RAPID7

Industry
Higher Education

Region
Americas

Size
Large R1 University

Products
InsightVM

Technical Account Manager

ENHANCING ITS SECURITY AND TRANSFORMING ITS VULNERABILITY MANAGEMENT WITH RAPID7

UNIVERSITY of SOUTH FLORIDA

THE INSTITUTION

The University of South Florida, a high-impact research university dedicated to student success and committed to community engagement, contributes an annual economic impact of more than $6 billion. Across campuses in Tampa, St. Petersburg, Sarasota-Manatee and USF Health, USF serves approximately 50,000 students from nearly 150 different countries. U.S. News & World Report has ranked USF as one of the nation's top 50 public universities for six consecutive years and, for the second straight year, as the best value university in Florida. In 2023, USF became the first public university in Florida in nearly 40 years to be invited to join the Association of American Universities, a group of the leading 3% of universities in the United States and Canada. With an all-time high of $692 million in research funding in 2023 and a ranking as a top 15 public university for producing new U.S. patents, USF is a leader in solving global problems and improving lives. USF is a member of the American Athletic Conference. Learn more at www.usf.edu.

Dennis Guillette serves as the Director and Security Architect at USF, overseeing security operations across both the Education Campus and the Health Campus. With a responsibility encompassing thousands of students, full-time staff, and faculty, as well as the security needs of a major high-impact research school, Guillette plays a crucial role in safeguarding the university's extensive community. His role involves managing both the strategic processes and the personnel necessary to maintain a secure environment, ensuring the safety and protection of the entire USF ecosystem.

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THE CHALLENGE

Fragmented Vulnerability Management

Before adopting Rapid7's solution, the USF security team lacked a comprehensive tool for capturing vulnerability data across their environment and were relying on a scanner that was inadequate for their needs.

WITH THOUSANDS OF MACHINES AND SYSTEMS, THE FRAGMENTED VULNERABILITY MANAGEMENT PROCESS, COMBINED WITH AN OUTDATED SCANNER, MADE MANAGING VULNERABILITIES A COMPLEX TASK.

This lack of a unified tool led to significant difficulties in capturing vulnerability data, communicating risk to senior leadership, and maintaining an effective security posture.

Security Concerns

The security situation was exacerbated by a series of internal observations with their cybersecurity operations that underscored the urgent need for an upgraded security solution. This realization helped prioritize funding to upgrade USF's overall security stack. The university faced challenges with unmonitored IoT devices, outdated server software, and siloed access within the organization. These issues not only threatened data security but also impeded USF's ability to prioritize and manage remediation efforts effectively.

Rebuild the Vulnerability Management Program

Guillette acknowledged the limitations in their security operations and indicated his team's desire to obtain an enterprise vulnerability management solution to completely rebuild their vulnerability management program. He pointed out that they required a solution that not only identifies vulnerabilities but also integrates seamlessly with their operations, provides real-time insights, and scales with their evolving needs. It was clear that they needed to invest in a system that would support their long-term security goals and help them stay ahead of emerging threats.

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THE SOLUTION

Implementing InsightVM

USF implemented Rapid7's InsightVM and engaged a Technical Account Manager to address their security challenges. Rapid7's InsightVM provided the university with a comprehensive vulnerability management tool that allowed for efficient scanning and detailed reporting, which ultimately provided a timely and actionable response to any security challenges they faced.
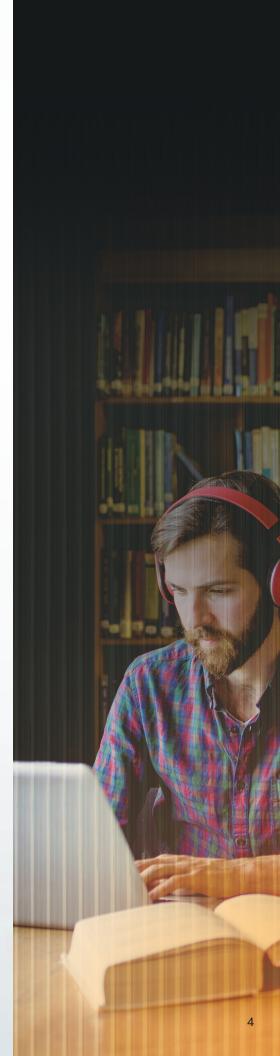
Implementation Guidance and Support

Additionally, the Technical Account Manager played a pivotal role in guiding USF through the implementation, helping to customize the solution to fit their specific needs and overcoming any hurdles that arose during the transition. "The support we received from Rapid7 was patient and exceptional in finding what worked for us," Guillette said. This support was instrumental in preventing implementation challenges and ensuring a smooth transition.

Seamless Integration

One of the key benefits of InsightVM was its ability to seamlessly integrate with USF's existing business processes, including JIRA for project management. "The true value of the technology lies not just in the scanner itself but in its ability to integrate with our existing business processes, making it easier to get things done and ensuring that our vulnerability management aligns with our overall goals."

This capability enabled USF to translate vulnerability data into actionable tasks and integrate them into broader business processes. The integration with existing project management tools, such as JIRA, was expressed to be crucial for USF in streamlining remediation efforts and ensuring that security measures were prioritized according to their risk levels.

THE RESULTS

Enhanced Visibility and Control

The adoption of InsightVM brought immediate benefits, including improved visibility into the university's network. "We were able to identify machines that had fallen under the radar and mitigate or eliminate them," Guillette explained. "Discovery was a big help, allowing us to find servers that weren't using traditional server IP addresses and those we didn't know existed." This was expressed to be instrumental in advancing the university's security agenda.

Better Insights and Streamlined Remediation

The detailed reporting and quantification features of InsightVM enabled the USF security team to present actionable insights to senior management, which led to the development of effective remediation strategies and highlighted the need for organization-wide policy changes. Guillette noted, "The ability to prioritize remediation based on risk levels has been transformative. We can now use detailed, quantifiable data to support our security decisions." By streamlining remediation efforts, InsightVM significantly improved the university's security posture. Guillette also praised Rapid7's reporting capabilities, stating, "The level of detail in the reports from Rapid7 exceeds expectations. We can now present actionable data rather than large, unreadable reports."

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Summary

Dennis Guillette highlights the effectiveness of Rapid7's solutions in enhancing security measures at USF. "Rapid7's tools have been instrumental in helping us identify vulnerabilities before they become critical issues and integrate seamlessly with our existing systems. This integration has been invaluable for us," he stated.

In summary, Rapid7 has proven to be a vital partner in USF's journey towards a more secure and resilient IT environment, helping the university navigate its complex security landscape with confidence and effectiveness. Rapid7 is here for that.

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About Rapid7

Rapid7 is creating a more secure digital future for all by helping organizations strengthen their security programs in the face of accelerating digital transformation. Our portfolio of best-in-class solutions empowers security professionals to manage risk and eliminate threats across the entire threat landscape from apps to the cloud to traditional infrastructure to the dark web. We foster open source communities and cutting-edge research–using these insights to optimize our products and arm the global security community with the latest in attacker methodology. Trusted by more than 11,000 customers worldwide, our industry-leading solutions and services help businesses stay ahead of attackers, ahead of the competition, and future-ready for what's next.

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