



DENISON

INSIGHTS FROM THE EXPERTS

7 CIO Insights on Modern Campus Communications

See how Dena Speranza is building a
connected campus in the cloud



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DENISON



CHIEF INFORMATION OFFICER

Dena Speranza

FAST FACTS

Founded: **1831**

Total Faculty: **233**

Student to Faculty Ratio: **9:1**

Productivity Suite: **Google Apps for Education**

IT CHALLENGES

Enrollment: **2150 Undergraduates**

Majors & Programs: **49 Courses of Study and 11 Pre-Professional Programs**

Student Geographic Distribution:
50 States and 40 Foreign Countries

How does technology impact students, faculty, and staff at Denison University? What is the IT strategy currently in place?

Denison University is a leading national college of liberal arts and sciences where students from around the world come to forge the skills needed to succeed.

Denison's place at the forefront of higher education is recognized by "Colleges That Change Lives," U.S. News, and Forbes, among others.

From a technology perspective, we're a Google Apps for Education institution. We have over 150 e-classrooms and meeting spaces with integrated technology. We also support multiple enterprise and

departmental applications, including learning management and student information systems.

In terms of campus telephony, we're replacing an ancient PBX system. The system is close to 25 years old and supported by a bulky network of desk sets and on-premise hardware. By moving away from it, we're helping faculty and staff become more effective in their day to day work.

The goal is to leverage modern cloud services to build our vision of a digital workplace.





As a CIO at a modern institution, how would you describe your vision of a digital workplace?

Moving to a pure-cloud communications platform is going to facilitate the conversation channels that students want to interact with us on. For example, we'd like to make it easy for faculty to text students directly from their desktop. These are the kinds of interactions that our students are looking for.

We're a very relationship-driven organization. We're focused on being high-touch and face-to-face. Our goal is to seek out innovative ways to strengthen student engagement. Moving us to a digital workplace environment will free up more time for these efforts.

Let's say an advisor is attempting to track how many touch points they've had with a student. We need to be able to integrate our voice solution with Google Apps for Education so they can instantly pull insight on upcoming meetings, shared documents, and recent email interactions with that individual.

Accessing the right information at the right time is critical when building student relationships across advising, recruiting, financial aid, and administrative departments.

Our mission is to connect the campus through a centralized communications experience and create intuitive workflows for staff and faculty.



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We facilitate what
our faculty and
students need by
providing the right
set of IT tools.

Dena Speranza
CIO of Denison University

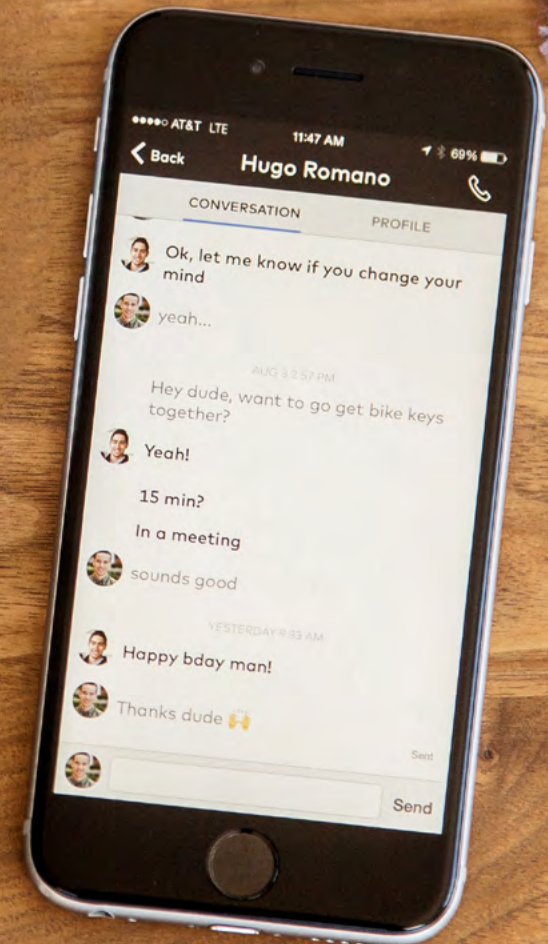
What is your philosophy behind selecting the right technology for modern campuses?

