

The Santa Clara

What's That Sound?

VANI AGGARWAL · APRIL 21, 2023

Campus safety is threatened by negligence and unpreparedness

The dark amplifies fears of being followed, triggering extra caution in every footstep and every groan, creak and squeak of the night. For women, walking alone at night can require personal safety devices—alarms, Tasers or pepper spray—out of fear. In fact, in 2021 8 violent crimes took place on the Santa Clara campus.

"I choose to carry a pepper gel to feel more secure when walking alone," said sophomore commuter student Tripti Pandey. "It makes me feel safer, especially when I've been harassed on my relatively short walk to the train station multiple times."

That is not to say that Santa Clara's student body and Campus Safety Department aren't trying to lessen the dread of walking at night. The Safe Walk program, for instance, at 408-554-4410, allows for a confidential and safe companion to accompany you, whether on- or off-campus, during their operating hours. The school also promotes Rave Guardian's safety timer, which will notify the contacts you set in the app to check up on you if you do not arrive at your destination on time.

But more could be done to improve safety, especially across campus in the transit station—a hub for commuters.

The Santa Clara

underpass (originally designed to check blind spots for safety) since it's almost always scribbled over or smeared would be major improvements to safety."

Those who live on campus face safety challenges as well. Non-affiliates seem to have somewhat easy access to residence halls and classrooms.

"Some areas of campus are rather unrestricted, even to non-students," said sophomore Lydia Myla. "Someone could just walk into a building, a classroom or even a dorm, and nobody would even notice."

On April 10, residents of Finn Hall were notified via email of the "increase of policy and safety violations committed by non-Cura residents and even some non-SCU students," specifically referring to members of the community holding the door open for people behind them.

Ironically, getting into a residence hall is a lot easier than getting into the Malley Center. The front desk checks your student ID before you're even allowed to use any of the gym's facilities.

I'm not suggesting that residence halls or buildings should be personally checking the IDs of each person coming in—that's not practical or easy. But the stark contrast in the accessibility between the two is terrifying and suggestive of an issue with Santa Clara's priorities.

On-campus safety relates to the broader issue of rampant gun violence in America. Living in the U.S. gives us the unique misfortune of the mass trepidation of school

The Santa Clara

and, frankly, a cliché. It's an oversimplification of the expected response into three straightforward words. In actuality, we need to know the specifics of how to run, how to hide and how to fight—aspects that are overlooked until it's too late.

With the seemingly omnipresent news of gun violence and precarious assurances of protection, the administration and students alike need to do better to make Santa Clara a safe campus, especially when students are scared and oblivious to protocols and resources.

If there were to be a shooting on campus, calling for a lockdown or evacuation, many of us would have no idea what action to take, especially commuters who don't have a designated area on campus to shelter in place.

A recent shooting at Northwestern University was worsened by the university's slow response as students heard of the shooting through unofficial means (social media, group chats or friends) before official alerts. Students were rendered confused, anxious and in danger. The fear of having inadequate communication from official sources is a valid fear—one that Santa Clara needs to ensure they are prepared for.

A feeling of preparedness is integral to a secure, anxiety-free college experience. In a perfect world we could walk safely alone at night, feel secure where we live and not worry about school shootings. But, unfortunately, that isn't the case, and we need to educate ourselves on the actions we need to take.

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