

Building out a better surveillance solution.

Bridgewater State steps up campus safety/security with a cohesive end-to-end solution from Axis.



Organization:

Bridgewater State University

Location:

Bridgewater, MA, USA

Industry segment:

Education

Application:

Public safety, property and asset protection

Mission

Bridgewater State University (BSU) was disenchanted with its video management solution. The vendor wouldn't work with the university directly, so BSU had to contract with a third-party support service who in turn would contact the vendor who would be slow to respond. The untenable delays often left the university without camera coverage or system access while issues were being resolved. The vendor also charged an additional licensing fee for supporting cameras that weren't its own brand. Since BSU was expanding its camera count and deciding to standardize on Axis cameras, it was time to explore other video management and recorder options.

Solution

The university replaced its legacy video management solution with AXIS Camera Station and Axis network video recorders. The intuitive interface of AXIS Camera Station makes it easy for the BSU Police Department to monitor all 120 cameras on campus.

They can set up a rotating mosaic of live camera views, and quickly store and retrieve video clips with a few simple clicks. The system also includes features that help the IT Department streamline maintenance and updates, and easily scale the system as needed. Furthermore, BSU has direct and immediate access to Axis' award-winning technical service and support team should any issues arise.

Result

BSU eliminated the costly licensing fees the previous video management system (VMS) vendor charged for supporting the Axis cameras. With AXIS Camera Station the network administrator can quickly push out updates to all their cameras simultaneously and the health monitoring feature eliminates the need to walk around campus twice a week checking camera status. Additionally, Axis multi-sensor cameras give BSU four camera views for the cost of a single license.



From normal school to full-fledged university

From its humble beginning in 1840 as a training school for teachers, Bridgewater State University (BSU) is now the comprehensive university of Southeastern Massachusetts and the fourth largest public university in the Commonwealth with approximately 10,650 students. The main campus sits in the heart of downtown Bridgewater, a cosmopolitan suburb 25 miles south of Boston. More than half of BSU's students are commuters, many of whom take advantage of the MBTA commuter rail service that runs right through campus.

Given the ease of public access to the campus, security has always been a priority. "Initially video surveillance was light," says Travis Rebello, IT administrator for Bridgewater State University. "We had a few Axis cameras in place that we loved and were just starting to add more."

More cameras, more network storage, more problems

The choice of Axis cameras didn't sit well with the university's network video recorder vendor. "The VMS vendor wanted us to use their own cameras," says Rebello. "If we did, the licensing fee would be included. But we wanted to standardize on Axis cameras. We felt they were more durable and performed better."

The relationship became problematic. "We weren't allowed to work with the vendor directly," shares Rebello. "So, whenever we had an issue, we'd have to call the support company who would then call the VMS company for help. It took forever to get something done and left us questioning why we were using that VMS to begin with."

The search for an end-to-end solution

Finding a better solution was rather serendipitous. BSU's IT administrator had been invited to a meeting at Axis Communications headquarters in Chelmsford, MA, to discuss its latest camera offerings. While there, curiosity led him to the Axis Experience Center where he saw a demonstration of AXIS Camera Station. It was a "Eureka!" moment.

"It just made sense," says Rebello. "If we have Axis cameras and we start using Axis software, why not put the Axis physical infrastructure in place and tie it all together?"

Axis loaned the university an AXIS Camera Station server to field test, which sealed the deal. After a rigorous trial run, BSU decided to buy three AXIS Camera Station servers from ePlus, an Axis security partner. The purchase included the Axis camera licensing fees. Since the university installed their own equipment, the IT department went directly to Axis Communications' award-winning technical support team for any assistance they needed.

An easier way to view and review video

Officer Christopher McCarthy of the BSU Police Department asserts that it's "astronomically" easier to search and review video with the AXIS Camera Station than it was with their old VMS. "If you need to see something really quick, you can just hit the instant replay button," says McCarthy. "Before, it took multiple clicks, and the software was really slow."

AXIS Camera Station also allowed the Police Department to create their own customized views of the 100+ cameras they monitor. Some windows on the monitor are dedicated to a single critical camera. Other panes feature rotating camera views to help officers observe certain locations from multiple angles.

As the network administrator, Rebello appreciates that AXIS Camera Station has the ability to let him know immediately if a camera goes offline. It also notifies him if a camera's firmware is out of date so he can push out an update directly from the AXIS Camera Station server.





