

A background image of a student in a grey hoodie looking at a smartphone, standing in front of a brick wall. The image is overlaid with a dark blue gradient.

REGROUP GUIDE

COLLEGE CAMPUS SAFETY

Best practices for keeping students,
faculty and staff safe and informed

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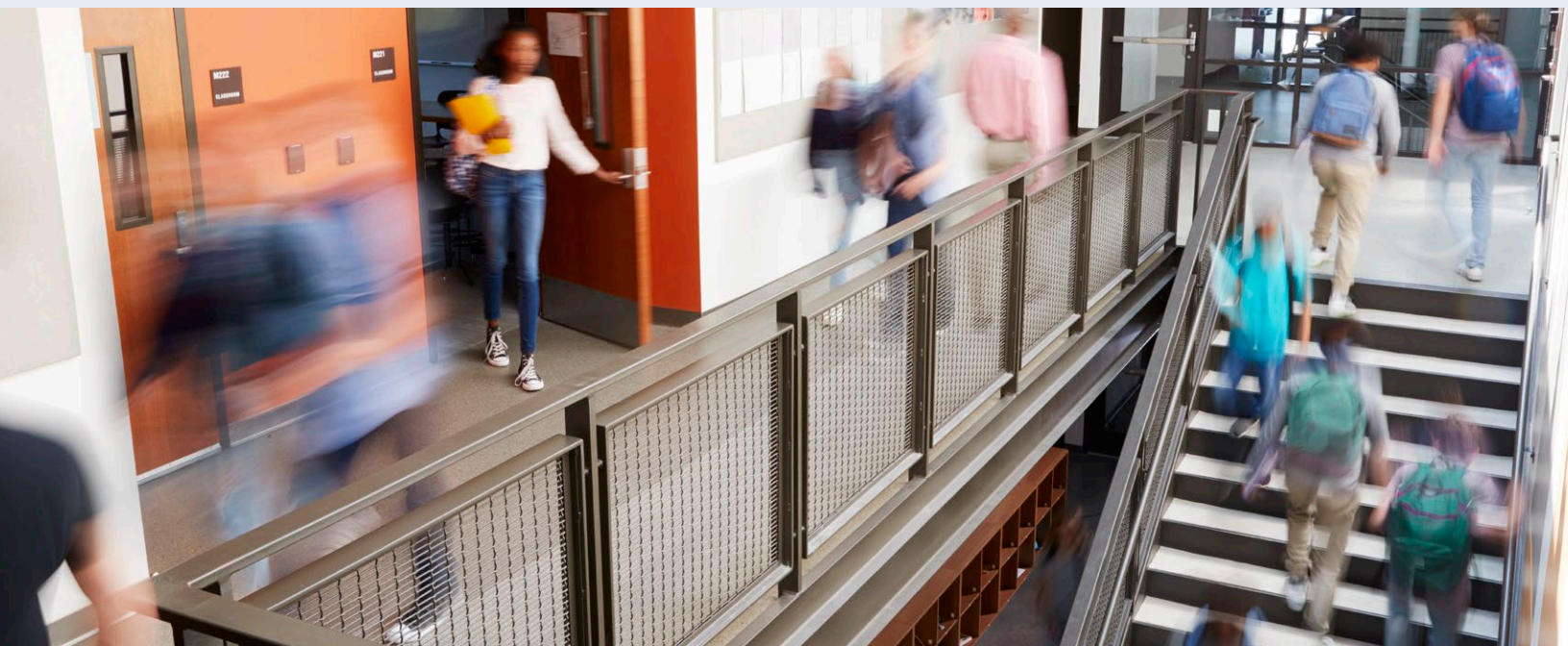
Overview

Education professionals want their students to learn and grow in a safe environment. The college experience should represent a time of positive change, advancement and achievement. However, campuses face dangerous situations and violence.

The National Center for Education Statistics reported 27,300 individual on-campus crimes committed in 2019, equaling 18.7 on-campus crimes reported per 10,000 full-time-equivalent students. These numbers include 11,800 forcible sex offenses, 9,000 burglaries, 3,100 auto thefts and 2,200 aggravated assaults.

While new measures may be periodically enacted to address past events and their outcomes, a need remains for each campus to look inward at its security practices. Questions need to be asked, such as: Is the college compliant with safety regulations? Can more be done to promote safety and security throughout the student body? What additional measures can be taken to bolster security in and around campus?

Regroup explores the barriers to a safe campus in this guide and how schools can address them. We aim to promote a safe learning environment for all students and foster open dialogue about safety for students, faculty and staff.



Safety Challenges on Community College Campuses

Given the diverse nature of community college campuses, which often serve a wide range of students from different backgrounds and age groups, assessing campus security needs to consider specific factors. These may include the size and layout of the campus, the presence of high-risk areas (such as science labs or computer facilities) and the potential for external threats in surrounding neighborhoods.

Community colleges often collaborate with local law enforcement agencies and community organizations to strengthen security efforts. This collaboration can involve sharing information, coordinating emergency response procedures and conducting joint training exercises. By engaging with the broader community, community colleges enhance their ability to address security concerns effectively.

