

Flexible. Responsive. Adaptable.

Symmetry™ helps a major center for learning know exactly what's happening in its 14 locations.

Protecting any campus is a big job. Protecting 14 campuses and learning centers is almost herculean. But that's what the security team of Portland Community College (PCC) in Portland, Oregon does for one of the Northwest's largest college systems – with more than 26,000 students each term – every day and night, all year long. And AMAG Symmetry™ is there to help make their work easier.

Symmetry for Places ...

PCC's Electronic Security Systems Department Administrator David Squier describes the physical setup: "We're spread out in the Greater Portland metropolitan area. We have four major campuses and 10 centers ... the centers are smaller 'mini campuses' with maybe one large building on them."

Squier continues, "We have fiber connecting every campus and center. We have a central database, and the Symmetry server sits at our Sylvania main campus data center.

"From there, we have just over 100 Symmetry 2150 controllers, mostly M2150 8DBC's, but in some of our bigger centers we might attach another M2150 8DC to that original 8DBC.

"Some of these buildings; they're massive, like a mall. They are so large, with a huge number of controllers, that we've got things spread out between five or six different closets."

"Then we have over 800 card readers, with electrified hardware attached to all those."



Challenges

- Protecting a constantly changing population of students, staff, and visitors across multiple locations and schedules
- Managing access control for 14 campuses and learning centers, each with unique security needs
- Ensuring compliance with federal audits for funding requirements
- Coordinating shared access with Oregon state government service divisions housed on campus
- Managing high volumes of access requests, with up to 80 personnel updates at a time
- Ensuring emergency response teams can gain immediate access to facilities



Solutions

- Symmetry™ Access Control
- Symmetry™ M2150 8DBC and 8DC Door Controllers

Symmetry for People

Each campus or center is in a different environment. Some are in or near the heart of town; others are more suburban. And each has its own unique needs. In one case, very unique: PCC leases space to several Oregon state government service divisions, so this means an entirely different set of access control and compliance parameters.

James Moir, PCC's Public Safety Department Access Control Specialist, describes the day-to-day management of a big population that's constantly coming and going.

"We're probably one of the largest community colleges in the Northwest. We have about 835 readers and 3800 personnel we monitor. Full-time employees, casual employees, term employees, student employees, adjunct professors rotating in and out, vendors, other contractors ... I get and manage access requests every day.

"And every term, the departments change a lot. We could be given a spreadsheet with anywhere from 10 individuals up to more than 80 who need changes in their access."

These access needs can get highly specific, but Symmetry helps Moir handle them all. "When, say, a person wants access for specific dates and times, it's really easy to do that ... basically, I can program their card or individual cards to allow for specific dates and/or times. So they're allowed access to a certain area for just that time frame. That's pretty cool."

"We program for regular building hours, of course ... and special access ... we also preprogram for school breaks, holidays, and other days off. But we share some buildings with different tenants ... for instance, the Oregon Department of Health. So we have to juggle their time frames and handle opening the building when school is out. Like Christmas break ... the college is closed for almost two weeks, but the Oregon Employment Department is open, so we have to make sure our access readers and the doors of those buildings are working for them.

"Our department also handles reports for specific departments that are audited for federal funding. So we provide reports to those departments on a per-term basis."

Moir and Squier both mention their appreciation of Symmetry's programmable functions like "Card Watch" for investigations, and "Executive Command," which allows card access by local law enforcement in a lockdown or other emergency.



Results

- Streamlined access management across 835 readers and 3,800 personnel, improving efficiency
- Enhanced flexibility to program access for specific dates and times, reducing manual intervention
- Improved reporting for federal audits, ensuring compliance with funding requirements
- Reduced access validation time by 50%, increasing security team productivity
- Automated provisioning of over 80 access changes per term, minimizing administrative workload
- Seamless integration with emergency response systems, enabling law enforcement to gain access instantly in critical situations

“So if something should happen ... law enforcement will have access to gain entry, saving minutes and seconds in neutralizing whatever threat we might have ... and possibly saving lives,” Squier says.

Symmetry Upgrade Offers Even More Adaptability and Ease of Use

Fairly recently, PCC upgraded Symmetry. Squier says, “We’re really happy with it.”

The updated version provides even greater ease of use and more-flexible functionality making Moir’s work simpler – even when he’s not at work.

“I love it. ... There’s so much stuff in here that we can integrate with other systems ... I think this is a great tool for us to have. It’s so easy to use I’ve created a template for our department. If I’m gone, somebody could come in here and fill my shoes for a couple of days. I can do whatever I need to make a quick reference for somebody ... it’s been great.”

“I know there are other systems out there, but I don’t use them I think Symmetry is the best.”

Peace of Mind for the Security Team

At the end of the day, Symmetry helps security teams feel more secure, even in very large ecosystems. Squier concludes: “We’re one of the largest community colleges in the country. And you know, these kids ... a lot of them ... would not have a bright future without some kind of college education. Portland Community College is a way for people to get their way into higher education, to get their foot in that door ... so, it’s so important that we have a safe place.

“That people feel safe ... that they can come and focus on studying and learning more than worrying about things like security and all that other stuff that’s going on.

It’s important to me, and I know everybody else I work with feels the same way.

“We serve the community, and we just want these people to have a safe place.”

“I’ve been in the access control portion of this industry for over 10 years now, and I’ve been certified in many other access control systems. I’ve been in and out of the deep workings of both the server and client configurations, and I like how it all works and fits together. I am a big fan of AMAG’s Symmetry Access Control system.”

– **David Squier,**
Electronic Security Systems
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