

Education Solutions

Case in Point

University of Texas - Arlington's One-Card System Does It All

On any given day, the typical college student might need to enter and exit his or her residence hall multiple times, purchase food from a campus vendor or check out research materials from the library. While all of these things could be accomplished by separate means - keys, a meal plan card or library card, respectively - this only provides more opportunities for the student to misplace these items and compromise security. A student meal plan card or residence hall key often have no identifying markers to prevent someone other than the cardholder from using them; a multipurpose identification card, however, can access all of these privileges and has a photograph of the student to which it belongs. Such cards can also be easily deactivated if misplaced by the cardholder, making a one-card system a viable solution to many university security concerns.

One example of the successful implementation of this kind of solution is the University of Texas at Arlington's one-card system. It is the culmination of 15 years of updates and added functionality, resulting in a system that addresses the needs of students, faculty, staff and university guests. The magnetic stripe card, which works with CBORD's



CS Gold system, controls access to campus buildings, tracks meal plans, records time and attendance, and provides a ubiquitous form of identification on university grounds. The multiuse system not only keeps students and university employees safe by restricting access to sensitive areas and university events; it also allows cardholders to take advantage of privileges such as meal plans and campus laundry facilities.

Card Options Include Declining Balance and Debit

When determining what privileges to offer to its students, UT Arlington considered the makeup of its community and what services might appeal to its campus population. Factors such as the university's urban setting influenced administrators' choices when it came to making certain services available, says Director of Campus Card Operations Pascal Robert.

Through an agreement with Wells Fargo, students have the option of using their credentials exclusively as a declining balance card through UT Arlington or linking it to a bank account. It makes it a pin-based debit card, Robert explains. And it's optional - students don't have to link their cards to an account. But all of our cards are made with proper ISO [numbers] so they are linkable if our students decide to do that.

Students have access to two declining balance options on their cards through UT Arlington: Dining Dollars and Mav Money. Dining Dollars can be used to buy food from the university's dining services and are only available with the purchase of a meal plan. On

the other hand, Mav Money - named for UT Arlington's mascot, the Maverick - can be used to make purchases in the university bookstore, wash clothes in the residence hall laundry facilities or to print or copy when a student or faculty member exceeds their quota for the semester. The university also opted to allow non-campus-affiliated vendors to accept Mav Money. This lets students access a wider array of services with their cards, both on and off campus.

The university uses CS Gold to manage most card-related privileges. The application is highly customizable and operates on a Windows-based graphical user interface with optional Web-based features for reporting, patron look-ups, access assignments and more. On-campus purchases using Mav Money and Dining Dollars are made using the MICROS 9700 HMS point-of-sale system. [MICROS] is a CBORD partner so it all integrates with our CS Gold system, says Robert. We also use some of CBORD's older terminals such as the Turbo reader. We utilize both of these for point of sale and the Turbo is also used to manage privileges such as school elections, meal plans and activities.

Locks Can Provide Varying Levels of Security

Each UT Arlington ID card issued allows for different levels of access to the cardholder based on their preferences or position. New students will automatically be granted access to the library and the Maverick Activities Center but must apply to gain access to most other facilities, including secure areas such as chemical or radiation laboratories.

Department heads must request access for specific staff, students and sponsored affiliates; these requests are then processed by the administration and campus operations office. The data is stored in a data warehouse and periodically audited to prevent students and personnel from gaining unwarranted access to any campus facilities.

UT Arlington restricts access to sensitive areas by using locks that can only be opened by ID cards with the correct access levels. The university recently introduced Schlage AD-Series locks into the campus security system, which can be equipped with many credential entry interfaces. The university uses locks with a combination magnetic stripe reader and numeric keypad.

We actually have about 1,300 offline access points on campus, says Robert. These points are safeguarded by Schlage locks that require a pin and ID card to disarm. This prevents stolen cards from being used to gain entrance into secure areas. I believe we have close to 60 wireless access points and probably in the neighborhood of 600 online access points. Our building perimeters are mostly online.

The university participated in the beta testing of the AD-200 Series locks, which replaced the Schlage Legacy Computer Managed (CM) locks around campus. Robert believes the CM locks will be slowly phased out, and that's why it was a good thing for us to be involved in that beta process, he said. We have a chance to have a front seat to testing these locks and defining how well they will work as a replacement to the legacy equipment.

IT Department, Planning Integral to System Implementation

Robert says the most important part of implementing a one card system is to make sure that the different systems on campus can be effectively integrated. UT Arlington uses a database provided by CBORD to manage access levels, declining balances and other card privileges. We have the CBORD system as a base system, and basically every time we want to add a branch to our tree, we make sure that it's going to integrate well with CBORD, he explains. We also want to make sure that the provider is involved and that specific enterprise will all be onboard to support the endeavor. So I would say that when you choose a product, make sure that you're going to be able to have it supported by whoever is involved in that relationship.

Robert advises further that each stakeholder being affected by the implementation of a new system should be involved in its evaluation process. Also, after a product has been selected, it should be introduced at a time that generates as little interference as possible with peak campus activity. Make sure you have a plan B and a plan C, because an unknown surprise will appear no matter how well you plan, that's just the way it goes - especially with technology, says Robert. If you know you're going to have to shut down the server for 24 hours, you don't want to do that in the middle of orientation. The relationship between UT Arlington's administrators and its IT department has been integral to campus security. Robert points out that there is a standing meeting between administrators, representatives of different branches of the IT

department and Campus Card Operations, in which current security needs and future plans are discussed.

But no one system can best address every single security need on a university campus. UT Arlington has spent many years adding functions to the one card system it implemented 15 years ago. I've been in this business for over 10 years, and what I've found is that you have to pick the [system] that is the closest to what you need, he says. The bottom line is that there are so many offerings that can do a lot of things; it's very important to understand what your organization's needs, goals and missions are and then look at the technology that's out there and will best fulfill those.

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The University of Texas at Arlington located in Arlington, Texas is a comprehensive research, teaching, and public service institution whose mission is the advancement of knowledge and the pursuit of excellence. Founded in 1895 as a private liberal arts institution, UT Arlington has evolved through a succession of names and missions. The institution achieved senior college status in 1959 and became part of The University of Texas System in 1965. The institution, which comprises 409 acres in downtown Arlington, is currently authorized by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board to offer 80 baccalaureate, 74 master's, and 31 doctoral degree programs.

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