

# **One Card ID System**

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## *Abstract*

*How one university transformed a limited function ID card into a multi-functional card. The following information highlights the steps taken to bring various campus departments together to enhance the delivery of services through the campus ID card.*

## **Introduction of the Organization**

Austin Peay State University is a comprehensive university located 45 minutes northwest of Nashville, TN. With a population of 9000 students on two campuses, the main campus is located in Clarksville and a satellite site at Fort Campbell, KY.

## **Statement of the Problem/Initiative**

As a state institution, contracts for services must be bid every 5 years and the contract for the ID system was set to expire and the university desired to consolidate and enhance the services offered on an ID card. The university was also going through a system-wide implementation of a new ERP system. In addition, ID hardware, computer and peripherals were nearing end of life and changes were needed to improve the efficiency of the system and the delivery of services to the campus community.

## **Design**

In order for enhancements to the system be initiated and accepted by the campus community it was important to understand the students' wants in a new card system as well the administration goals. A list of features was generated through conversations with students in leadership positions on campus and informal feedback from students

waiting on ID cards. The discussions focused on one thing: A card that will allow students to do a variety of tasks. Those tasks included, accessing residence halls with card readers, readers on vending machines, use of the card off-campus, access to athletic and student events and continued use in the campus food service area.

Campus administration enhanced the student list with features that were important for campus functionality and delivery of services:

- Identification

Wearing of ID cards by faculty, staff and students should there be an emergency situation.

- Building and campus security

After hours access to university facilities

24 hour locks on residence halls

- Declining balance on ID card:

Vending, copiers, food services and purchases. Reduction of cash handling and cash management issues

- Direct deposit capability

For student payroll and financial aid disbursement.

An RFP was developed to have a “one card” for all campus services and needs as expressed by the various constituencies. A couple of items were working in the favor of development of this new card. One time funds were available to cover hardware costs and several other projects were up for bid or rebid at the same time: food service, a

banking relationship with the ID card, card readers for doors and a new ERP implementation.

The ID Card RFP included the following required features:

- Point of Sale devices
- IP readers
- Windows based
- Ability to interface with third party access control vendors and outsourced bookstore operations
- Handle multiple food service options
- Established interface with ERP vendor
- Expandable features as funds become available

After the RFP was awarded, the university had to move quickly to implement all facets of the program in a very tight timeline. This required numerous meetings with the departments affected by the new system. Some of the meetings were taking place one year prior to awarding of the contract because of the need to develop import data feeds. The groups involved in the meetings included: Business Office, Public Safety, IT, Admissions, Records, Physical Plant and Student Affairs. During these meetings the following challenges were outlined:

- New ERP implementation (Banner)

- All new programs
  - New language to learn
  - Development of new interfaces
- Compressed Timeline
  - Started in November
  - First summer orientation was at the end of May
  - Coordination of new and different vendors
    - Food Service, Bank, ERP, Door Security System
- Re-Carding of campus
  - Summer Orientations
  - Returning students
  - Fort Campbell students
  - Faculty and Staff
- Banking relationship
  - Linking current ID card with optional bank account
  - Use of ID card in town as a debit card
  - Obtaining a IIN number
  - Providing checking accounts for students who do not qualify
- Staff Resources
  - IT time and priorities
  - University Facilities office
  - New Food Service vendor with new staff
  - Physical Plant

- Building Access Readers
  - Installation (electrical and fire system)
  - Summer and fall housing
  - Import of information
  - Training of Residence Hall staff
  - New Recreation Center turnstiles
  - Library afterhours access

## **Implementation**

The implementation phase of the project focused on two main areas of concern. First, coordination of all the affected areas was a top priority. The communication between all departments was essential in the success of the project. Regularly scheduled meetings were held to establish a timeline, develop a task list, assignment of duties and the designation of a follow up individual. That individual was responsible for following up on all tasks and deadlines. A key component to the coordination efforts was testing. Testing of data exchange was extensive, often and early in the process. The testing and re-testing of the system resulted in very few import problems.

Second area of concern was the marketing of the new system to the campus community. Through our banking partner, we were able to develop and distribute a new brochure highlighting the enhancements to the ID card. Other methods of marketing the changes and the need for a new ID were through the Housing Office and their orientation of new residence hall students, campus emails and the website. To further facilitate ease of re-carding we developed an alphabetical timeline in order to break up the lines in

manageable parts. However, that still left the issue of staffing of the re-carding event and in our agreement with the banking partner, the bank supplied the personnel to assist in the five day re-carding event in the fall. While a couple of days did see a 10 minute wait, the process was a success.

## **Benefits**

The benefits of the changes were seen on many different layers in the campus community. The students are now able to use one ID card when the journey around campus. This card provides access to meal plans, a declining balance, access to residence halls, recreation facilities, afterhours library access, vending machines and copiers. Students now consider the ID card the one item to have with them at all times, a key security benefit. In addition, students are able to put money on their account eliminating the need to carry cash or other cards.

The relationship with the banking partner has provided the student and university with several benefits. With the partnership, students can “attach” their ID card to the banking partner thus making the ID card a debit card for use anywhere that debit cards are accepted with a PIN number. This is off and on campus venues. The university at the same time moved from a check distribution model for financial aid disbursements and student payroll to a direct deposit model. This required all students to have a bank account. Since some students, for whatever reason, are not able to obtain an account, the banking partner did provide an account. The university not only saw a savings in the cost of printing of checks but also saw a reduction in the staff hours needed to supervise that

operation. This time reduction was seen not only in the printing phase but the reconciling phase as well.

With the addition of readers to vending machines and copiers, there was marked reduction in the handling of cash, reconciling of transactions and transporting cash across campus. The use of readers also allowed for the verification of the services, totaling of sales and elimination of cash refunds. The side benefit to this process was the reduction of risk of theft of money from vending machines and copiers.

While the system and the operation still require staff to monitor the day to day activities of the ID card, the initiation of the automatic updates/imports and various tasks has reduced the staff time to manually run programs and manipulate data.

Finally, with the implementation of the system, the campus safety and security has been enhanced. Lost keys, failure to return keys and the locking/unlocking of outside doors is not an issue any longer. With after hours access to buildings controlled electronically and through card readers, buildings are more security and 30% reduction in reports of lost property.

## **Retrospect**

There were several things that were learned in this process. First, there is never enough time and everything always takes longer to do than you planned. Second, changing card systems, food service vendors, adding a banking partner and installing a door reader system was a major juggling act and required a massive amount of communication and coordination. While it is not recommended to repeat this method of implementation it did bring several important features to the ID card at one time instead

of in stages. The students were able to see immediate improvements and enhancements in the system. Third, nobody likes to change. Resistance was high among certain population groups or individuals, however after the initial shock wore off, the system is now considered the norm. Change on the campus usually takes about six months to a year. New students coming onto the campus were not an issue and easily adapted to the system and some of the most active users of all the features. Miscommunication and assumptions were rampant on the campus and it is important to inform the campus community as often as possible and to meet with different campus entities to dispel rumors and misconceptions about the system. Great lengths were taken to make sure everyone was aware of the changes coming and the impact it may have on campus operations. Despite the communications, some departments were still late in jumping on board.

Finally, never be surprised about what is missed in the planning. Even today, two years after the first import, we still find new “oh reallys”. All the scenarios prepared for do not equal the day to day operation and despite the best efforts of everyone, things will be missed. When that happens tweaks to the system have to be made until the next one comes along. Best advice for everyone, buy lots of coffee and donuts for the IT department.