"Having automated health checks on the cameras is a real plus for us," says Officer McCarthy. "Before we had to manually go to each camera view in the software once or twice a week to make sure it was still up and running."

Matching the right camera to the job

Because Axis offers such a diverse portfolio of cameras, BSU picks and chooses the ones most suitable for the tasks at hand.

One of the most popular models they've deployed are the Axis multi-sensor cameras. "We tried to use the multi-sensor cameras wherever we could to bring down the cost of licensing with our previous vendor at the time," says Rebello. "We especially like deploying them in our parking garages where there are so many challenging angles."

Rebello also loves the high-powered optical zoom of the Axis pan/tilt/zoom cameras. "You can zoom down the entire street, focus on a leaf and see an insect crawling on it if you had to," says Rebello. "It's mind boggling."

Officer McCarthy likes the Axis panoramic cameras with Wide Dynamic Range deployed at building entrances. "They do a great job of filtering light so that when someone walks into the building you can clearly see their face and identify who they are. There's no image washout," states McCarthy. This feature is especially important when trying to confirm if a student used someone else's card to get into a dorm, or inappropriately piggybacked on someone else's card swipe.

For heightened security at its most remote parking lot, which contains a huge structure outfitted with solar panels, the university is adding an Axis license plate recognition camera to the surveillance mix. "We're in the process of implementing software in conjunction with those cameras to create a database of the cars coming in and out of that lot," says Rebello.

Camera durability has been a huge selling point. Rebello tells of an accident in one of the parking garages where a van with a ladder rack on top smacked into an Axis camera, knocking it off the pole. "The camera's left dangling there, upside-down, on its Ethernet cable," recalls Rebello. "But it keeps on recording. The lens and cover never shattered." The IT department just had to replace the conduit and reattach the camera to the pole.

Moving forward with advanced apps and analytics

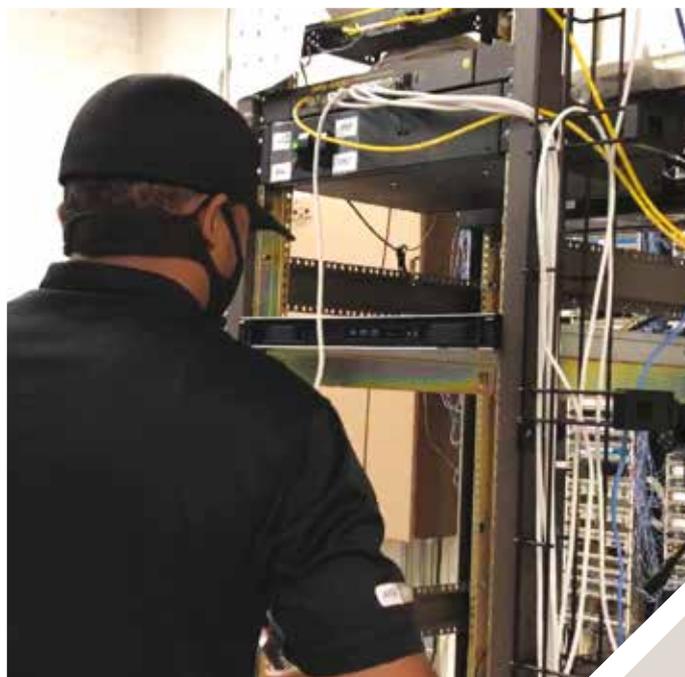
BSU is already compiling a wish-list of features it hopes to incorporate next into its Axis solution. One is using Axis' ACAP platform to deploy a gunshot detection analytic for their Axis cameras. Another is to use the map feature within AXIS Camera Station to show the location of every camera on campus so an officer can click on an icon and instantly bring up the camera view.

"Axis has done a great job partnering with us," says Rebello. "But as everyone knows, safety and security are a continual work in progress. We feel confident, however, that whatever is next on the horizon, Axis has our back."



"Migrating to AXIS Camera Station has made a huge difference. The easy user interface and snappy performance continue to impress me every day. It makes me wish we began using it sooner."

Travis Rebello, Network Administrator for Bridgewater State University



About Axis Communications

Axis enables a smarter and safer world by creating network solutions that provide insights for improving security and new ways of doing business. As the industry leader in network video, Axis offers products and services for video surveillance and analytics, access control, intercom and audio systems. Axis has more than 3,800 dedicated employees in over 50 countries and collaborates with partners worldwide to deliver customer solutions. Axis was founded in 1984 and has its headquarters in Lund, Sweden.

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