

## Why a Unified Security System is Crucial for Your Campus

Many parents now consider campus safety on par with academic opportunities when helping their children choose which campus to attend. According to a recent poll, 75 percent of parents believe the safety of a campus is an important factor in choosing a college.<sup>1</sup>



### In This White Paper

- › Crucial elements of a unified security system
- › Technology considerations for the near future
- › Policies and procedures
- › Challenges in implementing a unified security plan

## Safety Ranks Higher Among Parents Than Even Academic Quality<sup>1</sup>

Fueling that concern are frequent news reports of campus burglaries, robberies, and sexual assaults. A 2012 U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention study found that about one in five undergraduate women has been the victim of attempted or completed sexual violence during their college career.<sup>2</sup> Then there are active shooters, bomb threats, and other man-made emergencies that add to the array of security challenges facing campus administrators.

To be fair, the vast majority of college and university campuses are generally safe places that foster education. But to maintain that safe environment, institutions need to invest in solutions that will have them prepared when an emergency strikes. By securing every aspect of a college or university campus through a unified security system, institutions are better prepared to deter or respond to all types of emergencies.

**To maintain that safe environment, institutions need to invest in solutions that will have them prepared when an emergency strikes.**

---

Comprehensive security strategies provide campus police or safety officials with the required tools to deal with the most important issues. Those strategies require integrated, centrally-controlled solutions such as access control, video surveillance, mass notification, and smartphone apps that empower students and faculty to play a larger role in securing the campus. Then, with adequate staffing and appropriate policies and procedures, a campus can create an effective and robust security plan.

Additionally, engaging students in the security plans and systems by creating useful and easy-to-understand technology provides encouragement and empowerment for tip reporting and involves students in helping to create a more secure campus.



**By securing every aspect of a college or university campus through a unified security system, institutions are better prepared to deter or respond to all types of emergencies.**

## Crucial Elements of a Unified Security System

### Single Electronic Credentials

Best practices dictate providing a single electronic credential to control all campus access privileges. An enterprise access control system allows each ID credential to be customized to permit access only to certain buildings along with additional day and time restrictions.

The system should provide central credential granting and managing capabilities. That responsibility typically rests with the campus safety organization, but may also include integrated input from the human resources and admissions offices. Credentials should be able to be added, deleted, or modified in seconds.

Also, the system should provide the option of adding NFC (near field communication) contactless access.

### Single Console Monitoring and Reporting

Disparate security systems on campus should be controlled from a single console to ensure a rapid, reliable, consistent, and convenient response to emergencies. Web browser control enables remote operation and sharing of access, video, and other data with local first responders.

Central monitoring of the security systems is also critical. A campus access system provides an audit trail of all door entries, including any alarms. Security cameras placed to provide views of all access points allow safety officials to check the cause of alarms before dispatching officers.



## Options Tailored by Location

Security plans and technology systems may not always be an exact fit for every campus. Therefore, it's important the security solution selected is flexible enough to fit with campus needs and location-specific requirements.

For example, the access system should accommodate wired readers, but also provide the option of adding wireless card readers in areas where access control may be temporarily required, or where running cable is impossible or too expensive. In addition, an access system must accommodate the variety of credential and reader technologies (magstripe, contactless, NFC) that are found on a typical higher education campus.

Online management of both wired and wireless locks is critical. The system must be able to immediately lockdown the campus in an emergency situation. Offline locks may be used in areas where enhanced security is required, but immediate management is not as important.

## Unified Emergency Response

During an emergency, delays in sharing information can cost lives and added property damage. A unified security system requires a mass notification element to alert the campus community of emergencies such as an active shooter, a chemical spill, or severe weather.

To be effective, the mass notification component must be capable of simultaneously sending thousands of pre-defined or live messages via email, text, or voice to computers, mobile phones, tablets, and landlines. Instructions and safety information improves emergency preparedness and helps reduce losses.

Intelligible voice and tone warnings also can be sent via high-powered speaker arrays mounted on poles, rooftops, or affixed to buildings to reach people outdoors. And with up to a half-mile radius, only a few arrays should be needed to cover an average campus. Both text and voice mass notification systems are also useful for delivering non-emergency messages.

## Flexibility for Centralized and De-centralized Campuses

The campus safety organization typically maintains overarching control and monitoring of a unified security system, but it may make sense to distribute management based on roles, responsibilities, and locations of other departments and administrators.

For example, administrators overseeing the housing department, library, computer labs, and parking facilities may assume day-to-day management and customer service capabilities of the security system within their areas.



### Mobile Safety App

Many campus safety departments are adding a crowd-sourced approach to crime-prevention efforts through the addition of a mobile safety application. With a single touch of an icon, smartphone-carrying members of the campus community gain immediate voice or text communication with campus safety officials. A secure online command dashboard monitored by the campus safety team also collects data from students, faculty, and staff in the form of GPS-tagged audio, video, photos, and text.

The app allows the campus community to receive emergency notifications, engage with an interactive safety map, and track the location of friends and contacts throughout the campus.

