

# Reed College Designs a Safer, More Connected Campus with Zoom Phone and InformaCast



Eliot hall  
Photo credit: Anna Harris

## The Challenge

When it came time to update its phone system, Reed College saw an opportunity to move to the cloud. However, the college still wanted to be able to leverage the safety and communication benefits offered by its InformaCast mass notification system.

## The Solution

Reed College turned to Zoom Phone to move its voice systems to the cloud and take advantage of its integration with InformaCast to provide critical notifications to students and staff about events that could impact their well-being.

## Moving to the Cloud

The challenges of implementing new technologies in older campus buildings can be difficult to navigate, but for Hailie Roark, computing and information services project manager and senior infrastructure administrator at Reed College in Portland, Ore., it also presented an opportunity.

With more than 1,300 undergrad students and over 500 faculty and staff spread out in 80 buildings, being able to reach everyone was a necessity. When the time came to renew the college's phone system, Roark went looking for a flexible, cloud-based solution that would enable the college to easily reach people with the information they needed.

"Disaster recovery and business continuity were top concerns when we started looking for a new phone system," said Roark. "We were housing key voice infrastructure in one of our oldest buildings. As a small liberal arts college, our spaces were designed for learning, not as enterprise data centers. We wanted to get equipment off-site and into the cloud."

A crucial part of Roark's search involved finding a solution that would be able to utilize its InformaCast mass notification software. Having recently made the switch to InformaCast Fusion, Roark wanted a cloud-based phone solution that could integrate seamlessly with the college's mass notification system. Since Reed College was already using Zoom Meetings for educational instruction, the decision to go with Zoom Phone was an easy one.

"We were already using InformaCast to send emergency alerts to people on campus, and Zoom for daily communications and instruction," said Roark. "Due to geography and building materials, we have a lot of black holes on campus—places where wireless or cell phone signals can't reach. With Zoom Phone and InformaCast we can place a phone in those areas to broadcast audio messages and alerts to people in an emergency."



Reed College Old Dorm Block  
Photo credit: Leah Nash

## A Single Pane of Glass

Combining InformaCast and Zoom Phone offered the college the ability to consolidate systems and save money in the process.

“We’re now able to manage all of our alerting from a single system and have eliminated a lot of technical debt in the process,” said Roark.

That included eliminating the on-premises VoIP system the college had been using, as well as the separate SMS text and email service that was being used to send alerts to people on their mobile devices.

“It makes it much easier for our team members who have to use these tools,” said Roark. “They only need to bookmark one page and remember one log in. They only need to train and conduct testing on one system.”

## Building a Safer Campus

Reed College runs drills with InformaCast and Zoom Phone to prepare for a number of scenarios. The Community Safety team prebuilt text and audio messages in InformaCast to target several potential safety concerns.

“We want to ensure that we are keeping our system simple and streamlined so that messages can be sent out quickly in a crisis,” said Roark.

This simplicity came in handy during a recent weather event that impacted campus operations.

“We experienced a spring ice storm that shut down the city and left hundreds of thousands without power,” Roark explained. “The college needed to communicate with its community and curtail campus operations on short notice, but the community-wide emails weren’t delivering fast enough or reaching some folks who had lost power and internet.”

The response team decided to use InformaCast to help spread the word. With Fusion, they were able to send emails, SMS text messages and phone calls with recorded audio messages. Leveraging multiple delivery methods got the word out to community members who would have otherwise been left in the dark.



Reed College Library  
Photo credit: Leah Nash

## Looking to the Future

Lately, the Community Safety team has been looking into the recipient response functionality available in InformaCast Fusion as an efficient way to gather feedback in a possible event.

“We have several projects we are looking to implement in the near future,” Roark said. “We want to take advantage of the E911 capabilities offered by Zoom Phone and the recipient response functionality available in InformaCast Fusion. We also are looking to integrate more overhead speakers as we install them in buildings around campus.”

Visit <https://www.singlewire.com/informacast-higher-education> for more information about how college and university campuses can implement InformaCast and Zoom Phone to help with their safety and alerting needs.