ASSISTANCE

Security Layers

IN HIGHER EDUCATION

BY BRAD KAMCHEFF

Crime on campus continues to be a major concern for colleges and universities. According to a report by the National Center for Education Statistics, burglary and sexual assaults account for the majority of crimes reported against college-age people. To address these issues, colleges and universities have made considerable investments to fortify on-campus security over the past decade.

Such investments have included installing surveillance systems that can monitor outdoor common areas and parking lots, replacing dormitory keys with keycards, and implementing campus-wide access control systems that can be used to manage building access for faculty and students.

As campus security continues to improve, so does the diversification of the types of security solutions implemented, integrated, and leveraged with existing systems. Intercom systems, which can be seamlessly integrated with both surveillance and access control, are a must-have solution as part of a comprehensive campus security program.

Dormitory Use

Perhaps the biggest change with security technology being used on college campuses is taking place within college dormitories, where traditional locks and keysets are being replaced with electronic locks and all-in-one keycards that can be used to enter a student's dorm room. The same keycard can also allow access to eat in the campus dining hall and check out a book in the library.

While dormitory access has become more secure over the past decade, one thing that hasn't changed is the need for students or visitors to have secure and reliable methods of communicating with the front desk staff at a residence hall. Now, because of additional security measures, many residence hall doors remain locked around the clock, but this lack of access can make it difficult for visitors to interact with anyone in the building unless the front desk is fully staffed.

An IP intercom station can be placed on the exterior of a dormitory or within a vestibule area to ensure that visitors have a way to contact the resident assistant on duty or someone in the security office should they need to request access into the building. For students, the added benefit of an intercom system outside the dormitory is the ability to easily reach campus support staff should they arrive at their residence hall and find their keycard is missing or not functional.

A two-way video and audio intercom system also provides an additional layer of security for staff, by providing visual verification of visitors. Video intercoms can enable staff to not only talk to someone who wants to enter but also clearly see the person when the system includes an integrated IP video camera. Dormitory staff can use a two-way video intercom system to confirm a person's identity, whether the person is a food delivery driver or an individual whose access to a particular building has been restricted. These visual interactions can help staff members to quickly determine if the person is who they say they are or to check identification credentials using the video camera.

If someone is not permitted on property, resident hall staff can alert the proper on-campus authorities. Security is maintained while campus authorities are summoned to address the issue.

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Mobile apps, when paired with IP intercom systems, provide increased flexibility for security directors or officers on educational campuses. For example, if a campus is not able to staff the lobby of a building or a dormitory, access can be remotely managed from a mobile device. Such apps enable security personnel to access video feeds and directly communicate with the student or staff member requesting access to a building. Remote oversight is also an efficient and safe way to manage campus deliveries.

Securing Parking Lots and Outdoor Spaces

Security in parking lots on college and university campuses often presents one of the biggest challenges for campus security because parking facilities are often large and located quite a distance away from traditional educational buildings on campus.

Emergency parking towers, equipped with intercom systems, can be strategically placed throughout parking lots and garages, providing an additional layer of security, especially for emergency situations. For example, if a student does not feel safe walking to their vehicle after a class late at night, an

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Many intercoms come equipped with paging capabilities. This ability means that an intercom station can be used to provide direct communication into lecture halls if an emergency unfolds on campus, such as a major weather event or an active shooter incident. Preprogrammed messages can be recorded to give students and staff directions on what to do next, such as to shelter in place, move to a more secure location, or to evacuate the premises immediately.

emergency parking tower can be quickly used to directly speak with on campus security staff or to request an escort. Including a video intercom allows security staff to see the student requesting assistance. Such visual contact can provide critical identification when staff arrive on-site.

Because these towers are tall and equipped with light beacons on top, they are easy to locate, even at night. Additionally, these well-lit towers can act as crime deterrents by presenting a secured and monitored environment to would-be criminals. Since emergency towers are hardwired, each tower provides a secure and highly reliable method of communication, even in areas where cell phone coverage may be spotty.

Many parking garages are also maze-like structures, which can make it difficult for a person to clearly communicate their specific location. The tower’s specific location is shared with security personnel when the emergency communication button is pushed. This information helps to ensure that responders are dispatched to the correct location.

Having video intercom systems located inside a parking garage allows security officers to clearly hear and speak with the individual who is calling about an emergency. An optional overhead camera can provide a birds-eye view of the area around the person in distress as compared to the identifying view of the intercom.

Enhancing Communication in Lecture Halls

College and university teaching staff must have access to security tools to easily communicate with the appropriate people in the event of an emergency. Intercom systems in classrooms and lecture halls enable professors to reliably call for help without having to worry about poor cellular phone signals. The panic button on the intercom station in the room can be pre-programmed to contact on-campus security if a student or teacher experiences a medical issue or if a person in class becomes disruptive.

