By Ralph C. Jensen

REGULAR CONSULTATION

New York integrator sets security tone on higher education campus

J effrey Sweeney wears multiple hats at A+ Technology and Security Solutions, the highest profile of which is business development manager. He also serves as a security consultant to various customers that sister company, IPVideo Corp provides with security hardware. For Sweeney, it's the best of both worlds. He is an integrator and consultant with access to IPVideo's stable of networking solutions.

For A+ Technology, higher education is a main player in the security in-

dustry, including Stony Brook University (SBU) on Long Island. It is part of the State University of New York higher education system, including its world-renowned university medical center. From its beginnings a half century ago, SBU has been characterized by innovation, energy and progress that includes state-of-the-art security systems to protect students, staff and instructors, while transforming the lives of people who earn degrees and those who make groundbreaking discoveries in the university's laboratories.

SBU has evolved in a dramatic trajectory of growth from what was once a small teacher preparation college into an internationally-recognized research institution. The university, however, is not too big to learn new lessons of its own, which is perfect for A+ Technology, because when it comes to security, there is plenty to learn.

A PASTORAL SETTING

Stony Brook's reach extends from its 1,039-acre campus on Long Island's North Shore, encompassing the main academic areas, an 8,300-seat stadium and sports complex, and Stony Brook Medicine to Stony Brook Manhattan, a research and development park, four business incubators and various places where education is a must. Stony Brook also co-manages Brookhaven National Laboratory along with other such prestigious names as Princeton, the University of Chicago, Stanford and the University of California, Berkeley.

Security is a must.

"We're not just protecting an institution of higher education, we also protect a medical center and always-growing research facilities that have unique demands for security," said Lawrence M. Zacarese, assistant chief of police and director of the office of emergency management at Stony Brook. "We are responsible for more than 200 buildings, and all that goes along with that. Our police force is about 150 strong with 75 of those officers acting as sworn officers of the state. We provide security in the medical center; and the staff there face distinct challenges in that environment."

Stony Brook is still growing. There are about 24,500 students; 11,500 are residents on campus, and 24,500 staff serve in various roles of education or support. The university is a rather large city in terms of land mass and population, and it even has its own 911 call center, handling 38,000 calls per year. Keeping everything on the network operating properly is exactly what keeps the university onsite integration team busy.

"In our case, the higher education campus is a public institution and our goal is to make sure the security staff on campus has everything it needs to execute equipment to the highest level," Sweeney said. "While the university has its own full service integration team, we are the reseller and trusted advisor, and when it comes to new technology, we stay ahead of the curve in an advisory role to inform the customer what the technology is used for and how it will best serve them."

MORE CAMERAS IN PLACE

Because of its growth, Stony Brook recently placed its 1,000th camera. The university had been replacing its old analog system with IP cameras when there was a failure; though in 2008, there was an internal decision to use the latest technologies and make the switch to an all-IP system. That switch is ongoing and when new cameras are warranted, IP equipment is the choice. The cameras of choice on this campus are Axis and Panasonic.

The university poses an interesting situation to campus police and to A+ alike. For instance, the university police use some of its annual budget to upgrade and buy new cameras for this campus. Other departments may want to upgrade their own security system so they, too, buy networking cameras as well. Though it is a joint effort, Zacarese and his staff are always in the mix when it comes to security.

"Everyone on campus understands IP cameras on the network and how they work," Zacarese said. "With multiple buildings on campus, everything is networked. The challenge, of course, is that this is a public campus and our challenge is to protect the faculty, students and staff."

"What really made our IP cameras work was replacing the head-end servers and installing a friendly video management system," said Jack Plunkett, chief technology officer at IPVideo Corp. "We worked diligently with A+ Technology and the university by installing SentryVMS. This system has been very friendly to the university's efforts, and as they grow their security system, the VMS will grow with us. It also is compatible with a huge range of cameras, allowing us to use whatever camera model makes the most sense in any given location."

