



Case study



Boston College Students' Safety and Experience Soars with the Deployment of Evolv Express[®]

Boston College

LOCATION: Boston, MA

FOUNDED: 1863

MASCOT: Eagles

STUDENTS: 15,025

FULL-TIME FACULTY: 888

RESEARCH GRANTS: \$773 million

ATHLETIC CONFERENCE: ACC

WEBSITE: www.bc.edu

Solution Snapshot

Goals

- Shrink length lines of students and fans seeking to get into athletic venues
- Streamline secondary screening to reduce the formation of “soft” targets
- Determine how many people enter each athletic venue (ticketed and not ticketed)
- Redeploy security staffing currently required to conduct manual bag checks
- Minimize nuisance alarm rates to facilitate the free flow of security screening traffic
- Increase the number of students and fans who are in their seats at the start of games rather than in security screening lines
- Leverage portable screening technology between different athletic venues
- Access real-time security screening data anytime from anywhere

Solution

People

- Evolv Solutions Engineer conducted a site survey of all athletic venue entrances
- Evolv Customer Success Manager coordinated training of staff, including set up, tear down, and storage of systems

Technology

- 8 Evolv Express dual-lane systems (some ruggedized)
- 7 Evolv Express single-lane systems (some ruggedized)

Process

- Helped configure and deploy 15 Evolv Express® systems
- Worked with the Boston College to set up mass notification settings
- Ongoing technical support and training resources
- Evolv Insights®
- Evolv Mobile Carts

Outcomes



Balance safety with delivering a great experience for all



Shrank time for stadium ingress (arrival to seats) by more than 50%



Reduced security staff hiring difficulties by requiring two-thirds (~200) fewer personnel compared to bag checks



Able to redeploy Express systems quickly and easily between locations



Avoid high nuisance alarm rates and staff requirements of walkthrough metal detectors



Increased concession and retail store spending



Withstand adverse weather conditions—freezing temperatures, rain, snow, and ice, and reduce the chance of students being subject to inclement weather



Integration of the Express mass communication feature with local police for faster emergency response



Able to access real-time analytics used to deploy systems rapidly to address changes in traffic flow at specific entrances



Safety and Experience Are Core University Values

Matt Conway, the Associate Athletic Director of Facilities and Operations at Boston College (BC), joined Boston College nearly 20 years ago and has assumed greater roles and responsibilities during his tenure, including taking on facilities and capital projects in 2017.

As Boston College is a member of a Power Five conference (ACC), and the student and alumni bodies of the prestigious university diversify and increase, the demands on events increase every year, according to Conway.

"The world has changed externally, and we had to change our philosophies on how we run and operate safe events for our fans," he conveys. "9/11 and the Boston Marathon bombing certainly shape how we run quality athletic events. Yet, at the same time, we also are in a constant endeavor to improve our home experience. Our objective is for people to come and watch athletic events in person."

This is accentuated due to the nature of the Boston College campus, which Conway describes as a close-knit family. "Everyone—faculty, staff, and students—care greatly about each other, both what

we do here at work and each other's families," he says. "As a college and university, our priority is the protection and safety of our students. Parents have entrusted us with their children and expect us to keep them safe while they are on campus, and this includes attendance at different athletic events."

In addition to students attending athletic events, Conway indicates Boston College alumni have a particular affinity for visiting the university campus. "We make it a priority to ensure they have a safe and enjoyable time when they're back on campus, which includes attending athletic competitions," he says. "Historically, our attendance hasn't been quite what we wanted, but we've seen this change in recent years with more families and children in attendance. Our goal is to treat everyone who comes to our campus as if they are a 'million-dollar' donor—both in terms of their safety and experience."

Boston Trusts Evolv

Boston College joins Fenway Park, Gillette Stadium, and TD Garden as the fourth team in Evolv's hometown to trust the Evolv Express with the safety of their students and fans. Hosting several million Bostonians and visitors each year, these Boston teams are leading the pack in delivering a perfect mixture of safety and security to all who enter their venues. Whether professional sports or collegiate athletics, we believe that everyone has a right to safety and proudly stand with our hometown teams in this mission.

