

Suffolk University

Significant Efficiency Savings with CBORD and Allegion Access Control Solution

Suffolk University, located in the heart of downtown Boston, serves a diverse student population of about 6,500 across three schools.

“We have students from over 50 different countries, and pretty much every socio-economic group imaginable is represented on campus,” comments Mikhail Ilin, manager of campus card services and adjunct professor at Suffolk University. “In addition to my duties as the card services manager, I also teach some classes here at Suffolk. It’s great to have interactions with students from different countries and different cultures. They offer different perspectives, and they all bring something unique and very positive to the table.”

Suffolk’s mission emphasizes its commitment to fostering a culture of inclusion and providing a student-centered experience. In fact, student satisfaction was the catalyst for implementing CBORD’s Odyssey campus card solution in the first place, years ago. “At the time, the university had a basic system just to produce IDs,” notes Mikhail. “The card system was upgraded to Odyssey when Suffolk opened its first residence hall. That created a need for a comprehensive card services program here at Suffolk. Our students needed to be able to pay for meals and buy food off campus.”

Challenge

Over the years, Suffolk has continued to expand its use of CBORD’s campus card solutions, implementing additional features and modules to meet changing requirements. These solutions have enabled Suffolk to manage its growing campus services program successfully, yet there was an important function still being handled manually.

“We had a standalone access control system that didn’t integrate fully with Odyssey,” Mikhail explains. “There was a custom bridge built by the Odyssey team to update the standalone access control periodically. It was a lot of work to get that going at the beginning of every semester. We would have to enter information for students by hand and create their access manually.”

Solution

The university needed a solution that would both eliminate the time-consuming manual processes and provide one cohesive solution, with one point of contact, for hardware and software. “We wanted to move away from the environment where the locks and readers are provided by one company and the software is provided by another company,” Mikhail comments. “When issues came up, there was confusion about which company to contact. We wanted to eliminate all of that.”



Mikhail turned to CBORD and became an early adopter of CBORD’s access control solution. “We were probably one of the first customers running CS Gold and CS Access with Odyssey,” Mikhail says. “We had instant integration with access control. I have to do an upload once, and the two systems talk with limited action on my part.”

Having decided on the software solution, Mikhail needed to consider his options for hardware and card format. “As soon as we went with CS Access, I knew there were some choices to make about what card to use, what readers, and what lock mechanism we would use.”

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Mikhail Ilin,
Manager of Campus Card Services

At a CBORD User Group Conference, Mikhail took the opportunity to speak with a representative of Allegion, a long-term CBORD partner for locks and card readers, about his challenges.

Mikhail was pleased that their conversation was focused on meeting his operational needs. “There was a sincere interest in providing the best solution for Suffolk, not just making a sale,” Mikhail comments. “Allegion went the extra mile by coming onsite to speak with our committee regarding this project and the different options available.”

A solid partnership between CBORD and Allegion played a crucial role in Mikhail's decisions for this project. "I asked Allegion flat out if they were looking at a long-term partnership with CBORD," Mikhail notes. "CBORD and Allegion confirmed the partnership and integrations were strong. I can buy everything from CBORD, and they are very familiar with the different products and solutions. We can contact one company when issues arise."

Allegion's readers communicate with CBORD's systems and read a variety of card formats, giving the university flexibility and insight into student behavior and access usage. "Allegion solutions are in place throughout campus. For access control, we currently have 114 doors secured with a combination of MT11 and MTMS15 Allegion readers, mostly in our residence halls. The remaining readers secure our computer labs, fitness center, as well as biology, chemistry, and physics labs to protect expensive equipment and to know who goes in and out and when," Mikhail says.

This is where the communication with CBORD's systems makes a difference. "We can gather stats on usage of the secured rooms and the fitness center, which gives us valuable information we can use for strategic planning," Mikhail comments.

"On the Odyssey side of our operation, we use Allegion readers in our two Value Plus Reload Stations where students load money onto their campus card accounts," Mikhail explains. "We also have Allegion MT20 readers in about 50 print release stations and 10 POS terminals, allowing students to tap their cards instead of swipe to save time at these busy locations."

Regarding the actual ID cards, Mikhail has received a positive response to the new card format he chose. "When we switched to CBORD's access solution, we went with Schlage® MIFARE® DESFire® ID cards and the feedback was very positive," Mikhail notes. "Students like the ability to just tap instead of swipe. Tapping the card saves a couple of seconds during the check-in process; however, during rush hour these seconds add up to considerable time savings which leads to increased student satisfaction."

