

# Episode Two: Unlocking Physical Security Costs

The global leader in  
door opening solutions

*This is an excerpt from Unlocked — an ASSA ABLOY podcast series on campus security. Unlocked explores the security issues and challenges that colleges and universities face as they strive to create a safe and secure learning environment. Visit [intelligentopenings.com/unlocked](https://intelligentopenings.com/unlocked) to hear more.*

## Upgrading Security: Whose Job Is It?

Pittsburgh Theological Seminary faced a common situation for schools: a handful of disjointed card systems, new and old buildings, doors with standalone locks that required their own access card and, in many places, metal keys.

A student could need a mix of keys and cards just to go to classes, the dining hall and their dorm. More importantly, that means

there's no unified way to lock down the campus.

The school's security committee understood the safety issues, and they wanted to act. But first, who would lead that project? They made the decision that many small and medium campuses do—the IT department. That means people who are not security experts are managing these massive projects that

require a great deal of knowledge, time and money, and that can have life-or-death implications. Who wouldn't want to add that to their to-do list?

Unlikely project managers are recognizing the reality of the situation — suddenly being thrown head first into the security industry.

## Million-Dollar Question: What's the Price of Security?

Shouldn't it be easy to say how much it costs to put a lock on a door?

"That is always the million dollar question," said Micah Carlson from Convergent Technologies, a system integrator. (System, or security, integrators work directly with project managers to install, train on and support the physical security systems, and they often are the people schools purchase the system from.)

"There's so much that goes into it that's not just the cost of that door."

For starters: Where will the server and software be located? What's the overhead required for that? What's the distance to each door? What type of structure are you dealing with? Are the doors and frames concrete-filled? What kind of condition is the facility in?

Unfortunately, one-size-fits-all doesn't exist when it comes to campus security. Project managers must compile a lot of information about their facilities before getting a realistic estimate.

## Becoming a Security Expert, Stat

"It just is so wildly different than IT—different language, different ways of communicating." David Middleton, the director of IT at Pittsburgh Theological Seminary, summed up the frustrations of IT leaders at college campuses around the country.

### How do they get the jobs?

"I'm responsible here for anything that plugs into the wall, or has a circuit board in it, or is technical in any way, shape or form."

That settles it. As our doors and locks evolve from mechanical to electronic, administrators are relying on IT departments to take on security upgrades.

So along with running the entire IT organization for his campus, Middleton had to learn everything he could about physical security. And fast.

He started by trying to get an idea of the industry. He researched the various smart card technologies and lock

manufacturers. He gained an understanding of the school's current mechanical lock system, which at that point fell in the facilities department—worlds away from IT.

Middleton became the subject matter expert for his campus, and he soon saw one thing very clearly: This was going to be expensive.

## Starting Point & Planning for the Unexpected

To begin a security project, Carlson suggests completing these tasks:

- Answer the questions: Which departments will be affected? Which departments have budget for this type of project? Involve them from the start.
- Walk around and do a quality check on your own. Look for older facilities; they can come with difficulties, especially for doors and access control. Take note of the condition of hinges, doors and locks; time and 18- to 24-year-olds can do a number on them.

- Talk with a security expert you can trust. They might not be easy to find, but they'll be incredibly valuable. Find someone who is in the industry, goes to the security shows, talks to manufacturers, knows the standards and keeps up with industry trends.

This is exactly what David Middleton did. As prepared as he was, he still ran into a few surprises. Delivery times, setup times and hardware swaps took their toll on Middleton's timeline and budget. "I would say that in general with the timeline, add maybe another 50-60% to what you think because you'll probably use it. And we did."

Carlson emphasizes the value of locksmithing. The often under-appreciated step includes cutting in locks, specifying the correct type of levers and finishes and aligning everything just so.

As Middleton remembers, when you're thinking about complicated issues like security and access, matching hardware finishes can be easy to push aside. But that can be a time-consuming and costly mistake. Some finishes can take eight to 12 weeks for delivery.

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## Securing the Budget for Security

Not only did Middleton do the research for Pittsburgh Theological Seminary's security upgrade, but he also had to sell the school's security committee on the system.

It's easy to understand the convenience of single-card access, but administrators might not want to dedicate a couple hundred thousand dollars for convenience. As Middleton found out, they will spend for safety.

"In a terrible, terrible situation that we hope to never, ever, ever have to use—if that situation saves one life, how much is that one life worth? And at that point it makes all the sense in the world."

To help ease the budget concerns, project managers can explain how the system can save the school money and time in other areas.

For starters, it can act as a force multiplier for campus police. In other words, you'll need less people doing guard tours.

*Administrators might not want to dedicate a couple hundred thousand dollars for convenience. They will spend for safety.*

Outside of safety, the security system can pull double—or triple—duty when schools take advantage of its data and automation.

You can use it to monitor the environmental conditions (temperature

or humidity) of labs or medical facilities, and to take the manual work out of processes such as scheduling rooms, running reports and allowing access into certain areas at certain times. And staff can simply check the cameras to identify basic maintenance issues.

In addition to those hard costs, a universal system can even boost a school's brand with potential students, staff and funders. How much is that reputation worth?



## One Card for Convenience, Revenue & Even More Security

To unlock more benefits and even more budget, consider enabling the security ID card to do more than provide building access. Like buy snacks!

“They’re using it for payments in vending machines, in their bookstore, for laundry, for meal plans and in their cafeterias for dining,” said Fred Emery, who leads sales for the OneCard division of Heartland.

The campus card transaction system pairs student security and student conveniences. Tying the card to things like vending and off-campus merchants brings in new revenue streams, and that can help offset the costs of your security system.

This one-card functionality also improves security because students won’t share it. If their ID card has their money on it, they’re less likely to loan it to a friend to get access to a building.

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## It’s a Daunting Must-Do

There’s no doubt about it: Security project managers face a daunting task.

They need to become experts in the security world, find the most effective way to spend the school’s money, fight for that budget and keep up with evolving technology and evolving threats. They must determine how, when and where to invest the school’s money to make the biggest impact.

As Carlson put it, “It’s a big task but you’ve got to take it one step at a time.”

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