

Mansfield University of Pennsylvania Video surveillance and access control integration



Students on campus

3,400

Undergraduate and graduate programs

70

Challenges

- › No video surveillance on campus
- › Mechanical keys were cumbersome and didn't provide secure access control
- › No video record to refer to in case of vandalism, crime, or emergency
- › Students defied basic safety rules at the peril of other residents

Solution

Address security issues by installing Blackboard's comprehensive surveillance and card access solutions across the campus.

Mansfield University of Pennsylvania proves that it takes student and faculty safety very seriously by installing a card-based access program that integrates directly with the video surveillance system.

Mansfield University of Pennsylvania is one of the 14 state universities that are part of the Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education. Located in the borough of Mansfield in North Central Pennsylvania, the institution has **3,360 students and 180 professors.** **With 73 undergraduate, nine graduate, seven associate, and 63 minor programs,** Mansfield offers special options programs such as multiple majors, a self-developed major, an honors program, internships, independent studies, individualized instruction, and study abroad opportunities.

Taking a Serious Look at Safety

Sometimes it takes a serious event for institutions to re-assess student and faculty safety on campus. For Mansfield University, that turning point came in 2007, when a shooter at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University took the lives of 32 people and left 17 others wounded. "When the tragedy happened we were in the middle of a strategic planning phase here," recalled Alex Miller, One Card administrator. "Obviously, as with most universities at the time,



Accomplishments

- › 24/7/365 entryway access monitoring
- › Video surveillance throughout four residence halls
- › Video surveillance in all public, exterior areas on campus
- › Ability to quickly intervene when vandalism, crimes, or other emergencies take place on campus
- › Fast locking and reissuing of entry access cards that are lost or stolen
- › Increased sense of safety and security among students

the incident prompted us to take a fresh look at our own security and safety systems.” An initial assessment of the campus’ safety measures and rules proved that an overhaul was in order. Despite current policy, students often left doors propped open while coming and going, which jeopardized the safety of students and advisors who were living in the residence halls. “We didn’t have video cameras or card-swipe door controls, we still used old fashioned keys, and we didn’t lock our main entrance doors until nightfall,” said Miller. “The Virginia Tech incident put things in a different light.”

An Integrated Solution

Mansfield’s top priorities included a video surveillance system for residence halls and public areas, and a card-based entryway access solution. The university was already using Blackboard Transact on campus and felt the vendor’s access control setup would be a logical choice.

“It didn’t make any sense to shop around,” said Miller, who was impressed not only by the solution’s compression and storage space, but also by the video camera/card integration with the door access solution. “We went with Blackboard Door access solutions first and then integrated Blackboard Video Surveillance as soon as it was available.”

The university also contracted with Axis to install fixed-dome network cameras above entryways. Since the halls were already wired for Internet access, the cameras utilized power over Ethernet (POE) to connect to the network with a simple Ethernet drop.

Installed in four residence areas and all exterior, public areas on campus, the surveillance system is monitored by campus police on a 24/7, real-time basis. Entry is controlled and monitored 24/7/365 and video is stored for at least 18 months, a capability that surprised Miller. “When we got into this we were hoping for six to eight months of storage, but we’ve gone way past that. It’s great.”

Putting Safety First

Each residence hall director is authorized to monitor video associated with his or her building. Campus police actively monitor all the cameras at all four residence halls and all exterior cameras using Blackboard Video Surveillance. When movement triggers the cameras, residence life administrators are alerted to the live feed and address the immediate problem. If the issue persists, they can search for archived video using the intuitive Blackboard Video Surveillance to identify repeat offenders and consider disciplinary action.

With the help of the video surveillance and card access program, university administrators have restored security to the halls without compromising resident privacy. Those caught on video leaving doors ajar are held accountable. Mansfield police have even used a video timeline to search archives for possible vandalism suspects.

In one instance, the video helped campus personnel identify a student threatening self-harm and prevented a tragic outcome. In another, security personnel were able to easily identify a group of students who vandalized a residence hall.

The other new security measures are bearing fruit as well. “Once we implemented these new systems we began conducting drills for safety and security,” said Miller. “Thanks to the Blackboard Door access solution, among other things, our time to secure the campus, which includes locking all residence hall doors, is under 10 minutes for the entire campus.”

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**Alex Miller
One Card Administrator
Mansfield University**

Finally, reissuing lost access cards—a major debacle when traditional door keys were used and doors needed to be rekeyed for safety reasons—is “no big deal,” according to Miller. “We disable the old card and give out a new one. It’s as simple as that.”

Sitting Up and Taking Notice

Mansfield’s security overhaul hasn’t gone unnoticed by students. A recent survey of exiting seniors revealed that 83 percent are “very satisfied” with the school’s safety measures. Four years ago, when they were freshmen, just 56 percent of the same student body gave the institution such high marks.

“The enhancements we’ve made in the name of campus safety have definitely been embraced by the majority of our students, who were really in tune with that issue after the Virginia Tech shootings,” said Miller. “The cards, cameras, and campus police monitoring has become second nature for them.”

With construction completed on two new residence halls that opened in January 2012 and two additional halls scheduled to open in fall 2013, Mansfield will benefit from the fact that its Blackboard solution can scale up to meet its growth. The security solution will also be easily transferable when the school decommissions its 60-year-old residence halls in favor of newer buildings.

“We wanted to be able to use the equipment now and then pull camera sets and door controllers out and install them in other areas as the new residence halls were being brought online,” said Miller, “The plan is working out very well.”

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