

FEATURE

PAINTING A SECURE UNIVERSITY EDUCATION

City by the Bay even more secure with university's enhanced security system

By Mary E. Wilbur



THE ACADEMY OF ART UNIVERSITY IN SAN FRANCISCO HAS EVOLVED FROM A LOFT STUDIO FOR A HANDFUL OF STUDENTS IN 1929 TO BECOME THE COUNTRY'S LARGEST PRIVATE SCHOOL FOR ART AND DESIGN. THE FAMILY-RUN INSTITUTION UNDERSTANDS THAT PARENTS WANT TO BE ASSURED THAT THEIR CHILDREN ARE IN A SAFE AND SECURE ENVIRONMENT.

Academy President Elisa Stephens, the granddaughter of the school's founder, Richard S. Stephens, has committed the academy to an ever-expanding curriculum in order to stay current with new technologies and trends.

CLOSED CAMPUS, INTERACTIVE RELATIONSHIP

AAU leaders speak to the parents and students about safety in an urban campus environment, where they have access to the design, graphic, Web, photographic, architectural and environmental beauty of San Francisco. While the campus itself is a closed environment, the academy nurtures an interactive relationship with the surrounding community.

It's not the same campus that grandfather Stephens established, and it likely has different concerns. Richard Stephens was a fine-arts painter and creative director of *Sunset Magazine*. He and his wife, Clara, opened their new school in a rented loft at 215 Kearney St. As

enrollment grew, so did the distinguished faculty, which comprised art and design professionals. By 1933, the curriculum had expanded to include fashion illustration, and three years later, a fine art department was established.

Today, more than 17,000 students call the academy home, a place where they can earn bachelor's and master's degrees and participate in certificate programs or continuing art education courses with more than 30 areas of academic emphasis.

Similar to their counterparts of yesteryear, students today have access control throughout all the facilities, where there are state-of-the-art design facilities, galleries and collections.

SECURITY ON FOOT

Roving patrols that provide security are as much a part of the academy's philosophy as its commitment to being "student-centric," meaning staff members will do what they need to do to benefit the students. On a day-to-day basis, the academy's security team makes the decisions that will affect positive outcomes for student security. This includes video surveillance, campus safety hosts at buildings and desk guards in buildings where students must be buzzed-in to enter.

"Video cameras are our best crime-fighting tool," said Mike Patricca, head of AAU security. "Video has solved the majority of problems with teams of thieves stealing projectors and students' computers. After we got hit a few times, we got video to help us solve the problem as evidence, catching them in the act. The thieves were arrested, then came back a second time and are now doing time thanks to video surveillance."

What brought it all together was implementing a video management solution from Salient Systems of Austin, Texas. Security officials and AAU staff alike knew the old legacy system had to be replaced, so when a DVR went down, the transition from analog to digital began to take shape.

NOT AN OVERNIGHT PROCESS

Upgrading the security systems didn't take place overnight. The academy lists 29 properties as part of the university. Last year, it added 30 cameras in the Del Monte Cannery area of San Francisco. Security officials selected ACTi megapixel cameras, running all of them on Salient Systems' video management software.

"The amazing thing about this school is how they take care of their students," said Dave Chritton, partner and owner of MicroBiz, a San Francisco integrator. "When it's time for the students to go home, the Academy wants to make sure they make it there safely. AAU manages a 24-hours communication center and has issued access control badges for the students."

The Cannery area at Fisherman's Wharf is AAU's latest contribution to its campus and the city. Academy officials selected CompleteView video surveillance software as a force multiplier, which monitors and manages every camera in the network. The software allows the cameras to capture activities that officers may not see, and it is available and accessible 24/7.

The Cannery landowners were excited to see the academy move in. They instituted a revitalization plan for the area and added a security system that not only protects their own interests but also benefits the surrounding business owners.

CompleteView is proactive, with live video available to provide real-time information for crisis management. Officers can know what is happening before they enter a building or facility, resulting in reduced risk in parking areas, cafeterias, lecture halls, large social gatherings and athletic events.

"This is an IP-based system with a large server and recorder that



sends images back to the communications center," Chritton said. "AAU is the largest real estate owner in the San Francisco area. They want excellent service, and security is a top priority."

Security is critical on every level at the academy. The basic level provides cameras and surveillance for the safety of staff and students and includes on-premise guards and alarms for many properties. The facility also employs a card access system and a high-tech IP backbone developed by AAU's IT group. The academy has 20,000 active cardholders. Some 18,000 students access the campus.

"This really is about the students and their safety. When the academy does something, the San Francisco community at large benefits," said Susan Toland, strategic initiative executive, Office of the President. "By keeping our students safe and secure, we are able to graduate talented and educated students who enhance the talent pool by adding to the design and art economy as an emerging business sector."

Because AAU has deployed such an extensive camera and software system, San Francisco police officers have come to rely on the academy's video of the perimeter and the properties the academy uses. In one instance, a couple on vacation were walking on an adjacent property, and the woman was shot and killed. An important part of the incident was captured by campus video surveillance, and the video assisted San Francisco police in prosecuting the killers.

The Salient solution has been used throughout the academy and has been tested at the Jerrold Bus Center, where it tracks busses and monitors the perimeter of the bus barn. It also helps record the detail of license plates, and vehicles' entry and exit times. Other selling points of the solution were search and playback, and monitoring screens in real time.

"We needed to replace the legacy system," Patricca said. "The current video management system provides a higher-resolution image from the megapixel cameras, both inside the facility and on the exterior of the buildings." 📍

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