"Our desire to upgrade was also driven by the industry standards for ID credentials," Mikhail continues. "We realized that the trend has shifted toward a smart, more secure credential. Working with our CBORD account manager, we reviewed several options for ID cards and together we picked MIFARE."

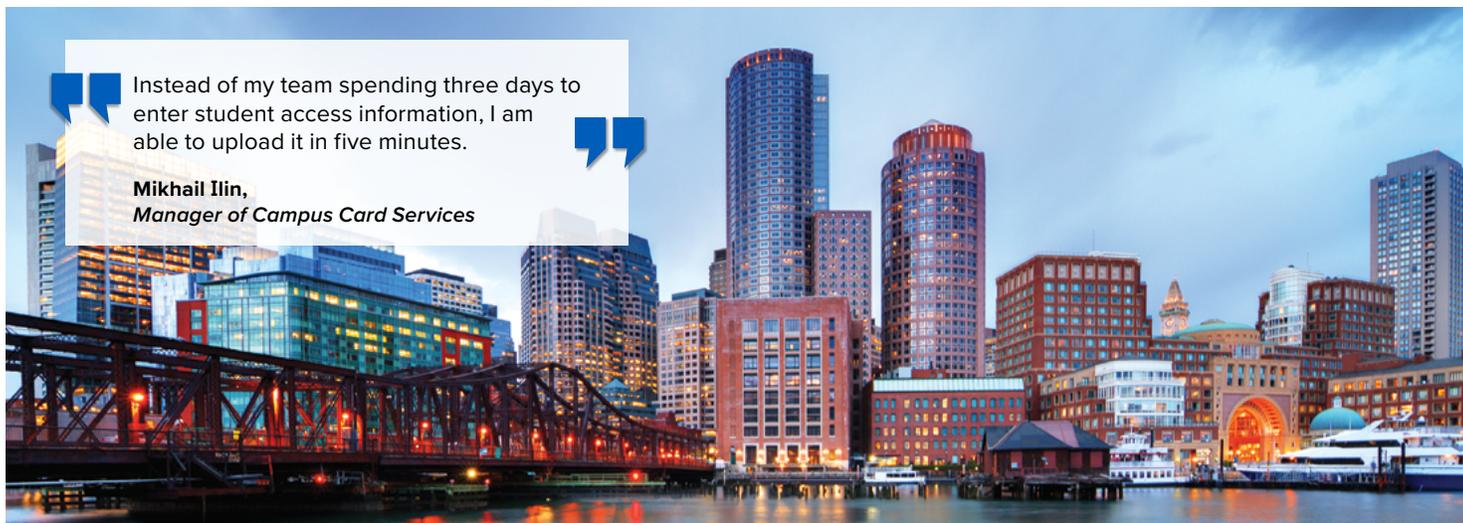
Business Benefits

Mikhail appreciates the time savings and improved efficiency resulting from the switch to CBORD and Allegion for access control at Suffolk. "Instead of my team spending three days to enter student access information, I am able to upload it in five minutes. We have realized significant positive impact on efficiency and have been able to do more with fewer human resources."

With the university upgrading its first residence hall with 200 Allegion AD-400 online locks this summer, Mikhail already sees the benefits to come. "We anticipate cost savings as we move away from physical keys," Mikhail states. "It's my understanding that res life spends a lot of time and resources distributing keys, getting them back, repairing keys and locks, and dealing with lockouts. We'll be able to eliminate all that with a tap of the card. That's one of the of cost savings we're looking forward to."

Mikhail also looks forward to the peace of mind that will come with eliminating the use of master mechanical keys. "If someone were to lose a master key to a building, it would cost a lot of money to replace every single core. With online locks, it's not a problem if a master key is lost," Mikhail continues. "Simply turn it off and within minutes we're good to go without added costs."

CBORD and Allegion together provide the leading-edge access control solution Suffolk was seeking. Mikhail appreciates that both companies are committed to helping his program succeed and that both look to the future to provide innovative solutions. "It's the innovation and the connection with staff members," Mikhail notes. "I am able to reach out to senior management at CBORD with any concerns or suggestions, and they take them to heart. There is a long list of staff members who have gone above and beyond, doing everything in their power to make us happy. These professional connections mean a lot to me." ■



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