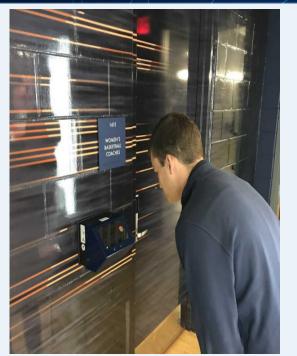# Princeton Identity's Iris Recognition Technology Solves Security Challenges for Auburn University

Princeton Identity's Identity Software *(IDS)* platform supports Auburn's legacy iris reader hardware (shown above). The school will soon upgrade to new Access200 readers which allow subjects to stand upright and are smaller, faster and more streamlined in appearance.

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Auburn University Ups Its Athletic Facilities' Security Game with Princeton Identity's IDS Iris Recognition Solution

As parents pack their kids off to college or university, most experience bittersweet emotions – happiness to see them begin an exciting new life chapter, but sadness that they are leaving home. Today, in an age of mass school shootings, sexual assault and other highly publicized crimes, they also fear deeply for their security. During campus tours, questions are asked about the technologies that guard students while in their dorms, classrooms, libraries and elsewhere.

Securing athletic facilities is a particularly tricky challenge. Student athletes and coaches rarely carry anything personal with them out to the playing fields or courts, leaving access control cards or keys in the locker rooms. As a result, doors are propped open, defeating security for the entire building.

Auburn University found a way to defeat this access control threat. In 2011, it chose an iris-scanning solution by Princeton Identity. Eyes, after all, are something that students and coaches have with them at all times. The system was further expanded during the ensuing years and in the summer of 2018, Auburn undertook a major system software upgrade to Princeton Identity's latest software platform, IDS.

The Game Plan

Eight years ago, the Alabama school, which has more than 30,000 undergraduate and graduate students and approximately 1,300 faculty members, held a focus group meeting to discuss future planning for safety and security on its nearly three-square-mile campus. "One of the things that was most intriguing to us was the iris scan because it was the first time we'd seen it," says Jeff Steele, Associate Athletic Director of Facilities and Operations, Athletic Department. At that meeting, "Princeton Identity gave a presentation on the iris scanners. Given its possibilities, we took a hard look."

The university had already installed biometric hand-readers the year before. "We built the Auburn Arena in 2010 and installed some hand scanners for access to our locker rooms, but we were having tremendous problems with the system, especially with our basketball players, because they have huge hands. We had to have a custom hand reader, but even that wasn't great," Steele recalls.

For example, student-athletes sometimes injured their fingers during practice. These would then swell. "It would throw the reader off so that it couldn't identify them. It became such a problem that the student-athletes and coaches started blocking the doors open, which defeats the whole point of having a system in place," he says.

Eyes on the Ball

The school hoped that the PI solution, based on touchless iris recognition technology, would solve the problem. Steele admits he was initially concerned that the system would be operationally temperamental and challenging. "Boy, was I pleasantly surprised. We had very few issues whatsoever," he states.

The biggest problem turned out to be getting users to stop for a full few seconds in front of the reader rather than speeding on before the scanner could make a proper identification.

As of early 2018, nine additional areas had been added to the system. These included the soccer and track buildings and the locker rooms for the men's and women's track, baseball, volleyball and soccer teams, as well as the locker rooms of those teams' coaches.

Rob Stanford, Facilities Management Technology Specialist, explains that access rights are managed through a Lenel OnGuard access control platform, which integrates seamlessly with the PI system. "When students leave a team or graduate, we just change their permissions and turn off their access. We've had some coaches and students leave and then come back a few years later. We haven't had to re-enroll them. The system still recognizes them because their eyes don't change. We just reactivate their permissions." The PI solution is fully scalable, capable of holding—and differentiating between—thousands of enrollees, including students who are on the teams, student trainers and managers, coaches, and others with job functions requiring access to the regulated areas.

Offensive Play

In the summer of 2018, ahead of the arrival of incoming freshman athletes, PI upgraded Auburn to its Identity Software (IDS) that manages the new generation of enrollment and access readers, and also upgraded the enrollment readers to the newest Access200e devices.

"PI's IDS software offers absolutely fantastic functionality," says Stanford. "The enrollment software is now completely web-based, and the new enrollment camera, the Access200e, is a separate unit that doesn't have to be hooked up to a computer with special drivers and configurations. It sits on a little stand and you just plug it directly into a network jack. That means we can easily enroll people from anywhere, using a laptop or tablet; it's a lot more flexible. We're not limited by having the software installed on a specific computer and having to handle enrollments at that location. In the past, we had to process all new users in our operations office. Now, we can bring a laptop or tablet, and the new portable enrollment camera, over to wherever the team happens to be, and we can do the enrollment right there.... It's going to be extremely convenient next year when we enroll our largest team—the 160 to 170 students on the football team." Steele adds, "Enrollments take no more than a minute or two each, and most of that time is spent keying in the person's information. It's very fast and easy."

The new software is user-friendly and easy to troubleshoot. Stanford explains that the system has a dashboard that displays the status of all the readers on campus, spread across multiple buildings, and he can easily configure them through a single interface for the entire enterprise.

The iris readers are positioned at each secured door and communicate over the network with the Lenel OnGuard application server. "The iris readers function similarly to proximity readers. Someone walks up to the reader, the device identifies whether they're in the system and, if they are, it communicates with the access control software that determines whether they should be granted access. If they should, it sends a signal to the door to unlock," Stanford says.

PI worked with Auburn to preserve the investment the school had made in the original PI system, giving them the ability to take full advantage of the new, feature-rich IDS software without swapping out the earlier generation of door readers. Stanford is able to manage the legacy N-glance readers just the same as the newer Access200 readers.

"Enrollments take no more than a minute or two each, and most of that is spent keying in the person's information. It's very fast and easy."

*Rob Stanford,
Facilities Management Technology Specialist*

"As we expand, at additional doors we'll use the new Access200 readers, which are smaller, faster and more streamlined," Stanford says. "It's a much simpler installation process. All the communication happens over the network. It will require a lot less expertise to install the readers without all the wiring we used to have. And eventually, we'll also swap out the older N-glance readers with the newer models."

The End Zone

Auburn's athletic department will almost certainly further expand the system and other departments may follow. "There's a whole lot more excitement about them because of their look and smaller footprint. There's something more modern and appealing about them, aesthetically," states Steele. There are several other interested parties on campus as new buildings are being built. "They want everything to be very modern. Using the PI system fits with that vision better than using existing technology."

Stanford says that there has been almost no need for maintenance since the system was installed except for software updates. "There have been only a few minor glitches with the hardware and they've been resolved quickly. We've been very pleased," he states.

Steele notes that during campus tours for prospective students and their parents, the reaction to the PI system has been overwhelmingly positive. "Moms and dads are the most impressed with it—especially if they are parents of female student-athletes. They can see that it's a much stronger system than key or card access."

He concludes, "I believe we've taken steps in the right direction for the safety and security of our students, coaches, and facilities. The Princeton Identity system offers us ease of use, ease of maintenance, ease of operation and it provides a higher level of security than we had in the past."

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