

Team Name: MVPL

Student Name: Maya Sioson

Insights

- The logistics of the night safety services that UW provides can be difficult to figure out, which makes them less easy to use.
- Walking with a group to provide safety can be a hassle and isn't always a possibility for students.
- Safety concerns can directly affect a student's ability to participate in certain activities, such as club meetings.
- The size and open nature of the UW campus means that there are always areas that are empty or unmonitored, making it easy for anyone to slip in and out.
- Existing physical safety resources on the UW campus could be improved.

Project Description

Our user group is students who are out walking around or near campus when it's dark. We are focusing on both male and female students of any year who are out at night at least 4 times a month. We feel that many students would consider UW and the surrounding area dangerous at night. This obviously poses safety concerns, but there are other effects such as students not being able to participate in certain activities. We want to find some way to help students feel more safe and comfortable while walking around at night.

Interview Questions and Answers

My interviewee was a 20 year old female. I improvised some questions (indented) that weren't part of the list that we came up with as a team.

Q: How often do you find yourself walking around/on campus outside when it's dark?

A: Maybe like once or twice a week, I try to get home before then usually.

Q: Why are you out walking?

A: Usually I'm either trying to get from class to class, but if it's dark, I'm usually trying to walk to the bus stop.

Q: Where do you walk?

A: Usually just following that pathway from like through More Hall through the Denny yard, or I go through Suzzallo down to the bridge.

Q: Do you avoid certain places? If so, Why?

A: I try to avoid the alleyways through the Ave, just because there's not that many people going through those areas and there's usually, you know, comfortable, warmer places for the homeless. I also don't like walking around Stevens Way, Rainier Vista, Burke Gilman, etc. like places on the exterior [parts of campus].

Q: So you would say that you try to walk where other people are?

A: Where the students are, yeah.

Q: Do you walk by yourself or in groups?

A: Usually by myself.

Q: Do you feel comfortable walking by yourself? Do you try to walk with a group when you can?

A: No, I'd rather walk by myself.

Q: What affects your decision?

A: It's more just I like to walk at my own pace, don't wanna make small talk. Nothing safety-wise, just a personal preference.

Q: Tell me about a time you had to walk at night.

A: There was one time where I definitely felt like I was being followed, like they got off at the same stop as me, they walked in the same direction as me. And then I think I just went into a library (that I wasn't intending to go to). I left after like 5 minutes. I don't know if they were following me, but...

Q: How do you feel walking when it's dark

A: I'm definitely more aware of my surroundings, definitely looking around more, I wouldn't say I feel unsafe persay, especially if there's no threatening people or presences around, but it's just more of a general awareness.

Q: Do safety concerns prevent you from doing things that you want to do?

A: Yeah definitely. I would love to be able to go out to more club meetings and things. Especially things like the E line and transferring buses, I don't really wanna be stranded at a bus stop while I'm transferring. I'd rather just be closer to home if I'm gonna be alone. Typically anything past 6:30 I don't really feel safe participating in activities.

Q: So you're not really comfortable taking the bus past 6:30?

A: Yeah, especially because I have to take exterior routes.

Q: How do you feel as a female walking at night?

A: It definitely adds another weight, I wouldn't say that I'm scared when I walk around at night, but again, going back to the general awareness, feeling like I have to be aware. Like I can't not do that.

Q: Why do you feel this way?

A: I think there's a lot of news of things that have happened that just really shows that anyone or anything can be affected, and also there's always a lot of people saying like, "oh, you have to be careful." Just a lot of verbal awareness.

Q: Have you been in/heard of dangerous situations near campus?

A: I feel like when I'm in these situations, I don't know if it could've turned into a dangerous situation, or if I didn't get out of that situation something would've happened. Personally I haven't been in like a close call or something dangerous.

Q: Do you know anyone personally that's been in a dangerous situation?

A: Not really, actually.

Q: Why do you think walking at night in the U-District is unsafe?

A: I think since we have such an open campus, anyone can come in and out, anyone can be anywhere at any time, you know. It doesn't just have to be students and staff. I think also just the sheer size of our campus makes it so that there are a lot of dead zones in safety. I also think Seattle as a whole just has a lot of "night life," you know like... I don't know.

Q: Like activity at night?

A: There's just a lot of people wandering at night, whereas like a suburban area everyone would just be in their homes by like 8. I think city, metropolitan areas also just kind of attract a lot of crazies.

Q: What methods are you currently using to stay safe when walking around in the dark?

A: Looking around; if I see sketchy people, I'll keep my distance. Sometimes I'll intentionally get off early or later just to avoid interactions with people. Walking faster when it's scary. Sometimes I'll have my hand on my phone ready just in case something happens.

Q: Do you carry any devices or weapons to protect yourself?

A: No, because I think my initial reaction wouldn't be to fight, it would just be to get away as fast as possible.

Q: Have you ever used night safety services here at UW?

A: I've wanted to, but I haven't.

Q: Why?

A: I have been looking into it, but I wasn't exactly sure if I could just get on like a normal bus, like I didn't really know the times and where they stop... I guess I could just look into it, but it wasn't clearly apparent.

Q: So you're just not really sure about the logistics of it?

A: Yeah, and I'm also not around that late very often.

Q: Do UW alerts change your night walking?

A: I've never had an instance where it needed to change, just because they were never in an area where I was concerned. But I definitely would be like, "I would not go there" if it said like "man shot here" you know.

Q: What would help you feel better walking at night?

A: This is actually something I thought of; I know that we have those emergency blue things [phones] you know, but I've always felt like if I was ever in a dangerous situation, I don't know where the closest one is, like there's no map so I think it would be helpful if there was like arrows on paths to show where the nearest one is.

Q: So you think if you were in a dangerous situation you would try to find one?

A: Yeah, like I just wouldn't know how far I would have to run and where, you know what I mean. Or maybe just put more of them, you know.