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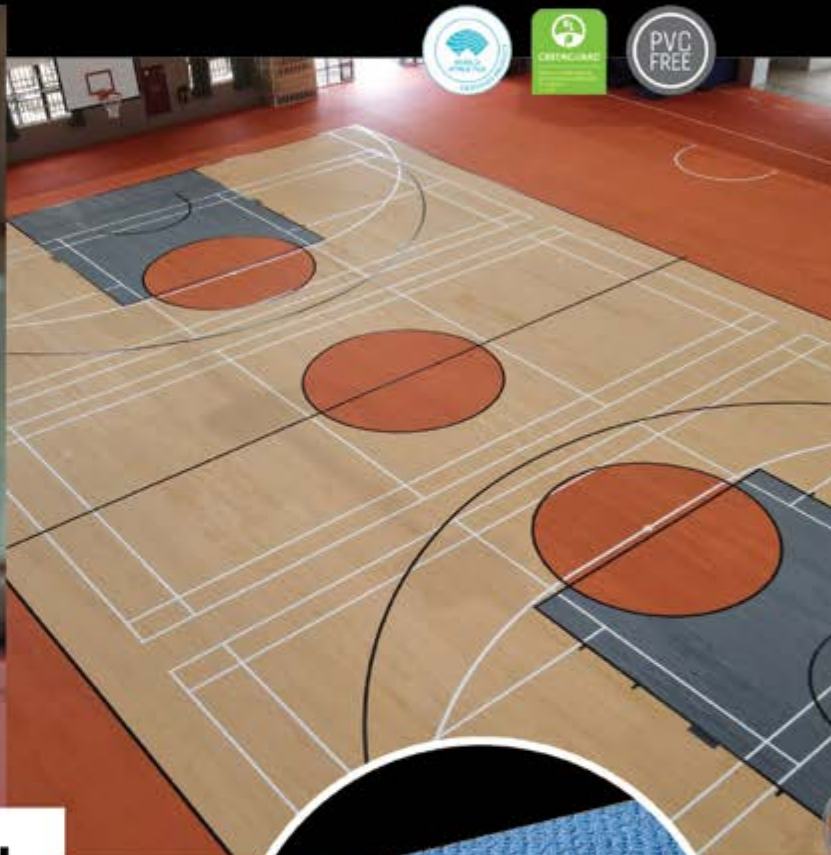
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Lasting Connections in Piano Pedagogy at Roosevelt University

Discover how Yeeseon Kwon is redefining piano pedagogy through innovation, technology, and meaningful collaboration. From interdisciplinary education to distance learning and community-building initiatives, Kwon connects academia with the broader musical world—equipping students of all ages for evolving careers, lifelong learning, and a dynamic, future-focused role in music and society.



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You only have one shot to get campus flooring right. Between the logistical puzzle of student traffic and the hidden dangers of legacy materials, the margin for error is zero. Is your team asking the right questions?

Editor's Letter

MAY 2026

May on campus always feels like a strange and wonderful contradiction. One minute, students are sprinting to finals, and the next, the grounds crew is quietly preparing for summer projects that will transform the campus while the students are away. It's a season of both endings and beginnings—and, if you're in facilities management, a season where your to-do list somehow doubles overnight.

In this issue, we're focusing on a range of topics that sit right at the heart of creating safe, functional, and welcoming campus environments. We begin with ADA recreation—an area that continues to evolve in the best possible way. Ensuring that every student has access to wellness and recreation opportunities isn't just about compliance; it's about community. When recreation programs are truly inclusive, they strengthen the entire campus experience.

We also take a closer look at fabric structures, which have come a long way from their early days. Today's options are durable, flexible, and surprisingly attractive (yes, I said it—attractive). Whether you need additional athletic space, storage, or a quick expansion solution, these structures are proving that sometimes the smartest building isn't the one made of brick and mortar.

Every issue has its workhorse topic, and this one is flooring. Specifically, we're diving into flooring maintenance and the often-overlooked world of mastic removers. It may not be the flashiest subject, but anyone who has dealt with old adhesive knows it can turn a simple renovation into a full-blown adventure. The good news? There are solutions that make the process faster, safer, and far less...colorful in language.

And then there's security—an area that continues to demand attention and innovation. This month, we explore the growing use of panic buttons across campus facilities. These systems are a powerful reminder that safety doesn't always need to be complicated to be effective. Sometimes, it's about having the right tool in the right place at the right time—and making sure everyone knows it's there.

As always, we're grateful to be part of your planning process and your daily work. Whether you're tackling summer upgrades, evaluating new products, or just trying to stay ahead of the next unexpected challenge, we hope this issue provides insight, ideas, and maybe even a moment or two of relief.

After all, if campus life has taught us anything, it's this: expect the unexpected...and keep a good sense of humor close by.

Ed Bauer, Publisher
Private University Products and News Magazine
ed@pupnmag.com



Ed Bauer
Publisher/Editor-in-Chief
ed@pupnmag.com

Amanda Love Day
Regional Marketing Director

Christian Erkhart
Regional Marketing Director

Rosalind Fournier
Copyeditor

Jake Rasmussen
Creative Director

Ed Bauer
Cynthia Mwenja, PhD
Staff Writers

Allison Trapani
Franmar
SportsArt
Contributing Writers

Circulation
circulation@pupnmag.com



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Lasting Connections in Piano Pedagogy at Roosevelt University

BY CYNTHIA MWENJA, PhD

Dr. Yeeseon Kwon—Co-Chair of the Interdisciplinary Conservatory and Professor of Piano Musicianship and Piano Pedagogy in the Chicago College of Performing Arts at Roosevelt University—continually seeks ways to connect the academy with the larger world of piano study and performance. A deeply admired leader who stays on the forefront of both pedagogical and technological innovation, Kwon weaves her roles in teaching, research, and service together so that they all work in harmony to advance the field of piano pedagogy.

Kwon also develops and sustains purposeful relationships with an impressive array of people and organizations in her field. As she says, “I value making connections and building community.” Additionally, Kwon thoughtfully builds on current practices to work toward what is coming next. Brian Shepard, Chief Executive Officer of the Music Teachers National Association (MTNA), appreciates that Kwon is “focused on the future of music performance and music in society” and is “always looking for creative ways to move forward and to innovate.” Kwon’s dynamic, future-oriented focus is what drives her desire to develop new pedagogies, new approaches to working with emerging technology, and new initiatives to meet the needs of students and instructors alike.

