University Balances Ease of Access With Security to Enable a Full Range of Campus Services

Founded in the 1940s, an established private educational institution located in the eastern U.S. has approximately 7,000 students and 900 faculty and staff who commute to campus on a daily basis. The university also provides low-cost, part-time evening studies for working adults. As a growing institution, the university continues to expand its degree programs in law, business, science and the arts.

As the university has evolved, a variety of authentication technologies have been used for accessing everything from campus parking to library loans, meal plans, the recreation center and more. To simplify campus life while improving security, the university decided to implement a single ID card incorporating multiple technologies. The key to success would be rf IDEAS® credential readers capable of supporting each authentication requirement with no need to replace existing systems.

THE CHALLENGE
Manage costs and streamline processes at a growing university

The university continues to grow, adding courses and degree programs as its population increases. In the interest of cost-efficiency, streamlined management and customer service, the institution needed to reduce the number of access and ID cards being managed by students, faculty and staff. At the same time, it wanted to add as much digital functionality as possible, incorporating multiuse reader technology to accommodate campus legacy systems.

The campus card program manager described the university's credential environment as "the wild, wild west," with no two schools on campus operating the same way. The ID card system was old and piecemeal, requiring everyone to carry photo IDs and parking cards, which were often adapted for use at the library and recreation center by applying stickers. And because the original card technology was fairly standard and old-school—magnetic stripes and proximity chips—functionality was limited.

Security was a concern, as well. Cards could easily be duplicated, increasing the risk of unauthorized access to campus buildings, and card readers were mostly offline, preventing fast online notification of emergency situations and potential lockdowns.

The university needed an updated, consolidated card system designed to help manage services better, provide more security and greater access control, improve student and staff satisfaction, and fully integrate with the institution's existing system.
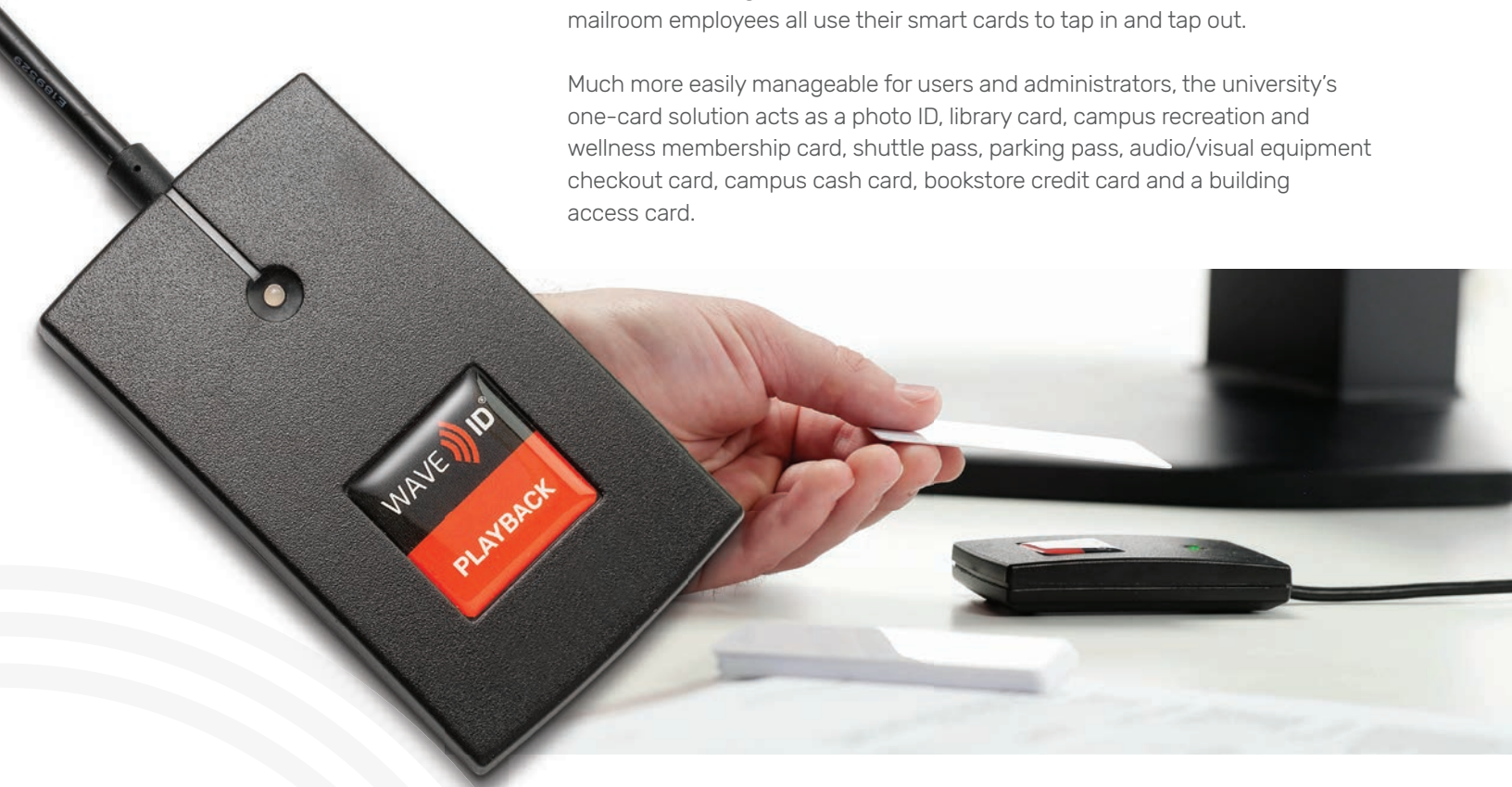
THE SOLUTION

