



OPEN OPTIONS®
ACCESS TECHNOLOGY



FAST FACTS

Customer

Young Harris College

Technology Partners

Open Options Access Control

Mercury Security

Milestone

Allegion

Industry

Higher Education

Geography

North Georgia

Young Harris College

CUSTOMER

Young Harris College is a private, baccalaureate degree-granting college located in the beautiful mountains of North Georgia. Founded in 1886 and historically affiliated with The United Methodist Church, Young Harris College educates, inspires and empowers students through the highest quality liberal arts education.

The college currently has more than 1,100 students across five divisions — Education, Fine Arts, Humanities, Mathematics and Science, and Social and Behavioral Sciences — and employs nearly 250 faculty and staff. YHC was named to the 2017-2018 list of Colleges of Distinction, and is also listed as a “Best National Liberal Arts College” by U.S. News & World Report.

CHALLENGES

Young Harris College has recently completed major campus improvements to accommodate their growth. These LEED-certified improvements include the 121,000-square-foot Rollins Campus Center, new residence facilities, and a 57,000-square-foot recreation and fitness center. Hollis Townsend, Director of Technology Support & Operations for YHC, saw this expansion as the perfect opportunity to implement a state-of-the-art access control solution in the new buildings, as well as upgrade the existing access control system in other areas of the campus.

YHC’s previous access control provider posed numerous issues that threatened the overall safety and security of the campus, including licensing, annual maintenance contracts, and technical support to name a few. “Integrations we needed were stalled because we weren’t able to upgrade the software every release due to costs, and calling in a problem was never a quick process,” said Townsend.

When searching for a new access control provider, Townsend cited the security of students and protection of facilities as two of the biggest challenges the new system needed to manage.

“We also wanted a system that worked seamlessly with our existing Schlage locks, so Allegion provided us with about six manufacturers for consideration,” said Townsend. “After review, we had three of those companies come to campus for presentations.”

In addition to their partnership with Allegion and compatibility with Schlage locks, Open Options was awarded the project because according to Townsend, “their product had the most integration options available, and they showed they were in a position to continuously offer more.”

For over two decades, Open Options and Mercury Security have worked together to provide a true open architecture access control solution. Open Options’ flagship access control platform, DNA Fusion, interfaces with a host of other systems, including intelligent locks, video management systems, critical communications, elevator systems, visitor management, and many more. Because of Open Options’ commitment to open architecture and their numerous third-party technology partnerships, Mercury Security named Open Options one of the company’s first Platinum Elite partners in 2014.

“The whole upgrade process was pretty painless; the biggest issue was that one of our largest buildings was in heavy use during the upgrade, so we had a very short window – one week to be exact – to complete the work in that building,” said Townsend. Fortunately, the installation was rather straightforward with only having to switch out the building controllers, as all the existing locks and wiring were already compatible with DNA Fusion. Furthermore, transferring cardholder and database information from the old system to DNA Fusion was simplified with Open Options’ OpenDX software.

OpenDX database exchange software provides an easy-to-use interface for configuring the data users want to transfer into their DNA Fusion access control system. This powerful tool removes the time-consuming task of manually entering data across various business systems, saving the organization significant money and valuable resources. OpenDX performs automated data transfers from any valid data source.

SOLUTION

“As most access control system users do, YHC utilizes access levels and time schedules campus-wide to achieve maximum security, and with DNA Fusion’s extremely intuitive feature set – such as the drag and drop functionality and global access levels – managing these permissions is a breeze,” said Townsend. “For example, if a person changes departments, we can easily add or remove them from groups.”

As previously stated by Townsend, a huge factor in the selection of Open Options as the college’s access control provider was the company’s extensive portfolio of technology partners and integrated solutions. In addition to integrating Schlage AD and NDE locks with DNA Fusion, YHC also deploys Milestone Systems’ XProtect software for their video management needs.

The integration between DNA Fusion and XProtect enables full control of live and recorded video from XProtect through the DNA Fusion client. DNA Fusion software manages the entire access control system, including door controllers and door hardware, users, cards and access levels. The highly customizable DNA Fusion client is used to configure, maintain and monitor the access control system including viewing live and recorded video, integrated from XProtect software.





Other integration features include the ability to view live video from graphical building maps and from camera trees in the hardware browser, as well as the ability to display multiple monitor views and simultaneously play back using built-in controls.



For streamlined security management, Townsend and his team were adamant about getting their Information Technology department away from running the campus's day-to-day security operations, and to transition that role to the designated security operators.

"Even though DNA Fusion is extremely easy to manage because of its feature set, I credit a lot of our knowledge on the product to training," said Townsend. "Because of the training we received through Open Options, the sessions we conduct for our users is typically less than an hour."

Student Safety is Top Priority



In addition to a well-rounded security solution, YHC has numerous efforts in place to streamline and control access, which in turn increases the safety of students on campus. Students are assigned credentials that are used to gain entry to facilities campus-wide, including residence halls, common student areas, and more. YHC also requires students present their access badge at elevators, where the students are then able to choose from set floors depending on their access level.

"Ultimately, we need to be able to provide students access to their residence halls and common areas, yet prevent them any additional access without it being explicitly given," said Townsend. "I think the way our system is configured does a good job of addressing that."

Though Townsend and his team are happy with the college's current security solution, he wants to stress this isn't the end of the road for system expansion.



"Future plans include implementing emergency procedures and tying them into our existing systems to keep our students safe," said Townsend. "Open Options is the standard for our access control, and we look forward to working with them, our other product vendors, and our integrator, GC&E Systems Group, to continue upgrading our security."