Educator

Throughout her admirable career as a piano pedagogue, Kwon has maintained her attention on questions such as “How do we learn?” and “What impacts motivation?” Kevin Hampton, Dean of the Chicago College of Performing Arts, emphasizes that,

for Kwon, “it’s always about the students, whether research or contributing to new pedagogical approaches.” As Co-Chair of the Interdisciplinary Conservatory at Roosevelt University, Kwon has seen firsthand that many students want the flexibility and opportunities that can arise from working across disciplines. Similarly, MTNA’s Shepard admires the way that the various disciplines are “aligned and connected” under Kwon’s leadership; this alignment helps Kwon’s students to be successful in their future careers.

Kwon notes that students in the program she co-chairs are “people who said they want music AND” something else—such as those who are interested in arts administration, health, or the entertainment business. In their conservatory, Kwon and her colleagues want to ensure that they meet the needs of students today, when most music and theatre graduates will necessarily work in melded fields. Of course, Kwon says, jobs in orchestras and education will continue to be available, but other positions which draw on multiple fields

are emerging, such as in music and dance therapy, arts management, production and sound engineering, for example. As a result, Kwon highlights the need for music educators to think about how people are making, hearing, and producing music, how they are engaging in collaborations—and how they are helping their students to develop collaborative and transferrable skills.

Because of the pace of change in how audiences interact with music, some people fear that the arts could be fading. By contrast, Kwon states firmly that “the arts aren’t going anywhere.” She does point out, however, that “we need to cultivate the way we want to live in the future”—educators need to actively share their ideas about emerging possibilities so that students can develop more curiosity and imagine what might be achievable in times to come.

Expanding possibilities with technology

Throughout her career, Kwon has always embraced advancements in piano technology,



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and she continues to develop techniques for both the remote teaching and group lessons that these advancements can enable. Hampton admires that Kwon is a proponent and master of distance learning; she teaches both individual students and groups remotely. He says that she is “the go-to person for these approaches” and has become a nationally recognized leader in distance pedagogy. Kwon is excited by how much more accessible piano pedagogy can now be, given these tools to work with.

Because of her interest in the possibilities offered by emerging technology, Kwon has worked with Yamaha since her time in graduate school. She sees how technology “augments how we teach and learn,” so it is nothing to fear; instead, she sees emerging tech as an area of growth and exploration in options for teaching all students. Amy Sorter, Director of Higher Education Solutions and Outbound Sales at Yamaha Corporation of America, states that Kwon is endlessly innovative, “always on the cusp of using technology pedagogically.” Kwon finds that

Yamaha supports what she is trying to accomplish in working with her students, “to take to the next level.” Sorter says, when Yamaha representatives present at conferences, Kwon volunteers to help, noting that “other teachers want to hear what she’s doing; she’s a leader.”

One Yamaha instrument that Kwon uses is the Disklavier, among others. This acoustic piano has a variety of features to support cutting-edge piano pedagogy. Not only does it allow teachers to offer remote lessons, but it can also record performances on the piano itself using sensors which then recreate the original performance through the movement of the keys and pedals. For example, the Disklavier can record a student’s performance in a recital hall, and then Kwon and the student can listen to the performance from the audience’s perspective. Pianists can also pre-record accompaniment for vocalists and other musicians to use for later performances or engage in remote masterclass scenarios with more nuanced sophistication.

Adult learners

Kwon’s private music students span ages from young children to older adults; she even has some students in their eighties she has taught for over a decade. Kwon’s work with older adults has expanded her view of piano pedagogy to include not only adult learning but also wellness; music study has been shown to preserve neural connections within the brain. Shepard says that Kwon continues to develop her understanding of how music study in adulthood positively affects brain function: “active music-making slows mental aging.” Kwon has been pleased to learn that older piano students experience cognitive benefits stemming from the tactile experience of playing piano.

Service Leader

Kwon dedicates substantial amounts of time to supporting students and colleagues through her notable service work in several leading organizations. At the Frances Clark Center, Kwon holds the role of Institutional Engagement Director. According to its website, the center is “a not-for-profit

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educational organization ... that serves the advancement of piano teaching, learning, and performing.” Jennifer Snow, President and Chief Executive Officer of the Frances Clark Center, points out that “piano is a big world,” and Kwon is “an expert teacher” who is highly respected across the field. Snow states that the Frances Clark Center is lucky to have Kwon on board not only because of her dedication to service within the profession, but also due to her “positive, vibrant, and empathetic” nature.

As Institutional Engagement Director, Kwon has organized and led ongoing initiatives with young professionals and collegiate students, with programming around building networks of support. In doing this work, Snow says, Kwon connects with the “hopes and dreams of the next generation of leaders in the field.” In the Peer Connections program, Kwon organizes a quarterly virtual gathering for professional piano teachers to share their expertise relevant to their work. Participants

may discuss challenges they are facing and ask for ideas, suggestions, and resources. Each meeting offers a space for people to learn about professional support and opportunities while developing relationships within the world of piano pedagogy.

For the past three years, Kwon has also organized the Collegiate Connections program which invites students to share their work before they graduate and embark on their professional lives. Student cohorts answer formal calls for proposals, and their submissions are subjected to blind peer review. This program gives students helpful pre-professionalization collaborative experience, aligned with Kwon’s consistent focus on preparing students for future success.

Kwon also has a long track record of service within the Music Teachers National Association. Members of this organization are generally piano teachers of all kinds, including

college professors and private piano teachers, so constituents have need different types of support from the organization. Shepard appreciates how well Kwon is “in tune with MTNA’s mission to be creating artist-citizens,” and he notes that Kwon is “a unique member” because she has served at so many different levels in the organization, from local to national. Kwon is proud to have served in various MTNA roles, beginning during her student years. Most recently, Kwon joined the MTNA national board in March as the East Central Division Director. Many of MTNA’s members work with pre-college students, and Kwon wants to focus on the important impact on society that these teachers can have by making sure that the arts become an ongoing part of their students’ lives—whether or not they decide to pursue careers in the arts.

Kwon also serves in the College Music Society (CMS), whose members are musicians of all kinds working in higher education.



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Formerly Vice President of CMS, Kwon says that working with this organization is particularly rewarding because of the interdisciplinary insights she gains within the disciplines of music, including theory, education, musicology, composition, jazz, business, instrumental and vocal performance. Interacting with these colleagues is both “eye-opening and fulfilling,” she states. Within the CMS, Kwon facilitates the Inclusive Pedagogy in Music Cohort initiative because “this is a need in the lives of all college professionals.” Inclusive pedagogy spans many ideas, among them building diverse repertoire, establishing inclusive classroom practices, strengthening assessment practices, and creating meaningful spaces of belonging for students and faculty. Colleagues who are doing this work lead six sessions each year for participants. She is gratified that people have valued and participated in this work, and interest continues. Kwon emphasizes the idea that these issues continue to be of utmost importance.