Encodable, multiuse cards incorporating mag stripe, MIFARE™ and proximity chips, combined with 125 kHz proximity and 13.56 MHz contactless WAVE ID® readers from rf IDEAS

Opting for a triple-technology card was a quantum shift, according to the card program manager. By adding the capability to write code to different sectors of the chip, the system became customizable. A plan was formulated with the university's chief IT technologist to develop a centralized card office, card-specific software and back-end infrastructure. Work began during the summer when the student population was at its lowest. The university's new smart card program went live as students were returning for the fall semester.

The program manager looked at different card readers, but after working with a consultant, his office decided on equipment from rf IDEAS. Twenty rf IDEAS card readers were installed on campus, most of them in offices and the two campus libraries.

The WAVE ID® Playback can be programmed to read specific card sectors, and in one instance was linked to a time clock to monitor time in and time out at the university's plant and facility operation sites. With employee ID numbers matched to the right sector, housekeepers, plant operators, carpenters and mailroom employees all use their smart cards to tap in and tap out.

Much more easily manageable for users and administrators, the university's one-card solution acts as a photo ID, library card, campus recreation and wellness membership card, shuttle pass, parking pass, audio/visual equipment checkout card, campus cash card, bookstore credit card and a building access card.

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THE RESULTS

Increased efficiency and simple management

An estimated 90–95% of students now carry campus smart cards, a percentage nearly matched by faculty and staff. Students, in fact, can stop by the ID management office and get their cards in five minutes.

And while official user surveys are still in the offing, user feedback has been favorable overall, with the card program office regularly receiving kudos from students and staff for a system that's quick, responsive and making their lives easier.

The campus card program manager reported an overall positive experience with rf IDEAS, noting especially that the company's university account specialist had been involved since day one. Pricing was competitive, he added, and rf IDEAS technical support staff were always there to talk his office through "the who, the what, and the how" in installation and troubleshooting.

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THE BENEFITS

Improved ease of use, expanded functionality, greater manageability
and tighter security

The new campus smart card and rf IDEAS reader system helps to make
the university campus more efficient, and provides added security and
convenience for students, parents, staff and service providers. The system
not only adds value to the campus experience, but also opens up a wider range
of possibilities for future installations.

Campus ID cards and WAVE ID readers are used in a variety of applications by
students and staff, including:

- Bookstore
- Dining / meal plans
- Classroom
- Laundry management
- Events
- Library
- Computer lab

- Recreation center
- Attendance parking
- Maintenance schedules
- Equipment and tool check-out
- Printing
- Back-of-house food service operations

**For more application information,
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