

# Blackboard & The University of Pittsburgh



Among the many advantages of implementing a comprehensive campus one-card solution is the ability to generate business intelligence reporting from transaction data on a single system. For a large university of more than 25,000 students, managing and analyzing all the transaction data on campus can be challenging, particularly when multiple offices and systems are utilized.

Needing a single, sophisticated card system that could support its large 132-acre campus, the University of Pittsburgh called on Blackboard to help solve the challenge of disparate transaction-related systems and cards.

## **Make Campus Services Simpler**

The University of Pittsburgh's Panther Central Card Office manages the student ID card network and campus services for the institution, which is used daily by the 7,200 on-campus resident students and 18,000 commuter students. However, prior to 2001, the University did not operate its network through a centralized card system.

Every campus service was located in a different office around the University and the students had to visit these various locations to obtain their student ID, get their housing assignments, and receive their meal plans. Having so many locations across campus not only made operating this process difficult for the card office but also problematic for the students to get the services they wanted.

Finding a universal card system to run all of its on- and off-campus services from a central location was vital for the University to satisfy the needs of the student body and administration, who demanded a more streamlined operation.

## **Creating a One-Card System Using Blackboard**

The University of Pittsburgh wanted to integrate all campus transaction activity into a one-card system. Using Blackboard and its Building Blocks manager, the University was able to interface with all of its on-campus facilities and off-campus partners and collect the data that it needed for its operations, establishing a unified card program that would be viable across campus.

"Blackboard has allowed us to offer our students, staff, and faculty convenience and flexibility in all aspects of campus life by making our University ID the one card they need while on campus. We look forward to continuing to expand our program, and offering new services to our customers."

Jessica Larson  
*Panther Central Manager  
University of Pittsburgh*



Blackboard



Running their card data through Blackboard's Microsoft® Windows-based platform has allowed card office administrators to easily coordinate, filter and organize the information it receives from the library, gym, dining halls and laundry facilities. It provides them with easier data collection and reporting capabilities that has saved them time and enabled them to make better decisions about campus improvements based on the data they have obtained.

"Blackboard successfully integrated with all our campus offerings and partner products," says Jessica Larson, Panther Central Manager. "It provides our university administrators a variety of different interfaces to use, which makes reporting easier and improves time management. We can do our job better and that makes our services across campus more convenient for the students."

Since implementing the Blackboard system to unite its card program, the University of Pittsburgh has seen an increase in its on-campus capabilities for data capturing and reporting, managing facility door access control, operating multiple dining and vending services, and managing events. The

campus card system has nearly 100 NCR touchscreen point of sale registers deployed on campus, as well as multiple self-service Payment Headquarters devices, 55 vending machine readers, and 46 event readers across campus.

Using the reporting modules allows the University to report to departments directly on information relevant to their business. The University can run financial reports that detail the activity in dining services and other campus sales, such as bus ticket purchases. They can also inform the intramural department on student involvement at the gym and at intramural events to help them design their programs to meet the student's schedules. The card system's monitoring of facility access points also provides security reports that are used to help determine an individual student's location.

### **Card System Success Off-Campus**

The University has also experienced success using their card program off-campus. The University of Pittsburgh's Panther Central card office oversees their BbOne program, allowing student funds to be used off-campus. Since its implementation, the off-campus program has grown in student and vendor popularity, and the University now has relationships with more than 70 off-campus partners.

The card office also benefits from the direct deposit capabilities of the system, which has reduced the paperwork required to pay off-campus merchants each month. Additionally, since switching to the BbOne program in 2005, Pittsburgh has consistently improved its revenue stream. In the past year it generated approximately \$1.5 million in cardholder deposits.

### **Campus Embraces Blackboard**

The Blackboard system has become mission critical to the University of Pittsburgh's campus card program. Blackboard's deployment across the campus has been embraced by the students and administrators who appreciate the flexibility that the integrated one-card system provides them on- and off-campus.

The University, as a way to enhance the student experience and further expand their student card program, set up card readers at the different museums in Pittsburgh to encourage students to explore the city. Students can swipe their cards at the entrance and get into the museums for free. At the end of each month, the card office can analyze the student data and determine the program's success.