Evolv is proud to be the Official Fan Screening Partner of Boston College Athletics.



TD GARDEN

**Gillette
STADIUM**

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Bag Checks Created Long Lines and Bad Fan Experiences

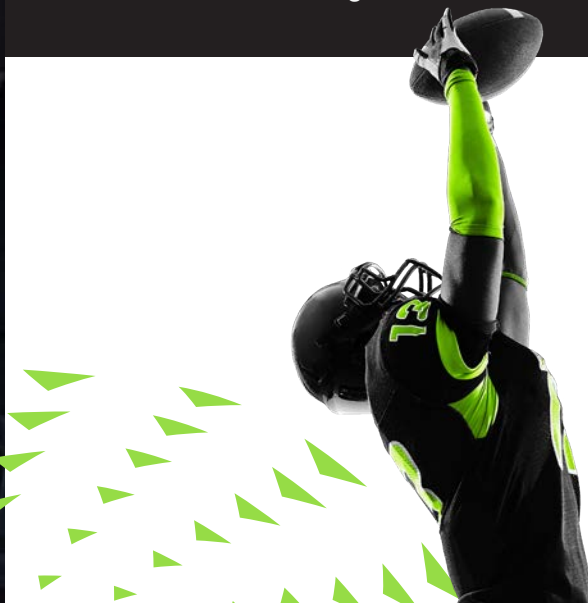
Boston College has a rich tradition in athletics, touting the Alumni Stadium which holds 45,000 football fans, and a basketball and hockey center, Conte Forum, that holds 8,600 fans for basketball and 7,500 for hockey.

The college also has a softball field with a capacity of 2,500 and a lacrosse field with a capacity of 2,000. "These are a mix of indoor and outdoor venues that all must be kept safe while delivering a great experience for the athletes, students, and fans," Conway says.

For several years, Boston College relied on bag checks at the entrances to its different athletic venues. "Even after implementing a clear bag check policy, we still had long lines at the entrances of our different games and events," Conway says. "Our students and fans like to experience tailgating and other social interactions in our parking lots. The influx of fans at the last minute before games would 'overwhelm' our bag check stations and the lines were substantial. Fans missed the kickoff and tipoff of games because they weren't able to get into the stadium and to their seats in time." This delay also impacted concession and retail sales, as fans spent time waiting in security queues rather than exploring concession and merchandise stations before the start of games and events.

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Boston College



Traditional Metal Detectors Were Not an Option

Around 2019, Conway and his team evaluated walkthrough metal detectors and ultimately determined they were not the right fit for the campus.

"Metal detectors do not scale, and we were concerned that the lack of speed would result in long lines outside of our doors," Conway says. "These, in turn, would create secondary targets. Plus, recruiting and retaining security staff to run all of the metal detectors was going to be difficult. With the pandemic, this issue became even more accentuated and we decided to pass." Post-pandemic, when the search resumed, Conway knew he had to find a technology that would scale and accommodate a diverse student body, and the growing alumni base—without jeopardizing their experience.

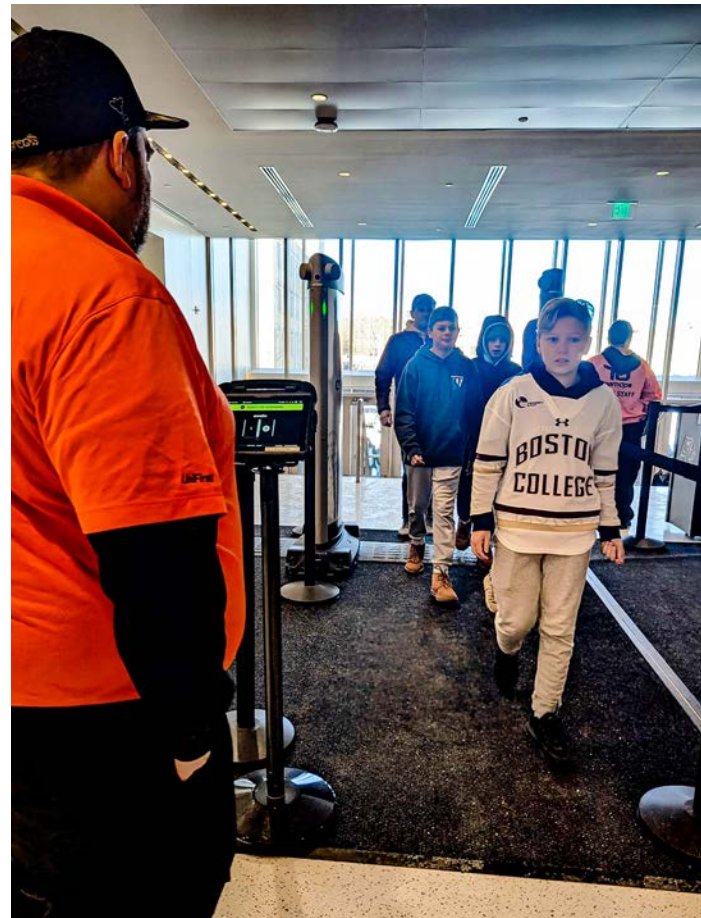
Experiencing Evolv at a National Championship Game

