

## Let's Talk Tech Podcast #4 transcript – Gettin' Giggy Wit It on 21<sup>st</sup> Century College Campus

**Preview: Greg Hawkins:** *"It's no longer one facet of higher education when it comes to learning and teaching and research. The Internet has become more and more the center of higher education and it's a key part that students need to use and our faculty need to use. In my role as dean of students, I receive many different types of requests, inquiries and complaints from students. If cable TV goes out, you might hear about it in a week, but if the Internet is not working, you have 20 emails right away. Students love and use their Internet all the time. It's a crucial part of learning inside and outside of the classroom."*

**Introduction: Stacey Kirkland:** Hello and welcome to "Let's Talk Tech," a monthly podcast that explores the latest emerging technologies, the people behind them, and how these trends affect the way we work, live, and play. I'm Stacy Kirkland of C Spire and in today's episode show host Dave Miller interviews Greg Hawkins, dean of students at Belhaven University, to get the inside story on how this small private Christian liberal arts institution is redefining on campus living by offering students ultrafast Gigabit Internet access that's 100 times faster than national average broadband speeds and super HD TV services. Join them as they discuss trends and changes in technology on college campuses today and how students who live in on campus housing expect and need faster Internet access to optimize the use of a myriad of computer devices for study and note taking. Learn how the university partnered with telecom and technology service provider C Spire to wire the 50 acre campus in Jackson, Mississippi with fiber optic cable and pave the way for some of the fastest Internet access in the world.

**Dave Miller:** Welcome to C Spire's "Let's Talk Tech" podcast. I'm Dave Miller, show host, and today we're exploring how a small private Christian liberal arts college in the Deep South may have earned the title of offering the biggest on campus perk ever by providing 700 students who live in six residence halls with access to the fastest Internet speeds on earth. Joining us to talk about this exciting development is Greg Hawkins, dean of students at Belhaven University in Jackson Mississippi. He oversees residence life on the 50-acre campus. Welcome, Greg.

**Greg Hawkins:** Thank you so much for having me on the program, Dave. We're so pleased to be partnering with C Spire. I've worked here for 10 years now and this has been, by far, the fastest Internet connection that we've had on our campus and our students are just thrilled to have this kind of connectivity.

**Dave Miller:** Thanks, Greg. Congratulations on becoming the first institution of higher learning in Mississippi to offer students Gigabit Internet access and related super HD TV service. This ultra-fast Internet access and super HD TV service with dedicated DVRs in each residence hall room was activated in August under an agreement with C Spire, a Mississippi-based telecommunications and technology services provider. The company wired the entire campus with dedicated high-speed fiber optic cable and electronics, which supports this lightning fast Internet connection. This is quite an accomplishment when you consider that a 2014 survey of the top 100 colleges in the U.S. showed that Lamar State College in Port Arthur, Texas was in the No. 1 spot with average download speeds of about 155 megabits per second and upload speeds of just under 48 megabits per second. In contrast, Belhaven students now have both upload and download speeds of up to a 1,000 megabits per second or about six and a half times faster than what was previously considered the speediest broadband connections in the country. It's still early, Greg, but can you share some insights with us on student reaction to the availability of ultra high speed internet access on campus?

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**Greg Hawkins:** The students absolutely love it. As you know, Internet is such a crucial part of their learning and how they operate. They're just used to having fast Internet. The students who are returning to the residence halls this year are especially appreciative of the faster Internet speeds and the multiplicity of access points where they can all go online and use the different types of devices that they've brought to campus. The reactions so far have been very positive.

**Dave Miller:** Well, that's good to hear. Let's talk for a moment about the importance of Internet access on college campuses and how the growing use of technology is fueling this need for speed and capacity. Some might say, "are super-fast Internet connections really necessary?" What do you think? Tell us what the reaction has been here on campus and what your experience has been so far.

**Greg Hawkins:** Sure. A recent study in 2014 of over 1,200 college students showed that the average student now owns seven Internet connected devices, so rather than just bringing their laptop to get connected to the Internet, they're bringing seven different devices – not just the cell phone, but the gaming system, printer, iPads and many other different kinds of devices that require Internet access. Not only are they bringing many different types of devices, but they are using the Internet all the time – we call it constant connection. On average, a student is spending 125 hours each week connected to the Internet or with technology in some way.

**Dave Miller:** That's absolutely amazing. So how much of the shift in usage is mirrored by changes in student behavior and how they study and how they do research? You talked about the increase in the number of devices, but let's talk a little bit about how students actually use the Internet to do study and research.

**Greg Hawkins:** In the same study I referenced earlier, 73 percent of students said they need technology to study and over 70 percent said they use a computer or tablet to take notes. In short, students are replacing the big, heavy backpacks with technology. They still read books and they still bring books, but they're more and more likely to bring an iPad or a tablet to take notes during a lecture or class. And, they're more and more likely to use technology both in and outside the classroom. They're more likely to bring e-textbooks rather than purchase the hardbound book in the bookstore. They're more likely to participate in Skype study groups and to post their homework to online services like Blackboard. In short, they're just constantly using technology and the trends are continuing to show that they're more and more likely to increase their usage in the future.

