University Balances Ease of Access With Security

Solution enables a full range of campus services

Founded in the 1940s, an established, private educational institution located in the East has approximately 7,000 students and 900 faculty and staff who commute to campus on a daily basis. The university also provides low-cost, part-time evening studies for working adults. As a growing institution, the university continues to expand its degree programs in law, business, science and the arts. The university understands the importance of continuous improvement not only with its curriculum but also in their use of technological tools for daily operations and to help students on their road to success.

CHALLENGE: Manage costs and streamline processes at a growing university.

The university continues to grow, adding courses and degree programs as its population increases. In the interest of cost-efficiency, streamlined management and customer service, the institution needed to reduce the number of access and ID cards being managed by student, faculty and staff. At the same time, add as much digital functionality as possible, incorporating multi-use reader technology to accommodate campus legacy systems.

In describing the university's credential card environment, the campus card program manager likened it to "the wild, wild west," with no two schools on campus operating the same way. The ID card system was old and piecemeal, requiring everyone to carry photo IDs and parking cards, which often were adapted with stickers for use at the library and recreation center. Because the original card technology was fairly standard and old-school – magnetic stripe and proximity chips – their functionality was limited, too.

Security was a concern, as well. Cards could be easily duplicated, increasing the risk of unauthorized access to campus buildings, and card readers were mostly offline, preventing fast online notification of emergency situations and potential lockdowns. The university needed an updated, consolidated card system designed to help manage services better, provide more security and greater access control, improve student and staff satisfaction and fully integrate with the institution's existing system.

SOLUTION: Encodable, multi-use cards incorporating mag stripe, MIFARE™ and proximity chips, combined with 125 kHz proximity and 13.56 MHz contactless pcProx® card readers from RF IDeas.

Opting for a triple-technology card was a quantum shift, according to the card program manager. By adding the capability to write code to different sectors of the chip, the system became customizable. A plan was formulated with the university's chief IT Technologist to develop a centralized card office, card-specific software and back-end infrastructure, and work began during the summer when student population was at its lowest. The university's new smart card program went live as the students were returning for the fall semester.

The program manager looked at different card readers, but after working with a consultant, his office decided on equipment from RF IDeas. Twenty RF IDeas card readers were installed on campus, most of them in offices and the two campus libraries.

The pcProx Playback can be programmed to read specific card sectors, and in one instance was linked to a time clock to monitor time in and time out at the university's plant and facility operation sites. With employee ID numbers matched

to the right sector, housekeepers, plant operators, carpenters and mailroom employees all use their smart cards to tap in and tap out.

Much more easily manageable for users and administrators, the university's one-card solution acts as a photo ID, a library card, a campus recreation and wellness membership card, a shuttle pass, parking access, audio/visual equipment checkout card, a campus cash card, a bookstore credit card and a building access card.

RESULTS: Increased efficiency and management.

An estimated 90-95 percent of students now carry campus smart cards, a percentage nearly matched by faculty and staff. Students, in fact, can stop by the ID management office and get their cards in five minutes.

And while official user surveys are still in the offing, user feedback has been favorable overall, with the card program office regularly receiving kudos from students and staff for a system that's quick, responsive and making their lives easier.

The campus card program manager reported an overall positive experience with RF IDeas, noting especially that the company's university account specialist had been involved since day one. Pricing was competitive, he added, and RF IDeas technical support staff were always there to talk his office through "the who, the what, and the how" in installation and troubleshooting.

BENEFITS: Improved ease of use, expanded functionality, greater manageability and tighter security.

The new campus smart card and RF IDeas reader system helps to make the university campus more efficient, and provides added security and convenience for students, parents, staff and service providers. The system not only adds value to the campus experience, but also opens up a wider range of possibilities for future installations.

Campus ID cards and pcProx readers are used in a variety of applications by students and staff:

- Bookstore
- Dining / Meal Plans
- Classroom
- Laundry Management
- Events
- Library
- Computer Lab
- Recreation center
- Attendance tracking
- Maintenance schedules
- Equipment and tool check-out
- Printing
- Back-of-house Food Service Operations

For more application information, visit www.RFIDeas.com.

RF IDEAS

RF IDeas, Inc.
4020 Winnetka Avenue
Rolling Meadows, IL 60008

Toll Free: 866-439-4884
Voice: 847-870-1723
Fax: 847-483-1129

www.RFIDeas.com