



## Georgia State University

### Open Platform Design Helps University Capitalize on Existing Physical Security and Surveillance

When Georgia State University needed to upgrade its proprietary access control system without sacrificing existing hardware, Software House C•CURE 9000 security and event management system was the clear choice. With C•CURE 9000's open platform, the university was able to capitalize on its existing physical security and surveillance, as well as increase the capabilities of the system.

## CASE SUMMARY

### Location:

Atlanta, Georgia

### System Installed:

Software House

C•CURE 9000 security & event management system

Legacy Controller Upgrade Kits

## Introduction

Georgia State University (GSU) is centered in historic downtown Atlanta. Its urban surroundings provide approximately 32,000 students with a distinguished education, as well as access to the city's government, culture, and business organizations. The University is considered a commuter school with 61 percent of first-year students living on campus and 17 percent of all undergraduates living on campus.

Since 1913, the University has seen significant growth. GSU built its first student housing facility in 2007 and, since then, has continually built and expanded its student housing facilities to include five different locations and 9 buildings for more than 4,000 students.

Roderick Padilla, assistant director of IT services at GSU and a 23-year veteran employee of the University, recalls a time when access control was just keys. "Two decades ago, campus security was dramatically different," Padilla said. "I remember when you would have keys out there and wouldn't know who had them or how many people had the masters, the sub-masters and the sub-sub-masters. But, of course, with better IT and physical security, things have come a long way."

Today, GSU has the largest campus police department of any school in the state with more than 100 employees. The challenge for the University is securing its urban campus, where students, as well as strangers, can walk the grounds. Campus housing includes extensive surveillance equipment, turnstiles and gates to get into each facility, card readers in elevators to limit access to certain floors, and parking decks with readers and access gates. With a growing student population, an urban environment, and increased incidents of campus and school violence around the

country, campus security is particularly important at Georgia State.

GSU has a diverse mix of student housing locations to secure, which encompasses a variety of newly built and purchased conversions. A 1,100-occupancy dormitory named Piedmont North, for example, was once back-to-back hotels built for the 1996 Summer Olympics in Atlanta. A Greek housing area with multiple buildings was built in 2010, and its first and largest dormitory called University Commons, (which was once named the 3rd Most Luxurious dormitory in the country by The Fiscal Times) houses 2,000 students and is open year round.

## Challenges

Though keys have not been the primary source of access control in GSU's housing facilities for some time, the University was looking to upgrade its existing access control system due to a number of issues, including lack of integration capabilities and product support.

Recognizing "We really wanted to replace our proprietary system with an open source system -- something that would work with all the cameras and other equipment we have," said Padilla. An open platform was particularly important to Padilla, as he wanted to limit the amount of equipment that would need to be replaced. The IT Services Department oversees a security area worth about \$1.7 million in assets for student housing, including turnstiles, gates, 50 DVRs, more than 720 cameras, 25 access control panels and 150 card readers.

## Solution

Working with a Tyco Security Products sales representative and GSU's integrator of seven-plus years, LMI Systems, Inc., the department decided on Software House's C•CURE 9000 security and event management system. Because of its open platform design, most of the existing equipment the University had did not need to be replaced. The University could capitalize on its existing physical security and surveillance, as well as increase the capabilities of the system with better integration and features. Some controllers were easily upgraded using Software House's Legacy Controller Upgrade Kits, which allow legacy controllers to be updated to an iSTAR Pro controller, without replacing the existing wall mount enclosures.

"One of the factors that made the decision easy for [GSU] was that their peripherals didn't have to change," said Heath Hunt, vice president of technology operations at LMI Systems, Inc. "It's more cost-effective when you are talking about just head-end equipment and software changes."

Aside from an access control solution that would work with the University's existing security equipment, GSU was looking for a solution with superior reporting capabilities. "The reporting is exactly what we wanted," Padilla said. "I can go to an entry log for any access card and see the recent history for a particular card or user as well as who gave the person access to that card. I didn't have that ability before and it's exactly what we need."

With multiple Hall Directors and other staff members that are able to create cards for student residents,

reliable audit trails and reporting features are essential for the security staff. For example, if a Hall Director creates a new card for a student whose card was lost, but forgets to flag the previous card as lost, anyone walking around the campus could pick up the card and have access to areas they are not allowed. With C•CURE 9000, GSU security staff can run daily reports on any users with more than one active card and immediately deactivate the card, as well as find out who created the card without flagging the old one, and bring that to the necessary staff member's attention to correct the mistake in the future.

"Another benefit is if someone tries to use a flagged card, not only will the card not work, but the system tells us someone is trying to use the card," Padilla said. The software's integration with GSU's surveillance equipment even gives GSU PD a visual on the person.

"We didn't have good integration between our access control and cameras before," Padilla explained. "We really wanted this critical enhancement to be able to pull video with an access event. These are key issues because students lose their cards all the time and being in the city of Atlanta, this is an open campus. The safety and security of the students is of utmost importance," he said. Receiving the surveillance video from an event allows for quick, informed responses from staff and police in a variety of scenarios and emergencies beyond a lost card, Padilla said.

Aside from the importance of the solution's capabilities, timing was a big factor for Georgia State University. GSU's IT Services Department began talking about a new access control solution in the spring and needed to be sure everything would be installed over the

summer and fully operational before fall classes were back in session.

LMI Systems, Inc. had the system ready to go within three weeks and spent the summer migrating each housing facility and working on any issues. “It was a seamless transition,” said Padilla. “We didn’t have to replace the cards since they were all fully compatible with the new system. It was a matter of recreating the access rights and exporting all the data.”

GSU closed all of its student housing facilities over the summer, with the exception of its largest residence hall, University Commons. Summer access cards were pre-created with access rights and University Commons was on the new system immediately. The rest of the summer was spent focusing on the other buildings with minimal disruption, said Padilla.

## Future

With the new access control system up and running at GSU, the University can now focus on the future. While the current system uses access control to enter the resident facilities, Padilla would like to expand card access to individual rooms as well, for the next dormitory the University builds.

In addition, at some point, GSU would like to move to a one-card system, according to Padilla. Currently, students have separate housing cards, library cards and vending/ID cards. “We’re not quite ready to do that yet, and I don’t know exactly how we will decide to do that, but the student housing solution has been successful, so maybe it will serve as that benchmark we need for the rest of the University,” Padilla added.

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