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DECEMBER 2025  
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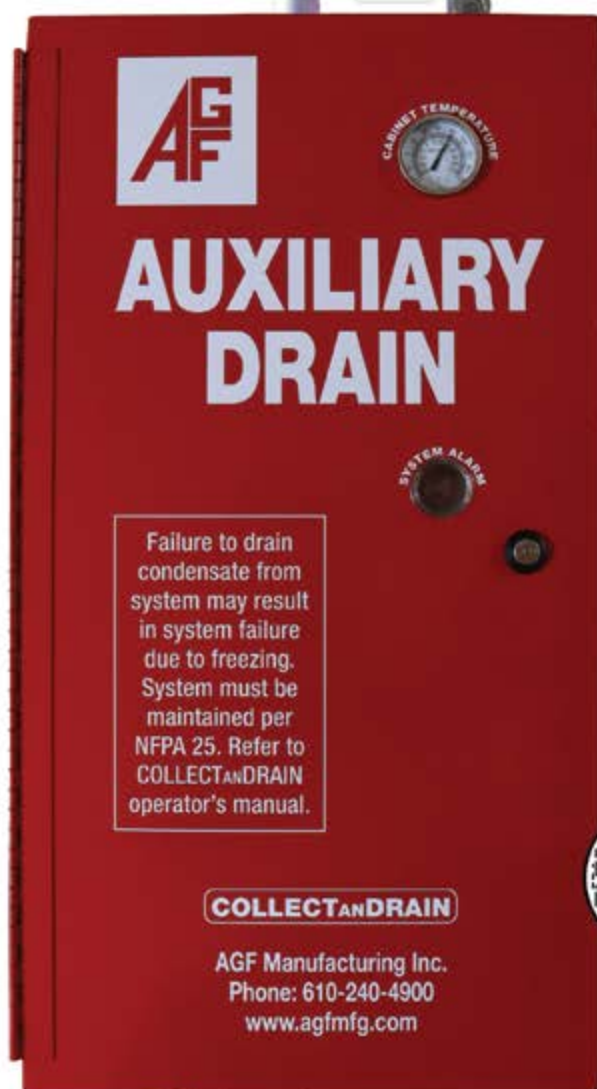


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**Emergency Phones Across Campus:  
Options, Considerations, and Best  
Practices for Private Colleges**

Emergency phones may seem old school in a world of smartphones and safety apps—but their value on private college campuses is stronger than ever. When networks fail, batteries die, or panic sets in, these fixed, highly visible stations become a lifeline: instantly locating callers, deterring incidents, and offering true redundancy. Yet today's campuses face a complex challenge: choosing systems that integrate with modern VoIP infrastructure, meet strict ADA requirements, and blend seamlessly into carefully designed campus environments. This article explores the options, pitfalls, and proven best practices that help private colleges build emergency phone systems that are reliable, accessible, and future-ready.



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## COLUMNS



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## SPOTLIGHT / ON OUR COVER

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**“The Expression of Life” at The  
College of Idaho**

A professor of English at The College of Idaho, Diane Raptosh has published nine books of poetry from the autobiographical to the universal aspects of human condition. She is known for enhancing her courses with vivid exposure to the world outside the classroom, including prisons. “Her life is poetry,” says one of her students, “and poetry is the expression of life.”

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**8 Things Every Great  
Classroom Wants You  
to Know**

Great classrooms are intentionally designed, not accidental. These eight insights reveal how thoughtful layouts, movement, and furniture choices shape engagement, comfort, and belonging, helping higher-education spaces become places where learning thrives.

# Editor's Letter

DECEMBER 2025

As the year draws to a close and campuses across the country settle into the familiar rhythm of finals week, I'm reminded once again of the remarkable resilience and steady growth of private colleges and universities. Even in a season often marked by stress and deadlines, these institutions are continuing to expand, innovate, and reinvent the student experience in ways that inspire all of us who serve this sector.

In this December issue of *Private University Products and News*, we turn our attention to several areas that reflect this ongoing evolution. Classroom environments, for instance, are shifting rapidly to support new teaching styles and collaborative learning. This month, we highlight classroom furniture solutions that balance flexibility, comfort, and durability—features that are quickly becoming non-negotiable as faculty and students look for spaces that truly enhance engagement.

Residential halls are also undergoing meaningful transformation. The latest projects we cover demonstrate how modern student housing is being designed not just as a place to sleep, but as a place to belong. From community-focused layouts to sustainable material choices, private institutions are setting the tone for campus living that feels both supportive and forward-thinking.

