

Mansfield University links access control to IP video with Axis. Rural university improves dorm security by integrating intelligent keycard system with network video surveillance.



Organization:
Mansfield University

Location:
Mansfield, Pennsylvania,
USA

Industry segment:
Education

Application:
Safety and security

Axis partners:
Blackboard Transact,
Videolnsight

Mission

Mansfield University, a state college in upstate Pennsylvania, wanted a better way to balance student freedom with residence hall security. Despite dormitory policy, students often left doors propped open while going in and out of the dorms, jeopardizing the safety of everyone living in the buildings. Residence Life administrators decided that installing a keycard access system tied to video surveillance would reduce the university's potential liability while improving security in the co-ed housing facilities.

Solution

The university contracted with Blackboard Transact, a Phoenix, AZ-based network integrator and Axis partner, to integrate the school's One Card ID system with dorm access control and Axis fixed dome network cameras installed above entryways. Since the dorms were already wired for Internet access, the cameras could utilize Power over Ethernet to connect to the network with a simple Ethernet drop.

Each residence hall director is authorized to monitor video associated with their building. Campus police actively monitor the cameras at all four dormitories using Blackboard Video Surveillance.

Result

With the help of the Axis network cameras, university administrators have restored security to the dorms without compromising the privacy of its residents. 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 incident.

"Linking Axis network cameras to our keycard system gives us a much higher level of security than we've ever enjoyed before. We can see where our problem situations are occurring and take immediate steps to reduce our potential liability."

Chuck Colby, Association Vice President of Residence Life, Mansfield University.

Adapting to a changing world

Despite its rural setting, Mansfield University is situated just a mile from a major interstate that attracts visitors to the area's parks, vistas and rail trail. In addition, the Mansfield community itself has recently undergone a dramatic change with a recent natural gas exploration in the area's deep shale formations.

"We expect thousands of new jobs to open up in our tri-county area," predicts Chuck Colby, association vice president of residence life, Mansfield University. "In anticipation of the sudden influx, it's important to shore up security in our residence halls since many more outsiders might have access to our campus."

Detering careless behavior

"The ongoing nightmare for any dorm complex is how to keep the doors closed," shares Colby. "We need to convince students to accept the fine balance between freedom and security that every university desires for its residence halls." By linking video surveillance and key card access, campus security and residence hall directors can actually see who might be propping doors open for a friend or to catch a late-night smoke – unwittingly creating an opening for an opportunistic intruder. "It's a much higher level of security than we could ever achieve with a door access system alone," states Colby.

When the cameras are triggered by movement or audio, Residence Life administrators are alerted to the live feed and can address the problem immediately. If the issue persists, they can search for archived video using the intuitive Blackboard Video Surveillance VMS to identify repeat offenders and consider disciplinary action. "Video surveillance helps us deter potentially dangerous behavior and restore security to our students' living quarters," says Colby.

Simplifying deployment with network video

Mansfield was one of the last schools in the Pennsylvania state school system to adopt a card system where the student ID doubled as a debit card for on- and off-campus services.

When Blackboard demonstrated how the same card could also be used to control access to dorms, the university was sold on the idea of eliminating room keys.

"Having a single card and not having to worry about carrying keys or cash is a nice service we like to offer our students," shares Alex Miller, One Card administrator, Mansfield University.

Adding network video surveillance to the mix made perfect sense to security-conscious administrators. "With the violent crimes taking place on U.S. college campuses lately, it just made sense to incorporate video surveillance into our dorm access system," states Miller.

Blackboard installed an array of AXIS P33 Series and AXIS 216FD Network Cameras with vandal-resistant housing and two-way audio capability. "Their compact size and wide range of adjustable features made them a good match for our environment," shares Loren McNett, IT technical support, Mansfield University. "It's also useful to have speakers and microphones when we need them."

Because the network cameras support motion and audio detection as well as tampering alarms, the university officials can stay on top of potential threats whenever movement or noise is detected or if the cameras lose connectivity.

Scaling surveillance to cover entire campus

While the initial solution focused on the residence halls, Mansfield plans to eventually roll out surveillance cameras across its 175-acre campus. Talks are already underway to install network cameras in the bookstore, library and academic areas, as well as parking lots, walkways and hiking trails.

"The nice part about a network surveillance solution is its scalability. Adding cameras is as simple as adding another server to the cluster," assures Alex Miller. "Even scaling user privileges – from who can see which live camera feeds to who has access to archived video – is pretty straightforward."



MANSFIELD UNIVERSITY

Blackboard
transact

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