The Boston College team continued its search for a different security screening approach and discovered it due to a chance encounter with Evolv Technology.

"I attended a national championship game in Miami where Evolv technology was being tested at one of the gates to Hard Rock Stadium. I was immediately intrigued and did some more research on it."

As part of the process, Conway returned to Boston and consulted with Bill Evans, the Chief of Police for Boston College. Boston College and its police department work hand-in-hand to secure the campus and rely on each other's expertise and insights when it comes to their security ecosystem. For them, researching and testing the system was key. "Throughout this whole process, we received outstanding support and feedback from Bill and his team," Conway says. "This has been critical throughout the project."

After additional research and hands-on experience with Evolv, Evans and his team were aligned with Conway on pursuing Evolv as their new security provider. Following university protocol, Conway and Evans put together a proposal for university leadership, including Father William Leahy, the President of Boston College. Administrative leadership was likewise impressed with Evolv's ability to efficiently screen students and fans while ensuring a great experience.



Reasons for Selecting Evolv

Conway cites several reasons why everyone at Boston College felt Evolv was the right decision for the university, from screening accuracy to student experience and data insights.

"Knowing how many people are entering the stadiums or fields was a big piece of our decision-making process," Conway says. "We can check our throughput rates and times and verify that our numbers are accurate. In addition to athletic events, we concluded that the Express could also be employed at our Pops on the Heights donor event. This is a big event featuring a series of different concerts with the proceeds going to the university. Incorporating Evolv into our security ecosystem and increasing the safety of the attendees without impacting their experience is critical."

Another aspect of the solution that Conway and others liked about Evolv was that it is SaaS (software as a service) based. "As a result, the Evolv is updated regularly and we do not need to worry about patches," he notes. "Whenever there is a new update from Evolv, a software update kicks off, and we get to pick when is the most convenient time for us to deploy it. Because Evolv is self-learning, getting these updates enables us to improve our Evolv deployment constantly with every update."

During the sales process, the Evolv team was transparent with the Boston College team about what the Evolv system would detect and not detect. "Evolv also explained how nuisance alarm rates would increase as the sensitivity settings on the Express systems were changed," Conway says. "They were very honest about very small pocket knives and other things could get through. We're most interested in finding weapons that can do mass casualty damage."

Another key aspect of the decision was also Evolv's dedication to education and to creating safer environments for students, something especially important in a college campus. "Our college campuses are vibrant, fluid environments where young adults are not only learning but also living. Students' expectations of safety are especially important given that they also call their schools their homes," says Jill Lemond, Evolv's Senior Director of Education. "Students deserve spaces where they can live, work, learn, and enjoy themselves. We help to provide safer experiences at colleges and recognize the nuances of those environments."

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Deploying Evolv: 15 Express Systems Across Numerous Athletic Venues

A total of 15 Evolv Express systems were acquired midway through 2023—eight dual-lanes and seven single-lanes.