In our world, we don't force people to work in any particular mode, we facilitate what they need by providing the right set of IT tools.

We want to enable digital capabilities and build collaboration channels across campus. It's all about what we can do from a technology perspective to directly impact student success and

employee engagement.

Our focus is on implementing secure, easy-to-use solutions that make life better and more productive for faculty and staff. Those are the big wins.





What drove this shift towards the cloud and VoIP technology?

For one thing, we are far past the expiration date of our 25-year-old PBX. The system is clunky and cumbersome to use. Features like voicemail are completely antiquated. We also lack simple capabilities like hold music or visibility into who's calling in.

Even basic IT tasks like setting up a quick call center take a tremendous amount of programming. We have to bring in external vendors and leverage third-party contractors.

Cost-wise, we've lost track of so many lines over the years that switching to the cloud will eliminate a considerable amount of IT waste.

Overall, I'd say our greatest driver is flexibility.

We're looking to eliminate legacy hardware and take complete ownership of campus-wide communications.

From an administrative perspective, the ability to quickly provision lines and manage users in the cloud is huge. And because pure cloud communication platforms tie all channels—text, chat, video, and voice—to a single number, our staff and faculty will have the freedom to dictate the exact work style that's right for them.

What are some of the big trends that your peers in higher education are dealing with in transitioning to the cloud?

The number one concern that my peers have, and that I have as well, is security. That's top on the list for any cloud-based implementation. The situation varies from vendor to vendor, and you have to perform quite a bit of investigation to validate a system.

However, from an administrative standpoint, moving to the cloud frees up IT resources so we can focus on more strategic goals.

Instead of having our IT team manage a system, a server, and all its components, we're able to deploy cloud services that are fluid and device agnostic.

This way, staff and faculty can access conversations that shift seamlessly between smartphones, laptops, and tablets.

From a continuity perspective, we're driven to outsource these core services. Moving to the cloud means we're eliminating single points of failure.



A person with long brown hair is seen from the side, holding and reading an open book. The background is a blurred library or study area with bookshelves and other people. A dark blue semi-transparent box is overlaid on the left side of the image, containing white text and an orange quote icon.

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Dena Speranza
CIO of Denison University



How do you view the future of Denison?

In terms of IT operations, we're concentrating our resources on the student experience. We're streamlining back office technology so we can divert resources back to this core goal. Moving forward, this will continue to be the case.

Our students are mobile. They're engaging with technology from a digital perspective.

Their world is increasingly centered on that digital experience. It's critical that we help them connect across campus through familiar channels and build their literacy about the new digital marketplace.

We plan to continue integrating this digital-first mindset into our liberal arts experience.

These goals also tie into our global focus. We have students in study abroad programs who need to stay engaged with campus, regardless of what country they're in. For them, maintaining that tight connectivity with faculty and advisors, even when they're halfway across the globe, is key.

How does the technology that you select ultimately shape your culture and potential as a university?

Technology is a facilitator that's used to solve problems. We don't deploy technology for technology's sake. Instead, we focus on taking advantage of modern platforms that solve immediate problems.

When we choose a cloud technology, we approach the decision from two angles—what problems are we trying to solve, and are they the strategic emphasis that we need to be focused on as an institution.

Higher education is experiencing a period of unprecedented change as

we shift from the old on-premises world to a digital workplace.

Universities seeking to thrive in this environment must find new ways to support our community's demand for high-quality, personalized services that help faculty, staff, and students engage more effectively.

An efficient and easy-to-use communications system is therefore a must-have for every higher educational institution.

Dialpad for Higher Education
Connect Everyone. Work Anywhere.

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Dialpad

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