



Columbus State University

Customer case study

TECHNOLOGY/PRODUCTS

- Fargo DTC400 Direct-to-Card Printer/Encoder
- Asure ID Exchange badge design and database software

TOP REASONS WHY COLUMBUS STATE UNIVERSITY CHOSE FARGO PRINTERS

- Ease of use for multiple users
- Ability to print debit cards
- High responsiveness in the printer
- Ability to add a magnetic stripe in future years

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*Rick Cravens,
Director of Campus Recreation,
Columbus State University*

Columbus State University improves security, strengthens productivity and enhances student satisfaction with new printer.

Challenge

Students know that handing in work on time is important. That timeliness is important in other areas of college life as well. That's why waiting two or three days for ID card support was the straw that broke the back of Rick Cravens, Director of Campus Recreation at Columbus State University in Columbus, Georgia. Cravens, who is responsible for issuing ID cards to the 7,500 students on campus, was also the person who set up the ID card program at the university several years ago. He knew it was time for a change.

Columbus State University is a comprehensive university offering strong academic programs, a diverse and dynamic student body, a committed and dedicated faculty and staff, a beautiful landscaped campus, a variety of athletic and student activity programs, and an exceptional level of community support. It needed a more responsive ID card program.

The use of ID cards has evolved naturally at the university. "We have used ID cards in the library the longest," said Cravens. "Computer labs came next about five or six years ago, followed by the fitness center. It has been a natural progression."

As most of Columbus' students live off campus, administrators were first concerned with controlling access. "There has to be a way to regulate who can go where," said Cravens. "This has become more important in the last four or five years. It's easier to identify and control people with ID cards."

Solution Found

In 2005, Cravens upgraded to a Fargo DTC400 Direct-to-Card Printer/Encoder at the suggestion of Gary Levinsohn of ID Services, Inc., a Columbus-based Fargo solutions provider. Cravens' primary reason was to improve responsiveness, but he soon found added benefits, including ease of use and a high quality product. Direct-to-Card technology uses dye-sublimation printing, which applies heat to a dye-based ribbon that is divided into four main colors. During printing, a printhead passes over the ribbon, heating the dyes on the ribbon, which then applies colors to a blank card. By combining colors and varying the heat, the printer can produce up to 16.7 million colors.

Today, student ID cards are issued from the student center. Administrators print cards directly from the student enrollment database, eliminating the possibility of error and making changes easy. Using Asure ID Exchange badge design and database software, those printing the cards just have to add a photo. To prevent someone from printing a card from a non-enrolled student, the software prints a large "NO" across the front of the screen if the correct data isn't found. To add another layer of security, Cravens recently moved the printing station from an open counter to a closed room and had an access window cut into the wall.

"Fargo printers, specifically the DTC400 series, are extremely easy to use," said Levinsohn. "That's an important factor, because Columbus State University has several different students who work in the student center during the course of a week, and there is always turnover. Training students on the Fargo printer has been easy."





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ID Services, Inc.*

HID CORPORATION
AMERICAS &
HEADQUARTERS
15370 Barranca Pkwy
Irvine, CA 92618
U.S.A.
Phone: (800) 237-7769
Tel: +1 (949) 732-2000
Fax: +1 (949) 732-2360

HID CORPORATION
ASIA PACIFIC
19/F 625 King's Road
North Point, Island East
Hong Kong
Tel: (852) 3160-9800
Fax: (852) 3160-4809

HID CORPORATION, LTD
EUROPE, MIDDLE EAST, AND
AFRICA
Haverhill Business Park
Phoenix Road
Haverhill, Suffolk
CB9 7AE
England
Phone: +44 (0) 1440 714 850
Fax: +44 (0) 1440 714 840

While Cravens' staff prints student ID cards, Human Resources' personnel print those for faculty and staff. "We used to print them all," said Cravens, who admits to wearing a number of hats at the university, "but it became difficult to maintain two databases, so Human Resources took over the faculty and staff ID cards." Human Resources also chose a Fargo DTC400 printer and Asure ID software for its ID system.

In addition to cards for students, faculty and staff, Columbus State University issues a number of different ID cards. Students in the teaching program have their own ID card for access into elementary schools. The nursing program also provides separate ID cards so nurses can practice at different hospitals. "We print seven or eight different IDs from our machine," said Cravens, "including some for the university police and retirees."

In 2005, Columbus State University also initiated a debit card program for students, collaborating with Higher One, which provides refund management services to colleges and universities. Debit cards not only provide a student benefit, but they also can help universities reduce administrative costs and simplify business processes.

Results

The reaction of students to the debit cards has been "very, very, very, very good," said Cravens. "I was kind of surprised, because many of the students and staff have never had a debit card before. It has been a learning and growing experience for them. They can use the card on and off campus. It was a good change for us." Students who lose their cards can go online and request a new card from Higher One. Because this takes about a week, students can have the university print a temporary card, which is good for two weeks while the bank creates a new debit card. Many colleges struggle with the issue of how much technology to include in an ID card. With dramatic advancements in ID card technology, there are many options today, and administrators are wise to look into the future as they consider their ID card program. ID cards on the Columbus State University campus today just use a bar code, but Cravens said he plans to add a magnetic stripe in the next couple of years. "The printer has that capability," he said, "so we don't need to upgrade. That's one of the reasons we selected the Fargo DTC400. We also may add card access to dorms, vending machines and copy machines on campus."

ID Services, Inc. has a yearly consulting plan with Columbus State University, which involves Levinsohn in decisions early in the process. Not only does this save the college a full-time employee, but it also anticipates issues before they become problems. "I work closely with Rick to make sure he is up to date on new technology and made aware of any potential security problems with ID card issuance," said Levinsohn. Prime examples include the upgrade in printers and software, as well as moving the ID desk to an enclosed secure space. The best part is that instead of waiting two or three days for ID card support, Cravens can count on Levinsohn to be there within hours, if needed.

Schools today are finding a wide variety of options to keep students and faculty safe, and in the process, they are enhancing convenience, efficiency and productivity. Columbus State University is no different. Here, every student receives an ID card that he or she can use to access a variety of amenities, including the fitness center, library, cafeteria, athletic events and computer labs. The housing administrators also use ID cards for dorm access and meal plans.

Experts in school safety have long known that a photo ID program is a proven tool in maintaining security. Administrators such as Cravens know that it also helps to strengthen a school's productivity and student satisfaction.

