Students feel safer with network surveillance.

Gateway Technical College reinforces zero tolerance policy with Axis IP cameras.

Organization:
Gateway Technical College

Location:
Wisconsin, USA

Industry segment:
Education

Application:
Campus safety and security

Axis partners:
Technology Resource Advisors, Firetide, Milestone

Mission

When students at Wisconsin's Gateway Technical College were surveyed five years ago to help administration enrich campus life, many admitted that they didn't always feel safe on campus. Administrators immediately took the concern to heart and searched for ways to change that perception. In addition to hiring a professional security service to patrol each of the campuses more frequently, the college sought out a surveillance solution that would deter crimes and misdemeanors through more comprehensive and higher quality video and audio coverage of the buildings and grounds.

Solution

Technology Resource Advisors, Inc. (TRA) – a Milwaukee, WI-based integrator and Axis Partner – recommended a wide array of HDTV-quality Axis fixed and pan/tilt/zoom (PTZ) network cameras integrated with Milestone XProtect® Enterprise video management software. Surveillance video would be stored locally at each campus, where select staff members have access to live feeds and archived footage of their respective campuses.

As an added layer of safety, TRA configured the system so that the main security station at the Kenosha campus could simultaneously monitor the cameras across all its campus properties.

Result

Incidents of theft, physical violence and vandalism have dropped significantly since the network cameras were installed. The IP system has helped recover an instructor's stolen laptop, ensured new common rooms are well maintained and, in one instance, video of an alleged assault from the Racine campus was forwarded to the local police within 20 minutes of the event, which resulted in the suspect being apprehended the next day. Local reporters and community bloggers voiced amazement that anyone would try to commit a crime on a campus with such a high-tech surveillance system, and praised the cameras for catching the alleged criminal's "mug" on camera.

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COMMUNICATIONS

Making security a top – and visible – priority

Gateway Technical College, which serves the southeastern communities of Wisconsin, is a multi-campus, suburban academic institution offering more than 65 career training programs. When it polled its students five years ago about campus life, the college received a high number of comments expressing concern about security at some of its facilities.

The most common complaints focused on poor lighting in the parking lots, too few security guards patrolling the campus and no emergency call boxes. The college added LED lighting to better illuminate all the parking lots, hired a professional security service to maintain a more visible presence and installed emergency call boxes throughout the campuses. Gateway then took security improvements a step further when the college made the decision to replace its outdated, disparate standalone analog surveillance equipment with a new network video system.

Gateway turned to Technology Resource Advisors, Inc., a Wisconsin IT and surveillance integrator, who had the knowledge and experience needed to help make the campuses safer.

"In our latest survey, students said they appreciated all the upgrades we've done," shares Ray Koukari, Dean of Campus Affairs at Gateway Technical College, Racine campus. "They report that they feel a lot safer. And, in fact, security was given a top ranking, which is rare (in the educational world)." Gateway prominently posted signs at every entrance stating that the campus is under surveillance. "We want students and visitors to know that we're covering every inch and cranny of our campuses with video and audio recording," states Koukari. "It's a pretty effective deterrent."

Mix and match to cover every nook and cranny

"The problem with our old DVR-based analog systems is that they were standalone systems from a number of different vendors, some of which had gone out of business," explains John Thielen, Director of Building Services for Gateway Technical College's Racine campus. "It was pretty hard to manage. We needed an enterprise network solution that could bring all those systems under one umbrella."

While the new network-based surveillance system at the college has standardized on Axis vandal-proof cameras with HDTV-quality video and audio capabilities, TRA has network-enabled some of the campus' existing analog cameras with Axis encoders to extend the life of those legacy investments. Moving to an all-IP solution, TRA has drawn on the breadth of products in the Axis camera portfolio, choosing camera models with the best image quality and the right mounting accessories for each specific location and application.

"The Axis Product Selector portal is a fantastic tool that helps me select the right product," acknowledges Thomas Reminga, CTO of Technology Resource Advisors, Inc. and an Axis Certified Professional, "while all the technical specs and engineering designs help me determine if a particular camera will give my clients the images they need."