Security remains at the forefront of campus priorities, and rightly so. In this issue, we explore the essential role of emergency phones in strengthening campus safety networks. These systems—simple in concept but powerful in practice—continue to offer reassurance, visibility, and quick access to help when it is needed most.

We also dive into presentation technologies that are elevating the way information is shared across academic spaces. Whether in large lecture halls, intimate seminar rooms, or multi-use auditoriums, campuses are investing in tools that enrich communication and make learning more dynamic and accessible.

December always marks a unique turning point: the end of one semester and the preparation for the next. It's a moment filled with great expectations, fresh initiatives, new projects, and a renewed sense of purpose as we head into another year of supporting the missions of private higher education.

As we wrap up this issue and look ahead, I want to extend my heartfelt appreciation to our readers, our advertisers, and the dedicated staff who make this magazine possible. Your support allows us to tell the stories of these extraordinary institutions and the people who keep them thriving.

Wishing all of you a wonderful Christmas season and a joyful, successful New Year.

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## “The Expression of Life” at The College of Idaho

BY CYNTHIA MWENJA, PhD

Diane Raptosh, professor of English at The College of Idaho, demonstrates the vital role that poetry plays in the human experience through her published volumes, her course designs, and her community-engaged work. In her own writing, Raptosh examines the idea and experience of America from many angles; in her courses, she introduces students to a broad array of voices to support them in developing their own. In every aspect of her work, Raptosh centers the human stories that reveal one’s deep truths to another.

Raptosh has garnered a great deal of recognition in her career. An undergraduate alumna of The College of Idaho, Raptosh joined its faculty ranks in 1990; since 2002, she has been the Eyck-Berringer Endowed Chair of English. Raptosh has earned the Idaho Governor’s Award for Excellence in the Arts, and she was named the first poet laureate of Boise. She has also served as Idaho’s Writer in Residence.

### Published Works

Andrew Gades, assistant professor of Music and interim dean of the Undergraduate College, says that Raptosh has had a “fantastic career”; he points to her nine published books of poetry as a “mark of her productivity as an author.” He admires that her collections explore different poetic forms and collectively focus on a wide array of subjects. Some of her books, he explains, are autobiographical, while others focus more on more universal aspects of the human condition. For example, Raptosh wrote *Dear Z: The Zygote Epistles* as an aunt to a potential niece, explaining and exploring contemporary America in letters

written in many poetic forms, while other collections delve into climate and criminal justice. While Raptosh’s body of work spans themes and forms, Gades states, it is always deeply human.

During Raptosh’s 2018 sabbatical, her brother endured a catastrophic airplane crash in which his husband died; Raptosh became her brother’s primary caregiver as he recovered after the event. She says that he and his husband had been “talented and generous people,” and the experience was “too painful to touch” in terms of writing about it for some time afterward. As she later started creating pieces related to this experience, she centered the developing collection on personal and national trauma, with the idea that “this age is a patient.” As a caregiver, she noticed that people in pain tend to project it on those around them, and she sees this dynamic played out in the wider American culture. The collection that developed from these experiences and observations, *I Eric America*, was published in October 2024.

### Current Projects

Raptosh is developing a collection of American sonnets in her current sabbatical year. For the past five years, she has been using this form almost exclusively. She explains that the American sonnet doesn’t need to rhyme and has no strict meter; the only rule is that each one contains fourteen lines. She loves that the form provides a balance of “latitude and limitation” which allows her to “take off into the world of the poem.” For her current project, entitled *Come Across*, she is generating poems by interacting with a set of German-language flash cards that she had in her house. To begin a new poem, she pulls a card from the set and lets the English translations guide the poem in some way; the words might become part of the title or a refrain in the piece. The combination of chance and the rule—she must use the content of the card—have been generative for her sabbatical project. During the interview, she was delighted to pull a card with a word meaning “Pleasure, enjoyment, joy, fun”; her eyes lit up with the possibilities contained in those words. She points out that this was the “perfect card to





pull” because writing is always hard, but there’s no point in writing if it does not also contain joy.

Raptosh is also working on a second collection during this sabbatical year. This project, entitled *Cowboy Ropes Mars*, focuses on cowboys and “cowboy-adjacent” figures, such as colonizers. Calling this collection a “cornucopia of forms,” Raptosh states that it includes prose poems, parables, and flash works—along with poems written in the Korean *sijo* form, which has three lines—six in English—and 44 to 46 syllables. While Raptosh has not often worked on two projects at once, she appreciates that she has more freedom to do so now that she is past her child-raising years.

