

## Your Security on Campus

As a new or continuing college student, you will have plenty of things to think about. Here's another one: how can you assure your safety on campus? While most students get through four or more years of college without being threatened or harmed by on-campus crime, the unfortunate reality is that such crime is increasing.

The Crime Awareness and Campus Security Act of 1990 mandated that colleges must compile annual statistics about crime on campus and make that information available to current and potential students and staff members. What that means is that as you are considering colleges, you can check out each school's crime data. You can learn about the types and frequency of crimes on campus and then use that information as you're preparing your list of questions for your campus visit. See the Department of Education's Office of Postsecondary Education crime data online at <http://ope.ed.gov/security/main.asp>.

When you visit a college campus, ask both students and counselors very specifically what security measures the school has for assisting unaccompanied students walking at night, for handling threats, or for evacuations in the case of a violent incident or other emergency. What should you do if you hear someone making a threat or observe someone behaving in a dangerous or threatening manner? How are campus security personnel trained and what equipment do they carry? Does the school recommend (or allow) self-protection equipment such as pepper spray? In some cases, it is the municipal police that respond when there is a problem on campus. If so, visit with officers and ask about campus crime and response times. While you're at it, ask for their suggestions on how you can be safer at school.

In addition to finding out what security measures are provided by the school, you also need to take responsibility for your own safety. Here are some common-sense safety tips:

- Be aware of your surroundings. Look around as you're walking or riding your bike. Be especially vigilant when you're distracted, such as when you're texting or talking on the phone.
- Listen to what's going on around you. If you need to walk alone, leave the headphones turned off.
- Put the campus police phone number on all of your phones so you can dial it quickly if there's a problem.
- Walk, bike and park in well-lighted areas.
- Lock your car, both when you're in it and when you leave it.
- Always lock your room, both when you're in it and when you leave it.
- Avoid displaying obviously valuable items or wearing valuable jewelry.

- Go with a friend; it's safer—and it's more fun.
- Tell someone where you're going and when you expect to be back.
- If you're working at night, on or off campus, find out whether other people will be around and arrange to leave with someone else.
- If you feel even slightly unsafe, even in the daytime, call campus security and ask for an escort. If they can't assist you, call a friend and wait in a safe, well-lighted place until they arrive.
- If you are being stalked, report it immediately to campus police and to the authorities at your residence. Be prepared to give as much description as possible.
- Carry and use a flashlight. Don't just shine it on the path directly ahead of you, but sweep it ahead and around you.
- Consider carrying a whistle or a personal alarm.
- Much campus crime, including sexual assault by acquaintances, is associated with the use of alcohol. Be smart and just say no thanks.
- Pay attention to warnings. As colleges implement greater security measures, you may receive notices by text message, phone or e-mail. Take them seriously.

The chances are good that you won't encounter trouble, but these simple cautions can make you safer and help you avoid problems that may be brewing around you.

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