



**SOLUTIONS FOR UNIVERSITY
MAIL CENTER CHALLENGES**

INTRODUCTION

University mail centers, no matter the size of their student and staff populations, have entered a new era of mail. Today's students and staff are modern shoppers, and like the rest of us, are buying more online—a lot more. For example, back in 2008 one mid-sized university processed 80,000 packages; in 2016, they received over 195,000!¹ But don't rush to do the math on your own mail center yet—the number of packages per student is expected to increase.

University mail centers are figuring out how to deal with this new era of mail and the unique challenges that come along with it. Challenges that range from finding space for the volume of packages to adapting procedures for a student and staff population that is accustomed to two-day or even next-day delivery.

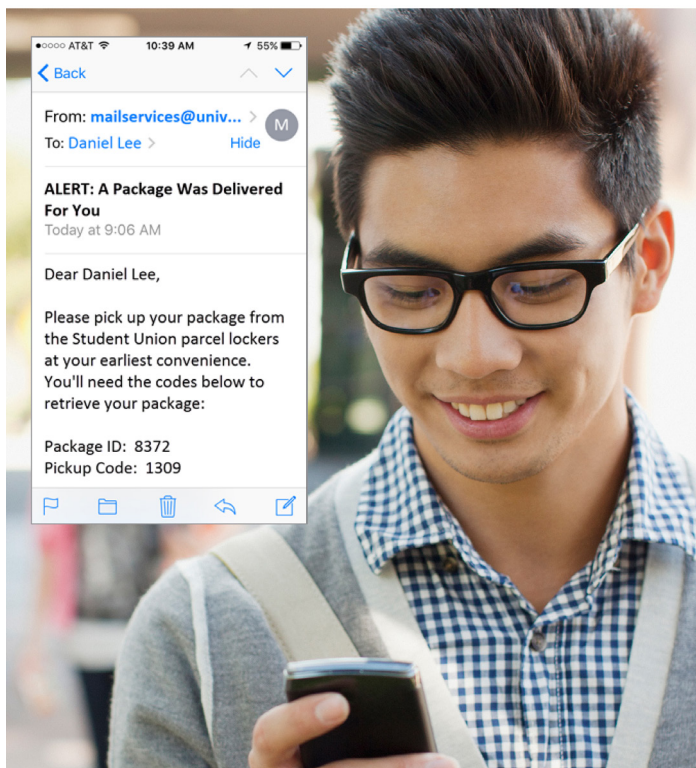
We'll walk you through the major challenges facing campus mail managers today and the solutions that are available to help.

CHALLENGES

Damaged and Lost Packages

A manual package tracking and distribution method can hurt relations with students and staff when packages are damaged or lost.

Packages sometimes arrive damaged or never at all and it is important to have a procedure in place for



“In the face of growing parcel volumes, outdated processes, such as manually logging in packages and having limited mailroom hours, can affect student and staff success and experience in ways it wouldn't have before.

Now is a great opportunity for universities and colleges to set their mail centers up for success by evaluating and updating their operations, and incorporating new technologies.”

—Dan Greaney, Business Development Inbound Logistics and Intelligent Parcel Lockers

reporting when this happens. Packages also get lost or damaged after arriving on campus. This can be due to an overcrowded mailroom or just oversight. While there is no way to completely avoid the possibility of damaging or losing a package, getting parcels out of your hands and into the waiting arms of their recipients as quickly as possible is the best way to avoid unhappy students and staff.

Pickup Delays and Lines Out the Door

The image of the long line of students coming out of the mail center fills us all with package angst and is a visual that more and more schools are anxious to eliminate.

Students—and parents—want their packages delivered as quickly as possible and they are often willing to pay more for three-day, two-day, and even overnight delivery. The last thing they want to see are their expedited shipping charges going to waste because of processing or distribution delays in the university mail center.

The process of manually logging in packages, then writing a note for students, and finally having them come collect their packages during limited mailroom hours was not built for the volume of packages mail centers are currently dealing with or the high expectations of students, parents, and staff.

Squeezed for Space

One of the main issues that mail centers are facing as a result of increased parcel volumes is something as basic as space.

We've all seen it: apartment complexes, corporate headquarters, and even university mailrooms piled high with brown packages. Most of the mailrooms were built with letters in mind, optimized for envelope delivery and distribution but not necessarily for packages. Plus, this space squeeze is now happening more often than just at the beginning of the school year. Students have increased their online ordering to include clothes, toiletries, and even food, extending the parcel peak to all year long.²

Gaining Insights Into Business Operations

Over- or under-staffing can occur when mail centers don't have visibility to the ebbs and flows of their business.

