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Winthrop Tests Iris Scan Technology and is Featured on CNNMoney

Winthrop University

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Quick Facts

- The technology – which involves taking a picture of a person's eye and using the photograph for future identification – has been around for several years at airports, hospitals and military bases.
- James Hammond, Winthrop's associate vice president for information technology, said Winthrop is one of only two higher education institutions to test the Iris.ID company's technology in the Southeast.



Incoming freshmen tried out the iris scanners at Orientation.



Scanner Sign at Orientation

ROCK HILL, S.C. – Winthrop University will increase its security measures this fall as it pilots the use of **iris scanners** on campus.

The technology – which involves taking a picture of a person's eyes and using the photograph for future identification – has been around for several years at airports, hospitals and military bases. The equipment has been too expensive for colleges or universities to use until recently.

James Hammond, Winthrop's associate vice president for information technology, said Winthrop is one of only two higher education institutions in the Southeast to test the **Iris.ID** company's technology.

The initiative recently attracted the attention of **CNNMoney**, which ran a segment about the iris scanner technology on July 10.

Winthrop will test the iris scanners this fall first at **Macfeat Early Childhood Laboratory School**, an on-campus pre-school program where the university's education majors are trained. The identities of parents and guardians will be verified through the technology when they pick up their young children.

Other testing places could include the **Lois Rhame West Health, Physical Education and Wellness Center** where it is inconvenient to carry an ID card when students work out or swim. The iris scanners, called **EagleEye stations**, allow students to enter locations quickly and with their hands free. The university has installed a station in **Tillman Hall**, where the information technology department is based.

The iris scanners are the most accurate form of **biometric recognition**, according to Hammond, and can't be forged like plastic ID cards. They use **3D technology** to take a picture of a person's eyes and then identifies around 250 unique features or about 10 times more "points of comparison" than a fingerprint system.

Eye features are unique to each eye, so those features can be stored alongside an individual's name and other details in a database.

"Iris scanners are very accurate and cannot be forged with today's technology," Hammond said. "ID cards are less effective because they can be passed to other users or stolen or even forged."

This spring, [Technology Services](#) tested the scanners at its office. Staff members also scanned the eyes of incoming freshmen during Orientation sessions in June, bringing the total number of scanned students to more than 1,200 or about a 1/5 of the total student body.

Hammond said Winthrop will determine in the next few months how feasible the program will be and which locations to target.

For more information, contact **Judy Longshaw**, news and media services manager, at 803/323-2404 or e-mail her at longshawj@winthrop.edu.

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