### **Facilitating Connections to Creative Writing**

Raptosh deeply enjoys teaching, and her students revel in the ways she constructs her classes. Patricia Lazalde, Literature and Creative Writing major at The College of Idaho ('26), notes that one strength making

Raptosh a “wonderful teacher” is that she has a “deep love for the craft of writing” and she helps her students explore that craft “in productive ways.” Raptosh “helps students create authentic connections to the art” via her love for many kinds of poetry and poets, exposing her students to a variety of poetic forms and different poet’s voices. She encourages her students to try out many of the poets’ styles so that they develop a style of their own. Because she “didn’t create boxes” that the students needed to stay within, Lazalde remarks, they learned “what it means to write something that means something to us.”

Arantza Teres-Martinez, Literature and Creative Writing major at The College of Idaho ('26), deeply appreciates Raptosh’s approach of “unconditional positive regard” for each of her students, saying that “She treated all of us as if we have wisdom; she treated our opinions with care and grace.” Additionally, Teres-Martinez notes that, unlike many other college professors, Raptosh asks her students to use every type

*continued...*

Raptosh “helps students create authentic connections to the art” via her love for many kinds of poetry and poets, exposing her students to a variety of poetic forms and different poet’s voices.

of language they have available. For Teres-Martinez, who speaks Spanish, that stance opened up exciting possibilities to explore. The question is not whether any language is right or wrong but “are you using language effectively?”

Teres-Martinez also appreciates the way Raptosh interacts with her students as human beings. If she polls a class and they’re overstressed, she might give them a mental health day or schedule a workshop day in class. Raptosh begins each class with a check-in and encourages students to use that material in the pieces they develop. She also allowed her students to ask about her opinions and experiences regarding big, human concerns, such as “love, marriage, and aging.” Teres-Martinez said that this openness, along with the wide array of texts in Raptosh’s classes, “opened up multiple ways to live life in a way that fulfills.” When working with young people who are “trying to learn

how to be human,” Teres-Martinez emphasizes, nurturing and facilitating that part of their growth—as Raptosh does—is crucially important. Partially in response to her experiences as Raptosh’s student, Teres-Martinez plans to enter the field of mental healthcare in graduate school, where she intends to “engage with people’s stories” and focus on telling what has not yet been told.

### **Working within American Carceral Systems**

Gades notes that, in many ways, Raptosh “pioneered what we now call high-impact instruction.” More than 25 years ago, she and Robin Lorentzen, now emerita professor of Sociology, pioneered a January term course entitled “The Prison Experience.” During the course—which is offered annually—students read literature by and about incarcerated people, and they visit area prisons, jails, safe houses, and juvenile detention centers. Guest speakers include attorneys, jail employees,

and prison residents, who talk about their crimes and life in prison. Through this class, Raptosh remarks, she “became obsessed with the system.” Since the United States is the largest incarcerator in the world, she points out, “understanding the prison system is understanding the U.S. itself.”

Over the past decade, Idaho’s prison system has become one of the most progressive in the U.S.—though it was one of the least progressive when the class began. Now, prison residents work with prison administrators to create more humane living conditions and establish mentoring programs for those who are incarcerated. These changes were brought about when local prison administrators toured Scandinavian prisons and borrowed ideas from them. For example, in Norway, correctional officers hold master’s degrees in counseling or social work so that they work with incarcerated people in a helpful capacity. Raptosh appreciates that Idaho is now leading

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the charge for meaningful prison reform in the U.S.

Gades notes that Raptosh was taking students out of the classroom many years before the guidelines for high-impact instruction called attention to this practice; connecting work in the classrooms to the wider community provides “transformational experiences” for the students. Raptosh explains that students often begin the course thinking that “everyone in prison is a monster, but then they hear the stories ... hearing stories is the best way to learn.” As students are told firsthand about the deep trauma, poverty, drug addiction, homelessness, sexual abuse, and more that the prison residents have endured, they are profoundly impacted by the experience. Raptosh has even seen some students change their major to criminal justice after taking the class. She states that “Young people always want to contribute to society.”

