be the next wave of attacks after the onslaught of attacks against [municipalities](#).

Higher educational institutions are difficult to protect due to the vast and complicated information technology environment with multiple networks and systems, wi-fi networks, ease of connectivity and faculty and students demanding connectivity with multiple devices. The culture in higher ed is different than in corporate America. Cyber criminals know the difficulty of protecting these environments and the demands being placed on IT professionals in the higher education space. Until we see a better understanding from faculty and students of the risks these demands are creating, higher education will be a target for cyber criminals and what happened to Regis University will be a reality for others.

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