

# Blackboard & Georgia Institute of Technology



Blackboard Transact enables institutions to easily facilitate and manage new campus programs for their students by expanding the capabilities of the student ID card on-campus, off-campus and online. Located on a 480-acre campus in downtown Atlanta, the Georgia Institute of Technology (Georgia Tech) is a long-time client using Blackboard Transact Commerce Management solutions to manage its day-to-day card operations.

With more than 19,000 students enrolled, Georgia Tech's BuzzCard office is always looking for opportunities to expand the capabilities of its student ID card (BuzzCard) to make its students lives more convenient. In the fall of 2008, the BuzzCard office incorporated an online ticketing and event access program into its card services repertoire and decided to test it during an annual off-campus student program, "Georgia Tech Night at Six Flags." Realizing the significance of what a successful card-operated program would mean for any future campus-sponsored events, the institute turned to Blackboard for assistance in launching the program.

## **An Inconvenient Process**

Georgia Tech has been hosting "Georgia Tech Night at Six Flags" for many years as a way to get the students off campus and engaged in the community around them. The Institute's Student Government Association (SGA) plays a very



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significant role in planning and promoting the program to every student, faculty, staff member and alumni. While attendance has been generally strong in prior years, one of the main complaints the SGA received from past attendees was that the ticketing process and entrance into the event was very time consuming.

Students would buy the tickets online but would have to wait in long lines to pick-up their tickets from the SGA office on campus. The SGA knew the process needed to be overhauled and they turned to the BuzzCard center to help them update, facilitate and manage the event ticketing and transportation process.

"The paper ticket process was very time consuming for the students and fixing that process was a high priority for us," said Donald Smith, Director of the BuzzCard Office at Georgia Tech. "We felt that if we reduced the need for paper tickets and took the program online, that would expedite the ticketing process and the students would be happier. We knew Blackboard could help us do that."

## **Launching the Online Program with Blackboard**

The BuzzCard Office worked with Blackboard to help them take the "Georgia Tech Night at Six Flags" program online using the Blackboard Community System™. Blackboard wrote and implemented a custom



Blackboard



“Blackboard has made a significant impact on our campus. It has allowed us to take our normal, day-to-day activities on campus and elevate them to meet our students’ needs. That’s important to us because we’re always trying to make our students lives more convenient, and Blackboard allows us to do that.”

Donald Smith,  
*Director of the Buzz Card Office,  
Georgia Institute of Technology*

program that allows the institution to obtain the student ID number, email address, and other data from the purchase of the tickets.

During the three-week period following the opening of registration, more than 7,500 people registered online. Georgia Tech noted that student attendance increased between 2007 and 2008 and the general feedback has been very positive. Students have been very pleased and the institute is expecting even higher attendance for the 2009 event.

At the event, Georgia Tech used 8 Sequoia handheld wireless readers to help expedite traffic through the gates. The new program allowed the students to purchase the tickets online and then receive their tickets at the gate through the swipe of their card. This was a very efficient and quick process for the students. As another added convenience the Institute was able to offer its students a “time ticket” for bus transportation to Six Flags. Students could go online and sign-up for the time slot they wanted for a ride to the event. This was a very popular option with 3,200 students signing up for timed tickets.

The program also generates custom reports, which allow Georgia Tech to gauge the program’s success and the student’s ticket purchasing activity.

“Blackboard was instrumental in helping us launch the online program successfully,” says Smith. “The program that Blackboard created allows us to easily move the data from the e-marketplace application back to the transaction system server making management of these events possible. With the success we’ve had with the Six Flags event, we know we can use Blackboard to manage other campus and department events. It’s going to make a huge impact on our campus.”

### **The Impact on Campus**

The online ticketing and transportation offering has been very well received across campus.

The BuzzCard Center gauges the success based on usage not only at the event but also with increased activity around the campus and on the e-marketplace.

“Using Blackboard has made a significant impact on our campus. We’ve seen a positive impact on the students, around campus and, especially in our department,” says Smith. “Since moving the Six Flags program online we’ve been approached by other departments who want to use the ID card to facilitate and manage their student programs. It’s been great.”

Based on its success with the Six Flags event, Georgia Tech has expanded its use of the BuzzCard for on-campus and off-campus events. In February 2009, the institute initiated an off-campus trip to the Georgia Aquarium, relying solely on the BuzzCard to swipe into the event. There were over 3,500 students in attendance. BuzzCard online activity has increased considerably since the online program was installed, including managing ticketing for five different events being promoted online for the spring 2009.