*continued...*





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In addition to the January term “The Prison Experience,” Raptosh also teaches a regular term class called “Prose and Cons: American Prison Literature.” Lazalde, who had not previously explored this area of study, remembers that not only were the books impactful, but that Raptosh’s passion for the subject further enhanced the experience. Lazalde appreciates that Raptosh assigns creative writing in this class, as well, because “She understands that the learning goes beyond memorizing the information in the texts.”

### **Expressing Life through Poetry**

Raptosh inspires students and colleagues alike through her zeal for both writing and teaching. Gades notes that “It’s a joy to have Diane at The College of Idaho”; he loves to tell campus stakeholders stories of the work she does, both inside and outside of the classroom. Teres-Martinez, however, describes Raptosh best as someone who embodies her discipline: “Her life is poetry, and poetry is the expression of life.”



**ABOUT THE AUTHOR:** Dr. Cynthia Mwenja teaches Composition and Rhetoric at the University of Montevallo.



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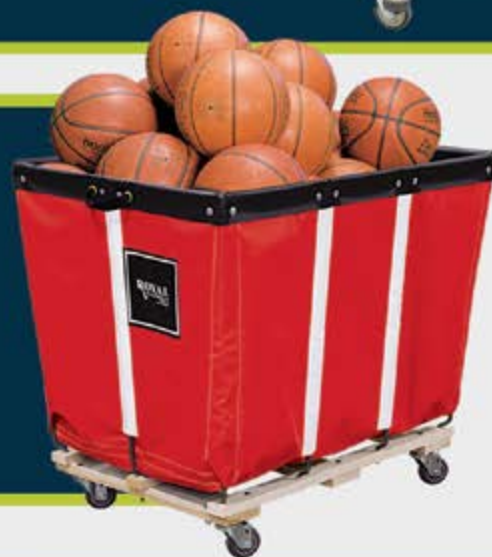
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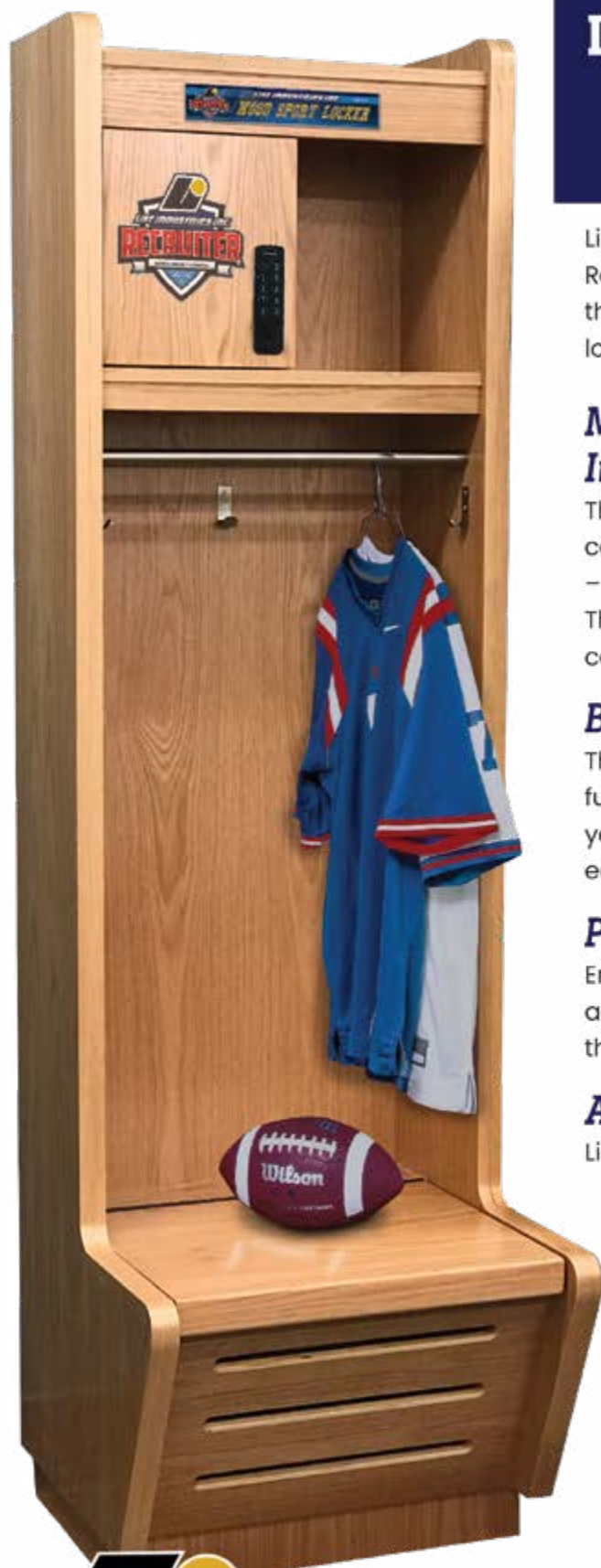
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# 8 Things Every Great Classroom Wants You to Know