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Kwon’s own current scholarly project relates to diversifying piano pedagogy. Kwon was granted research leave this term through a peer-reviewed, competitive process; she is curating a collection of compositions by Francis “Frank” Johnson, an under-recognized Black American composer. Johnson studied in Europe and was one of the first African American composers to publish single sheet music. Kwon will use the pieces she identifies to curate a progressive collection of intermediate piano repertoire, along with a pedagogical teaching guide for students and teachers. Hampton says that this project is “an important contribution to the literature available for piano lessons and performance.”

Kwon states that her many and varied experiences have repeatedly shown her the importance of collaboration. Working with students of all ages in private settings as well as in a variety of higher ed institutions, editing music publications, having worked as an editor for *Piano Magazine* and *Clavier*, and collaborating with Yamaha to showcase students and support fellow educators—all of these experiences have taught her the importance of not being siloed and to welcome working with many different kinds of educational and industry partners. Since she sees how all of the layers influence each other, she makes a point of bringing outside perspectives and approaches into the academy “to do what we do better.” Then, Kwon notes, “We need to bring it out to the people outside of academia. We need to help each other grow.” Kwon says that “it’s changing lives when we educate, transforming hearts and minds through music education. There is important work going on now and still to do.” Kwon provides an admirable model for professors and instructors in all fields to pursue connections to constituents within and beyond our campuses, and her example serves as a reminder that we can maintain vitality and excitement in our work by continuing to imagine emerging possibilities of the future.

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



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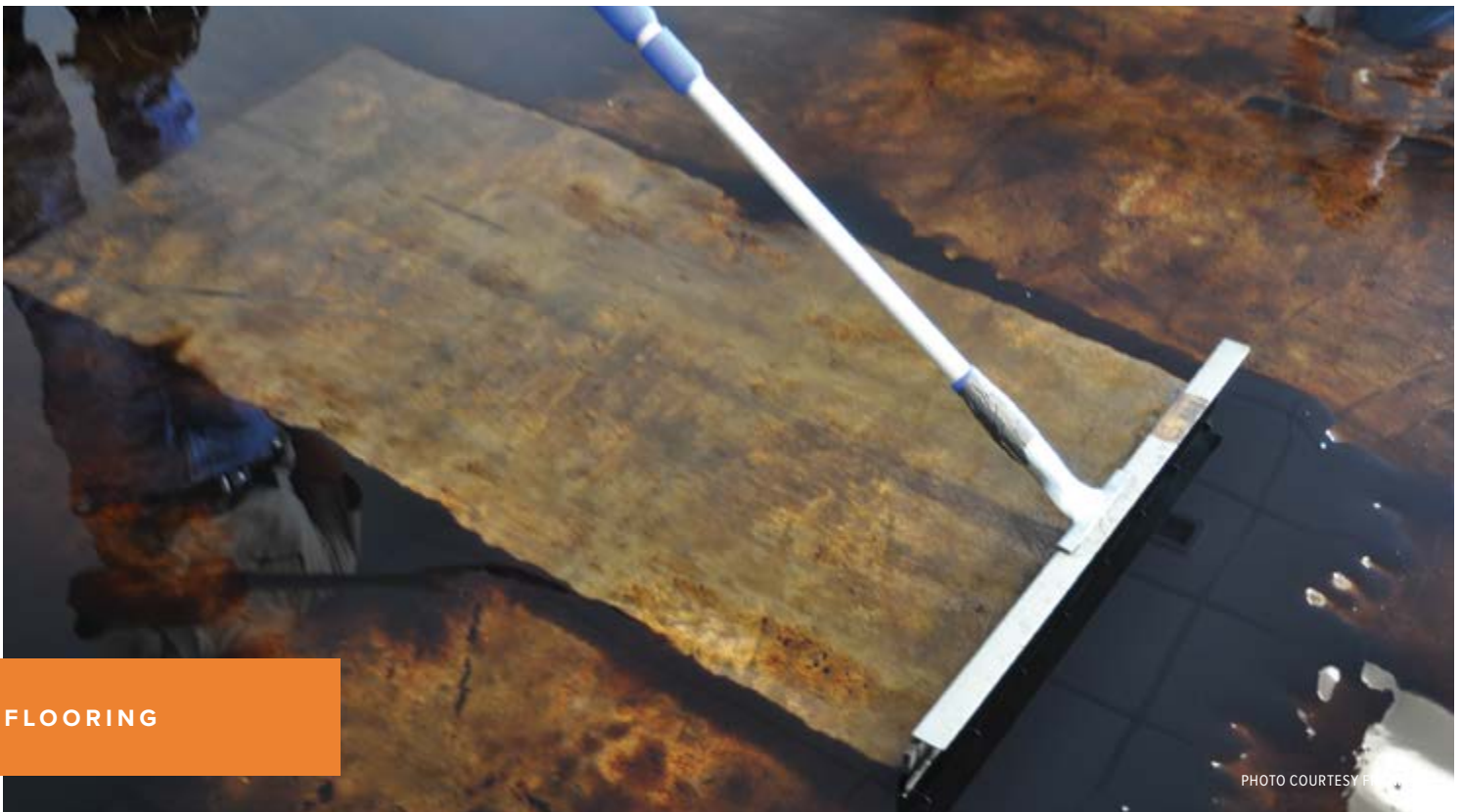


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FLOORING

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Campus Floors: Prep, Protect, Perform

Expert Advice for Campus Floor-replacement Projects

BY FRANMAR

You only have one shot to get campus flooring right. Between the logistical puzzle of student traffic and the hidden dangers of legacy materials, the margin for error is zero. Is your team asking the right questions? We asked Franmar's Lane Henkins to break down the 10 essentials every facility manager needs to know before the demo begins.

1. What are the key considerations when removing existing flooring in an occupied campus building without disrupting daily operations?

Four things drive every decision on an occupied campus project: scheduling, containment, hazardous materials, and communication.

Scheduling comes first. Work must happen when the building isn't in use. Evenings, weekends and semester breaks keep demo away from occupied spaces. The tighter the occupancy schedule, the more carefully the work has to be sequenced.

Containment keeps the job site from becoming a problem for everyone else. Dust and debris stay inside the work zone. In larger buildings, it's best to section off areas in phases rather than opening up the entire floor at once.

Hazardous materials require testing before any removal starts. Older campus buildings commonly contain asbestos in resilient flooring, backing and adhesives. Mechanical removal methods, such as sanding or grinding, can release it. Know what's in the floor before you touch it. And when it's time to remove floor mastics, Franmar's BLUE BEAR® BEAN•e•doo® Mastic Remover is free

of harsh chemicals and fumes, so it's ideal for use in campus buildings and other indoor settings.

Communication is what holds the rest together. Building staff and occupants need to know what's happening, where and when. Surprises on an active campus can create more disruption than the work itself.

