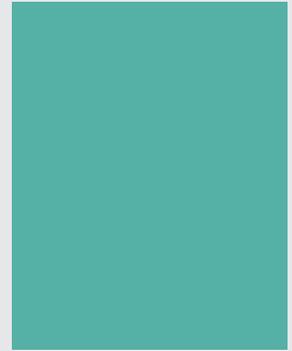
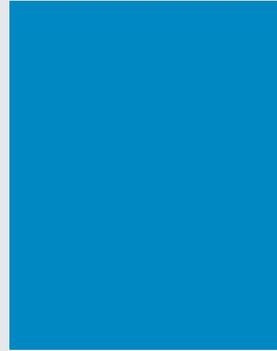


Case Study

Campus Security



University of Bridgeport



Training and support help create a safe environment.

Challenge

Located on the shores of the Long Island Sound, the University of Bridgeport's (UB) 56-acre campus offers a mix of modern facilities and historic structures that mirror the city of Bridgeport's legacy as a cultural and manufacturing center. Buildings from the estates of inventors, chemists and justices — as well as circus impresario and former Bridgeport Mayor Phineas Taylor Barnum, grace the campus.

As is the case with many industrial cities, the decline and outsourcing of manufacturing plants has hit Bridgeport hard. In the last half century, as the factories have closed and the population decreased, the city has experienced an increase in crime. For the namesake university, the problem is two-fold; not only must UB keep crime off-campus, but they also need to address and overcome these concerns in order to continually attract new students. UB is a private institution offering undergraduate and graduate degrees to approximately 5,000 students; the university boasts a diverse and international student body matched by a global perspective. But school safety is an issue that crosses cultural norms and values — parents from Connecticut to China want their children to be safe.

Solutions

April J. Vournelis, UB's Executive Director of Campus Security meets the issue head on. "We're an open campus in a very high-crime ridden area and one of the most important issues in deciding on a school is safety. We talk to all the parents as part of the admissions process, and this is key. They want to know: is this the right place for my child? Is it safe for students to be here?"

Comprehensive Campus Coverage

To this end, Securitas USA was brought on board at UB in 1994. "Originally, we were just looking to take over the security of the residence halls," notes Vournelis. Today, 44 Securitas officers provide around-the-clock, soup-to-nuts security coverage for the entire campus. Visible and vigilant security is essential — officers patrol in a vehicle and on bicycles. So is technology. Students, faculty and staff can request a Personal Alarm Locator (PAL) — described by Vournelis as a device that looks like a small, personal car alarm — which allows the Securitas USA team to monitor pinpoint each individual's location; officers can

generally respond to requests in under two minutes. Securitas officers are the first responders to medical emergencies and trained in first aid and CPR as well as the more subversive threats that can plague college-age populations such as suicides, sexual assaults, and drug and alcohol-related issues.

Ongoing Training

In the fall of 2008, UB hosted a statewide drill that included a variety of law enforcement agencies. "We trained our officers in Incident Command technique so that any organization that comes together can understand without using code words what the jobs are and how to get it done." She adds, "We've also had High Rise training, Hazmat training; the list continues – it is a welcome thing that Securitas provides us with various types of training that help us in doing our jobs successfully."

Results

Crime is down and enrollment has increased.

"Parents and potential students recognize that we provide a safe environment," she says. "Last summer, a New York police officer came to look at UB searching for a school to enroll his daughter in," she says. "He was researching colleges and he was asking me about the cameras and events that have happened on campus. Over the summer, he called me personally to tell me that he had chosen UB as his school of choice because he felt that I was being very honest about safety issues at UB and this made him feel safe about making his choice".

The viewpoint is shared by Security on Campus, Inc., a national non-profit organization devoted to preventing campus crime, who awarded UB the Jeanne Cleary Campus Safety Award in 2003.

Vournelis credits much of the turnaround to both the abilities of her site supervisors and the support that she receives from her Securitas USA branch office and the UB administration. "If we need five officers in a couple of hours, they get them; their support system is huge."

"That's why we stand behind Securitas," she continues. "Lots of companies contact me and they'll promise the world for a lower rate, but in reality, you get what you pay for. Statistically, contract security will last three years in an organization. We've been with Securitas for 20 years."

