

The Higher-Ed Telecom Buyer's Checklist

6 categories, 30 questions to work through with any phone system vendor before you sign — covering uptime, licensing, campus integrations, mobility, E911 compliance, and total cost of ownership.

Print this out or check items off as you go. Bring gaps back to your shortlist of vendors.

1 Reliability & Uptime

A campus phone system fails loudest during finals week and move-in day — exactly when call volume peaks.

- ☐ Redundant deployment options exist (active-standby or clustered)
- ☐ Call routing keeps working through a WAN or internet outage
- ☐ System has been load-tested at your peak concurrent call volume, not just your average

2 Scalability & Licensing

Enrollment shifts, departments merge, and a satellite campus can appear on the roadmap overnight.

- ☐ Adding an extension does not add a per-seat fee
- ☐ Platform covers your full headcount today and 3–5x growth without a re-platform
- ☐ Licensing model matches your budget cycle (annual, multi-year, or capital)
- ☐ Multi-tenant support, if colleges or departments need their own independent instance
- ☐ No forced hardware refresh tied to a software license renewal

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Campus & Systems Integration

The phone system rarely runs alone — it needs to talk to the tools admissions, IT, and safety already use.

- ☐ CRM and helpdesk integration for admissions and IT support queues
- ☐ Emergency mass notification system can trigger through the PBX
- ☐ SIP trunking works with your existing or preferred carrier
- ☐ API or webhook access for custom campus workflows
- ☐ Directory sync with your existing staff and faculty directory

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Mobility & Remote Access

Faculty and staff move between buildings, offices, and home — their extension should follow them.

- ☐ A softphone app is available for staff working off-campus
- ☐ A faculty extension rings a personal mobile app, not a shared office line
- ☐ Presence and status stay in sync across desk phone, desktop, and mobile
- ☐ Works over campus Wi-Fi and off-campus networks without a required VPN

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Security, Compliance & E911

Federal E911 rules apply to multi-line campus systems — confirm the vendor supports them, then confirm your own configuration.

- ☐ E911 location data updates as staff move buildings or extensions relocate
- ☐ Direct 911 dialing with no prefix required (Kari's Law)
- ☐ Dispatchable location sent with every 911 call (RAY BAUM'S Act)
- ☐ Call recording and access controls meet your data-retention policy

☐ Signaling and media are encrypted end to end (TLS/SRTP)

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Support & Total Cost of Ownership

The sticker price rarely matches what shows up on your invoice two years in.

☐ Support hours match your semester calendar, including move-in week and finals

☐ Total cost is itemized: licensing, hardware, support, and any per-extension fees

☐ A migration and number-porting plan covers your existing extensions

☐ Documentation and admin training are included, not billed separately

☐ Platform is open-source or standards-based, so you are not locked into one vendor's roadmap

NEXT STEP

See VitalPBX Handle This Checklist Live

Book a 30-minute walkthrough scoped to your campus — extension count, existing carrier, and E911 setup.

[Schedule a Demo](#)

VitalPBX provides configuration tools that support Kari's Law and RAY BAUM'S Act requirements. Consult your E911 service provider and legal counsel to confirm full compliance for your district.