2. How do we determine whether our existing subfloor is suitable for new tile or luxury vinyl tile, and what preparation is typically required?

Three conditions have to be reviewed carefully: moisture, flatness, and surface condition. All three matter, and all three need to be verified before installation begins.

Moisture testing is required every time, regardless of subfloor type. Wood, concrete, gypcrete and other materials each behave differently. What looks dry can still hold or transmit enough moisture to affect adhesive performance.

Flatness tolerances for tile and LVT are tight. The surface typically can't vary more than 1/8-inch over a 6-foot span. High spots get ground down and low areas get filled. The surface also has to be clean and free of adhesive residue before anything bonds to it.

Get all three right and the installation has a foundation to perform on. Miss one and the product doesn't matter.

3. What are the cost differences between installing ceramic/porcelain tile versus LVT when factoring in demolition, prep and labor?

Labor and preparation drive most of the cost in both options. The product itself is rarely the largest line item.

LVT installs faster. It has fewer steps, less complexity and lower labor cost per square foot. Tile requires layout, mortar, grouting and cure time. That process takes longer and adds up in labor hours. All in all, LVT

typically costs less than tile when you factor in installation.

Subfloor condition is the biggest cost variable in either case. If the substrate needs moisture mitigation, significant leveling or structural repair, those costs can exceed the difference between the two products entirely. Budget without a thorough site assessment and you could miss the biggest cost on the project.

4. How long does a typical flooring replacement project take—from removal to final installation—and how can we best phase the project across multiple buildings?

Preparation almost always takes longer than installation. Plan for that up front.

Moisture testing, subfloor correction and adhesive removal each take time. For a single well-prepped area, a crew can complete installation in a few days. Full-building projects run

several weeks. Multi-building campus projects extend over months, and that's fine when it's built into the plan from the start.

Phase by substrate readiness, not by building sequence. The key is not treating every building the same. Test each substrate independently. Conditions vary from building to building, and a schedule built on assumptions about one space can fall apart in the next.

Sequence the work so crews are always moving into a prepped area, not waiting on one. Idle crews are one of the most avoidable costs on a campus project.

5. What moisture mitigation strategies should be considered before installing LVT or tile, especially in older campus buildings?

Test before you plan, not after. Older buildings have unpredictable subfloor conditions, and moisture behavior varies depending on what you're working with. Don't assume a floor is *continued...*

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dry because it hasn't shown problems before.

When test results exceed manufacturer limits for moisture or pH, you have two primary options: apply a moisture barrier prior to installation or use a moisture-tolerant adhesive system rated for elevated readings. Which approach is appropriate depends on the subfloor type and how far out of range the readings are.

Addressing moisture before installation costs a fraction of what it costs to remediate after the floor is down.

6. How do ceramic tile and LVT compare in terms of durability, maintenance requirement and lifecycle cost in high-traffic areas like student unions and residence halls?

Both products perform well in high-traffic campus environments. The difference is in how they perform and what they cost to maintain over time.

Ceramic tile is the more durable option. It resists water, chemicals and heavy wear, and carries a longer service life in demanding applications. The trade-off is grout: it stains, cracks and requires ongoing maintenance. Repairs are also more labor-intensive when they're needed.

LVT handles heavy foot traffic well and offers simpler maintenance. There's no grout to manage, and individual sections can be replaced without disturbing the surrounding floor. But it's more vulnerable to heavy rolling loads and certain chemicals, which matters in specific spaces. Instead of saying vulnerable, can we say can be damaged by heavy rolling loads? Does the thickness of the LVT affect that?

For wet areas and dining facilities, tile typically wins on longevity. For residence halls and common areas, LVT often delivers

a lower total cost of ownership over the life of the installation. The best choice depends on what that specific space demands.

7. What are the best practices for managing dust, noise and safety concerns during demolition and installation in active campus environments?

Work off-hours. That's the most effective practice available. Scheduling demo and installation during evenings, weekends and breaks keeps the loudest and dustiest work away from occupied areas.

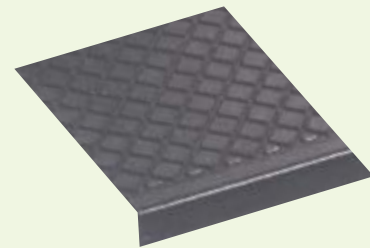
Containment controls dust migration. Plastic barriers and negative air pressure systems keep particles out of adjacent spaces. Choosing safer solvents, like those in Franmar's BLUE BEAR commercial line, can also help reduce risk. For flooring or adhesive that contains asbestos, full abatement protocols are required.

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Noise management follows the same logic as scheduling. Grinding and mechanical removal are the loudest operations. Save those for the lowest occupancy windows available and communicate the schedule to building management in advance.

Safety on an active campus goes beyond signage. Secure the perimeter with physical barriers, not just tape. Keep all tools, equipment and removed material contained within the work zone. Debris in a pedestrian path is a liability. Make sure every person on the crew knows the site boundaries and that those boundaries are enforced throughout the project.

8. Are there sustainable or LEED-friendly options available for both tile and LVT, including recycling or reusing old flooring materials?

Both categories have viable options, and the choices have improved significantly in recent years.

For new installations, look for products with Environmental Product Declarations (EPDs), recycled content and low-VOC certifications, such as FloorScore® or GREENGUARD Gold. These contribute to LEED credits under

materials and indoor air quality categories. And they're increasingly available from major manufacturers in both tile and LVT.

For removed flooring, ask your supplier or manufacturer about reclamation programs before demo begins. Several manufacturers will take back old material for recycling rather than sending it to a landfill.

Beyond certification, selecting products with longer service lives and lower maintenance requirements reduces long-term environmental impact in ways that don't always show up in upfront sustainability metrics. Durability is its own form of sustainability.

9. What installation methods (floating, glue-down or mortar-set) are best suited for different campus applications, and how do they impact future repairs or replacements?

Glue-down handles most campus applications because it's stable under heavy traffic and rolling loads. And individual sections can be replaced without touching the surrounding floor. It's the most serviceable option over time.

Mortar-set is for permanent installations where durability and moisture resistance

matter most: dining facilities, entryways, wet areas. It performs well for decades but is significantly harder to remove or modify. Factor that in if there's any chance the space will be repurposed.

Floating systems work when speed matters and the subfloor is controlled. The risk is flatness tolerance. If the substrate is off, the floor will move and joints will eventually fail. Repairs are straightforward when the product is still available, but matching discontinued product years later is a common problem.

10. What common mistakes should facility managers avoid when planning a flooring replacement project, particularly when transitioning from tile to LVT or vice versa?

The most common mistake is treating the existing floor as a reliable indicator of subfloor condition.