An Evolv Solutions Engineer spent multiple days on-site at Boston College conducting location assessments at the entrances at each of the university's athletic venues. His recommendations included best practices for where to place each Express system to elicit optimal traffic flow through each one. "After the initial testing of the systems, we brought in some additional Express systems because we wanted to make sure everyone coming to games and events were able to pass through quickly," Conway adds.

With some venues located outdoors, Boston College chose to include a select number of Express Outdoor systems. "We have some very hard weather conditions in Boston, and we needed a system that could withstand those environments," Conway explains. "And with our large number of venues, the portability of the Express system, which can be taken down, stored, and set up again quickly and easily, is a real plus. Some of the systems are in fixed locations, while others we move around the campus depending on the season and the entrances where we're seeing the most traffic flow." For these mobile Express systems, Boston College uses a mobility cart solution from Evolv, which enables faster and more effective Express transportation.

In addition to helping to configure the locations where each Express system was placed, the Evolv Solutions Engineer worked with the Boston College team to tune the system's security settings for each venue and event type. "When we implement security measures, we also assess to make sure we have the right balance in place," Conway says. "The practices at Gillette Field or Fenway Park may be relevant at the professional level, but they may not at the collegiate level, where we have mostly students. At the same time, if the Department of Homeland Security comes to us and indicates they have reason to believe there is a threat, we can turn up the sensitivity level. Thus, we don't want alumni and others to feel like the campus is a place where they must go through a series of constant security checks to get in and out. We want this to be a great experience for them. The Evolv team was very helpful in working with us to test out these different settings and determine which ones met our requirements best."

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Great Training, Support, and Communications

The rollout of Evolv was made seamless due to the training and support from the Evolv team.

"The technology is only as good as the training and the people operating it," Conway says. "Before we went live with the systems, the Evolv team did a great job giving us the right training tools."

This is reinforced by Boston College's Customer Success Manager, who delivered the initial training and has made training resources available to the Boston College security staff. The team has access to training resources through the Evolv Academy (Evolv's learning platform), the Bridge (Evolv's user group community), and most recently, through the in-tablet training videos that can be watched by guards and staff immediately before their shifts as a refresher.

On the flip side, Conway and his team also worked hard at their communications to ensure students and fans knew about the changes in security screening. This included notifications and an array of educational signage being added to every entrance that now hosts an Express. "This helped lay the groundwork for a successful deployment," Conway says.

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A Community Effort to Secure an Open Campus

Lemond acknowledges the difficulty of securing an open campus and the work that goes into it from various teams and departments—both from the planning involved and the rollout of new protocols.

"While it is best practice for K-12 school buildings to have strict visitor entry protocols during the school day, college campuses regularly welcome visitors, guests, and fans from outside the school community," Lemond says. "Expansive university campuses present security challenges as their openness and accessibility do not support visitor management programs. In the absence of those programs, universities look to Evolv for creative screening solutions to this nuanced safety concern. Evolv makes it an easier and more efficient process to integrate safety into the existing community programs."

One of the ways the Evolv Express enables faster response times to potential threats is through the mass notification capabilities of the tablet. "The ability to send out text-based notifications based on the nature of the threat from the Evolv tablet to our command post and different members of the executive team is something we like," Conway says. "For instance, if we detect a weapon at a specific gate, the security guards running the Express system can send off a notification to dispatch for backup support. The training videos from Evolve have been especially helpful here in terms of configuration and defining our response policies."

Because Boston College takes a community policing approach, the integration of notifications with federal, state, campus, and local police departments has been quite beneficial. "The mass notification capability on the Evolv system enables us to integrate with our different police organizations," Conway explains. "It is more than the Boston College Police Department. It also includes the Boston police, state police, transit police, and local Newton police. All of them have been very supportive in working with us when we rolled out the Evolv systems."