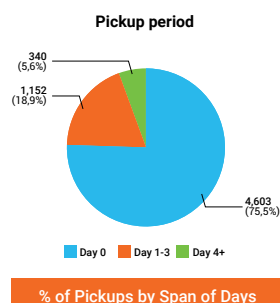
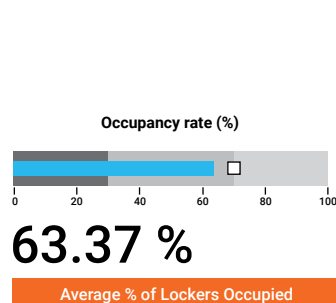
Although overall parcel volumes have been going up year over year, there are still fluctuations throughout the year that influence business operations, such as staffing. To ensure that the right amount of personnel is available, it's important to, either manually or with an automated system, monitor key business metrics such as parcel volumes.

SOLUTIONS

Start with Package Tracking and Security

More than ever, a successful mailroom will depend on how well you are able to track and secure your packages.

When more than one hundred packages cross your desk on any given day, mistakes are bound to occur if everything must be logged in and out by hand. Using a faster and more secure package logging method through automation is key for package security and workflow. Using a package tracking app or inbound package tracking software prevents packages from going missing and streamlines a time-consuming manual process.



Focus on Communication

The more you can notify students and staff via their mobile devices, the quicker the packages are picked up and safely out of your hands. Communicating to students that their package arrived via email or text message has been shown to cut pick-up times in half. On top of that, students and staff agree that it would be a great value-add to receive immediate notification of a package.

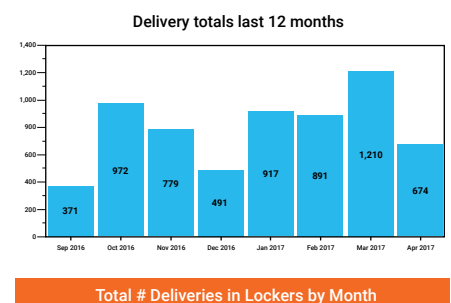
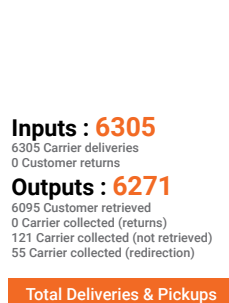
Most parcel tracking software options or intelligent parcel lockers allow you to text or email recipients automatically as soon as a package comes in. You can also then program second or third texts or emails, effectively limiting the number of returned or forgotten packages.

Explore Automation Options

Providers of intelligent parcel lockers are making lockers that are more and more in tune with the pains of university mail centers.

This is good news for universities looking for an all-in-one solution to their challenges of limited space, long pick-up lines, and package security.

Intelligent lockers are often tied to a package tracking software which automatically sends students or staff an email or text message when a package is received. The students are given a one-time-use code that they use to open the locker. This allows students to get the packages quickly and 24/7, eliminating long lines and packages piling up from students missing deliveries.



“Parcel Pending by Quadiant Parcel Lockers are automated electronic locker systems that securely store packages for easy retrieval by students and faculty. With 24/7 access, they allow people to pick up packages on their schedule. Parcel lockers dramatically reduce the time and resources required for parcel management and provide campus post offices with automatic tracking of every package drop-off and collection.”



Intelligent parcel lockers also allow the mail center to speed up processing times, when used with package tracking software, and they cut down on space. Instead of the packages living in a mail center, they are securely stored in lockers in a convenient pick-up location for students or staff. Security cameras can be installed in the locker area and each locker is monitored for damages or spoiled packages. This level of security and visibility can bring peace of mind to students, staff, and the mail center.

Plan Ahead with Mail Data and Metrics

Understanding your mail center, such as when are the busiest months or the peak pickup times, what types of packages are being delivered, and what is the average processing time for packages, can help mail centers get ahead of busy periods and adjust their workflow for their unique use case.

CONCLUSION

Be proactive about exploring the different parcel receiving and tracking solutions, and follow these four steps:

1. Look into automating your manual receiving process with tracking apps and software.
2. Explore solutions that include automated notifications to students and staff.
3. Investigate different intelligent locker options and how they can help with tracking, distribution, and security of packages.
4. Get a handle on what your mail center is receiving and its workflow with mail data and metrics from tracking software or intelligent parcel lockers.

CONTRIBUTORS

Dan Greaney, Higher Education Logistics Engineer

SOURCES

¹Daninhirsch, Hilary. “Keeping you posted: Campus mailing management.” *University Business*. 14 June 2017. Web.

²Stoltzfus, Kate. “Thanks, Amazon. Campus Mailroom Struggle to Keep Up with Boom in Packages for Students.” *The Chronical of Higher Education*. 8 Oct. 2015. Web.



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