A floor that performed well for years doesn't mean the substrate is ready for the next system. Tile and LVT have different requirements for moisture tolerance and flatness. What the previous product could handle, the new one may not, regardless of what the subfloor material is.

Start with the substrate. Test it, measure it, and assess it as if nothing has ever been installed on top of it. Then select your product and your prep approach based on what you find.

Cut the prep budget, and you're shortening the life of the floor before it's even installed.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR: Franmar delivers safer, high-performance cleaning solutions for facility maintenance teams, using soy-based chemistry to replace harsh chemicals—helping colleges and universities maintain buildings effectively while protecting occupant health, staff safety, and environmental standards.



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Recreation Without Barriers

**ADA COMPLIANCE AND
THE INCLUSIVE CAMPUS EXPERIENCE**

BY ED BAUER

Walk into any modern campus recreation center and you will see more than treadmills, courts, and climbing walls—you'll see a reflection of the institution's values. For private colleges and universities, creating an inclusive recreation program is not simply meeting legal requirements. It is about ensuring that every student, regardless of ability, feels welcomed, supported, and empowered to participate fully in campus life.

continued...



At the center of this effort is the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), a landmark civil rights law that guarantees equal access to programs, services, and facilities. For campus recreation leaders, ADA compliance is both a responsibility and an opportunity—one that, when embraced thoughtfully, strengthens the entire campus community.

ADA and Campus Recreation: More Than Compliance

The ADA extends far beyond wheelchair ramps and accessible parking spaces. It requires colleges to ensure that recreation facilities, programs, and services are accessible in meaningful and equitable ways.

Importantly, accessibility in recreation is not optional—it is a civil right. The law applies to both physical environments and programmatic offerings, ensuring that individuals with disabilities can participate in activities ranging from fitness classes to intramural sports.

Too often, institutions think of ADA compliance as a checklist. In reality, it is a comprehensive approach that includes:

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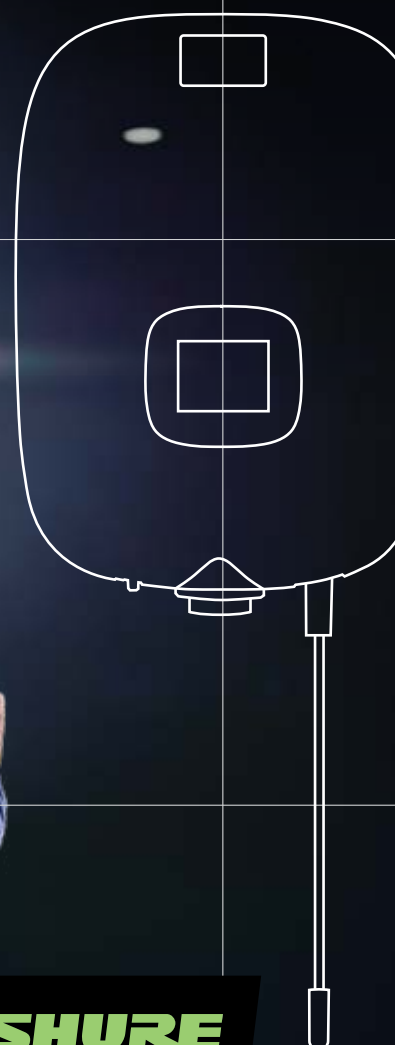
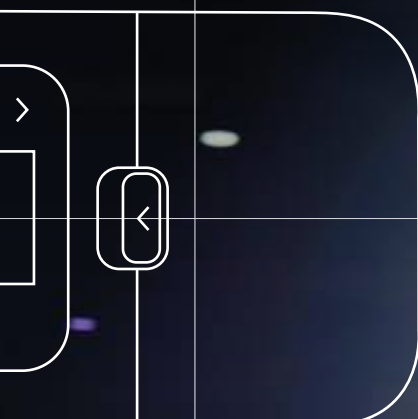
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- Facility design and construction
- Equipment accessibility
- Program and policy adjustments
- Communication and staff training

As one industry expert noted, many institutions still mistakenly equate ADA compliance solely with mobility access, overlooking the broader spectrum of inclusion required in recreation spaces.

Building Accessible Recreation Facilities

The foundation of an inclusive recreation program begins with the built environment. The 2010 ADA Standards for Accessible Design provide detailed requirements for recreation facilities, including fitness centers, pools, courts, and outdoor spaces.

Key facility considerations include:

Accessible Routes and Entry Points

Students must be able to reach all areas of

a recreation facility independently. This includes entrances, locker rooms, courts, and spectator areas.

Fitness Equipment Access

At least one of each type of exercise equipment must be accessible via clear floor space and usable by individuals with mobility devices.

Aquatics Accessibility

Pools must include features such as lifts, sloped entries, or transfer systems to ensure safe entry and exit.

Universal Design Elements

Forward-thinking campuses go beyond minimum standards by incorporating adjustable equipment, tactile signage, and inclusive locker room designs. These are the things that directly impact whether a student feels comfortable and capable of participating in campus life.

Program Access: Where Inclusion Comes to Life

Once a participant is through the doors, the focus shifts from physical navigation to active engagement. ADA requirements extend to how recreation programs are structured and delivered.

Institutions must ensure:

- Fitness classes can be modified for different ability levels
- Intramural and club sports provide adaptive opportunities
- Outdoor recreation programs include accessible equipment and routes
- Communication materials are available in accessible formats

This concept—known as “program access”—is one of the most critical and often overlooked aspects of ADA compliance.

For example, offering adaptive yoga, wheelchair basketball, or inclusive outdoor trips transforms recreation from a passive amenity *continued...*



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Operational Strategies for Inclusive Recreation

Creating an accessible campus recreation program requires intentional planning and ongoing evaluation. Leading institutions are adopting several key strategies:

ADA Self-Evaluation and Transition Planning

Colleges should regularly assess their facilities and programs to identify barriers and prioritize improvements. This structured approach ensures continuous progress rather than one-time fixes.

Staff Training and Awareness

Frontline staff must understand how to assist participants, adapt programming, and communicate effectively with individuals of varying abilities.

Student Engagement

The most successful programs actively involve students with disabilities in planning and feedback. Their lived experiences provide invaluable insights into what works—and what doesn't.

Investment in Adaptive Equipment

From accessible cardio machines to all-terrain wheelchairs, equipment plays a critical role in expanding participation.

Cross-Campus Collaboration

Recreation departments should partner with disability services, student affairs, and facilities teams to ensure alignment across campus.

Real-World Examples of Inclusive Campus Recreation

Across the country, colleges and universities are demonstrating what inclusive recreation can look like in practice.

