

VIDEO SURVEILLANCE POLICY

Division: Finance and Management

Responsible Office: Finance and Management

Date Established: 12/08/2009

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POLICY SUMMARY

SUNY Buffalo State believes that safeguarding the personal welfare of its students and employees is of paramount importance at all campus locales and in all buildings. In an effort to discourage those behaviors that threaten personal safety or a potential loss of campus resources, selective use of video surveillance is engaged at the campus.

POLICY STATEMENT

SUNY Buffalo State reserves the right to place video surveillance cameras on campus where necessary and appropriate. SUNY Buffalo State respects the privacy of the university community members and strives to balance that privacy against safety needs on campus. Cameras extend the protection of the University Police Department, even when officers are not in an immediate area. Cameras are not a guarantee of safety but are a tool that assists the University Police Department. Cameras protect campus community members from dangers by serving as deterrents and alerting police to dangers. Cameras are never used to monitor or track the behaviors of campus community members.

This policy does not apply to legitimate academic use of video cameras for educational purposes, to cameras used for journalism, or to private video cameras owned and operated by members of the campus community.

This policy does not apply to cameras used covertly by the University Police Department or another law enforcement agency for criminal surveillance as governed by the New York Penal Law.

This policy does not apply to video cameras or webcams established for reasons unrelated to surveillance activity, including remote monitoring of facilities construction to ascertain project progress or campus public relations initiatives.

Camera Placement

SUNY Buffalo State's University Police Department currently monitors video surveillance cameras located in public areas on campus. These cameras capture images only, not audio.

Requests for the placement of video surveillance cameras must be made to the Chief of University Police. Approved requests will include joint approval from the Vice President for Finance and Management and the Chief of University Police.

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All camera purchases occurring subsequent to the implementation of this policy must meet the guidelines of this policy.

Placement of video surveillance cameras shall be the responsibility of the Chief of University Police and/or the Vice President for Finance and Management and shall conform to applicable federal and state laws.

This policy does not apply to cameras used covertly by University Police or another law enforcement agency for criminal surveillance as governed by the New York Penal Law.

Cameras may not be established in private areas of the campus without obtaining a warrant and are subject only to appropriate legal authority.

Video surveillance cameras shall not be directed or zoomed into the windows of any private residential building, including residence halls.

Electronic shielding will be used to the extent possible so that the camera does not have the ability to look into or through windows.

This policy prohibits the use of “dummy” or placebo cameras.

Video Surveillance Camera Use and Nonuse

Video surveillance cameras are not to be used to monitor individual students, faculty, or staff except as necessary for a criminal investigation and/or except as in accordance with the terms of a warrant. Cameras may be used to monitor a student or employee work area, such as an area with financial transactions, even if there is only one student, faculty, or staff member employed in that work area. Cameras used to monitor a work area will not be used to view the contents of computer screens.

Video surveillance cameras will not be used by the university to evaluate employee performance or to monitor employees during their non-working time. Video surveillance cameras shall not be used to monitor violations on campus, such as violations of parking rules, nor to collect data on students, such as parking patterns or student activity.

Video Surveillance Camera Monitoring

Video or camera images may be monitored only by SUNY Buffalo State's University Police Department or other select personnel as authorized by the Chief of University Police. No unapproved employees may monitor or view video or camera images for any reason except as necessary in the course of an investigation or adjudication.

If the University Police Department feels it is necessary to aid in an investigation or search, small video clips or image stills may be released to the media or the public. Prior to releasing the video clip or image still, the face and identifying features of all those on video but not of interest to the investigation will be blurred.

All SUNY Buffalo State University Police Officers and other select personnel, as authorized by the Chief of University Police, approved to monitor video or camera images shall receive a copy

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of this policy and provide written acknowledgment that they have read and understand this policy. Officers and authorized personnel will receive any and all updates or amendments to this policy.

Video or Other Storage Media

Video tapes or other media will be stored and transported in a manner that preserves security. Current and archived tapes or media shall be kept locked and secured.

Recorded images that do not document specific incidents shall be kept confidential and destroyed on a regular basis. Such images will be retained for a minimum of thirty (30) days and a maximum of one year. Cameras purchased prior to the implementation of this policy will be granted a variance to this policy if recorded image retention is less than thirty (30) days. Recordings that document specific incidents and merit retention for administrative or potential legal uses must be maintained for three (3) years after the end of the year to which they relate. This retention period meets the statutes of limitations for personal injury litigation and for the initiation of criminal prosecutions for misdemeanors. All recorded images used for an investigation or prosecution of a crime shall be retained until the end of the proceeding and appeal period unless directed otherwise by a court of law.

All new camera purchases will be expected to conform to a recorded image retention minimum of thirty (30) days, as well as comply with campus hardware standards.

No recorded image shall be altered in any manner. The only narrow exception allows for faces of nonparticipants in an incident to be blurred for privacy reasons in the event a video or still image is provided to the media.

SUNY Buffalo State currently maintains a closed-circuit video surveillance system not available on the Internet, located in the University Police Department and select authorized campus locations.

Video Surveillance Equipment Maintenance

Every area with authorized video surveillance equipment is responsible for maintaining said equipment in good working order. In the event that equipment may require disposal, replacement, or update, the University Police Department must be consulted prior to any action being taken. All costs associated with equipment maintenance, including disposal, are the responsibility of the area.

Destruction or Tampering with Video Surveillance Equipment

Any person who tampers with or destroys a video surveillance camera or any part of the video surveillance system may be prosecuted in the criminal justice system as well as the campus judicial system.

Compliance

It is the responsibility of all members of the campus community to observe this policy. Anyone found to be in non-compliance will be subject to sanctions as determined by the laws of New York and/or campus administrative procedures.

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DEFINITIONS

Data Storage System: A computer or electronic device dedicated to the purpose of storing data

Permanent Video Surveillance Cameras: Cameras that may be established as part of the campus infrastructure. The placement of permanent cameras requires joint approval by the Vice President for Finance and Management and the Chief of University Police.

Private Areas: Areas such as bathrooms, shower areas, locker, and changing rooms, areas where a reasonable person might change clothing, or private offices. The only exceptions are cameras used narrowly to safeguard money, documents, or supplies from theft, destruction, or tampering.

Public Areas: Areas open for public use where the expectation of privacy is not violated by what could normally be openly observed, such as a campus quad, an academic hallway, a classroom, library study rooms, residential hallways, and lounges, and all outdoor areas.

Temporary Video Surveillance Cameras: Cameras that are established by the University Police Department to provide additional security for a campus event or situation and that are not in place for more than thirty (30) days.

Video Surveillance Cameras: Camera devices capable of capturing images (not audio) viewable by the naked eye and transferring such images to a data storage system. Image capture may use any technological format.

APPLICABILITY

This policy applies to all members of the SUNY Buffalo State community and others who may use university facilities.

APPENDIX/AUTHORITY

[The Consolidated Laws of New York State](#): New York State's Public Officers Law and Penal Code laws constitute the authority regarding this policy.

CONTACT INFORMATION

VP Finance and Management Phone: (716) 878-4311

Cleveland Hall 505

1300 Elmwood Avenue

Buffalo, NY 14222

Website: <https://financeandmanagement.buffalostate.edu/>

E-mail: vpfm@buffalostate.edu

APPROVAL

Prior to 2016

REVISION HISTORY

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Brief description of edit: Adapted to a standard template.

Date of change: 10-6-23

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Brief description of edit: minor updates and ADA formatting.

Date of change: 06/24/2026

Brief description of edit: Adapted to ADA compliant template