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Getting Full Value from Evolv Insights® Analytics

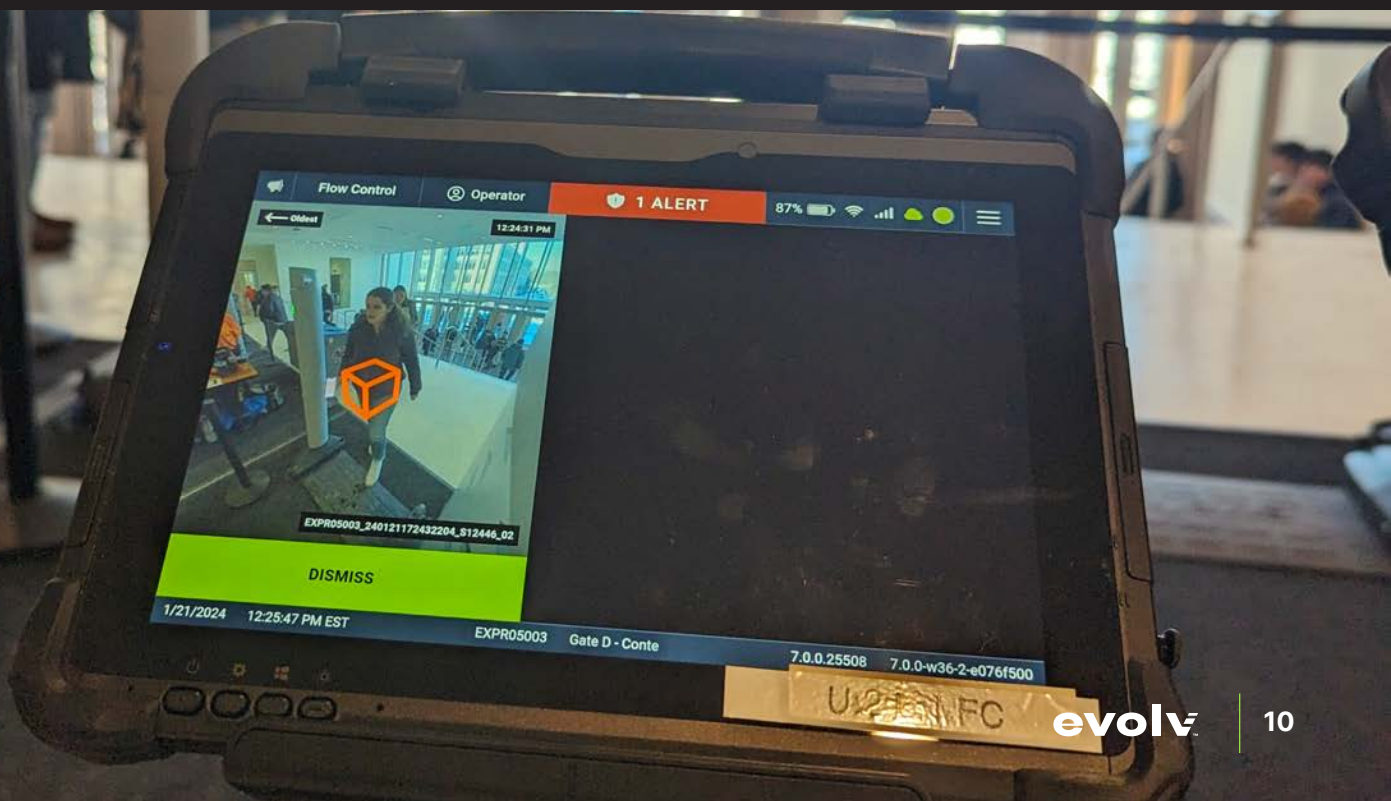
As part of the rollout of the Evolv systems, Evolv's Customer Success Manager worked with Conway's team to ensure Evolv Insights was fully configured.

The Boston College team uses both the desktop version as well as the mobile app. "We have data at our fingertips regardless of our location," Conway says. "It begins with virtual real-time responses. For example, I can sit in our command post on game day and see how many people have gone through the Evolv systems for screening. Then, we use that data to redeploy some of our Evolv systems to the entrances with the highest traffic volume. We also see changes in traffic flow based on the opponent. In the case of non-conference opponents, we see more people arrive on shuttle buses and thus redeploy systems to the other side of the building."

For winter sports such as basketball and hockey, the Boston College team does not always have a command post set up. Here, the mobile app is proving to be especially helpful. "I can be at my seat courtside and pull up the Evolv app to view data at each of our Express systems in real-time," Conway says. "I can check in at any time from anywhere. The same is true for our Police Department. This level of flexibility is important for an organization such as ours."