BY LIBBY FERIN

At Marco, we've spent decades building great K–12 furniture—but this past year, we've started asking bigger questions about the spaces those products live in. How does the shape of a room influence student behavior and outcomes. How does comfort affect confidence and productivity? How does flexibility support focus and collaboration?

The more we dig into the research, the clearer it becomes: learning is learning, no matter the age. College students may be older, but the fundamentals don't change—comfort still matters, flexibility still matters, and belonging always matters. And many of the same design principles that support great K–12 classrooms apply just as meaningfully for higher education classrooms.

Here are eight research-backed tips for designing higher education classrooms, and how the right furniture selection can support and enhance the goals of each classroom.

## 1. Start with the Question...

### INSIGHT

Every great learning space starts with a simple question: What do you want to

happen here? Whether the goal is discussion, creation, or collaboration, the layout should make that natural. When you design around behavior—not furniture lists or floor plans—you're designing for engagement.

### EVIDENCE

A major University of Salford study found that classroom design—layout, light, and color—can account for 16 percent of student learning progress\*. That's real impact from the built environment.

### ACTION

Desks and tables with varied shapes and easy mobility make it simple to shift from lecture to group work without losing momentum. When the space flexes, the learning follows.

## 2. Design for Movement

### INSIGHT

Movement keeps people awake—literally and mentally. When students can roll, swivel, or shift into quick huddles, they stay more engaged. Static rooms encourage passive learning; mobile ones invite participation.

### EVIDENCE

Active-learning research shows that students in flexible classrooms participate more and retain more than those in fixed-seating environments\*. Additionally, ergonomic studies show that even small posture changes increase blood flow and cognitive alertness\*. The longer students can stay comfortable, the more they stay engaged. Movement supports both engagement and memory.

### ACTION

When tables and chairs are built to move easily, the whole class moves with them—switching from solo work to group discussion without breaking stride.



### 3. Mix It Up

#### INSIGHT

No two learners are alike, and no classroom should treat them that way. Provide a mix of “destinations” within one space; soft seating, open tables and quiet nooks give everyone a sense of choice and control — two ingredients proven to boost motivation.

#### EVIDENCE

Research on flexible seating indicates that students who choose where and how they work show higher engagement and focus\*. Choice drives ownership.

#### ACTION

A thoughtful mix of lounge pieces, movable storage, and ergonomic chairs enable the space flex with purpose—inviting students to come together for group work or pull apart for quiet focus without disrupting flow.

*continued...*



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#### 4. Encourage Conversation

##### INSIGHT

Space sends social signals. Curved layouts invite collaboration; straight lines focus attention. The shapes we choose can subtly say “let’s talk” or “let’s think.” In college and university classrooms, where group work and peer learning are essential, connection is everything.

##### EVIDENCE

Classroom studies show that collaborative layouts boost reasoning, creativity, and communication compared with traditional rows. Students facing one another interact more—and learn more.

##### ACTION

When space encourages people to face each other, collaboration isn’t something you plan for—it just happens. Thoughtful geometry—curves, angles, and organic forms—create subtle cues for connection, guiding how people gather, share, and learn.

*continued...*

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## 5. Hear the Difference

### INSIGHT

We don't talk about sound nearly enough. You can have the best layout in the world, but if the acoustics are bad, no one can focus. The right balance of sound, light, and flow makes learning feel effortless.

### EVIDENCE

Studies link good acoustics and lighting directly to student performance and comprehension\*. In fact, even minor improvements in sound absorption have been shown to increase verbal clarity and reduce cognitive fatigue during long lectures.

### ACTION

Add layers that quiet the room without deadening its energy. Acoustic panels, soft seating, and even mobile storage can absorb sound while defining zones. Think of it as shaping how the room feels as much as how it looks.