Safety officials also can customize the app, layering in campus-specific information such as the location of police stations, healthcare facilities, and shuttle bus routes.

## Technology Considerations for the Near Future

The security industry is constantly improving and adding products to advance the performance of campus security systems. Consider these newer technologies when adding to or upgrading security systems.

- › Access credentials should be secure themselves and conform to NFC standards via an NFC card (MIFARE,

DESFire, or FeliCa) and smartphones with embedded NFC capabilities. Encryption is also vital to prevent “bump and clone” duplications. These duplications occur when a high-tech thief uses a card reader and antenna to surreptitiously read and replicate a proximity card. Contactless smart cards have basic encryption built into each card. But, poorly-implemented contactless systems are still vulnerable to the theft of the card’s serial number, an event that also can lead to fraud. The job of implementing a secure card system lies with the technology partner and campus administrators.

- › Access control systems should meet the specific needs of a college or university campus and must be capable of accommodating varying schedules including holiday schedules, immediately completing a campus-wide lockdown in the event of an active shooter, and meeting other location, time, and reporting needs of an institution of higher education.
- › Digital IP (Internet Protocol) video cameras offer high resolutions resulting in sharper real-time and recorded video. Video transmitted via the campus’ computer network can be remotely viewed on a smartphone or tablet and easily shared with local first responders—helping to ensure a unified emergency response. While IP cameras represent the future, the total replacement cost of legacy analog cameras is out of the reach of most campuses. There are converters that digitize analog signals, making it possible for IP and analog systems to work together. That allows for a planned migration to IP technology, replacing analog cameras as they fail.

## Policies and Procedures

Every security plan should begin with a thorough risk assessment to identify the campus’ strengths and weaknesses. Ideally, the assessment should be conducted by an experienced outside expert who comes to the campus with a fresh eye. A campus does not exist in a

---

bubble, so be aware of the surrounding community. Events that happen just off campus can have significant impact on the institution. This emphasizes the need to maintain a strong working relationship with the local police. Repeat the assessments annually.

Information from the risk assessment should be used to draft a detailed security plan. Campus stakeholders—administrators, department heads, safety officers, students, faculty, staff, and local first responders—should have the opportunity to comment prior to writing the final document.

The plan should include specific emergency responsibilities for various campus members. Playbooks provide detailed expectations for each group. Annual exercises reinforce those responsibilities and show where changes need to be made.

Any plan also needs to include contingencies for unexpected events. For example, have backup evacuation sites in case a first choice cannot be used due to severe weather events or terrorist activities.

## Challenges in Implementing a Unified Security Plan

Campus-wide support is critical to gain the time and investment required to complete and implement a security plan. Begin the process at the top. Win support from top administrators by keeping them involved from the beginning. Also involve other campus stakeholders. Create a security committee with full campus representation. Have it meet quarterly to review the plan and adjust as necessary. Rotate the committee leadership regularly to include all groups. By doing so, a campus can help avoid silo decisions that effectively cut many stakeholders out of the process and weaken the plan.

Look for federal, state, and private grants to help fund staff and technology necessary to successfully implement the security strategy. Also, remember to include adequate funding for ongoing system maintenance.

Colleges and universities are all about education. That should apply to the unified security plan. Every member of the campus community should have an opportunity to know how they are being protected and what responsibilities they have in the process. Schedule briefings for each group. Also ask campus publications, radio, and TV stations to share the strategy.

A college or university campus is really a small city with its own retail and healthcare operations, traffic and parking concerns, aging infrastructure, and, of course, a major public safety component.

Protecting thousands of students, faculty, staff, and visitors—along with valuable equipment and other assets—can be a daunting task. But a unified, integrated approach to security, along with careful planning, execution, and frequent re-evaluation, can create a safer and more secure environment.

## About Blackboard Transact

Blackboard Transact delivers the security and convenience of a single, unified credential that not only meets your campus needs, but transforms your students' overall campus experience. It provides unified transaction, security, and financial solutions—from building access and online financial aid disbursement to campus meals and on-and off-campus purchasing. For more information, visit <http://www.blackboard.com/transact>.

---

<sup>1</sup>Youngblood, Jillian. (Jan. 9, 2015). "Report: What Do Parents Want from Colleges?" Noodle.com. Retrieved from <https://www.noodle.com/articles/report-what-do-parents-want-from-colleges>.

<sup>2</sup>Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Sexual Violence: Facts at a Glance (2012). <http://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/pdf/sv-datasheet-a.pdf>

## Blackboard.com/transact

Copyright © 2015. Blackboard Inc. All rights reserved. Blackboard, the Blackboard logo, BbWorld, Blackboard Learn, Blackboard Transact, Blackboard Connect, Blackboard Mobile, Blackboard Collaborate, Blackboard Analytics, Blackboard Engage, Edline, the Edline logo, the Blackboard Outcomes System, Behind the Blackboard, and Connect-ED are trademarks or registered trademarks of Blackboard Inc. or its subsidiaries in the United States and/or other countries. Blackboard products and services may be covered by one or more of the following U.S. Patents: 8,265,968; 7,493,396; 7,558,853; 6,816,878; 8,150,925.