SAFE TO LEARN

Ellie Gibson *outlines the steps to creating effective security solutions for campus security*

University for many students is their first taste of independence and living alone, and as a result they are at their most vulnerable. Students have often never had to think about their own security, instead relying on parents or guardians. Moving to a new place inexperienced in personal security makes them easy targets.

This article will break down the key security issues faced on campuses and will explore the security solutions that can be implemented to create an effective security solution.

Titan Security Europe has compiled research about campus security. These are our main findings. The most common type of campus crime is sexual assault. Other campus crimes include burglary, aggravated assault and motor vehicle theft. The rates of campus crimes are as follows: sexual assault 44 percent, burglary: 32 percent, motor vehicle theft 12 percent, aggravated assault 7 percent, robbery 2 percent and arson 2 percent. As much as 20 percent of burglaries at universities happen within the first six weeks of the academic year, when students are at their most vulnerable, while one in three university students will become victims of a crime on campus.

RISK ANALYSIS

The first step in building an effective security solution for campuses is to carry out a risk analysis to identify specific threats that might be faced. Risk analysis helps to identify blind spots around the campus, areas where security is inadequate and where potential security hazards lie. To carry out a risk analysis on campus property, follow these steps:

GATHER NECESSARY INFORMATION

Data collection is the first and one of the most important steps to take when carrying out a risk assessment. These include identifying the current positions of existing security systems; identifying the potential blind spots of these systems; documenting all existing layers of security – CCTV, access control etc. – and comparing existing security measures to the campus crime rate to establish effectiveness.

IDENTIFY THE RISKS

From your data collection, you should be able to identify the main risks facing the campus. These incorporate: the most commonly reported crimes on the campus; what are students most concerned about or wary of – talk with the students themselves to ascertain this; and identifying the crime rate in the general area surrounding the campus.

IDENTIFY CAMPUS VULNERABILITY

From your data collection, identify and assess how vulnerable the campus is: how big are the blind spots on the campus; what existing security systems work and which ones fall short; and how easy would the campus be for outsiders to infiltrate?

ASCERTAIN RISK PROBABILITIES

At what time during the day are specific threats more of a risk and what other factors play into the probability of a crime occurring – sports game days, society outings, final term days, and so on?

MITIGATE

From this assessment, you can begin to implement strategies to mitigate threats.

Putting together an efficient security strategy comprised of security solutions and student training will move to protect campuses from the outlined crimes and risks.

ACCESS CONTROL

Access control ensures that only authorised persons can enter a specific building. It can take several forms – keycards, lanyard keys, security codes and fingerprints to name a few – but is one of the key strategies to protecting a college campus.

In terms of campus security: security codes can too easily be shared – even if students are forbidden from doing so, they might share codes with a friend, who could go on to share them with others; keycards can be too easily lost and/or stolen, proposing a risk if they are not immediately reported lost and therefore deactivated; and fingerprinting systems, while extremely efficient, are unfortunately not especially cost-effective.

The most efficient and cost-effective means of access control for campuses are lanyard keys. These are cost-effective, costing a similar amount to key cards. If students and staff carry keys around their necks, the risk of them being lost or stolen significantly reduces.

If keys are around their necks, students and staff are much more likely to identify when they lose their key to report it. Access control should be a first line of defence for universities. By controlling who can and who cannot enter specific areas, a college can minimise who can become a potential risk to the campus and students.

CCTV

Placing CCTV in the public areas of a campus (residential common rooms, car parks, outdoor forum areas, etc) will do the following: deter the theft of campus property; monitor all public areas in real time – meaning if any crime should break out in communal areas, it will be seen and then dealt with effectively; and should a crime occur that is not caught but is reported, CCTV footage of the crime will be used as evidence.

> **AS SECURITY GUARDS GROW FAMILIAR WITH STUDENTS, THEY BECOME SOMEONE THEY CAN TRUST**

CCTV is an extremely effective line of defence in campuses. It operates in areas that would be identified as 'blind spots', such as areas of buildings where concierge guards are not in operation, car parking areas or outside areas of campus that security patrols cannot always be in the vicinity of; having a constant manned presence in all public areas is ineffective – it is overly expensive, difficult to organise and has an opposite effect to making students feel safe; and with CCTV in operation, however, a campus ensures a constant but discreet monitoring of all public areas. It is imperative that CCTV is only in public areas. Students must be allowed privacy in their own rooms.

PERIMETER FENCING

Perimeter fencing encloses a specific area – in this case the campus – and works to deter outsiders from entering the property by setting a clear boundary. The fencing can be anything from a wooden fence to monitored pulse fencing. Wooden fencing is the cheaper alternative of the two and does a decent job at deterring intruders. However, it lacks some effectiveness as it is easy to scale, climb over or even break through a wooden fence. Monitored pulse fencing will cost a campus considerably more to install, but provides a far more effective defence. Monitored pulse wires will inform security teams if anyone attempts to enter the property. Meanwhile, if the fencing is also energised, it will shock intruders on attempted entrance. However, a campus can also opt for non-energised fencing, which won't shock intruders but will silently alert teams and allow them to catch intruders – especially when paired with CCTV monitoring of public areas.

SECURITY PATROLS

Security patrols involve guards monitoring the campus in-person. While a constant manned presence in all areas is probably unnecessary – hence the need

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for CCTV — a patrol that dispatches randomly or at set times can spot-check potential blind spots on campus. Patrols can additionally operate overnight, when campus is emptier — this is when crimes such as sexual assault or aggravated assault are more likely to take place. Security patrols can work alongside CCTV and monitored perimeter fencing to catch intruders as well as security risks from students and staff themselves.

THE MOST EFFICIENT AND COST-EFFECTIVE ACCESS CONTROL FOR CAMPUSES IS LANYARD KEYS

CONCIERGE SECURITY

Concierge security is a line of physical in-person security for the interiors of campus buildings. With concierge security: security guards are placed on reception desks of academic and residential buildings; these guards become familiar with students — becoming someone students can trust and turn to if feeling unsafe; concierge guards will check that any and all visitors entering a building are there specifically to visit with a student or staff member, and will verify this; and any and all deliveries will go through these guards.

STUDENT TRAINING

Security on campus is a group effort. Alongside implemented strategies as outlined, it is also important to provide students with training and information on how to keep themselves safe, such as: training them on the importance of keeping keys on them at all times; instructing them to keep all valuables locked away when not in use; giving them the appropriate phone numbers of all campus security services; assuring them of anonymity should they report a crime; and suggesting that they always travel in pairs or groups. It would additionally be highly beneficial to run simulations and workshops on keeping themselves safe on campus.

Student training on personal security is absolutely essential as part of an overall security system for campuses. Having access control, security patrols, concierge guards, perimeter fencing and CCTV in place work extremely well to protect a campus and its students. However, without instructing students that have never lived alone on the most basic personal security principles, carelessness and negligence can leave a large blind spot that even the best security practices can do little to combat.

CAMPUS SECURITY IN ACTION

By using a range of security methods that go hand-in-hand with one another, an effective and holistic security system can be created to efficiently protect a campus. The solutions outlined in this article work to deter and prevent crime from occurring on campus — and even if a criminal manages to bypass every single security solution set out, they can still be apprehended later by the authorities. One security solution on its own is not enough. A cohesive set of solutions from campus perimeters to individual buildings is needed in order to create the best security possible for campuses and students ●

Ellie Gibson is a Marketing Manager with Titan Security Europe, a leading global security firm. She has worked in this position for two years and with the company since 2018, during which time she gained experience in numerous departments, contributing to her overall knowledge on the industry.

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