The growth of security solutions has been steady. In 2012, the hospital campus on the north side of the university tapped into the same head-end servers. All camera systems on campus are now converged, feeding into the

university's command center.

The push for security has come from many different avenues, not the least of which are concerned parents, who want not only a good education for their children but expect them to be safe and secure in their learning environment.

UNDERSTANDING THE SOFTWARE

The security system has been installed in such a manner that adding to the security network is not only simple, but can be completed rapidly and without a hitch. Sweeney, who routinely visits with the police department on security installs, said that the campus can add 50 to 60 cameras at any one time seamlessly, and the Sentry VMS head end is completely expandable, with more than enough room for growth.

"Our network engineers [A+ Technology] are truly the backbone of our success at the university because they understand the network, number of cameras per server and where to place all the equipment so it works at its optimum," Sweeney said. "We may not do the installs on campus, but we have the ability to instruct how things and where things will work best while putting the system in place. This is much more than a point-and-shoot experience. As security integrators, we fully understand how to maximize the view of a camera. We understand how a building is built and how security fits into today's technology."

Zacarese also said that the university has "lots of real estate on campus" and is able to be an integral part of the Emergency Operations Centers. The university is seen as an inextricable unit among all of it local, state and federal partners. They have a place at the table when there is a regional emergency and will be called upon to help and serve.

"We are very fortunate to have an open line of communication to A+ Technology," Zacarese said. "They support us in all our needs, lend expertise and we work with them in understanding the potential of new products."

EMBRACING THE IP NETWORK

Zacarese said that his first encounter with security on campus was not a pleasant experience. The campus was filled with analog systems, and even then, they were dispersed in a hodgepodge manner. He also found DVRs located in ceilings and sometimes in desks; nothing really seemed to make sense. That's when Zacarese touched base with A+ Technology and Sweeney to begin a phase-in implementation of the IP solution.

"A+ Technology helped us initially with servers and a camera system," Zacarese said. "We also applied for and received a grant from the government because we had a series laptops thefts that contained sensitive research information.

"The analog cameras had no clear guidelines established for their use. When

we began to switch over to the IP camera system, we implemented specific rules for the use of the cameras and how they should be used. For instance, the chemistry department bought their own cameras, but it is our responsibility to install and monitor how they are used. The university bought the camera system for the center mall of the campus, and again, we are responsible for placing them and implementing them to the best possible situation."

The university also has invested heavily in an IP camera system that benefits students from a recreation standpoint. With the help of A+ Technology, campus police have designed a security system for the campus recreation fields where intramural sports take place. Still at the heart, or head, of the system is IPVideo's SentryVMS, which brings all security systems on campus together.

"Our success is working hand-in-hand with A+ Technology and implementing the VMS and hardware they bring to the table," Zacarese said. "They know their hardware and how the software works in concert. Let's face it, on the university campus, we have high-level, technical end users who want and expect the best solution available."

The switch to IP cameras has been a successful adventure. Not too long ago, there were a few burglaries on campus, just the same as any small city might have. Within 24 hours, the subject was identified and arrested. The security system provided clear evidence as to who that person was in every instance. The cameras caught the perpetrator entering the campus, and eventually showed it was a local high school student.

"The integration to IP cameras has certainly helped our investigations," Zacarese said. "We know the technology costs money but we've been able to get the money we need to invest in the latest technology, and we get results."

College campuses, however, have some unique situations. Zacarese said that students often leave doors open or unlocked, meaning there are crimes of opportunity. He said that with a great security system in place, campus police are able to move quickly past an unlocked door to solve a crime. Campuses, especially Stony Brook, are also filled with research laboratories, and these offices house information that must be secure.

"The good guys and the bad guys know there is critical information here, and it is our responsibility to help secure it," Zacarese said. "Additional security is used, which may be an iris scanner or additional card access. With help from A+ Technology, we are able to install what is needed and warranted.

"Our campus police are really on a physical security mission here. We behave within a culture of security. We know this, and our partner, A+ Technology, knows this too." DS

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