With these tools at hand, TRA deployed AXIS P3344-V and AXIS P3346-V Fixed Dome Network Cameras at every building entrance with an eastern or western exposure because these models could handle the wide dynamic range of lighting conditions, including day/night change over, and provide better identification of people going through these choke points. Conversely, TRA installed AXIS P3304-V Fixed Dome Network Cameras in the windowless hallways where the need for wide dynamic range wasn't a factor. AXIS 212 PTZ Network Cameras, which could be mounted vertically or horizontally, gave wide coverage of indoor spaces with a 120° field of view. AXIS Q6034-E PTZ Dome Network Cameras were pole mounted in the rear parking lots and equipped with responders to automatically pan and zoom to the nearby emergency call station in case a panic button was pushed. Because of distances from camera sites to campus buildings, TRA used Firetide wireless connectivity to link the parking lot cameras to the network.

"Someone broke the door to (the instructor's) office and snatched the laptop right off her desk. When she learned we had caught the incident on video and could clearly identify the culprit, she announced it to her next class. Within hours, the individual dropped the laptop off at an unmanned security desk."

Ray Koukari, Dean of Campus Affairs for the Racine campus of Gateway Technical College.

TRA also installed 3 different models in the AXIS P13 Series with increasing resolutions at every choke point in the parking lots. "We aimed the cameras with the narrowest field of view and highest resolution at the driveways to catch the license plate and facial features of the drivers," explains Reminga. "We used cameras with progressively wider angles further back to observe where the drivers went once they exited the vehicle or parking lot."

Tracking campus activity remotely with smart search

Unlike their former analog system, Gateway staff can now remotely access the video from anywhere. "During a weekend snowstorm, instead of trudging my way to campus, I'll log onto the cameras from home to make sure the plow service has cleared the parking lots before school opens on Monday," says John Thielen.

"As Dean of Campus Affairs, I sometimes get calls after hours from security," shares Dean Koukari. "So I'll just log onto the system from home and look at the archived video to see what happened."

Each individual campus maintains its own security station for monitoring its specific cameras. Access is limited to the director of security, the dean of the campus, the service company providing the security guards and the facilities director. If a facilities director at one campus is out of the office, he or she can grant temporary password-protected access to another campus' facilities director to cover for them. As an added layer of safety, TRA configured the system so that the main security station at the Kenosha campus could simultaneously monitor the cameras installed at every other campus.

"We really like the ease of use of the Milestone video management system," states John Thielen. "We can do smart searches for things like a book bag left unattended in a room and figure out exactly when it disappeared from the scene."

Furthermore, Gateway takes full advantage of the VMS' ability to remotely control their Axis PTZ cameras and override their guard tour programming if the security staff wants to zoom in for a closer look at an event in progress.

Improving campus life in and out of the classroom

Dean Koukari tells of one incident where Axis cameras were instrumental in recovering a faculty member's stolen laptop. "Someone broke the door to her office and snatched the laptop right off her desk," recalls Koukari. "When she learned we had caught the incident on video and could clearly identify the culprit, she announced it to her next class. Within hours, the individual dropped the laptop off at an unmanned security desk." Koukari acknowledges that since the person wasn't a Gateway student, the college would have been hard pressed to track him down.

Axis cameras have also played a key role in keeping renovated classrooms and common room furnishings like new. "We just completed year two of a three-year plan to update all our furniture," says Koukari. "People warned us not to do it because it could eventually get trashed. But it all still looks like new – the flat screen TVs, the Xbox equipment and even the pool table." Koukari attributes the absence of vandalism and damage to the students' awareness of cameras monitoring the area.

"Word is out that if you come on our campus, expect to be recorded," asserts Koukari. "If we catch you causing damage or throwing a punch, we'll be able to identify who you are and you'll face disciplinary action. It has really helped to boost our reputation as a safe environment for our students and our staff."

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About Axis Communications

As the market leader in network video, Axis is leading the way to a smarter, safer, more secure world — driving the shift from analog to digital video surveillance. Offering network video solutions for professional installations, Axis' products and solutions are based on an innovative, open technology platform.

Axis has more than 1,000 dedicated employees in 40 locations around the world and cooperates with partners covering 179 countries. Founded in 1984, Axis is a Sweden-based IT company listed on NASDAQ OMX Stockholm under the ticker AXIS. For more information about Axis, please visit our website www.axis.com