Robert Plante automated the Holy Cross mail center, saving time and boosting reliability.

CHALLENGE
A manual, clipboard-and-pen system made logging and tracking packages both time-consuming and labor-intensive, allowing the college to process just 60 packages per hour.

SOLUTION
UPS Trackpad® allows the college to process up to 360 packages per hour – from a geology textbook ordered on eBay to a care package from mom – six times faster than before, saving considerable staff time and improving customer service.

A SMARTER SYSTEM
UPS TRACKPAD MOVES THE HOLY CROSS MAIL CENTER TO THE HEAD OF THE CLASS.

High on a shelf in the Holy Cross campus mail center sit stacks of pink, yellow, blue and white log sheets. Robert Plante, mail center manager, used the photocopied pages to track packages when he started working for the Worcester, Mass., college in 1987. With the color-coded system, Plante and his team tracked the box number, package ID number, plus the student's name and signature, all by hand.

Although the system helped him manage shipments for the school’s departments and 2,800 students for more than a decade, it was cumbersome. To prepare packages for student pickup, the staff lined them up in box-number order. If someone said a package was never delivered, Plante had to search the records manually to try to find it. “I had a stack of papers like this,” he says, holding his hand a foot above the table. And the system’s lack of security worried him. A student could easily scribble a signature and walk off with someone else’s package.
So in 2003, after years of pitching the need for an automated tracking system, Plante got the go-ahead to install the UPS Trackpad® system – and it couldn’t have come at a better time. Both eBay and Amazon soon exploded in growth, and shipments for students started pouring into the mailroom.

SAME-DAY SERVICE

With UPS Trackpad, every package that comes into the mail center is scanned, which generates a label with the student’s box number. That label is affixed to the package and an auto-generated e-mail reports the package’s arrival to the student. Students swipe their ID cards to pick up their packages, ensuring that deliveries get into the right hands.

Shipments for the college’s departments follow a similar system, except a member of Plante’s team delivers the packages to the offices. A handheld tracker monitors package locations and signatures, then downloads the information to the main system. If someone reports that a package wasn’t delivered, Plante no longer has to delve into a foot-tall stack of forms to locate it. With a few keystrokes, he can find the information.

NEW SEMESTER, NEW SHIPMENTS

While Plante estimates that 500 packages arrive on a typical day, the college’s academic schedule results in huge fluctuations in volume. In the first week of the spring semester alone, 4,698 packages came through in just five days.

“We typically process all of our packages between 9 and 11 a.m. so they’re ready when we open to students at 11,” Plante says. Even on a high-volume day, Plante’s team is able to process all the packages at a rate of nearly 360 per hour – up to six times faster than before UPS Trackpad. With the old system, if staff members couldn’t finish processing the packages, they had to let them sit, sometimes for three or four days before they were ready for student pickup. The automated system also saves on staff time looking up package history, delivery verification and incoming “where’s my package?” calls.

After the system was implemented, Plante estimates he cut the number of students working for him in half, resulting in savings in salaries and management time.

“By purchasing the UPS Trackpad system, the Holy Cross mail center has increased its professionalism and credibility regarding the process of handling all packages delivered to the college,” Plante says.