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At the University of Nebraska–Lincoln, campus recreation facilities feature accessible entrances, equipment, and locker rooms, along with programming designed to remove barriers and celebrate differences.

Similarly, the University of Colorado Boulder has invested in inclusive fitness equipment, all-gender locker rooms, and adaptive features such as raised weight indicators and wheelchair-accessible machines.

These institutions recognize that accessibility is not a one-time project—it is an ongoing commitment to evolving student needs.

Private colleges are uniquely positioned to lead in this space. With smaller student populations and more flexible decision-making structures, they can implement innovative solutions more quickly and tailor programs to their specific communities.

The Benefits of Inclusive Recreation Programs

One of the most exciting changes in campus

recreation today is the shift from mere compliance to providing a truly inclusive experience. Forward-thinking colleges are embracing universal design principles, which aim to create environments usable by all people without the need for adaptation. This approach benefits not only students with disabilities but the entire campus population.

For example:

- Adjustable equipment benefits users of all sizes and abilities
- Clear signage improves navigation for everyone
- Inclusive programming attracts a broader range of participants

In this way, accessibility becomes a catalyst for innovation rather than a constraint, and the benefits extend far beyond avoiding liability:

Enhanced Student Experience

Inclusive recreation fosters a sense of belonging and engagement. Students who feel included

continued...

Today’s students—and their families—are paying close attention to campus accessibility. Institutions that prioritize inclusion gain a competitive edge in attracting diverse student populations.

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are more likely to participate in campus life, build relationships, and persist through graduation.

Recruitment and Retention Advantages

Today’s students—and their families—are paying close attention to campus accessibility. Institutions that prioritize inclusion gain a competitive edge in attracting diverse student populations.

Improved Campus Culture

Accessible recreation promotes interaction among students of all abilities, breaking down barriers and building empathy across the campus community.

Health and Wellness Outcomes

Recreation plays a vital role in physical and mental health. Ensuring access for all students supports overall well-being and aligns with institutional wellness goals.

Institutional Reputation and Risk Mitigation
Proactively addressing accessibility reduces the risk of complaints or legal challenges while reinforcing the institution’s commitment to equity and inclusion.

A Call to Action for Campus Leaders

For recreation directors and campus administrators, the path forward is clear: accessibility must be embedded into every aspect of planning, design, and operation.

This means asking critical questions:

- Are all students able to access our facilities independently?
- Do our programs actively invite participation from individuals of all abilities?
- Are we engaging students in shaping our approach to inclusion?
- Are we investing in continuous improvement rather than one-time upgrades?

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Answering these questions honestly—and acting on them—positions institutions to lead in an increasingly important area of campus life.

Recreation as a Gateway to Belonging

At its best, campus recreation is more than a collection of facilities and programs. It is a gateway to connection, confidence, and community.

Ensuring ADA compliance and embracing inclusive practices allows colleges to open that gateway to every student. It sends a powerful message: you belong here, and your experience matters.

For private colleges and universities striving to differentiate themselves, this commitment to accessibility is not just the right thing to do—it is a strategic investment in the future of their campus.

Because when recreation is truly inclusive, everyone wins.

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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Powering Purpose

HOW THE CAMPUS CHALLENGE IS TRANSFORMING UNIVERSITY RECREATION

BY CONTRIBUTED BY SPORTS ART

From student-led grants to energy-generating fitness equipment, colleges are turning recreation centers into high-impact hubs for sustainability, engagement, and institutional value.

Across higher education, the role of campus recreation is evolving. No longer confined to fitness and wellness alone, recreation centers are becoming powerful platforms for student engagement, institutional identity, and, perhaps most importantly, sustainability leadership.

At the intersection of these priorities is the SportsArt Campus Challenge, an initiative that is redefining how universities activate their missions through recreation spaces.

continued...



PHOTO COURTESY SPORTSART AMERICA

By combining grant funding for student-led sustainability initiatives with sweepstakes awards of energy-generating fitness equipment, the program is helping campuses transform intention into action and ideas into measurable impact.

Now in its third year, the Campus Challenge has grown into a catalyst for change, empowering students, administrators, and recreation professionals to rethink what's possible when wellness and sustainability converge.

A Program Built for Impact

The Campus Challenge operates on a simple but powerful premise: give campuses the tools and resources to bring sustainability to life.

Through its dual-entry model, the program offers both competitive grants, ranging from \$2,500 to \$10,000, and sweepstakes prizes that award ECO-POWR™ energy-generating cardio equipment to campus recreation centers.

This structure is intentional. Grants fuel grassroots innovation, often led by students and sustainability organizations, while the equipment transforms recreation spaces into visible demonstrations of environmental stewardship.

“The Campus Challenge empowers students and administrators to take an active role in sustainability while rethinking how fitness spaces contribute to a larger mission,” said Ruben Mejia, Executive Vice President of SportsArt Americas.

That “larger mission” is one most universities know well: creating environments that support student success, foster community, and reflect institutional values, including a growing commitment to sustainability.

Turning Student Ideas into Institutional Change

For many campuses, the most transformative aspect of the Campus Challenge is its emphasis on student-led initiatives.

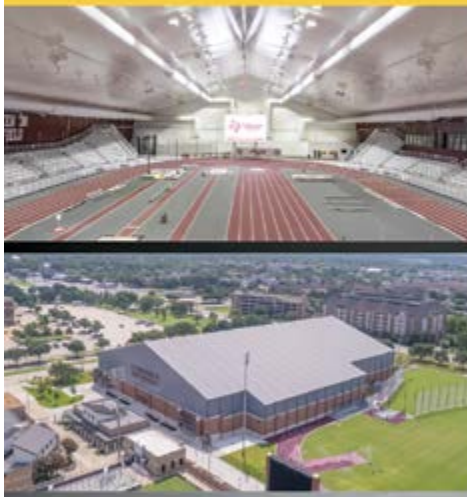
At Seattle University, a 2026 grant recipient, the program is helping launch a student sustainability fund designed to remove one of the biggest barriers to progress: access to

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resources.

The initiative will provide small-scale funding for student organizations to implement greener practices, from hosting sustainable events to improving procurement decisions.

The idea emerged from a simple observation: sustainability is often limited not by interest, but by affordability.

Student leaders recognized that clubs and organizations frequently default to less sustainable options due to budget constraints. By lowering the barrier to entry, the new fund aims to make sustainability accessible across campus, including for groups not traditionally focused on environmental issues.

“This funding allows us to bring that mission to life by empowering students across campus to make more sustainable choices,” said Jacob Caddali, a student sustainability delegate.

From Pilot Projects to Scalable Models

At Wayne State University, the Campus Challenge is driving systems-level change through a zero-waste athletics initiative focused on reducing landfill waste at basketball games.

