

# Thwarting the DDoS Predators: Liberal Arts College Protects Itself Using FirstLight Solution

## OPPORTUNITY

April is a busy time for college Admissions, Financial Aid, and Alumni offices, as new students await their acceptance offers and college seniors look forward to graduation.

However, an unfortunate but all-too-common scenario unfolded for one small liberal arts college in the Northeast that brought the typical frenzy of spring admissions to a standstill. The college faced what every IT professional dreads: a DDoS attack blocking all Internet and email traffic. It's a crisis with potentially serious repercussions as schools increasingly turn to the Internet to control critical systems such as HVAC, security, and communications – all part of the Internet of Things (IoT).

It wasn't their first DDoS attack. About 18 months prior, the school had fallen victim to a similar attack, and turned to FirstLight to help mitigate that attack, asking FirstLight to change their various IP addresses to rectify the problem. The college then decided to turn to a popular cloud security platform in hopes of protecting it from future attacks.

Unfortunately, it didn't work. The platform failed to neutralize the next attack.

## SOLUTION

Following several days of IT staff working round the clock trying to restore traffic, rotating in shifts so staff could sleep for three-hour blocks, they called FirstLight. FirstLight had a close relationship with the school as its Internet and SIP provider, and the school had an Engineering Services Agreement with FirstLight to maintain the school's routers.

After contacting FirstLight and securing an incidence response plan later that day, within an hour of FirstLight's DDoS mitigation solution installation, Internet traffic was flowing freely again.

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### INDUSTRY: HIGHER EDUCATION

### LOCATION: NORTHEAST

### CHALLENGE:

- In the midst of the spring college acceptance and financial aid season, a small liberal arts college was hit with a DDoS attack
- The platform it was using by a third party failed to properly fend off a DDoS attack
- Digital traffic came to a standstill, and staff was working round the clock to find a solution

### SOLUTION:

- The college called FirstLight engineers on a Sunday, and FirstLight quickly responded by creating an emergency incidence response plan
- FirstLight engineers quickly assessed and implemented a DDoS mitigation plan of attack
- Using FirstLight's DDoS Prevention and Mitigation solution, the college was able to restore Internet traffic within an hour of installation

### RESULTS:

- The college now has a secure and proven DDoS Protection and Mitigation solution in place
- Traffic has been restored, and unusual activity and threats are identified and blocked
- The college is more vigilant now to guard against all forms of cyberattacks, DDoS or otherwise
- Because the college also uses FirstLight for its Internet connectivity, the college enjoys synchronous high-speed broadband that leverages the power of the DDoS solution

“Organizations often think of securing a DDoS Protection and Mitigation solution only after they’ve experienced a DDoS attack,” says Len Camara, Chief Information Officer, FirstLight. “An attack is typically costly to rectify, and often results in system downtime, lost employee productivity, reputation damage, and in the case of a college, the potential loss of student enrollment in a competitive recruiting environment.”

Given that many schools operate on software as a service (“SaaS”) platforms like Office 365 and Google, as well as IoT devices like security cameras and emergency systems, a DDoS attack can virtually shut down a college campus.

## RESULTS

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The college is now confident that it is well protected against future attacks, and is more vigilant in guarding against other forms of cyberattacks, including malware, ransomware, and phishing attacks. “There’s nothing more sobering than being at the mercy of a cybercriminal,” said the school’s director of IT infrastructure. “It makes you that much more vigilant about protecting your infrastructure and realizing just how dependent we are on connectivity.”

With the attack behind them and connectivity restored, the flurry of spring activity continues.

## ABOUT FIRSTLIGHT

FirstLight provides a full complement of cost effective, high quality, scalable telecommunications services, including high speed Internet access, data center, monitoring, cloud, managed and voice services to retail and wholesale customers throughout the Northeast and Mid-Atlantic.

For more information call 1-800-461-4863 or visit [www.FirstLight.net](http://www.FirstLight.net)