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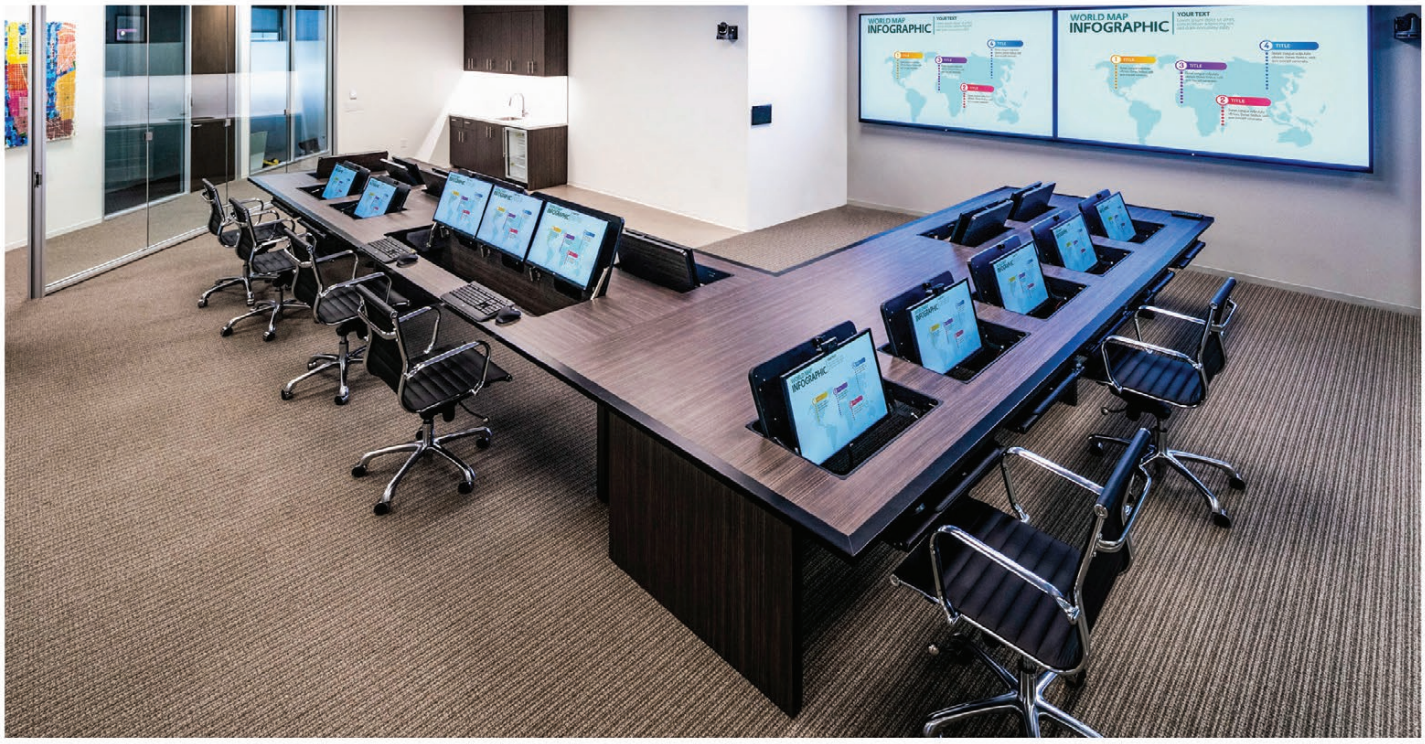

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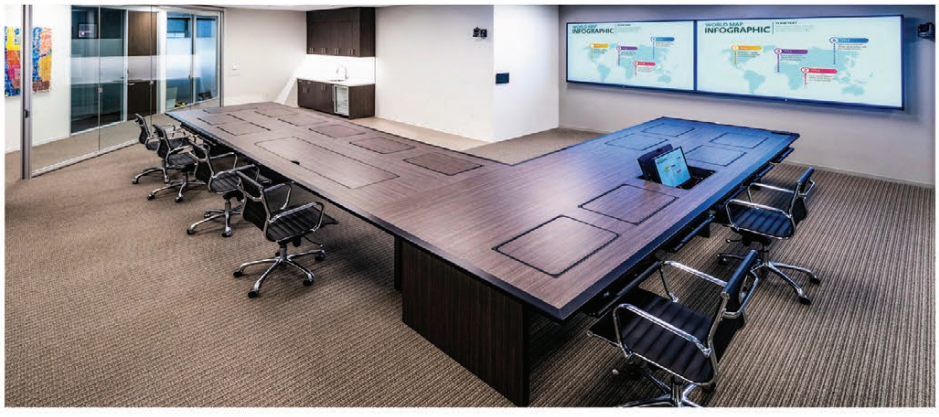

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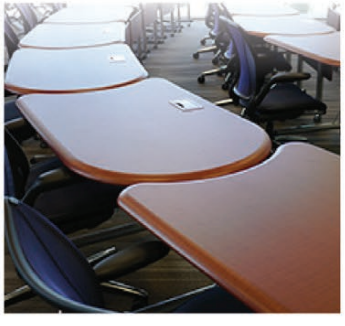

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Many intercoms also come equipped with paging capabilities. This ability means that an intercom station can be used to provide direct communication into lecture halls if an emergency unfolds on campus, such as a major weather event or an active shooter incident. Preprogrammed messages can be recorded to give students and staff directions on what to do next, such as to shelter in place, move to a more secure location, or to evacuate the premises immediately. These messages can also be set to be repeated every few minutes, ensuring the message is heard and that everyone within an educational building on campus receives the same consistent information.

Beyond emergency situations, intercom systems can also prove particularly helpful by providing a direct line of communication between the classroom and the technical support office. Such direct contact can make it easier for professors to request immediate assistance to address technical issues, such as a connectivity issue with the classroom projector.

Intercom systems help enhance security, manage building access, and provide a valuable means of communication in the event of an emergency. The reality is that educational institutions are prone to unexpected events. The addition of intercoms and emergency towers will strengthen the efficacy of any comprehensive security system and can help protect students, faculty, and visitors during emergencies.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR: Brad Kamcheff has been with Aiphone over thirty years. He uses innovative methods to promote and inform industry peers about Aiphone's vast intercom portfolio, award-winning quality processes, and unparalleled customer service teams. Long-time experience has helped shape his view of the security industry and become knowledgeable of its trends.

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