With a goal of achieving a 90 percent diversion rate, the project includes waste audits, behavior analysis, and student-led composting and recycling efforts. Early results show a diversion rate of approximately 50 percent, which is proof of concept for a scalable model.

“Through partnerships with campus groups and local organizations, we’re tackling issues like food waste and landfill diversion in a way that reflects both our responsibility and our opportunity to create change,” said Wayne State student Dylan McNay.

Operational Sustainability Meets Campus Engagement

At Wilfrid Laurier University, sustainability is being addressed from both operational and

strategic angles, ranging from compostable game-day materials to infrastructure modernization.

“This grant is a catalyst for what we believe can be a transformative shift, creating a roadmap for sustainability that is both practical and impactful,” said Chad Van Dyk, Manager Business & Service Operations, Wilfrid Laurier University.

Across these institutions, a common thread has emerged: sustainability is most effective when it is embedded into daily campus life and not treated as a standalone initiative.

Where It All Comes Together: Recreation as a Visibility Engine

If grants drive innovation behind the scenes, the sweepstakes component brings sustainability front and center into one of the most visible and highly trafficked spaces on campus: the recreation center.

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At Pacific Lutheran University, the 2026 Grand Prize sweepstakes winner, that visibility is exactly what makes the impact so powerful.

“At PLU, sustainability is something that’s consistently talked about and embedded across departments,” said Rob Thompson, Associate Athletic Director for Recreation, Pacific Lutheran University. “When we saw the Campus Challenge, it felt like a great opportunity to bring in new sustainable, green-friendly fitness equipment that would directly benefit our students and campus community.”

For Thompson, the value isn’t just in the equipment itself, it’s in what it represents.

“I think it helped reinforce that sustainability is a shared value across campus, including within our fitness and recreation spaces,” Thompson added. “The bigger impact will really come once students see and experience the new equipment. It makes sustainability tangible and directly connected to their everyday use.”

That concept of making sustainability tangible is central to the Campus Challenge model.

From Concept to Connection

ECO-POWR™ equipment converts human energy into usable electricity, allowing students to see the direct impact of their workouts in real time. At PLU, that feature is expected to resonate strongly.

“The ECO-POWR™ feature that converts usage into clean, renewable energy is something I think students will really connect with and get excited about,” Thompson said.

This type of engagement is difficult to achieve through policy or messaging alone. It requires an experience, which is something recreation spaces are uniquely positioned to deliver.

“Campus recreation plays a really important role because it’s such a high-traffic, highly visible space for students,” Thompson added. “Bringing that same sustainability mindset into

the fitness center helps extend that culture even further across campus.”

A Shared Challenge: Access and Resources

Despite growing interest in sustainability, many institutions, particularly smaller private universities, face a common barrier: funding.

“One of the biggest challenges is access to resources for higher-cost sustainable upgrades,” Thompson said. “Programs like the Campus Challenge help bridge that gap by creating opportunity and momentum.”

This aligns directly with what student leaders are experiencing on campuses like Seattle University, where funding limitations often dictate decision-making.

By addressing both student-led ideas and institutional infrastructure the Campus Challenge creates a more complete pathway to progress.

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Activation in Action Across Campuses

Other sweetstakes winners are already demonstrating how this plays out in practice.

At the University of South Alabama, ECO-POWR™ steppers are being integrated into a broader engagement strategy, complete with signage and programming that highlights the energy generated during workouts.

“The ECO-POWR™ Steppers are a perfect fit for our rec center and will allow us to highlight how individual actions can contribute to collective change,” said Daphne Tyson, Director of Campus Recreation and Wellness at South Alabama.

At Lafayette University, the addition of ECO-POWR™ rowers has energized both the facility and student interest in sustainability. “Students are excited to see our rec center align with the university’s larger sustainability goals,” said Tyler Weiss, Associate Director of Fitness, Lafayette University.

And at Pearl River Community College, the transformation has been immediate.

“Our Wellness Center now has a new energy

and sense of excitement,” said Tara Rouse, Director of the Wellness Center at Pearl River.

Reimagining the Role of Campus Recreation

Taken together, these examples point to a broader shift: recreation centers are no longer just amenities, they are strategic assets.

They serve as:

- High-visibility platforms for institutional values
- Daily touchpoints for student engagement
- Living demonstrations of sustainability in action

“Campus recreation is evolving into a platform for purpose-driven engagement,” Mejia said.

For universities, this evolution supports key priorities, from student recruitment and retention to ESG commitments and donor storytelling. For students, it creates a more meaningful connection to campus life.

A Blueprint for Private Universities

For private institutions in particular, the Campus Challenge offers a compelling model.

It demonstrates that:

- Sustainability initiatives don’t have to start large
- Visible, experiential solutions drive engagement
- Cross-campus collaboration amplifies impact

Thompson’s advice reflects this pragmatic approach: “Lean into what already exists on your campus and build from there,” he said. “Start small with practical, visible changes that students can engage with. When people can see and experience sustainability in action, it becomes much more meaningful and lasting.”

A Movement, Not Just a Program

Ultimately, the Campus Challenge is succeeding because it meets campuses where they are and helps them move forward. It empowers students as changemakers, equips recreation leaders with innovative tools, and gives institutions a powerful way to bring their sustainability missions to life.

“College students are taking the initiative to change our shared world, and the Campus Challenge demonstrates the importance of sustainability in their lives,” Mejia said.

The Future of Campus Recreation Is Purpose-Driven

As sustainability becomes an increasingly central priority in higher education, the role of campus recreation will continue to expand. The question is no longer whether recreation spaces can support institutional goals, it’s how effectively they can deliver on them.

Programs like the Campus Challenge are providing the answer. By turning workouts into energy, ideas into action, and spaces into statements, they are redefining what campus recreation can be: not just a place to exercise, but a place to engage, to educate, and to lead

ABOUT THE AUTHOR: SportsArt delivers innovative, sustainable fitness solutions for campus recreation and wellness facilities, including ECO-POWR™, energy-generating equipment that reduces operational costs. With premium cardio, strength, and rehab systems, SportsArt supports student health while advancing institutional sustainability goals.

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When Seconds Matter

THE RISE OF PANIC BUTTONS ON CAMPUS

BY ALLISON TRAPANI

Campus safety has evolved beyond simple checklists. Today, it's about how quickly you can communicate when it matters most. Students and parents now expect a seamless safety net, and at the heart of that infrastructure are two essential tools: panic buttons and emergency phones. Together, these systems form the backbone of modern emergency communication strategies by bridging the gap between incident and response; ensuring that help is never more than a button press away.

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The Shift in Private Campus Security

Private universities operate in a unique space. Unlike large public campuses with extensive municipal integration, private institutions often rely more heavily on internal security teams and campus-managed infrastructure. This makes communication systems—especially those that provide instant alerts—essential.