However, problems can occur in virtually every large community — campuses included — that endanger individuals, property and other assets. There is simply no reliable way to anticipate every potentially dangerous scenario.

At any given time, a college campus may host thousands of individuals traveling from class to class, convening in common areas, focused on studying and not their surroundings and socializing with others. These individuals can be at high risk simply because their attentions are elsewhere.

The constant flow of campus foot traffic can make monitoring unchecked visitors or individuals who may not belong on campus challenging. Furthermore, crowds can mean coverage for suspicious individuals. This can make it impossible for security professionals to spot non-students or potential criminals.

Additionally, many campuses in the United States are quite sizable. Keeping track of building access, fire escapes, common areas and individual classrooms can be a virtually insurmountable task for security forces. And, with many schools, aging structures can present significant risks regarding secure access and severe weather threats.

Finally, outdated communications and surveillance technology can create hazards within the campus environment. If not addressed, these inadequate technologies can create 'dead zones' wherein surveillance is impossible, and individuals do not have a tool for reporting suspicious activity or other troubles.



10 Most Dangerous Scenarios

While community colleges are generally safe environments, it's important to acknowledge that certain scenarios can pose risks. Here are ten potentially dangerous situations that community colleges should be aware of and address:

- 1 Active Shooter Incidents:**
This is a rare but highly dangerous scenario where an individual with a firearm poses an immediate threat to the campus community.
- 2 Physical Assaults:**
Incidents involving physical altercations, assaults or acts of violence can occur on campus.
- 3 Sexual Assault and Harassment:**
Community colleges must actively address the issue of sexual assault and harassment, providing prevention education, support services and a responsive reporting system to ensure the safety and well-being of students.
- 4 Lone Students:**
A student returning to the dormitory late at night can be at risk of personal attack. Even though colleges strive to maintain a safe environment in every corner of the campus, it is difficult to monitor the comings and goings of each individual student.
- 5 Campus Burglaries and Thefts:**
Theft of personal property, including laptops, smartphones and other valuables, can occur on college campuses.



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Cybersecurity Threats:

Community colleges, like any educational institution, face cybersecurity risks, including data breaches, phishing attacks and unauthorized access to sensitive information.

7

Natural Disasters:

Community colleges should be prepared for natural disasters such as earthquakes, floods, hurricanes or severe weather events.

8

Fire Hazards:

Fires can occur due to electrical malfunctions, cooking accidents or other factors.

9

Mental Health Crises:

Students facing mental health challenges may experience crises that can impact their own well-being or pose risks to others.

10

Transportation Accidents:

Community colleges with transportation services or parking facilities may face risks related to accidents, including collisions, pedestrian safety and traffic congestion.

College administrators and security professionals should regularly assess the safety of their facilities.



Examining Your Current Safety Plan

By law, all post-secondary institutions in the United States have safety and emergency plans. Some states mandate how often these plans are reviewed, while the Clery Act requires reporting crime statistics. In any industry, an annual review of the safety and emergency plans is best practice.

Your campus security plan should address three specific areas:

Assessment of Potential Risks and Threats

Identifying the weaknesses on your campus is an important first step to minimizing the risks to students and faculty. Many college administrators and security forces invite local law enforcement's participation in this exercise to assess potential risks and threats, including:

- Examining access points, emergency exits, security cameras, first aid equipment, fire extinguishers and other safety equipment to ensure adequate placement and functionality.
- Analyzing campus visitor procedures.
- Identifying adequate resources to respond to emergencies.
- Educating and training staff members about emergency procedures.
- Encouraging students to take an active role in their safety.
- Creating a coordinated approach to mental health care and prevention.

Emergency Response Plans and Coordination

An effective emergency response plan demands coordination. That means stakeholders and other answerable parties must fully understand their responsibilities and be able to execute them should a critical event occur.

Drills and other practice exercises can prove helpful for coordinating efforts and the individuals responsible. Each person involved should have clear instructions on how to perform their duties and how to interact with other stakeholders.

Coordination with outside agencies, such as police and fire departments, is also critical. Establish open dialogue with local agencies to understand the best possible approach to requesting their assistance and when they should be contacted. Campus police forces will have already established communication with outside agencies before an emergency. For this reason, they can effectively guide your coordination efforts.





Communication Protocols

Communication during emergencies is absolutely essential to promoting the best outcomes. From a single-person crime to a crisis that could impact large numbers of people, a swift, intelligent response can only be achieved through effective communication.

Effective emergency response requires communicating the most helpful information in a timely fashion to all stakeholders, including staff, students, security, facility managers and more. This requires technology for communications and training for staff members on what information is shared and how. The goal is to provide responders with as much information as possible to make the response relevant and practical.

When examining your communications, it's important to identify potential stumbling blocks. For example, do you have access to adequate communication channels? Are you relying on out dated technologies? Are the correct people identified as stakeholders?

Considering how important first communication is during an emergency, examine your current protocols and infrastructure to identify potential weaknesses and possible improvements.