**Dave Miller:** Well, it sounds like the more we talk that really this ultra high speed Internet access is becoming table stakes for students. In other words, if you're a student and you're on a 21<sup>st</sup> century college campus, you really expect and, more importantly, need this fast Internet access to optimize all these various use of all these devices that we were talking about earlier. Whether it's connected computers or tablets or e-readers or the multiplicity of devices now that need to connect to the Internet for study and note taking, it's expected that you will provide robust Internet access. Is that a fair assessment?

**Greg Hawkins:** Absolutely. It's no longer one facet of higher education when it comes to learning and teaching and research. The Internet has become more and more the center of higher education and it's

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a key part that students need to use and our faculty need to use. In my role as dean of students, I receive many different types of requests, inquiries and complaints from students. If cable TV goes out, you might hear about it in a week, but if the Internet is not working, you have 20 emails right away. Students love and use their Internet all the time. It's a crucial part of learning inside and outside of the classroom.

**Dave Miller:** Do you anticipate future changes in instructional use of Internet access in the lecture hall now that you have this ultra-fast Internet access on campus? This is especially true since it doesn't matter whether it's a high-definition, multi-person video conferencing session or streaming content or downloading or uploading massive amounts of data. Do you see this as a possibility in the future.

**Greg Hawkins:** For sure. I think technology will continue to grow within higher education as will our use here at Belhaven University. For instance, inside the classrooms, more and more teachers can bring different formats when they're coming to teach. It's not just the traditional stand up with chalk and lecture for 50 minutes, but more and more they're interacting, perhaps using a video, perhaps using different forms of technology to help students stay engaged and then on the flipside students are using it as well when they get up and present. They're using technology to help their presentations, they're using technology in their research, they're using technology to help them grow and to help them learn and ultimately become more and more the men and women that are prepared to take on the world.

**Dave Miller:** Another related question: Do you see the potential in the future for maybe enhancing any plans or initiatives that the university has in terms of collaborative learning among the students themselves – perhaps working together in a small group on a particular topic or paper or whatever the assignment may be?

**Greg Hawkins:** Sure. We have a relatively new building in the center of campus called our Think Center. It's a great hub for students to come and to learn and to grow and there's different pieces of technology that they can use. It all comes together there and the ultra-fast Internet absolutely enhances their ability to learn and grow because they can sit down, plug in all their devices together and move seamlessly and quickly from one task to another. It's very easy and cohesive for them to do that and the fast internet speeds enhance the ability for them to learn not only in that building, but across our campus. The Internet is definitely crucial whether it's in the study rooms in the residence halls and students trying to quickly look up something or research something or transfer something. It's used all the time with, as we've mentioned, with so many different devices and so it's a key part of our students' ability to learn and will continue to be able to use it and enhance the student's ability here at Belhaven.

**Dave Miller:** We've talked a lot about the ultra-fast Gigabit Internet access on campus, but the other service that your on-campus students now have access to starting this fall has been super HD TV service. Tell us a little about that and what the reception has been among students.

**Greg Hawkins:** I'm now in my 10<sup>th</sup> year here at Belhaven and we have never had high definition cable on campus. This is a game-changer for us. Having this high definition cable has been so wonderful, especially when it comes to watching Saturday afternoon football or some of the sporting events. You see first-hand how so many of our students now are used to having high definition cable, so having this service for them is great. They can now finally watch their cable in high definition and now if they're in class or if they have something and they have their favorite TV show they also have the opportunity to

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tape the show. We know they like having that capability. What's nice about it is every single room has their own DVR, every single room has the capability to tape hours of content, and every single room has the high definition cable. In our brand new residence hall, the University Village, we put in flat screen TVs in every single unit and it's great to have the DVR capability in there. When students moved in, they could get all of their television entertainment right from the get go in high definition. That was a special moment.

**Dave Miller:** Sounds like you've got your finger on the pulse of students' entertainment needs.

**Greg Hawkins:** We do. Students work hard and are very busy, but there are times when they need to relax and catch up on their favorite TV show or sporting event and now they can watch it live or on the DVR in high definition.

**Dave Miller:** I really appreciate the time you spent with us on the program today. It's been really fascinating delving into how students on your campus and on college campuses in general are relying so much more on fast Internet connections and how schools are using this beefed up access to improve high performance teamwork, teaching, learning, research, and scholarship. Thanks again for coming on the program, Greg, and we'll look forward to visiting with you in the future.

**Greg Hawkins:** Thank you so much for having me on the program. We're so excited to have this technology partnership with C Spire.

**Episode #5 Preview: Stacey Kirkland:** Thanks for listening to today's podcast. To learn more about Belhaven University and their Gigabit Internet access for students, go to [www.belhaven.edu](http://www.belhaven.edu) or check them out on Facebook under Belhaven University Student Life. If you like the show, subscribe through SoundCloud, iTunes, Stitcher or Tune In. Join us next time as we talk with one of the leading fiber to the home researchers and analysts in North America about the latest consumer broadband Internet trends and insights. We'll discuss how changing consumer behavior and use of technology is driving the growing demand for ultra- fast Gigabit speed Internet access in homes and neighborhoods across the country and we'll learn why fiber based services, which provide more reliability and faster speeds, have rapidly become the most important considerations for consumers shopping for new homes.