## 6. Support Belonging

### INSIGHT

Students learn better when they feel seen and supported—it's that simple. The space can do a lot of that work. When a room feels comfortable, flexible, and welcoming, students let their guard down. That's the heart of Universal Design for Learning: build spaces that work for everyone from the start instead of trying to retrofit later.

### EVIDENCE

UDL research shows that when environments offer multiple ways to participate—through movement, visibility, and choice—students are more motivated, persistent, and confident.

### ACTION

Provide options. Make sure everyone can move easily through the space. Add small touches—warm colors, softer textures, better lighting—that make the room feel inviting.

When the classroom feels good, people relax, connect, and learn better.

## 7. Tech That Works With You

### INSIGHT

Technology is part of every class now—laptops, tablets, and phones are as common as notebooks used to be. The trick isn't adding more tech; it's planning for it. When outlets, screens, and Wi-Fi are where students actually need them, the room runs smoother and learning feels seamless.

### EVIDENCE

Studies on active-learning classrooms show that when technology supports flexible layouts—like movable screens, shared displays, or simple power access—students participate more and stay on task longer\*.

### ACTION

Design every space like it matters. Add spots to plug in, surfaces to work on, and



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### 8. Keep Listening to the Students and the Space

#### INSIGHT

Every classroom space tells you how it's working—if you're paying attention. Notice where students gather, which areas they avoid, and how they move through the room. Ask what helps them focus and what gets in the way. Those everyday details are your roadmap for what to keep, tweak, or rethink next time.

#### EVIDENCE

Research shows that regularly gathering feedback from students and faculty leads to smarter, more responsive learning environments\*. Simply observing how a space gets used often reveals what no survey ever could.

#### ACTION

Walk the room once it's lived in. You'll see what's working and what's not. Ask a few honest questions and make small tweaks. Spaces will show you how to make them better—if you pay attention.

#### The Big Picture

Good design isn't about chasing trends—it's about supporting people. The same shape psychology that drives focus and collaboration in K–12 classrooms is the same for college and university classrooms. And, those same principles can be applied outside of the classroom too -- because some of the best learning doesn't happen in a classroom at all. It happens at the in-between spaces — the commons, library corners, student unions, even hallways. When those areas are designed with the same intention as general classrooms, they become extensions of learning instead of just places to pass through.

At Marco, curiosity drives everything we do. We're learning from educators and designers every day, finding ways to make our products serve real outcomes—not just fill rooms. Because when design, behavior, and purpose come together... that's where learning truly takes shape.



**ABOUT THE AUTHOR:** Libby Ferin is the head of marketing for Marco, a family owned

American-made manufacturer of high-quality education furniture. She can be reached at libby.ferin@madebymarco.net.



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# Emergency Phones Across Campus

## OPTIONS, CONSIDERATIONS, AND BEST PRACTICES FOR PRIVATE COLLEGES

BY EB BAUER

Emergency phones—call boxes, blue-light towers, wall-mounted units, and kiosk stations—remain a visible and durable element of campus safety programs.

Even in an era dominated by smartphones and safety apps, strategically deployed emergency phones provide redundancy—a vital backup when mobile networks fail—along with rapid access to dispatch, location clarity for responders, and a powerful deterrent effect.

*continued...*







For private colleges that take pride in cohesive campus design, the challenge is choosing systems that integrate with modern communications infrastructure, meet ADA obligations, and complement the campus aesthetic while delivering reliable performance year after year.

Facilities leaders must weigh system options, technical and operational demands, and accessibility requirements, informed by examples from private institutions that show both successful strategies and cautionary lessons.

### **Why Emergency Phones Still Matter**

Mobile devices and safety apps are valuable, but they are not perfect backstops. Batteries die, reception can be spotty, and injured or panicked people may not be able to use a phone. Emergency phones provide a fixed, always-available means to summon help and are highly visible—which can deter incidents simply by their presence. Research and campus reporting show that many students and parents still expect these systems to exist as part of a layered approach to public safety.

### **Types of emergency phone systems**

#### **Pole-mounted “blue light” towers / kiosks**

Tall, illuminated poles with a call button (and often a flashing light at night) are archetypal campus fixtures. They’re highly visible from a distance, offer immediate wayfinding signals

for responders, and are commonly placed along major walkways, parking lots and campus perimeters. UNC and many other campuses still maintain large inventories of these units because of their visibility and deterrent effect.

#### **Wall-mounted call boxes and building-mounted phones**

These are compact, low-profile units suitable where pole installations would disrupt sightlines or aesthetics—for example, at building doorways, sheltered walkways, or subterranean entrances. They provide the same two-way voice link to dispatch but occupy less visual real estate.