Using Communication to Protect People and Property

A robust communication strategy is key to promoting the best possible outcomes in times of crisis and emergencies. College and universities require the appropriate tools to accomplish this goal, and, at times, the most expensive or complicated technology isn't necessarily the solution.

When moments count, a simplified but interoperable approach is best. Determining how crisis communication is handled requires planning, stakeholder engagement and tools that people of all technical abilities can easily utilize.

Create Your Emergency Communications Team

Identify members of your staff and faculty who should act as communication points during emergencies. These team members will need adequate training on how, when and why to reach out and training on the technology used during emergencies.

Conduct Drills

Emergency communication strategies are better served if everyone is practiced and ready. This requires drills for different scenarios, such as an active shooter event, severe weather, fire or crime response. Outline the responsibilities of each team member and conduct drills often to stay fresh and improve response time and information shared.

Ask for Help

Don't be afraid to reach out to local law enforcement, fire departments or emergency services to gain insights on best practices in emergency response communication. Local authorities can assist you in building your communication practices and provide guidance specific to your institution and geography.



Review Communication Tools

When exploring options for communication tools, consider a multi-channel approach that reaches email, text, push notifications, desktop alerts and mobile apps—the more coverage, the better the results. Encourage your campus community to participate actively in emergency response through two-way communications. Specifically, a platform that includes a mobile app for reporting issues can help security professionals mitigate risks. In addition, mobile apps enable students and faculty to communicate directly with campus officials during emergencies.

STEPS TO CAMPUS COMMUNICATION

Create Your Emergency Communications Team

Conduct Drills

Ask for Help

Review Communication Tools



How Regroup Can Help?

Regroup offers a comprehensive communication solution for educational institutions, featuring a world-class web platform and a free mobile application. Our system allows institutions to communicate quickly with students and staff. It offers tools such as location-based alerts, two-way communication and customizable preferences, ensuring everyone receives information in their preferred language.

Educational institutions nationwide, including community colleges, universities, districts and K-12 schools, use Regroup Mobile to improve communication with their broader communities while keeping their students and faculty safe in various scenarios. These scenarios include violence, active shooter events, college lockdowns, emergency drills, attendance reporting to parents, anonymous safety tips, event promotions, weather closures and delays, daily student-teacher communications, faculty and staff internal notifications and more.

Regroup Mobile App features a variety of tools that help colleges communicate and respond effectively to crises, such as:

- Panic Alerts: contacts can quickly alert others during an emergency using a panic button.
- TipSafe Anonymous Reporting: students and faculty can report safety concerns anonymously, keeping everyone safe.
- Two-Way Communications: users can respond and send important information and updates in real-time.
- GeoFencing: a tool that helps keep people from entering a danger zone or informs them before leaving an area to keep them safe.
- Alert from Anywhere: administrators can reach recipients from wherever they are.
- Two-Tap Emergency Notifications: pre-programmed QuickPost Templates that help administrators get information out quickly with only two taps in the app.

Regroup offers seamless integrations with the leading Learning Management Systems that enable you to leverage our platform to communicate daily information such as lunch balances, attendance and grade reports, building closures, schedule changes and more.



Final Thoughts

Although college should be a time of learning, growth and personal discovery, it can be peppered with potential uncertainties and risks. Maintaining safety and security on college campuses requires buy-in from administrators, security professionals and local agencies.

Continuous improvement, analysis of security practices, communication and feedback all lend to the process of ensuring the safety of students, faculty, staff and property. By regularly examining safety practices and utilizing resources like local government, college campuses have increased odds of mitigating risks and reducing threats of criminal acts and violence.

Analyze your current safety and emergency response plans. Identify weaknesses. Understand the dangerous scenarios and how they can affect students. Develop a crisis communication plan and practice emergency response communications. At every step, understand that the safety of those on campus is the most important mission and that proper planning and implementation can achieve the best outcomes.

Resources

Regroup for Higher Education - <https://rmn.pub/3Geep5s>

Case Study: Regis University - <https://4by9.short.gy/VoBtvE>

The Clery Center - <https://www.clerycenter.org/>

Campus Security Center, Department of Education - <https://www2.ed.gov/admins/lead/safety/campus.html>

Campus Crime Statistics - <https://ope.ed.gov/campussafety/#/>

Campus Safety Magazine - <https://www.campussafetymagazine.com/>





About Regroup Mass Notification System

Since 2006, Regroup Mass Notification has provided an easy-to-use but robust mass alert platform for education, health care, business and government. Our genesis is in higher education with college clients throughout North America.

We've continually helped develop risk assessment plans for client colleges and universities and have worked to improve our mass notification platform to serve these clients.

Regroup has been recognized as a leading provider of security technology by the Secure Campus Awards, American Security Today, DRI International and Unified Communications. Our cloud-based, multi-channel mass notification platform integrates with popular educational tools, the National Weather Service and NOAA and provides rapid two-way communication through the Regroup Mobile App. For over 16 years, institutes of higher learning have turned to Regroup for their emergency and everyday communication.

You can learn more about us at **regroup.com** or schedule a demonstration of the Regroup platform at **regroup.com/demo**.