

Security Products

The Integrated Product Newsmagazine For Security, Fire & Safety Professionals

APRIL 2005

The Last Word

A SCHOOLING ON SECURITY

Smart cards run the show at Auburn University

By Karina Sanchez

Homework, study halls, club meetings, classes, work schedules, exercising, eating, parties—there are so many things that go into being a typical college student. But those at Auburn University have one less thing to worry about: security.

This school accommodates 375 buildings on more than 1,840 acres of land. And Stanley Security smart cards and readers are at the heart of the university. We spoke with Marlan Sagar, supervisor of security technicians and access control for Auburn, to get the inside scoop on the BASIS integrated system.

FROM THE BEGINNING

The first footsteps hit the floors of Auburn University in 1856. But it wasn't until 1945 that the university decided to lock its doors with Best Access Systems, a subsidiary of Stanley Works.

"We used Best Access Systems' mechanical locks starting then, and when it came time for us to make a decision on electronic access, they were, obviously, one of the companies that we looked at," Sagar said.

The school stuck with Best and revamped its access system eight years ago, installing 759 card readers and issuing close to 30,000 smart cards to students, faculty and staff.

A ONE-CARD SYSTEM

As incoming freshmen scurry around campus in a frantic search for their next class, their smart card knows exactly where they're supposed to be.

"The interfacing between the university's server and IT department allows for automatic downloads of each card to the student's class schedule, residence assignments and door access," Sagar said. "The cards that are used for access are used for everything else, too."

The ID cards, which identify students by

their headshots and specified magstripe, are used for everything from building access to book-buying. And even though the cards' uses are numerous, securing a 1,840-acre campus is a top priority for Sagar.

"We have such a tremendous number of buildings here. One of our buildings is 11 stories tall and has well over 100 exterior doors. And because of its size, it was always a large problem to get the building secure at night," Sagar said. "With the system that we have in place now, you can time these doors to all lock at the same time."

This automatic locking system saves the time that it would take a security guard to walk the halls, manually locking every door on every story.

NEVER LOOKING BACK

Sagar is pleased with how the system has worked out for the university and its students. He plans on perfecting access control by integrating cameras to the card readers.

"In the future, we'd like our cameras outside of the residence halls to integrate with the card readers. We'd like for the cameras to automatically show the student's picture and name right on the frame when their card is swiped," Sagar said. "This way, we'd know if the person who was actually swiping the card was the same person whose picture is on the card."

For now, Sagar confirms that he and his staff are on-call 24 hours a day for those who live in on-campus housing buildings. If a problem with the system arises, a technician responds to the incident within 30 minutes.

Well after all the lights have gone out at Auburn University, Best Access Systems is still hard at work earning an A+ in Smart Cards 101.

Karina Sanchez is the associate editor for Security Products magazine.

