

## ACCESS CONTROL

# SECURING PRESTIGE

Yale University migrates to new retrofit system

By Kim Rahfaldt



Yale University, Michael Marstrand

**ESTABLISHED IN 1701, YALE UNIVERSITY SPANS THE URBAN STREETS OF NEW HAVEN, CONNECTICUT WHERE 11,000 STUDENTS ASPIRE TO BECOME THE BEST IN THEIR FIELDS OF STUDY. YALE'S CENTRAL CAMPUS COVERS 310 ACRES WITH THE BUILDINGS REPRESENTING EVERY PERIOD IN ITS HISTORY: NEW ENGLAND COLONIAL, HIGH VICTORIAN GOTHIC, MOORISH REVIVAL TO TODAY'S CONTEMPORARY STYLES. IN ADDITION, THE WEST CAMPUS SITS ON 136 ACRES WITH 1.6 MILLION SQUARE FEET OF RESEARCH, OFFICE AND WAREHOUSE SPACE, AND THERE ARE OVER 600 ACRES OF ATHLETIC FIELDS AND NATURAL PRESERVES MAINTAINED.**

Securing a prestigious, historic university that is located in a busy, urban area produces challenges. High expectations by students, parents and staff, combined with today's security and environmental challenges, demand an exceptional security program.

With an attitude to continuously improve, Yale's Public Safety Department developed a security outreach, education and awareness plan and reduced theft by 80 percent over the past five years. From a technology perspective, their security system had reached the end of its life. To continue to provide a high level of security, the Director of Information Technology, David Boyd, and Chief of Police & Director

of Public Safety, Ronnell Higgins, along with a selected team of Yale stakeholders, decided to upgrade their legacy Casi Rusco Picture Perfect System to AMAG Technology's Symmetry SR Retrofit System. A true partnership was born between AMAG and Yale.

## YALE'S ACCESS CONTROL VISION

Between students continuously moving around and effectively managing thousands of visitors, Chief Higgins' vision was born from three goals:

1. To monitor and manage all security systems from a single point of contact.
2. To increase security and enhance the ability to control movement of all identity types through onboarding and offboarding of permanent and temporary employees, retirees or others, including implementing visitor management.
3. To increase efficiencies and enhance self-service access control using mobile credentials.

The Symmetry SR Retrofit System provided Yale an affordable migration path that gave them everything they needed in an integrated unified security system. Yale was able to keep their existing wiring in place along with their card readers and cards.

"Some of our buildings are 200 years old with three-foot stone walls," said Director of Information Technology, David Boyd. "Not having to do a rip and replace of our old system saved millions of dollars."



Yale University, Michael Marsland

“PSIMs were overkill and too expensive to buy and manage,” continued Boyd. “With Symmetry, we have a single point of contact and can manage threat levels and identities. It essentially operates as a mini PSIM for us.”

After a grueling six month process of vetting companies and their solutions, Yale selected AMAG and installation began almost three years ago.

“AMAG has been great to work with,” said Boyd. “We work closely with them on what we need for the future, and it has developed into a true partnership.”

### HOW TO TACKLE 350 BUILDINGS

The old Picture Perfect microboards were replaced with Symmetry Retrofit panels. Given that there are almost 900 controllers throughout the University to swap out, Yale took a building-by-building approach to upgrade to Symmetry and chose to vet all users in the process.

“We wanted a clean system. We sat with the building managers of each building and made sure the right people had access and had the correct access levels assigned to them,” said Boyd. “In the end, the transition will have taken longer, but we’ll have a brand new, clean database.”

AMAG’s Professional Services team wrote a customized interface to Yale’s proprietary internal database to easily pull data into the Symmetry Access Control system.

Deployment was simple. The integrator tested the old system and scheduled the changeover for each building. They then swapped out the old micros for the new SR controllers, plugged each one in and the panel can go live in a matter of minutes.

Yale uses a one-card system. Student IDs are used to purchase food, check out library books, and also used as an access control card. The

migration to the new system is so flawless, students and staff don’t realize the changeover is occurring. The student access cards operate normally regardless if a building has been converted to Symmetry or not.

“The biggest story here is that no one knows we are changing from one system to another,” said Boyd. “There is no disruption.”

### STRIKING A BALANCE

According to Chief Higgins, parents make decisions about where to send their kids to college based on what they see and feel. Yale is mindful of that, and is careful to articulate how safe the campus is so the parents are aware.

“We need to have the systems in place that ensure that what we said [about Yale’s security] is in fact, true,” said Chief Higgins.

A college campus must be open, yet safe and secure. An active shooter hoax a few years back forced Chief Higgins and Boyd to look at their security program from a different perspective. The incident invoked a regional response. Boyd and his team were pulling up cameras and monitoring the situation live, and the security system worked. However, people from outside the University were called in to help. The city police and fire department officials did not know the layout of the buildings or campus like the Yale police department. Communicating and executing a lockdown scenario proved difficult because of their lack of familiarity.

Chief Higgins and his team examined what happened versus what they would like to see happen in the future. “Tragedy trumps tradition,” said Chief Higgins. “We averted tragedy but determined it was time to make some changes.”

“That incident showed us we needed a way to manage threats so we can lock down the school or an area with the click of a mouse,” said Boyd. “Our new Symmetry SR Solution has Threat Level Manager.”

Threat Level Manager allows Yale to lock down the university in the event of an emergency, but still provide an open campus the rest of the time.

Boyd and Higgins have big plans to do much more to ensure a secure campus for students and staff. Increasing efficiency is a large part of it.

“We are looking into a self-service web page to increase efficiency,” said Boyd. “Rather than email changes to a central scheduler, we want building managers with proper authority to make changes on a website to increase efficiency. The cost savings would be substantial.”

AMAG’s Symmetry CONNECT policy-

based identity management software will help streamline Yale’s internal onboarding and offboarding process to improve workflow and better operationalize their business.

“Symmetry CONNECT will obtain information from the HR system and push out to authorized individuals to on-and-off board students and employees,” said Boyd.

Between students and staff, the number of changes being made to the system on a daily basis demands a streamlined approach. Symmetry CONNECT minimizes cumbersome paper and multiple email requests, improving efficiency and saving money.

Yale also plans to integrate Symmetry access control with Milestone’s xProtect



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video management system allowing events to pop up on video where there is an alarm. Vingtor Stentofon Intercoms are located on campus and they plan to tie in the audio and the video so live camera feeds pop up on the Symmetry system. Creating more efficient guard tours and implementing mobile credentialing will also be considered in the future to increase usability.

“Once we implement these upgrades, that’s when the end user will see a difference in our systems,” said Boyd. “And that’s our plan.”

“Symmetry has helped us service our community in the most optimum way,” said Chief Higgins.

For over the first two years of the project, an AMAG engineer worked onsite with the Yale team. He helped manage the software conversion, interface creation and hardware conversion. Issues were resolved quickly and a strong relationship established.

“Our relationship with AMAG Technology is a true partnership,” said Boyd. “They work closely with us through each phase of our upgrade and listen to what we need to successfully secure our campus. I value the relationship and recommend Symmetry for any campus environment.”



Kim Rahfaldt is the public relations manager at AMAG Technology.



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