HID®

Vanderbilt University Selects HID Mobile Access to Secure Its Sprawling Campus in Nashville, Tennessee

Nashville, Tennessee, USA

"Keeping students safe is our top priority. Another key consideration was moving to a mobile verification system and HID Mobile Access® fit our needs perfectly."

Mark Brown
Director of Business Services Technology
Vanderbilt University

Renowned University That Is A "City Within a City" Turned to HID Global to Ensure a Safe and Secure Environment for Its Students, Faculty and Staff

Vanderbilt University, located in Nashville, Tennessee, is an internationally recognized private research university with a total enrollment of more than 12,600, drawing from all 50 U.S. states and more than 100 foreign countries.

The oldest part of the Vanderbilt campus, built around 1859, is known for its abundance of trees and green space, which stand in contrast to the surrounding cityscape of urban Nashville. But along with its reputation for having a beautiful, green campus came the challenge of being in the center of a vibrant, fast-growing urban city.

The Vanderbilt campus is located approximately 1.5 miles (2.4 km) southwest of downtown and has 333 acres and 177 buildings. The fact that the campus is within city limits raised significant challenges around ensuring the right people had legitimate access to the school's resources and buildings and directly impacts resident students. The university, often referred to as "Vandy," has more than 90 percent of its students residing on campus the entire time they are in school.

CHALLENGE

Mark Brown, director of business services technology at the university, said that keeping students safe is the top priority. "We need to make sure that students are in a safe environment, so it's one less thing that they have to worry about and that the parents have to worry about."

In the early 2000s, Vanderbilt decided to convert its residence halls into an academic residential college system. "With more students on campus, we have to make sure that only students are accessing their residence halls, rather than members of the public wandering onto the campus," Brown said. "A secure access identity control program, ensuring only those with proper credentials could access residence halls, academic buildings, and faculty and staff areas, is of utmost importance to Vanderbilt."

Another consideration was the rapid adoption and ubiquitous nature of smartphones among students and faculty. With a $600 million building expansion project underway, Vanderbilt wanted to upgrade to a more convenient system for access control that was Bluetooth-enabled, eventually moving to mobile credentials. This would allow those on campus to more conveniently access their dormitories, dining halls and academic buildings with their mobile devices, and give the university a simple way to provision and de-provision credentials.

SOLUTION

Because of its broad deployment of HID access control cards and readers (along with a successful pilot of HID Mobile Access in the past) the university selected HID Global to deploy mobile access across its campus environment.

The University was also using CS Gold®, a higher education, on-premise solution from CBORD. The flexible system had been integrated with HID's Global access cards and door readers.

HID Mobile Access, powered by HID's Seos® credential technology, now makes it possible for credential holders to use their smartphone, tablet or wearable device to unlock doors. "You hold up your device to the card reader, just as you would a contactless card, and it sends that credential to the reader and unlocks the door, giving you access," Brown explains.

Another feature from HID Global called Twist and Go allows users to enter the door from further away by making a twist motion with their device—like twisting a doorknob. "The idea of twisting is to show that intent to go through the door, so you twist as you approach, and you can be probably up to 30 feet away," Brown said. "When you install the door reader you can change that range, so if you only want it to be available from a much closer distance you can dial it all the way down." In the pilot phase of the project, Vanderbilt deployed the Twist and Go feature on a roll-up door to a parking deck so that authorized drivers could enter more conveniently. "On hot days or cold days, you didn't even have to open the window to your vehicle," Brown added.

HID Mobile Access makes issuing credentials to new users simple. Users receive an email on their phone with a link to the HID Mobile Access app. "As soon as they've accepted that invitation and clicked on the link in the email, the credential gets pushed to their handset," Brown explains. "So really from the user experience, it's very easy." As a result, the solution cuts down on the time it takes the university to issue credentials. "What was probably a 10-minute process before can now be done in literally 10 seconds."

For contractors or other parties needing temporary access, Brown said provisioning those credentials is simple and more secure than a physical card. "Just a couple of days later—or however long they're going to be on campus—you can pull that credential off the phone, so they're not walking around with a credential they forgot to hand in."

In addition to rolling out mobile access on campus, Vanderbilt has begun to reissue students access cards to migrate to Seos-based smart cards—an upgrade from the iCLASS® technology currently in use. "We plan to slowly phase in the Seos chip as we issue cards over the next couple of years, and then eventually we'll just take the iCLASS chip off the card," Brown said. "That way we will have migrated to the latest and most secure card format."

The convenience of the new system provides the choice to use either an access card or mobile IDs on smartphones and has made it easier to conduct business on campus, Brown notes. "If faculty and staff are working late and they go to the restroom, for example, they might leave their ID card at their desk but they'll probably take their phone with them," said Brown. "So, in terms of convenience it's been very popular and performance has been great."

BENEFITS
HID Mobile Access is delivered through a highly secure and reliable cloud platform that is backed with a service-level agreement of at least 99.5% service availability.

What's more, students and staff have embraced the convenience and safety of using their device of choice for securely entering and exiting different areas on campus. The university plans to roll out mobile access to the entire student body over time. All iCLASS SE® campus readers are mobile-ready, so HID Mobile Access can quickly be expanded and installed to additional users.

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