# Installing Ripon College's
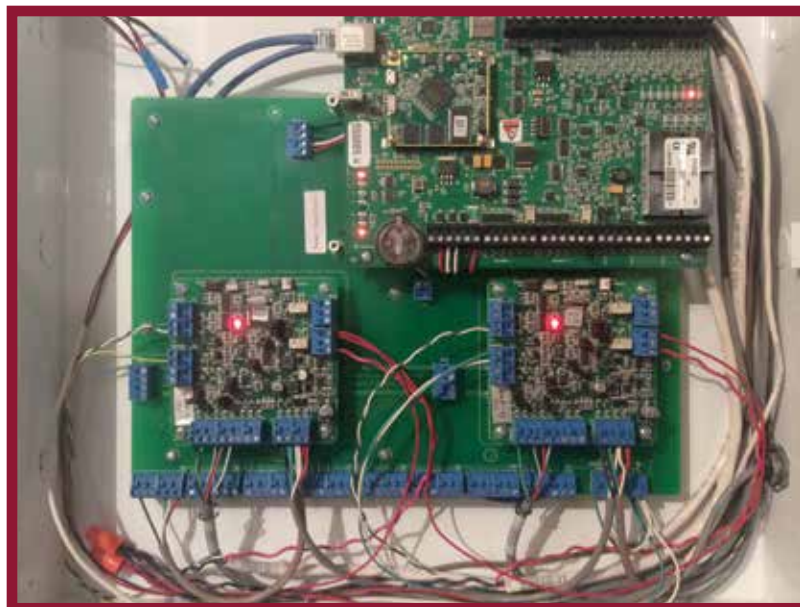# NEW SECURITY MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

*LaForce programmed, installed, integrated, and tested a new campus security management system for Ripon College and now provides ongoing support for the school's security needs.*

**By Emily Schutte and Matt Zimmerman**

**Johnson power board**

**Violence at American schools is a growing concern, and** campus leaders must take a proactive approach to managing physical and electronic security systems. Even historically safe higher education institutions such as Ripon College in Ripon, Wisc., need to pay attention to their physical and electronic security processes.

Founded in 1851, Ripon College is a private, non-profit liberal arts school with approximately 1,000 undergraduate students and very few reported criminal incidents. Still, administrators desired the ability to quickly respond to threats and lockdown campus buildings in drastic circumstances.

When LaForce joined the project in late 2014, Ripon's access control software was outdated and unsupported. Campus administration did not have an adequate lockdown procedure, and simple updates to the ID card system could take a day or two to execute.

To add to the challenge, ten out of the 26 campus buildings are listed on the National Register of Historic Places, so new door hardware needed to complement historic aesthetics. In addition, installation professionals needed to work around old building designs that did not easily allow for cable installation. Finally, replacement doors had to match building colors and style and integrate seamlessly with the new security system.

Ripon's staff recognized the shortfalls of the security system and needed a security partner with an in-depth knowledge of door openings that could integrate several software systems, install in challenging conditions while working around class schedules, test vital security processes, and provide ongoing support for the new system.

## Designing, Installing and Testing a Complete Security Solution

During the spring of 2015, LaForce's Matt Zimmerman, a Ripon College alumnus, worked closely with Vanderbilt Industries to design an electronic security system that would meet Ripon College's specifications. The Vanderbilt Industries Security Management System (SMS) is fully integrated with the college's student management software and allows students to use their ID cards for door access, dining, vending, and laundry services. This user-friendly platform allows college staff to efficiently restrict access, monitor alarms, manage visitors and lock the campus down in critical situations. The access control system allows "grouped" solutions, so different levels of access can be granted to various students and staff. The new "one card" solution automatically synchronizes every few minutes, a vast improvement over the manual 24-48 hour updates of the past.

Throughout installation during the summer and fall of 2016, LaForce coordinated with Housing and Student Services to minimize disruption. Though classes were not in session initially, installers needed to accommodate campus events and early move-ins by Resident Assistants and student athletes. Jesse Dorsch, LaForce Security Integration Field Technician, coordinated the access control installation in 24 of the 26 campus buildings. He approached the historical buildings carefully, since extensive surface wiring was not possible. By the time most of the students returned to campus for the fall semester, the dormitories were electronically secured, and the college IT staff was fully trained.

Still, cutting edge electronic security technology does little good when the physical openings are not sufficient. Clay Hoerauf of LaForce Contract Sales coordinated the retrofit doors for Ripon, replacing 22 openings with problematic closing or latching abilities. LaForce supplied eight aluminum doors, five Special-Lite doors, five fiberglass (FRP) doors, and four hollow metal doors. The Special-Lite doors maintain the historic look of the oldest campus buildings, which date back to the Civil War era, including Ripon's Carnegie Library. LaForce also matched a special color request—"Ripon Red"— on the main entrance door to Smith Hall.

During a campus hiatus in early 2016, LaForce personnel and campus staff conducted a meticulous test of the lockdown procedure. They tested for responsiveness and verified that every door reacted appropriately to the emergency notification. Moving forward, Ripon College conducts this test every several months.

**Smith Hall**


**Main entrance to Smith Hall**

Photos courtesy of LaForce, Inc.

**Doors to Todd Wehr Hall**



## Ongoing Support

In addition to testing, LaForce provides ongoing system support for Ripon College. Card readers and other security features can be easily added to new or remodeled buildings, thanks to the flexibility of the SMS and accessibility of LaForce staff. LaForce can also provide remote software updates and troubleshooting as needed.

Gary Rodman, Director of Enterprise Applications at Ripon College, is very satisfied with the school's new security management system. "The team from LaForce provided exceptional service when installing and configuring our access control hardware and software," he said. "They met an aggressive project timeframe, and were able to work fairly unobtrusively around our students and staff during the project. The access control system works reliably, and we have good granular control over who can enter our campus buildings."

## Conclusion

Security is a growing concern for everyone in the higher education sector. To address safety concerns, an effective electronic security system is imperative. LaForce is an integrator with extensive experience on projects of varying levels of size and complexity, and partners with institutions nationwide to provide superior solutions. The company has a strong, long-term relationship with Ripon College, and LaForce's partnership with Vanderbilt Industries was key to the success of the college's new "one card" electronic security solution. ∎



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