



UNIVERSITY OF NEVADA - RENO SAVES MILLIONS UPGRADING TO SYMMETRY SR RETROFIT SOLUTION

When the University of Nevada - Reno (UNR) learned their Casi Rusco access control system was deemed end of life and needed a massive upgrade, Housing Security Director, Charles (Chas) Stricker started asking questions and investigating options. When told by his current manufacturer there was only one option, he contacted his integrator, RFI Communications and Security Systems (RFI), and manufacturer, AMAG Technology, to explore AMAG's Symmetry SR Retrofit solution.

After learning how easy it was going to be to upgrade their old access control system to the Symmetry SR Retrofit solution, and how they would save thousands if not millions of dollars if they converted their entire campus, UNR decided to move forward.

As usual with universities, obtaining funding took time. UNR's security program is split into two sections: Main Campus and Housing. The Main Campus was unable to get funding right away. The Housing Department took a proactive approach and became a beta site for the Symmetry SR Solution.

AMAG's Symmetry SR Solution allowed UNR to reuse its existing wiring, card readers and cards. UNR's installing integrator, RFI, simply unplugged the old controllers and swapped in the SR control panels.

"The SR product is literally, unplug, put in the new board, and plug it back in," said Stricker. "We reused every piece of wire in every wall along with our readers and cards. This is the smartest upgrade solution I've ever seen."

For the beta test, White Pine Hall, a small residence hall with one main entrance, was converted over and tested for a year. The conversion went smoothly and the process was easy.

"We cut over White Pine in less than four hours," said RFI, Senior Account Executive, Hyong Cho. "We completed the programming changes and tested the doors. From that point on, we went to housing management, explained what we did and provided a budget number to finish the rest of the housing buildings."

Eventually, the Main Campus obtained funding and RFI started installing in the academic buildings.

The Main Campus and Housing departments had different requirements. For the Main Campus, not all students required access to dorms, whereas students living in dorms needed access control around the clock. Students are also not allowed in academic buildings after hours.

To simplify and provide more flexibility, UNR installed two servers and two Symmetry SR Retrofit systems.



AMAG Professional Services Creates Odyssey Housing Management Software Integration

All students receive a Wolf Card, which serves as a student ID, and can be used for purchasing meals, checking out library books, banking, entrance to sports venues, and for those who live in student housing, their access control card.

The Housing Department uses the Odyssey Housing Management System to assign rooms, view histories and track students. AMAG's Professional Services team worked with the Housing Department to create an interface to the Symmetry access control software. As students are added or removed from Odyssey, access rights according to building and wing are assigned or removed automatically from the Symmetry system.

"An unexpected benefit of Symmetry is how easy it is to build and assign access codes within the integration between Odyssey and Symmetry and change them when needed," said Stricker. "It gives the Housing Department great flexibility and it's all done on one screen."

"The kids love using a single card and we run through 3,000-4,000 cards a year," said Stricker.

AMAG Professional Services Delivers Main Campus Blackboard Integration

UNR uses the Blackboard Learning Management System for its student and faculty database, and AMAG's Professional Services team wrote a second interface to the Blackboard system. Symmetry pulls data from Blackboard on a schedule to populate cardholder data. If a faculty member has been terminated, their access will be automatically removed, immediately creating a safer environment.

The Wolf Card is issued through the Blackboard system and contains proximity technology for access control and magstripe tracks to purchase food, check out library books, etc.

"Symmetry looks at the Blackboard database to see what access is needed," said Cho. "If there is a new student, Symmetry will grab the information and populate into the Symmetry database and assign access. If someone is removed, the card is automatically deactivated."

Perimeter doors are secured on all buildings. Department heads within each operational building must request and fund any additional readers to secure internal or lab doors.

"Pre-planning and having IT support was instrumental to the success of this SR retrofit upgrade," said Cho. "Before going into this, I was skeptical and scared from having tried this in a corporate environment with a different product, but it went very smooth. We didn't have many issues we couldn't resolve and overall I am very happy with how it went."

Meeting Compliance

Two separate BioSafety Labs, one operated by UNR's Medical School and the other, the State of Nevada, conduct research and testing related to respiratory infections. Symmetry helps UNR meet strict compliance requirements mandated by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention by keeping a record of who came and went by inserting the date and time in a database field. UNR stores that data for a minimum of three years and is able to run reports if requested to do so to meet compliance.



Future

The University of Nevada-Reno continuously expands its Symmetry system as projects are granted funding. At the time of publication, one housing structure is under construction and others are being considered.

RFI Communications & Security Systems

RFI Communications & Security Systems is a diversified multi-systems integrator that has been designing, installing, servicing and monitoring technology-driven security and fire/life safety solutions since 1979. The relationship between RFI and UNR goes back to the mid-1990's when UNR installed its first access control system. Over the past 20 years, RFI has worked with UNR on over 100 projects, and has developed a trusted relationship.

"We have a great relationship with RFI," said Stricker.

"We've been down this learning path together and both have taken responsibility for mistakes and missteps. We trust their judgment and abilities and look to them for future solutions to best protect our students."

"I am very happy with how quickly we were able to complete the upgrade to the Symmetry SR Retrofit System," said Stricker. "The software learning curve was quick, and RFI was willing to learn how to complete the upgrade. Even with all our last minute requests, both RFI and AMAG got it done."

Specifications:

Symmetry Access Control Software

Cardholders: 22,000

Buildings: 50

Readers: 700

Panels: 70 at Main Campus, 15 in Housing

Professional Services wrote custom scripts for Blackboard LMS and Odyssey HMS



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