#### **Kiosk-style stations (multi-function)**

Newer kiosks may include cameras, environmental sensors, digital signage, and charging ports alongside the call button. They can serve dual roles—safety and information—which can be attractive in high-traffic gathering spots.

#### **Elevator and interior emergency phone**

Required in many jurisdictions for vertical conveyances, elevator phones are specialized and must meet additional reliability standards. Similarly, interior phones in parking garages, stadiums and remote facilities ensure coverage where exterior towers may not reach. police.

#### **Integrated VoIP / CAD-enabled telephony**

Modern campuses increasingly integrate call boxes with VoIP phone systems and Computer-Aided Dispatch (CAD) so that incoming calls present exact location data, call history and even audio to dispatchers—improving response speed and situational awareness. Princeton’s modernization project that integrated blue-light and other emergency communications into a VoIP/CAD environment is an instructive example. Motorola Solutions

### **Key Technical and Operational Considerations**

#### **Reliability, redundancy and power**

Emergency phones must work in all weather and power conditions. Consider battery backup, solar options for remote poles, and surge protection. Outdoor-rated enclosures and vandal-resistant designs will reduce maintenance and downtime. Vendor specifications should be reviewed for IP/weather ratings and mean time between failures (MTBF).

*continued...*

### Connectivity and location reporting

Integration with campus phone systems, PSAPs (public safety answering points), and CAD is critical. The system should convey precise location information to dispatchers automatically—not rely on the caller to describe where they are. When migrating

to VoIP, verify that the call boxes can report reliable location metadata and that dispatchers can see that information in their console. Princeton's migration illustrates both the opportunity and the integration work required.

### Placement strategy and wayfinding

Effective placement follows coverage, visibility, and accessibility. Place units along major pedestrian routes, entrances, parking lots, and areas identified in a campus safety audit as isolated or poorly lit. Avoid putting boxes in locations that create entrapment or block egress; they should be on predictable paths of travel and near clear sightlines so responders and the public can find them. Consistency in spacing helps users and responders develop expectations of where help is located.

### Maintenance, testing and lifecycle costs

A program is only as good as its maintenance. Regular testing, firmware updates, cleaning and lighting repairs must be budgeted. Keep a replacement schedule for parts that wear, and track service logs so you know which devices are persistently problematic. Some campuses have removed boxes after long periods of little use—but that decision should be data driven, not anecdotal.

### Integration with other safety tools

Emergency phones should be part of a layered system: fixed phones; mobile safety apps (panic buttons, location-sharing); CCTV where appropriate; and rapid dispatch procedures. Relying solely on apps or a single technology is risky—redundancy saves lives.

### Aesthetics and campus design integration

Private colleges often place high value on the visual cohesion of their grounds. That means emergency phones must balance visibility with design sensitivity.

- **Material and color choices:** While the classic “blue” is familiar and signals safety, manufacturers now offer housings in varied finishes—brushed metal, powder-coated colors, or wood-look cladding—that can match campus palettes. Consider finishes that resist graffiti and are easy to clean. Campus Security Today
- **Low-visibility options:** Wall-mounted or bollard-style units can satisfy safety needs in historic districts or landscaped quads where a 12-foot blue pole would be jarring.
- **Wayfinding lighting:** Instead of a bright top-mounted beacon, subtle in-ground uplighting or context-appropriate lanterns can provide the needed

*continued...*

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visual cue at night while preserving the character of the landscape. Security Industry Association

- **Dual-use kiosks:** When a unit can host directories, event signage or charging ports, campuses can justify the visual presence while adding utility.

Design collaboration between campus architects, landscape designers, and public safety professionals is essential. The best installations are those that are both discreetly integrated and unmistakably identifiable in an emergency.

### ADA Compliance and Effective Communication

Emergency communications must be accessible to all users. The 2010 ADA Standards and related guidance require that emergency two-way communications comply with accessibility rules, including tactile signage, operable controls, volume and speech intelligibility, and appropriate accommodations for individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing (TTY/TTY-equivalent access or real-time text). Facilities must also ensure accessible routes to the devices—ramps, curb cuts, and unimpeded approaches—and should consider the needs of those with cognitive or visual impairments when designing station instructions.

