Duke University's DukeCard:
A Model of Efficiency

By PAUL RAGUSA

Since the introduction of the all-campus DukeCard in 1985 under the leadership of Joseph G. Pietrantoni, associate vice president of auxiliary services, the DukeCard has grown and prospered without changing a thing. Robert Huber of Robert Huber Associates, Phoenix, Ariz., a campus card consultant in the industry for the past 19 years and co-founder of the DukeCard, said that many campuses are starting to move towards an all-purpose card, like the one at Duke University. Pietrantoni has taken the DukeCard, which utilizes the AT&T CampusWide system, and expanded its use on campus to facilitate multiple campus applications—including dining services, ID, vending, door access, library and computer access, parking, food delivery service—plus many new innovative uses. Pietrantoni asserts that the DukeCard, which utilizes a magnetic stripe, high coercivity, on-line system, has enabled him to link the entire campus and maximize resources and services. "Campus administrators can realize significant savings, and reduce the strain on users' wallets, by replacing these cards with a single all-campus card," he added.

Huber pointed out that many colleges and universities become overwhelmed with all the different companies and types of cards and technology, so consolidating their existing systems down to a single card can seem complicated and costly, when in reality it will simplify and centralize their campus card, attract more students and save the school money. The DukeCard, he said, has grown and expanded with a simple plan and strategy: Provide a campus card that is customer-friendly and campus-wise.

A SIMPLE PLAN

"Our goal is to have an internal mechanism that controls all internal transactions. It's important to have a campus card that touches every aspect of campus life," said Pietrantoni. He added that his goals for the DukeCard are simple ones:

- Recover costs
- Manage all transactions
- Provide an I.D. badge for everyone

Pietrantoni said he has been able to attain these goals by utilizing a single-card, on-line system, which tracks all transactions on the card to a main computer. Since 1985, the DukeCard debit account expenditures have risen from $3 million to $20 million. Combined, the 5,400 student card holders perform 300,000 transactions a day. He noted that Duke's strategic plan for expansion will push the number up to 500,000 daily over the next two years, and the existing 784 readers and point-of-sale devices will increase to over 1,200. All told, the card has expanded to encompass a multitude of transactions and services.

In addition to the ability to track and monitor all transactions, an on-line system is foolproof, noted Pietrantoni, leaving very little room for human error; everything is done electronically and accounted for in a host computer system that is linked to all readers on campus—and off campus, in some cases. For example, Pietrantoni has been able to offer students food delivery after 7 p.m. from 12 different franchises and restaurants, including Subway, Domino's Pizza, Pizza Hut and many others. Duke University sets up a reader at each site, which is linked to the Duke computer system. Students can call in orders and simply give their card numbers to the vendor, who then checks to see if there are sufficient funds for the purchase. When the food is delivered the student shows his/her card and signs a sales receipt. Since Duke started this service, students have responded by putting a million more dollars into their accounts, said Pietrantoni. He added that the DukeCard has produced $350,000

in commissions from the revenue produced by the food delivery program. Also, Pietrantoni has been able to downsize his food-service operations at night.

For foodservice applications on the DukeCard, Pietrantoni has been able to make some innovative business moves because of the completely on-line nature of the card. When bringing franchises on campus, for instance, a McDonald's, he is able to get a higher percentage of commissions than what is usually given because of the DukeCard. Duke does this, noted Pietrantoni, by not charging a franchise for rent or electricity, and in turn negotiating a higher commission percentage than it would be able to get. He has been able to realize $1.5 million in commissions with the five on-campus franchises; much more, he said, than if he did not have an on-line system to track student purchases, and was forced to charge for rent and electricity and to take a lower percentage of commissions. "It's a win-win situation for both parties," said Pietrantoni.

In addition, he has been able to offer use of the DukeCard at the concession stands in the athletic stadiums by simply setting up readers there.

Other benefits realized by an on-line system include maximized use of resources and services. For example, in the parking areas, Pietrantoni was able to maximize the use of the lots by tracking the number of students entering and leaving the lot at all times during the day. This has enabled him to better utilize the parking areas and provide more parking for students during high-demand periods.

