Founded in 1833, Mercer University is one of America’s oldest and most distinctive institutions of higher learning, offering rigorous programs that span the undergraduate liberal arts to doctoral-level degrees. Founded by early-19th century Baptists, Mercer — while no longer formally affiliated with the Baptist denomination — remains committed to an educational environment that embraces intellectual and religious freedom, while affirming values that arise from a Judeo-Christian understanding of the world.

With over 8,300 students enrolled in 11 schools and colleges on campuses in Macon, Atlanta, and Savannah, and at four regional academic centers across Georgia, Mercer is consistently ranked among the nation’s leading institutions by such publications as U.S. News & World Report and the Princeton Review.

**Wanted: A Streamlined Solution**

When Mercer launched its search for a campus one-card platform to handle a myriad of functions, the university’s main goal was to consolidate the 3-4 different access control systems used in its residence halls. Ken Boyer, director of auxiliary services, was tasked with finding a comprehensive one card solution to replace the institution’s four-door access systems and that could also handle security, vending, food service point of sale, and bookstore transactions.

Mercer partnered with Blackboard to implement a comprehensive One Card solution to replace the multiple door access systems and integrate vending, food service point of sale, and bookstore transactions into their campus ID card.

**Mercer University**

Mercer University expanded its use of Blackboard from a single, integrated door access system in its dorms to a campus-wide initiative that manages a wide range of functions and provides high service levels to students and staff.

**SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES**
11

**STUDENTS**
8,336

**REGIONAL ACADEMIC CENTERS**
4

**FACULTY AND STAFF**
1,658

**CHALLENGES**
- No integrated door access solution on campus
- Four independent campus card systems to administer and manage
- A large amount of manpower spent maintaining the card systems to keep them up and running
- A need for improved access control in student dorms

**SOLUTION**

Mercer partnered with Blackboard to implement a comprehensive One Card solution to replace the multiple door access systems and integrate vending, food service point of sale, and bookstore transactions into their campus ID card.

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www.blackboard.com/transact
“We wanted to get away from students and staff carrying around a variety of different cards,” says Boyer, “and find a platform that could handle door access and other functions with a single card.” After exploring several solutions on the market at the time, Mercer selected the Blackboard platform based on its ability to integrate the university’s card system and door access capabilities.

Through its partnership with Ingersoll Rand, Blackboard delivered a cost-effective, versatile solution that integrated fully with Mercer’s one-card system. Over time, the university added cafeteria meal plan management, vending, laundry, and printing services to its one-card program as well.

**Leveraging a Flexible, Scalable Platform**

Celebrating its 20th anniversary as a Blackboard user in 2013, Mercer most recently expanded its use of the platform by installing Ingersoll Rand AD400 locks on doors of some of its residence halls. The system provides better oversight for door access and allows the university to instantly revoke or reassign access rights when warranted.

**ACCOMPLISHMENTS**

- Integrated door access solution provides better access control and security in dorms, offices, and classrooms.
- The auxiliary office has a single campus card system and associated database to administer and manage.
- All meal plan, vending, printing, laundry, bookstore, and off-campus purchases are handled on a cashless basis.
- The university now has a flexible, scalable system that continues to meet the university’s growing needs.

“Moving to this level of door access was a natural progression of harnessing our existing one-card system and leveraging its full benefits,” says Boyer. “Over the next couple of years our plan is to roll the locks out to all residence halls in order to eliminate keys, gain better access on campus, and improve student security and safety.”

The flexible, scalable system also manages Mercer’s bookstore transactions and an off-campus network that allows students to use their campus cards at local merchants. “This eliminates the need to carry cash, makes students less of a target, and ultimately keeps them safer,” says Boyer.

**The Benefits of Streamlining**

Mercer has realized significant benefits both from its initial move to the platform and from subsequent expansions. The university has saved on hardware costs, operator hours, and the expense associated with maintaining multiple access control systems and databases. “Keeping our previous systems up and running required a lot of manpower and knowledge,” says Boyer, “We reallocated staff to other areas while simultaneously enhancing student services.”

Mercer’s students were quick to adopt the new one-card system and the various capabilities that have been added over the years. For example, access control was added to Mercer’s academic buildings and office, and all access points in its new Center for Collaborative Journalism are controlled by cards.

Boyer now has his eye on the mobile version of the Blackboard platform and is exploring contactless offerings and the opportunity to use smartphones in lieu of cards. When Blackboard comes out with new options we’re always ready to test them out and integrate them into our lineup,” says Boyer. “As technology continues to change, we plan to move forward right along with it.”