Practical ADA-related checklist items:

- Confirm speech intelligibility and signage with tactile characters adjacent to the device.
- Provide TTY or text-based alternatives for individuals who cannot use voice calls.
- Ensure the call button and any required keypad are within accessible reach ranges.
- Verify that the route to the device meets accessible-path requirements (slope, surface quality, turning space).

Ignoring these requirements risks non-compliance and, more importantly, leaves members of the campus community without reliable access to emergency services.

### Case Studies: Lessons from Private Colleges and Universities

#### Princeton University—modernization through integration

Princeton undertook a modernization of its 9-1-1 and campus communications center that included integrating blue-light poles, parking lot phones, and building emergency phones into

a unified VoIP/CAD architecture. The project emphasized exact location reporting to dispatch, improved call management, and future-proofing the campus as legacy analog systems retired. The lesson: integration pays dividends but requires careful interoperability planning and staged migration. Motorola Solutions

#### Rice University—broad deployment and prevention focus

Rice installed dozens of blue-light emergency phones across academic, residential and recreational zones in the 2000s. The university framed the program as both a prevention tool and a critical access mechanism for students during off-hours. High-visibility placement and consistent maintenance helped establish expectations among users. This shows the deterrent and community-reassurance value of a well-maintained system.

#### Mount Holyoke College—user education and signage

Mount Holyoke maintains blue-light phones and emphasizes clear instructional signage and student education so the campus community understands when and how to use the devices. Their approach points to an important truth: hardware alone is not enough—community outreach and clear policies matter.

#### Mixed experiences: removal and retention debates

Some campuses have considered removing call boxes as mobile safety apps gained traction and usage metrics declined. Yet removal decisions often spark controversy, as seen in public debates at the University of Georgia. Parents and students frequently report feeling safer when visible phones remain in place, underscoring that the value of call boxes extends beyond raw usage data.

### Making the Procurement

#### Decision: A Practical Roadmap

1. **Conduct a safety and needs audit**—map pedestrian flows, lighting, crime data, and dead zones. Identify where coverage gaps exist.
2. **Engage stakeholders early**—campus safety, facilities, IT/telecom, ADA officers, students, and architects. A cross-disciplinary team avoids costly rework.
3. **Define technical requirements**—power, connectivity (VoIP vs. analog), location reporting, camera/sensor

integration, and environmental ratings.

4. **Specify accessibility and signage**—ensure compliance with the 2010 ADA Standards and include TTY/text options.
5. **Consider lifecycle costs**—beyond purchase price: installation, trenching, power, testing, replacement parts, and routine maintenance.
6. **Pilot and measure**—deploy a small network with clear KPIs (uptime, number of calls, response times, false alarm rates, maintenance events). Use data to refine spacing and feature sets.

### Final Thoughts

Emergency phones are not relics—they are resilience pieces in a modern campus safety puzzle. For private colleges, where institutional identity and aesthetics matter deeply, the best strategy is one that balances visibility and design, meets ADA obligations without compromise, integrates with modern communications infrastructure, and is backed by a sustainable maintenance program. When thoughtfully deployed, emergency phones offer tangible peace of mind to students, families and staff—and they remain a visible commitment to campus safety.

As campuses plan upgrades and renovations, it's wise to approach emergency phones with cross-functional attention that includes safety professionals, IT/telecom, facilities, accessibility officers, and campus planners working together. The result will be a system that not only answers calls for help but also blends into the campus fabric, supports community trust, and stands ready when it is needed most.

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**ABOUT THE AUTHOR:** Ed Bauer has been in publishing for over twenty years. He worked on the staff at Mount Union College.





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Says Whalen, “It was a fantastic collaboration among all the parties. Hope's worked closely as the manufacturer to fulfill the architect's design vision, and then the installer worked closely with us to make sure everything was installed executed properly.”

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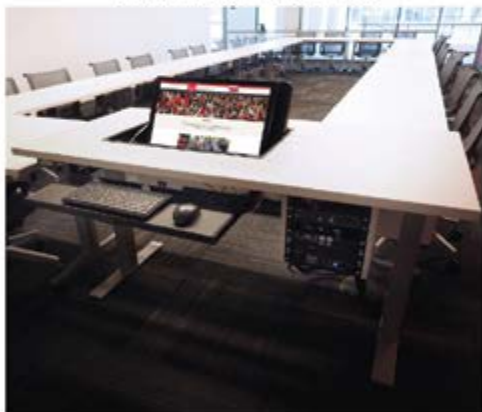
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