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Excited and Anxious at Initial Deployment

When all of the Express systems went live in mid-2023, Conway admits he was both excited and anxious.

"Our students are our toughest fans and the student gate at football games always had the longest lines and waits," he relates. "I was worried what reaction we might get. It turns out that we processed traffic at that gate faster and more efficiently than any time before—and this was on the first day of our Evolv deployment."

Security Lines Shrank Dramatically

With Evolv Express systems in place, Boston College has seen its security lines almost disappear depending on the event and the particular entrance.

"We're able to get our students and fans into our stadiums and venues—from street to seats—twice as fast as before," Conway says. "For football games, it previously took fans up to 30 minutes from the time they arrived at an entrance to get to their seats. This is now 10 or maybe 15 minutes at tops. For basketball games, we've gone from 15 minutes to less than five. These improvements in ingress dramatically improve fan experience, especially when we're experiencing adverse weather conditions like snow, rain, and cold temperatures."

As students get more experience with the Evolv technology, Boston College is seeing an improvement in their overall behavior when they pass through the Express lanes. "Boston College students and many of our fans also are getting used to the security screening process," Conway observes. "Over the past six months, we've found that the short lines before the entrances have gotten even shorter; after the fans go through an Express system once, they know the process and the next time is even faster for them."

Because Boston College eliminated the security lines outside of its athletic entrances, this soft target no longer exists. "Plus, as the vast majority of fans pass right through screening without setting off an alarm, we don't have secondary security screening queues, something that existed with our bag-check process or would have occurred if we had purchased walkthrough metal detectors," Conway says.



Concession and Retail Spending Up

Because students and fans are getting into venues faster, they are spending more in concessions and retail shops.

"It is too early to tell exactly what this looks like, but we know they are spending more before games—and it is because they have more time to do so," Conway says. "At the same time, most people are now in their seats in time to see the start of games. This wasn't always the case when we did bag checks."

A Great Threat Deterrent

So far, Conway is happy to report that Boston College has not detected any weapon that he would consider a significant threat.

"At any athletic venue, including our own, the impact of one negative event on your attendance and reputation could be tremendous," he says. "You're never going to capture 100% of the threats. But you want to make it as hard as possible for anyone who wants to do something to do so. Evolv gives us this ability."

Conway notes that Evolv is a great threat deterrent as a result. "Now that everyone who comes into a stadium or field is checked for weapons, we get alarms whenever plainclothes police officers pass through an Express system with their weapon on them," he says. "This goes to show that the systems are working and drives home the point that you should not bring a weapon into one of our venues regardless of who you might be."

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Substantial Decrease in Security Staff for Ingress Security Screening

Managing the Evolv Express systems is much more efficient from a security standpoint compared to bag checks for Boston College.

"We can manage the Evolv systems with about one-third of the security staff," Conway says. "For example, we required around 100 to 120 archways at footballs, with around two-and-a-half staff for each. Thus, at football games alone, we need fewer than 90 security staff now. As it is difficult to recruit and keep hourly employees, especially after the pandemic, this is a big difference for us."

Conway continues, "With Evolv, we are now screening everyone who is coming into one of our venues. In addition, using Evolv Insights analytics, we've found the 'gap' is around 10,000 between those with tickets and those without tickets. We have cheerleaders, concession workers, and people who pass through multiple times. It is valuable information to know precisely how many people we have in a venue at a given time and the traffic flow down to five-minute increments."





Delicate Balancing Act Between Safety and Experience

The response to Evolv from the Boston College “family” has been overwhelmingly positive per Conway.

Students tend to be the foremost fan critics, and they quickly embraced the Express systems at their entrances at football, hockey, and basketball games. Alumni from the community have responded similarly, while university administrators and leaders appreciate knowing how many fans are attending athletic events and what threats are being introduced at those venues. “Security screening is a delicate balancing act, and Evolv enables us to balance between creating a safer environment and one where our fans have a great experience,” Conway concludes.



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Contact us to learn more about helping to create
safer zones where you live, learn, work, or play.

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