



Creating a campus AED program: Florida A&M University

Florida A&M University (FAMU) has placed more than 120 Powerheart® AED G3s across the school's 422-acre campus, creating one of the most comprehensive college AED programs in the nation.

The AED deployment is part of the university's Heart Safe Campus Community Initiative, an ambitious plan to protect lives on campus and in the surrounding community.

Putting together the AED program was surprisingly straightforward, according to Errick Farmer, Coordinator of Academic Programs at Florida A&M University. They started by asking what other colleges and universities in the state were doing about heart safety.

"We found out that awareness of the importance of AED programs for college campuses is growing," says Farmer. "There is definitely an AED trend."

Leadership commitment and campus-wide involvement

The Florida A&M University AED program enjoyed commitment from top leaders, right from the start. When President James H. Ammons and Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs, Cynthia Hughes Harris, launched the Heart Safe Campus Community Initiative, they were keenly aware of the relatively high incidence of heart conditions in the community. And they were aware that undiagnosed conditions affect people of every age and fitness level, even apparently healthy student athletes.

They wanted the immediate protection that CPR training and a comprehensive AED program can provide. Another objective: Make it possible for a responder to obtain a defibrillator and return to aid the victim within two minutes.



A university committee, headed by Farmer, designed the new AED program. The committee included representatives from health sciences, pharmacy, public health, education, journalism, physical education, campus police, environmental safety, facilities management, and campus recreation, just to name a few.

"You want to have a vendor like Cardiac Science," Farmer said. **"Based on their experiences with other colleges, they helped us strategically place the defibrillators. Their knowledge was invaluable."**

Planning and partnering for AED success

When they were ready to purchase AEDs, Farmer had a Cardiac Science representative come to the campus to give him a demonstration of the Powerheart AED G3.

"After that demonstration, I asked Cardiac Science to present to the whole committee," Farmer said. "The committee absolutely loved the product."

The committee felt the Cardiac Science AED G3 was the perfect fit for a college community's needs. "Cardiac Science's ease of use was

*Errick Farmer, Coordinator of Academic Programs,
Florida A&M University*

number one for us,” Farmer said. “There was also the advanced technology – the way that the machine analyses how much of a shock to give.”

“We think it’s important that you don’t have to push a button to give a shock – once you put the pads on, the machine will do what needs to be done,” Farmer said. “Having the device be fully automatic was the key. And the price was very reasonable.”

Funding an AED program

There are a variety of options for funding an AED program. It is often possible to fund AEDs through a school’s general funds, by putting an AED phase-in plan in the budget. (A typical AED plan begins with AEDs for mobile first-responders such as campus police, then rolls out to campus facilities, dorms, and offices.)

Some schools’ AED purchases are spearheaded by the athletic director, the chief of campus police, or the medical director of the university’s health services, using their departmental budgets.

Still other schools obtain funding through university foundations, alumni groups, or individual alumni donors. FAMU found Federal, state, county, and private programs that offer assistance to educational institutions developing AED programs.

“We found that money is out there, from a variety of sources,” Farmer said.

In Florida A&M University’s case, initial funding for the AED program came through the university’s Center for Community Health. A Federal grant for the Heart Safe Campus Community Initiative enabled the college to make its initial purchase of 114 defibrillators. Florida A&M has since bought 15 more Powerheart AEDs for two new buildings with facilities that are frequently used for Tallahassee community events.

AED awareness and training

As the AEDs were installed at Florida A&M University, the journalism department was enlisted to let everyone know where they were and why they’d been purchased. The university strongly encouraged that every counselor and every advisor in the dorms be trained and certified in CPR.

“We focused on creating awareness,” Farmer said. “The counselors and advisors are the people we know who are going to be the first responders. They have to know to call 911, and how to do CPR and use an AED.”

The committee’s biggest fear – that students might vandalize AEDs – turned out to be unfounded.

“We were worried,” Farmer said. “But there haven’t been any problems. I think it’s the awareness we’ve created. People know these AEDs are life saving.”



Florida A&M University AED deployment

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Lessons learned

Florida A&M University is proud of its heart-health initiative and AED program. Farmer is happy to share their experiences with other colleges. These are his top three pointers for setting up a successful AED program:

- Communicate well. “We created a very good awareness,” Farmer says. “We involved the Tallahassee media as well as the school newspaper. We got the word out.” Committee members continue to meet with groups on campus to reinforce heart-health and AED-awareness messages.
- Involve all the key departments in planning. The involvement of decision makers from many areas – not just safety and facilities – is critical to success.
- Choose the right vendor. “You want to have a vendor like Cardiac Science,” Farmer said. “Based on their experiences with other colleges, they helped us strategically place the defibrillators. Their knowledge was invaluable.”

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