

*University brings in new technology to combat underage drinking, still a 'huge' problem*

## Machines detect fake IDs

By Nicole Christiansen  
Managing editor

One Thursday night two weeks before her 21st birthday, Allison Mencke showed a fake ID at Grandma's Saloon & Grill in Minneapolis, and that was the last time she saw it. Before that, however, Mencke had used the ID several times with no problems.

"I never had anyone second-guess it," she said.

Mencke, now a 21-year-old senior, is not the only one who wanted to get a preview of the bar scene. For less than \$100, students can find high-quality IDs that will let them purchase alcohol almost hassle-free.

But St. Thomas is doing its part to crack down on illegal drinking on campus.

Public Safety and Parking Services bought two handheld machines last May that are designed to distinguish between real and fake state ID cards.

The machines work like this: By either scanning the bar code on the front of the ID or swiping the magnetic strip on the back, the machines can determine if it is real. If the ID is real, the person's name, age and date of birth will appear on the 3-inch by 3-inch computerized screen. If it is fake, an error message will appear on the screen.

Sometimes an error message will show up on a real ID, however, if the magnetic strip is old or the bar code is bad, said Mike Barrett, manager of investigations for Public Safety and Parking Services. Public Safety would check further in either case, he said.

Only 40 of the 50 states use bar codes or magnetic strips on their IDs so the machines cannot detect whether every ID is real or fake.

"The machine's not foolproof," Barrett said. "But it's far better than any technology we've had in the past."

Public Safety officers will use the machines "any time there's an alcohol-related function where [they] are the primary security," Barrett said.

The machines have not been used at St. Thomas-sponsored events yet, he said, but they probably will make their debut on Homecoming weekend. The Minnesota Zoo, the site of this year's Oct. 12 Homecoming dance, has contracted its own security, but that means more security officers will be on campus that night, Barrett said. The only UST officers at the dance will be there to document the night's events.

Some local restaurants and bars, such as the District Warehouse and Ol' Mexico Restaurant, use machines similar to the ones St. Thomas bought, made by a company called ViAge.

"When all 50 states have the two-dimensional bar codes and magnetic strips, then they'll become more common at bars," Barrett said.

The machines cost \$1,500 apiece and were funded by the Dean of Student Life; the Center for Student Leadership, Activities & Living and Campus Life at the request of Public Safety.

"Fake IDs are the bane of college administrators everywhere," said Jim



Jason Gillen, assistant investigator, demonstrates how the ID machine works. The ID can be swiped through the machine or a laser can read the bar code. *Inset:* Public Safety and Parking Services has collected many fake IDs throughout the years.

Sachs, assistant dean of student life. "[Being 21 to drink] is the law and fake IDs are a serious issue in skirting the law."

The machines will be used when an ID's validity is in question in on-campus situations as well.

Barrett said it is not uncommon for underage students to say they are from another school and show Public Safety a fake ID instead of showing them a St. Thomas ID to avoid getting in trouble when they get busted in the residence halls.

If Public Safety officers encountered a questionable ID in the past, they held the student until the St. Paul police could verify the ID's va-

lidity. But this year UST officers can scan or swipe it through the machine.

"It saves some police services, some taxpayer dollars and saves the student or visitor the time it takes for the police to come out," Barrett said.

Fake IDs have been a "huge" problem at UST for several years, Barrett said. An investigation last spring by the St. Paul Police Department's fraud and forgery unit reported that someone was supplying fake IDs to all of St. Thomas and half of the University of Minnesota.

The IDs sold last spring were of good quality and could pass all the validity checks except the ones using the bar codes and magnetic strips,

Barrett said.

A person caught making, supplying or delivering a fake ID can be charged with a felony, punishable by up to more than a year in prison. Barrett said UST and the St. Paul police know who was involved with last year's incident.

"Those people caught in the recent past have been expelled," he said.

A person caught using a fake ID can be charged with a misdemeanor, punishable by fines up to \$700. If a fake ID is processed within the university, the user is charged \$100.

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## Little protest

North's speech well-received

By Justin Gilmore  
Staff writer

"No airplane with American men on it will ever be hijacked again," Oliver North said Tuesday night to a balcony-room-only crowd in the O'Shaughnessy Educational Center auditorium. His statement, referring to the heroic actions of United Airlines passenger Todd Beamer over Pennsylvania on Sept. 11, 2001, was met with a roar of applause.

North spoke for 20 minutes about the current situation the United States faces with terrorist groups and especially with Iraqi President Saddam Hussein. Afterward he took questions from the St. Thomas community. He answered many questions about what the future holds for humanity as we face the threat of weapons of mass destruction in Iraq.

"If Saddam Hussein sends someone to Tel Aviv with a chemical weapon, killing 10,000 people, Israel will use their only option, nuclear weapons, and life as we know it will change forever," North said, in a tone that silenced the room. North made it clear that he fully supports military action by the United States and its allies against Hussein.

North was scheduled to be in town to promote his book, "Mission Compromised," so the university had to pay him only half of his usual fee of \$20,000. One reason for inviting him to speak was that he is a well-known conservative, a view that is not represented well on campus, said Matt Best, chairman of the Lectures Committee. The committee knew that some controversy would arise concerning North's visit, but committee members saw it as an opportunity.

"It is great to encourage dialogue among the community," Best said.

North, an author and host of a nationally syndicated radio show and "War Stories" on Fox News Channel, began his career at the United States Naval Academy. He served as a Marine for 22 years and was awarded the Silver Star and two Purple Hearts.

Among his achievements is the rescue of more than 800 medical students from the island of Granada. He helped plan the capture of the hijackers of the cruise ship Achille Lauro. Today he is the honorary chairman of Freedom Alliance, an organization committed to restoring honesty and integrity to our political

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