Recent data shows that panic systems are already widely adopted across higher education, making them one of the most common emergency technologies on campuses. At the same time, mobile panic apps and wearable devices are growing in popularity, reflecting a shift toward more flexible, user-driven safety tools.

But the real story is why these systems are important.

What Panic Buttons Actually Do

At their core, panic buttons are designed for one purpose: get help fast.

In an emergency, even seconds matter. Panic buttons allow faculty, staff, or students to instantly alert campus security or local law enforcement without dialing a phone, explaining a situation, or navigating a system.

Depending on the implementation, panic buttons can:

- Instantly notify campus police or security teams
- Trigger lockdown protocols (such as door access restrictions)
- Provide real-time location data to responders
- Activate broader emergency communication systems

For example, some campus deployments automatically lock classroom doors and alert campus police simultaneously when a button is pressed. This kind of integration transforms a simple device into a powerful safety tool.

And importantly, panic buttons aren't only used for extreme events. Data shows that most activations relate to everyday incidents such as medical issues, behavioral concerns, or minor emergencies, rather than major threats. This reinforces their value as a daily resource, not just a last-resort solution.

Emergency Phones: The Fixed Foundation

While panic buttons are evolving rapidly,

emergency phones remain a foundational element of campus safety.

Outdoor emergency phone towers, commonly referred to as “blue light” towers due to their bright blue strobe lights, can be strategically placed across campuses in areas such as:

- Parking lots and garages
- Walkways and open spaces
- Building entrances and remote areas

Indoor emergency phones are highly visible, providing instant access to emergency personnel in:

- Residence halls and common areas
- Stairwells and hallways
- Libraries and labs
- Any high-traffic student area

Unlike personal devices or apps, emergency phones offer guaranteed access—no batteries, no downloads, no connectivity issues. Anyone on campus, including visitors, can use them.

Call boxes and emergency phones are present in most higher education campuses, highlighting their continued importance in campus-wide safety strategies.

More importantly, they serve as both a functional and psychological tool. Their visibility alone can deter crime while reassuring students and staff that help is always nearby.

The Power of Integration

The real transformation in campus safety comes when panic buttons and emergency phones are not treated as standalone tools, but as part of an integrated communication system.

Modern campuses are increasingly connecting:

- Panic buttons
- Emergency phones
- Mass notification systems (email, SMS, PA systems)
- Video surveillance
- Access control systems

This integration allows a single action, like pressing a panic button, to trigger a coordinated response across multiple systems.

For example:

- A panic button alert can initiate a mass notification message
- An emergency phone call can automatically pull up camera feeds in that area
- A triggered alert can activate lockdown protocols or paging announcements

Real-World Impact: Faster Response Means Better Outcomes

The value of these systems becomes clear in real-world scenarios.

Case studies show that panic buttons significantly improve response times by removing communication barriers. In one example, campus staff equipped with panic buttons were able to quickly summon help in situations where using a phone was not possible, ensuring that security teams could respond faster and more effectively.

Even more telling is how often these systems are used. While high-profile incidents draw attention, most alerts are routine, but still important. In one large-scale system, tens of thousands of alerts were recorded in a single year, with the majority tied to behavioral or medical situations rather than major threats.

This underscores a key point: Panic buttons and emergency phones are not just for worst-case scenarios; they are everyday safety tools.

Why Campuses Are Prioritizing These Systems

Campuses are increasingly investing in panic buttons and emergency phones for several reasons:

1. Duty of Care and Liability

Schools are expected to provide a safe environment. Immediate communication tools demonstrate a proactive approach to risk management.

2. Student and Parent Expectations

Today's students and their families expect visible, modern safety measures. Panic buttons and emergency phones are tangible proof of that commitment.

3. Campus Size and Complexity

Even smaller private campuses can have complex layouts, multiple buildings, and varying levels of security coverage. These systems help bridge those gaps.

4. Staff Empowerment

Providing faculty and staff with panic buttons gives them confidence and control in uncertain situations, improving overall campus culture and morale.

Built for Reliability in Critical Moments

When it comes to implementing these systems, reliability is everything. Devices must work

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With over 55 years of experience designing and manufacturing communication equipment in the United States, Viking Electronics has developed a range of solutions specifically suited for campus environments.

Panic Button Solutions

Products like the **PB-3** (analog) and **PB-3-IP** (VoIP) panic buttons are designed for discreet, immediate activation. Mounted under desks or counters, they allow staff to silently contact emergency personnel and deliver pre-programmed alerts.

Key features include:

- One-touch dialing to multiple emergency contacts
- Handsfree communication capability
- Optional location identification via messaging or DTMF signaling
- PoE-powered VoIP options for simplified installation

These devices are particularly well-suited for administrative offices, classrooms, and high-risk areas where quick, discreet communication is essential.

Emergency Phones and Intercoms

Viking's emergency phone lineup provides durable, highly visible communication points across campus environments.

For example, the E-1600-IP phone offers:

- Handsfree communication over SIP VoIP systems
- Built-in relay for door or gate control
- PoE-powered operation
- Visual LED indicator for call status

Best Practices for Implementation

For campuses considering or expanding panic button and emergency phone deployments, several best practices stand out:

Layer the System

No single solution is enough. Combine panic buttons, emergency phones, and mass notification systems for comprehensive coverage.

Prioritize Coverage

Ensure that all key areas - classrooms, offices, outdoor spaces, and remote locations have access to at least one form of emergency communication.

Keep It Simple

In an emergency, systems must be intuitive. One-touch activation and clear functionality are essential.

Integrate Where Possible

Link systems together to enable coordinated responses and reduce manual intervention.

Train and Communicate

Technology is only effective if people know how and when to use it. Regular training and awareness campaigns are critical.

Looking Ahead: Smarter, Faster, More Connected

The future of campus safety lies in smarter integration and broader accessibility.

We are already seeing:

- Increased use of mobile panic apps with GPS location tracking
- Greater integration with video and access control systems
- Expansion of wearable panic devices for staff
- Continued reliance on fixed emergency phones for universal access

As these technologies evolve, the goal remains the same: reduce response time, improve communication, and enhance safety across every corner of campus.

For campuses, panic buttons and emergency phones are no longer optional, they are essential components of a modern safety strategy.

They provide:

- Immediate access to help
- Faster response times
- Greater confidence for students and staff
- A visible commitment to safety

When implemented as part of an integrated system, supported by reliable manufacturers, they become more than just devices. They become a lifeline.

Because in an emergency, every second counts.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR: Allison Trapani is working as a Marketing Design Coordinator at Viking Electronics, Inc., a designer and manufacturer of over 500 security and communication products.

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