

Goucher's CCTV Camera Policy

Frequently Asked Questions

1. Why does the college have cameras on campus?

Many college campuses have video cameras, including very small campuses like Goucher's, and all of the colleges in the immediate geographic area, including Towson, Stevenson, Loyola and McDaniel; these cameras are used for purposes of enhancing safety, deterring and investigating crime, and protecting college property. Students and their parents have come to expect heightened sensitivity to these issues, in light of recent publicity surrounding criminal events on other campuses.

2. How do cameras work?

Cameras located around campus send live video to the password-protected monitoring stations for review by authorized and trained campus safety staff. The video is simultaneously recorded and archived to provide supporting evidence during the investigation of an incident.

3. Who watches the cameras and who can view recorded material?

Cameras are not monitored in real time 24 hours a day, seven days a week; however, the college reserves the right to do so with respect to any particular camera or cameras. The viewing of live video may occur if needed for legitimate safety and security purposes, such as surveilling an area in which a pattern of crime has been observed or reasonable suspicion of criminal activity exists.

Recorded material is viewed at the discretion of the Director of Campus Safety (or designee) and only for the purpose of enhancing safety, deterring and investigating crime, and protecting college property. No one other than trained campus safety staff may operate the system or view footage without express permission from the Director of Campus Safety.

4. Where are the cameras located?

Locations for the installation of CCTV cameras have been determined by the Director of Campus Safety, based upon a data-driven need at a specific location. Consideration is given to crime trends and the potential for criminal activity, and installation feasibility and costs. All decisions are made in consultation with the Vice President for Operations and the Vice President for Information Technology, to ensure that planned technologies are appropriate and feasible as proposed. Cameras have been placed at the campus entrance gate, parking lots, residence hall entrances and in several other locations in administrative and academic buildings.

5. Under what circumstances will covert cameras be used on campus?

Covert CCTV equipment is defined in the policy as a camera that is hidden from normal view or otherwise secreted away. The policy provides that covert equipment must be authorized by the President and the Vice President for Operations, and is to be used only in connection with suspected criminal activity or violation of college policy. The use of covert or hidden CCTV equipment will be conducted by

law enforcement officers or campus safety staff in compliance with federal, state and local laws. In addition, no covert cameras will be used in a location in which an individual has a reasonable expectation of privacy unless such use is authorized by a court or unless the resident of the space provides written permission for installation of such cameras. For example, if repeated acts of vandalism occur in an area that is not covered by overt cameras, a covert camera may be installed to identify the perpetrator. However, covert cameras would not be installed inside a private residence hall room without a court order, or the permission of the resident.

6. Will cameras be used inside of residence halls and in classrooms?

The priority for the placement of cameras has been at the front gate and at residence hall entrances. Although OneCard readers provide a record of entrances and exits, many times individuals enter the residence halls by following an authorized individual, but are not themselves authorized to enter the building. This extra layer of security is helpful in deterring unauthorized individuals from entering the buildings and in conducting investigations when crimes occur in residence halls. Cameras will not be used in private areas of residence halls, such as communal bathrooms or individual rooms, but may be used in areas such as laundry rooms and stairwells.

Similarly, the priority for academic and administrative buildings has been to install cameras at building entrances, though cameras may also be used in certain interior areas where valuable property is located, for example. Cameras are not currently planned for classrooms, though cameras may be used if the need arises, for example, in case of repeated vandalism in a classroom.

7. What assurances can you give us that our privacy is not going to be invaded?

Campus safety staff are trained in the legal and ethical issues of camera use. Officers are trained that they are not to track individuals unless there is reason to suspect the individual is a threat to people or property. “Profiling” of individuals based on protected characteristics such as race and ethnicity, is prohibited. Except in very limited circumstances described in the policy, the scope of camera coverage does not allow for surveillance of the interior of individual residence hall rooms or other private areas. If anyone has reason to suspect misuse of the camera system, they should report it immediately to the Director of Campus Safety or the Vice President for Campus Operations for investigation and appropriate action.

8. Could students or employees be subject to disciplinary action based on observations made on video?

Yes. The system would not be designed to monitor individuals who do not threaten people or property, and is not intended for use by supervisors to monitor employees on the job. However, cameras may be used to investigate certain incidents, including those that relate to personal injury to students, employees or visitors, or damage to or loss of College property.

9. If I am involved in an incident, can I view the video recordings?

Any video evidence that would be collected is subject to the same policies of the college that govern any other type of evidence gathered by the Office of Campus Safety. For example, in the course of an investigation, a witness may be asked to view specific recordings in order to identify a suspect. As another example, if the video is used in a student judicial process, the student respondent may be entitled to review the video, subject to FERPA. Any other requests to review videos, including those from outside

authorities, must be submitted in writing to the Director of Campus Safety for consideration; these requests would be reviewed by counsel.

10. Who decides how long the camera recordings are kept and who has access to them?

The policy provides that video recordings shall be retained by the Office of Campus Safety for a period of twenty (20) days, and may be retained for a longer period at the direction of the Director of Campus Safety if they are to be used for a criminal investigation or court proceedings, or other bona fide use. If recordings are used for purposes of a student code of conduct proceeding, students would have the right to view such recordings subject to the provisions of FERPA. Requests to view or obtain a copy of recordings for other purposes will be reviewed by the Director of Campus Safety and Vice President of Operations. Recordings will be made available for official college and law enforcement purposes, only if necessary, to enhance personal safety, deter and investigate crime, and protect college property.

11. To whom should I address questions and concerns?

Questions and concerns about camera usage and placement, or other issues related to the camera policy, should be addressed to the Director of Campus Safety and/or the Vice President for Campus Operations.