

Keeping Your Campus Safe and Your Budget Lean Contract Security as an Effective Force Multiplier

When choosing the mix of security elements needed to protect your campus you must also think about the inevitable: your budget. With security pressures rising and budgets shrinking even faster, now is the time to examine how supplementing your security team with contracted staff can help keep your campus safer and security program affordable.

So how does contracted quality campus security help avoid burning a larger hole in your institution's pocket? The answer is flexibility. Universities need to find a cost effective total solution for security, and contract security does just that. With more than 80% of the typical security department's budget committed to personnel, the range of resource options available to a university are limited.

Contracted security officers are not meant to replace specially trained law enforcement officers. They are intended to supplement police by offloading routine security tasks that are necessary to ensure everyone's peace of mind. While leaving complex law enforcement situations to qualified, and extensively trained campus police, contracted security officers, who are more affordable than police officers, are trained to effectively handle everyday security tasks on campus.

Today's budgets will simply not accommodate campus police forces large enough to accomplish every aspect of an effective security program. As demand grows for visible security presence, campus police agencies are too often stretched.

Some universities have also utilized their students as a security force, hiring them part-time and for a minimal rate, on student labor or work study budgets, and pay a fraction of the cost for police patrol. While this might help the budget, there are often serious issues relating to managing an effective force that can cover some of the thorniest situations on a campus. Many of these students are not trained to handle the various security issues that a well-trained security officer prepares for. Additionally, these students may be faced with serious matters affecting their peers they have been asked to protect and chances for compromising situations to arise increase exponentially. Many schools have found that the risks of using students to watch over other students far outweigh the significant cost attraction.

Many universities have discovered that hiring a highly qualified contracted security provider is the most effective way to bolster the security force and achieve their objective for a visible security personnel deterrent. The result of hiring affordable, well-trained security officers can be a consistent reduction in the campus crime rates.

Carefully choosing a contract security partner is the key. Engaging a national contract security company that specializes in Higher Education and trains their officers specifically for the issues they will confront on a campus is the best choice for a university. You want to make sure that your provider is reputable, has years of Higher Education experience and a strong referral base. The officers must be trained professionals, supported by a responsive local management and logistical team, and a national support network.

The company should be committed to enhancing the skills and knowledge of their officers. Training for post-specific responsibilities is fundamental. Enabling a program for officer professional development on Higher Education and security industry issues is essential. The security company should take the proper steps to ensure their employees meet company, institutional and state regulatory standards by performing background screenings and administering drug tests. Universities will also want to select a provider with a low employee turn-over rate, maintained through extensive recruitment resources, in-depth training tactics, and management programs.

Therefore, when looking for a security services company for your campus, consider this: Are they trained and prepared in the following areas?

- ◆ Residential Life Security
- ◆ Dealing with Domestic Abuse
- ◆ Dealing with Drug and Alcohol Abuse
- ◆ Understanding Young Adult Behavior
- ◆ Campus Emergency Preparedness
- ◆ Evacuation Planning for a Campus
- ◆ Fire Safety on Campus
- ◆ Campus Escort Services
- ◆ Advanced Customer Service
- ◆ Appreciating Cultural Diversity
- ◆ CPR/First Aid/AED Training
- ◆ Bike Patrol on Campus
- ◆ Clery Act Awareness
- ◆ Knowledge of FERPA

The additional layer of support and protection provided by a contract security team involves a range of services and should be customized to meet the campus' specific needs. Contract security officers can:

- ◆ **Increase patrol density and create a visible deterrent** – Institutions use contract services to increase foot coverage and improve mobility via bikes and personal motorized vehicles to target critical areas of concern. Combined with the strategic deployment of campus police and/or with municipal law enforcement, contract security officers help to significantly reduce crime and increase the feeling of safety and security on campus.
- ◆ **Provide expanded night support** – With a goal of curbing youthful misbehavior during the evening, overnight and weekend hours when many incidents occur, contract security can provide mature residence hall access monitors, increase patrols where students frequent and loiter, secure neighboring communities where students, faculty and staff live, and provide support for special events.
- ◆ **Ensure legitimate access** – Regardless of the time of day, additional security can create another barrier to entry and personally check credentials prior to entrance to residence halls, libraries, academic buildings and research facilities. Security officers can also staff gatehouses and perform patrols using (and respond to incidents discovered through) video surveillance.
- ◆ **Improve customer relationships while keeping campus constituents safe** – Contract security services provide escorts for students, faculty, staff and visitors. They help guide visitors, and provide parking lot and vehicle assists.
- ◆ **Keep buildings safe** – Additional security officers monitoring building systems and alarms keep campus property safe and secure.
- ◆ **Manage the security function** – For many of the smallest campuses, the contract security firm can take on full responsibility for the security and/or public safety function. The company can bring competency in planning and managing a campus safety program. A reputable and experienced security services provider should develop crime prevention programs (training, tips, and registration programs), perform Clery Act reporting, coordinate discipline with the student judicial affairs staff, help define and implement security technology and provide input to facility design to improve safety.

Contract security gives colleges and universities the ability to supplement their campus forces. The end result is a cost effective and well-planned security program dedicated to the safety and security of everyone on campus.