



Quinnipiac University streamlines its campus commerce and access management system

QUINNIPIAC UNIVERSITY

Campus Card Program

- » 3 campuses
- » 8,500 students
- » 78 undergraduate and graduate programs

Challenges

- » Existing OneCard system and card readers based on aging technology subjected to excessive wear and tear, reaching their end-of-life
- » Existing magnetic-stripe cards were easy to duplicate and students, faculty, and staff had to manually handle and swipe cards to use them

Solution

- » Combining Blackboard Contactless Multifunction Readers with Sony FeliCa technology streamlined every corner of campus commerce and access management

Quinnipiac University of Hamden, Conn. is a private, coeducational, nonsectarian institution located 90 minutes north of New York City and two hours from Boston. Consistently ranked among the top regional universities in the North in U.S. News & World Report's America's Best Colleges issue, Quinnipiac is also recognized in Princeton Review's "The Best 377 Colleges."

In Search of More Secure, State-of-the-Art Access Control Option

When Quinnipiac's aging door readers had outlived their usefulness, Sandip Patel, financial systems specialist, and John Meriano, associate vice president for auxiliary services, knew the university had reached a turning point with its QCard campus card system. "The door readers basically made the decision for us," said Patel. "They were coming to end-of-life and we knew we needed to upgrade them."

With readers already installed university-wide to manage access, vending machines, laundry, food service, and bookstore transactions, Quinnipiac faced a choice: upgrade its old hardware and retain its current setup or invest in the up-and-coming contactless technology.

At the same time, Quinnipiac was dealing with several other challenges concerning its existing QCard setup. With students losing their cards an average of two-to-three times a year, the university wanted a more secure system for issuing, freezing, and re-issuing QCards.

“The magnetic stripes on our traditional cards were pretty easy to duplicate with a \$30-\$40 decoder,” said Meriano. “We needed a more secure option.” Quinnipiac also wanted a system that would inflict less wear and tear on its equipment, translating into minimized reader maintenance and fewer service calls for the university’s technical staff, all while increasing satisfaction for students.

“Updating our aging card readers not only made good sense, but it also gave us the opportunity to showcase our university’s commitment to innovation,” Patel said. “As technology leaders, we knew it was time to abandon mag stripe cards and go straight to the future of card reader innovation.”

A Natural Technology Choice

A Blackboard user since 2000, Quinnipiac didn’t have to go far to find the perfect contactless system to replace its current setup. Educated on the advantages of contactless card technology, Patel and Meriano say they were simply waiting for the right products to integrate a state-of-the-art contactless system into the university’s existing campus management platform.

“We were already heavily invested in the Blackboard infrastructure,” Meriano says. “When Blackboard Contactless technology and the accompanying readers were introduced, we knew it was time to make the move.”

Quinnipiac replaced all aging door readers and food service point-of-sale (POS) systems on campus. Students were issued new QCards that contained “smart chips” (instead of mag stripes) and that relied on “taps” instead of physical swipes. The system combines Blackboard MF4100 Contactless Multifunction Readers and Sony FeliCa contactless IC technology, the latter of which includes an embedded IC chip and antenna that completes transactions in approximately 0.1 seconds by putting the card over a compatible reader/writer.

Live since May 2011, the contactless system was rolled out across various departments—from food service to

vending to laundry and residence halls. The universal system goes beyond just door access and transaction tracking. For example, Quinnipiac’s School of Business uses the ubiquitous platform to track student attendance at department functions and student organizations use it to handle transactions at fundraisers. A physical plant gas pump utilized at two campuses and off-campus, university-owned housing, various athletic events and parking garages also use the innovative QCard system.

The contactless system is always well received by users. “There’s definitely a ‘wow’ factor that comes into play when you can just tap-and-go,” said Patel. “It’s a major upgrade from what we were using previously and a more secure setup for us to administer, monitor, and maintain.”



Accomplishments

- Replaced all aging door readers and point-of-sale systems
- Improved security due to the difficulty of replicating contactless cards
- Simplified and sped up transaction processing at the point of sale and/or point of contact
- Lessened wear and tear on readers—newer ones require no contact



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Sandip Patel
Financial Systems Specialist

Measuring the Benefits

Quinnipiac has seen significant benefits from its decision to invest in a state-of-the-art contactless card system to replace its previous setup. As the only “holder” of the card encoder, for example, the university can rest easy knowing the QCards can’t be duplicated using a simple mag stripe encoder. The university also benefits from the proven reliability of contactless, more reasonable card costs, and equipment that’s subjected to less wear and tear.

The technology has also saved time in busy areas like the campus dining halls, where staff members used to physically swipe cards and hand them back to their respective owners. “Now the students tap their own cards and the cashiers don’t even have to be involved,” said Meriano. “That takes seconds off of every transaction in an environment that manages 2,000-3,000 diners per day.”

As it continues to migrate its aging readers to its contactless system, Quinnipiac also leverages its long-standing relationship with Blackboard. “Blackboard is always responsive and supportive,” said Patel, “and very good about pointing us to new solutions and options that will help streamline our operations.”

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