

University of Georgia



Industry

Higher Education

Organization size

10,665 employees

Location

Athens, Georgia, United States

ProductsSecurity Center, Omnicast,
Synergis, AutoVu

PartnersConvergent Technologies,
Preferred Technologies, Axis
Communications, BCDVideo,
Bosch, Sony

Multi-campus university overhauls building security with unified platform

When universities create a safe learning environment, next-generation leaders can thrive. With an enrollment totalling over 36,000 students, the University of Georgia (UGA) in the United States knows this well. This top-rated public university invests in technologies that help its police department secure six campuses while remaining mostly out-of-sight. No matter the incident, officers respond quickly. This reinforces a strong sense of safety and ensures students are focused on what matters—getting good grades and enjoying campus life.

Finding a solution that fits unique requirements

Keeping hundreds of buildings secure on a 762-acre main campus and five remote campuses isn't a simple task. It became even more difficult for UGA when an older proprietary access control system began failing. Repairs were getting costly as the solution neared the end of its lifecycle.

In search for a new solution, UGA wanted more flexibility with controlling doors. Many of its facilities have different requests and schedules, so each department needed to adapt the system to suit their programs and building rules. They also wanted a solution that could easily integrate with many devices and systems, and scale across all campuses. The team considered many options, including Security Center, the unified security platform from Genetec Inc.

According to Jeffrey Swindle, Lead Access Control Systems Administrator at UGA, "It all started with door security, but as we went further into the selection process, we learned more about how Security Center could unify access control with video and automatic license plate recognition (ALPR) systems. We also had the option to adapt the system to our unique environment using some very granular settings."

Security Center met all of the university's requirements. Furthermore, the Auxiliaries department on campus was already using the AutoVu™ ALPR system to enforce parking. UGA commissioned Convergent Technologies, a global service-based integrator, to handle the initial installation.

“We’re always looking to provide better security for students and staff, but our goal is to make it as unintrusive as possible. With Security Center, we’re doing just that. Our teams are better equipped to manage building security and to quickly respond to any incident on our campuses. Nothing has really changed for students and faculty, it’s just day-to-day campus life as usual.”

Staying ready for any incident on campus

So far, UGA has converted 10 buildings on the main campus in Athens, and another 8 buildings at the Griffin campus, just a few hours away. Operators keep watch over 250 doors and 100 video cameras. As incidents come up, operators immediately respond.

According to Swindle, “Now, when there’s an alarm, our dispatchers don’t have to go digging through different video systems to try to find the incident. They can see the live video of the event, and quickly locate the incident on the Plan Manager map interface to direct responding officers.” Upon completion, UGA is aiming to have over 1000 cameras, 1600 door readers and 400 users on the Security Center platform.

Using the Threat Levels feature of Security Center, Swindle and his team have planned response workflows for different types of situations. If ever a situation occurs, the system will immediately adapt to help responders follow procedures.

Making everyday tasks easier with customization

Securing the university buildings is a team effort at UGA. While the campus police department responds to alarms, facility managers handle day-to-day administrative tasks. Facility managers can change cardholder privileges and receive automated reports to see who’s been accessing the building.

Facility managers have also been empowered to oversee their unique building schedules. That’s because Preferred Technologies, an integrator specializing in custom solutions, developed a unique Schedule Management Plugin for UGA. The Genetec Professional Services team supported the development process.

“The university has a general holiday schedule, but every department is different. Some will still allow faculty or students to access certain buildings during the holidays,” explained Swindle. “With the plugin, it’s now easier for facility managers to set weekly building schedules months in advance, and make exceptions for academic events and holidays.”

The UGA team has also streamlined its Human Resources (HR) processes. As soon as the HR team inputs an employee’s termination date in the HR system data feed, Security Center will automatically deactivate the cardholder per UGA policy. “The flexibility we get has been integral to our success with the platform. We’re able to adapt the system to do pretty much anything we need,” said Swindle.

Enhancing security one phase at a time

The entire upgrade will be rolled out in phases over the next few years. The university is installing Security Center in one building at a time. In the future, UGA might consider merging the existing stand-alone AutoVu system with the newly-installed access control and video systems to achieve a cohesive campus-wide solution.

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Infrastructure at a Glance

UGA kept existing readers by using the Synergis™ Cloud Link, an intelligent IP controller that supports non-proprietary access control hardware. On the surveillance side, they chose BCDVideo servers for a powerful and cost-effective storage solution, and a mix of cameras from Axis Communications, Bosch, Sony, and other vendors to meet the unique requirements of each location.

