

# Top Safety and Security Trends on Campuses

## An Interview with Robin Hattersley Gray, Executive Editor of *Campus Safety Magazine*

*Robin Hattersley Gray has been reporting on the security and campus law enforcement industries since 1998 and is a specialist in emerging technologies and systems integration. She has authored award-winning editorials on campus safety and security technology including access control, IP video technology, network integration, event management, perimeter security, crime trends, communications equipment, and more.*

### **What laws and events have affected the current campus safety environment?**

The Clery Act, passed in 1990, requires schools to disclose campus policies and crime statistics. It also requires schools to provide timely warnings to the campus community about crimes that pose an ongoing threat to students and employees. High-profile safety incidents at high schools and universities have also affected planning. Campuses are paying more attention to preventing campus security incidents with technology such as IP video surveillance and mass notification systems.

### **How has the Virginia Tech tragedy affected funding for campus safety and security?**

When *Campus Safety Magazine* surveyed subscribers in September 2008, nearly one in four said that not having enough electronic security equipment, such as closed circuit TV, access control, intrusion detection, and fire alarm was a top-five concern. Our January 2008 survey indicated that almost two in three were paying greater attention to safety and security issues. The survey suggests that most campuses had already planned significant investments in safety and security before the Virginia Tech incident.

### **What are the most popular equipment upgrades being planned on campuses?**

Our January 2008 survey showed that the most popular upgrade plans are:

- Mass notification, planned by 73 percent
- Video surveillance, planned by 55 percent
- Access control, planned by 44 percent
- Emergency communications and radio systems, planned by 40 percent. 21 percent of the respondents said they planned to upgrade their IT infrastructures.

### **Why the urgency for mass notification?**

The Higher Education Act signed into law on August 14, 2008 requires “immediate” notification of students and staff when emergencies occur. While the final text did not include a hotly contested 30-minute notification rule, many campus officials want the capability to act as if 30-minute notification is required by law, to avoid having regulations imposed on them in the future. Text messaging systems are receiving the greatest share of attention. Also popular is digital signage, set up in heavily trafficked areas around campus to provide updates and instructions during emergencies. Digital signage can also be used for everyday campus announcements and directions, making the purchase easier to justify to campus stakeholders.

**What are the trends in access control?**

Campuses want to move away from manual, time-consuming lockdown processes like sending a custodian to lock and unlock doors one by one. Some campuses have given dispatchers the ability to automatically lock buildings remotely, using the network. Others are looking to adopt more sophisticated card access control systems. It's important to keep in mind that physical access control also plays a role in information security. Encrypting sensitive files is great, but campuses also need to make sure that the doors to computer rooms are locked when no one should be there. Automated access controls help.

**How is the current economic climate affecting campus security?**

Regardless of the state of the economy or political climate, campus security risks remain. In fact, the current fiscal uncertainty could lead to an increase in the number of major and minor incidents occurring at educational institutions. Because of this, individuals tasked with campus protection must find effective ways to remind other stakeholders why security is so important. One way is to show how new safety and security systems can save money by providing operational efficiencies or reducing liability exposure. For example, centrally managed video surveillance systems can provide a force multiplier for campus safety departments, help to deter crime and enable earlier response to lessen the costs of vandalism and other incidents.

**What other ways can campuses save money on physical safety and security?**

One way is to treat new construction as an opportunity. It costs far less to build in IP-based video surveillance and access control in a new building than to add it in afterwards.

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