CUSTOMER SERVICE

An important criterion for a successful card program, asserts Pietrantoni, is a customer-friendly card office that is open 7 days a week, 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. "Providing service 24 hours a day will open doors to a variety of campus card applications across a variety of departments at your institution. Without question, it will be the key to successful expansion of your system." One of the DukeCard offices recently underwent a $1 million renovation to better accommodate employees and increase services. There are two campus card offices with a total of 12 employees. "The card office, now in its 14th year, has sustained full cost recovery for the entire period and has reduced rates over that period," said Pietrantoni.

The program's current applications include coin-operated copy machines, department copy machines (billing departments for end use), washers and dryers in the residence halls and apart-
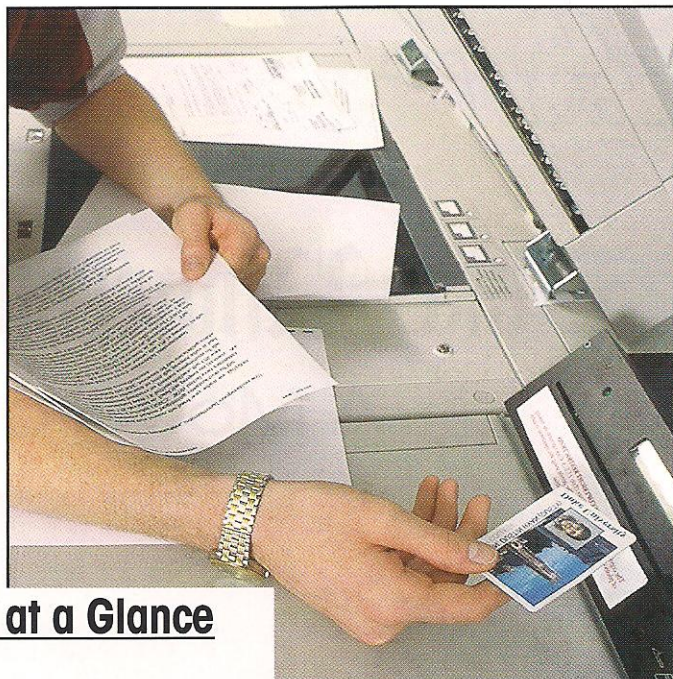
DukeCard at a Glance

Demographics

Undergraduate Students	6,000
Graduate Students	5,100
Faculty	1,660
Staff	20,100
	(Including Medical Center)

Total Cardholders	**32,000**
	(16,000 from the Medical Center)

Cardholder Activity

Total annual revenue	$21 million
Food Service (point)	$16 million
Vending	$1.1 million
All other (including retail, bookstore, computer store, laundry, copy machines, theater sales, athletic concessions)	$3.9 million
Transactions (daily)	300,000

Administration

Joseph G. Pietrantoni	Associate Vice President Auxiliary Services
John Diaz	Director of DukeCard Office/Operations
Duke card offices	11 employees

Campus Card System
AT&T CampusWide Access Solutions

Technology
High coercivity magnetic stripe

Applications

All foodservice operations	Washers and dryers
Door access	Vending services
Food delivery service	Bookstores
Athletic concessions	Barber shop
Parking	Theaters
Library	Student voter registration
Copy machines	Yearbook sales
Printing	

ments, all foodservice operations, all retail stores and bookstores, barber shop, theaters, vending machines, athletic concessions, residence halls and academic building door locks, and parking gates. Other uses include athletic building entry, student voter registration, yearbook sales, and the issuing of books from the library. "Potential uses are endless for this efficient, user-friendly system," noted Pietrantoni. He added that he is always looking for and finding new ways to use the all-campus DukeCard.

"The DukeCard is on solid ground and will continue to grow and touch all aspects of campus life," said Pietrantoni. The future of the DukeCard is promising, and new applications for the card will be added as needed, he noted. In addition, he said Duke has looked into adding "smart-chip" technology to the DukeCard, but Pietrantoni stressed the importance of first making sure the use of the technology will be essential for specific uses that are lacking on his campus. Moreover, the decision will be based on whether or not it will be cost effective for the university. "All this new technology is great, but schools must first consider whether the technology is needed before jumping to be the first to have it." Thus far, Duke University has done just fine with its simple and efficient DukeCard.

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