

# When Students Struggle: Recognizing Distress and Taking Action

March 25, 2026

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# Today's Agenda



Current Landscape & Introduction to Incident Reporting



Identifying Signs of Distress



Documenting & Best Practices

# Landscape Post-2007

- Virginia Tech active shooter incident
  - Communication gaps
  - Threat assessment and intervention systems
- Campus Communications Post-2007
- Formation of multidisciplinary teams to analyze “red flags”
  - Law enforcement, mental health services, student affairs, legal counsel
  - Threat Assessment Teams- Behavioral Intervention Teams
- Incident Reports are a key component in helping connect “Pieces of the Puzzle”
- HIPAA /FERPA- Disclosing concerning behavior does not violate federal privacy laws if there is a “rational basis” to believe the student may pose a threat to themselves or others.

-FERPA 34 CFR § 99.36



# Why Incident Reporting Matters

- Ensures timely intervention to connect students in need with resources that can help support
- Federal regulatory compliance (Title IX & Clery Act)
- University Policy 720: Threat Assessment and Management
  - Encouraged to report any and all potential, imminent or actual threats or violent behavior to the appropriate
  - Promotes a safe and secure environment to learn and work

# Reporting an Incident

incidentreport.charlotte.edu

- Academic Misconduct
- Assault or harassment
- Hazing
- Mental Health crises
- Threatening or suspicious behavior

## Reporting an Incident

Home Resources

### EMERGENCY INFO

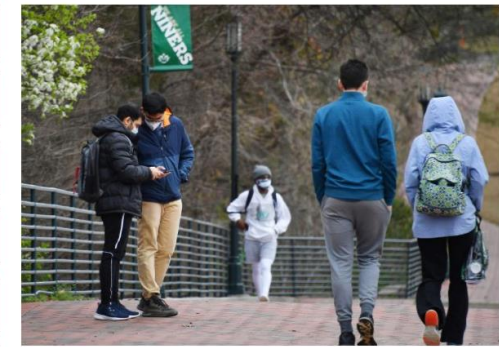
If you are in immediate danger or know someone who is in extreme distress, call 911 or UNC Charlotte Police and Public Safety at 704-687-2200.

The offices reviewing these reports do not respond directly to emergencies.

### PURPOSE

The purpose of this page is to provide students, faculty, staff, and community members a common place to report information, behavior, or observations, that need to be brought to the attention of university administrators. The landing page provides reporters the opportunity to select the reporting form that best matches the type of incident or information they would like to report.

- + REPORT ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT
- + REPORT NON-ACADEMIC BEHAVIOR
- + REPORT CARE AND CONCERN FOR AN INDIVIDUAL
- + REPORT SEXUAL OR INTERPERSONAL MISCONDUCT
- + REPORT DISCRIMINATION OR DISCRIMINATORY HARASSMENT
- + REPORT A GRIEVANCE
- + REPORT ANY OTHER CONCERN (ETHICSPPOINT)



Not sure how to categorize what you have observed or experienced? Contact the Dean of Students Office at 704-687-0345 for assistance.



# Connecting Key Campus Partners

# Introduction to Key Campus Partners

## Disability Services

- Facilitates accommodations and ensures that students with disabilities have access to education and campus life at the University.

## Housing & Residence Life

- Create communities in partnership with residential students that are welcoming, safe, well-maintained and intentionally developed to facilitate their academic, personal, and professional growth.

## Student Accountability & Conflict Resolution (SACR)

- Code of Student Accountability
- Code of Student Academic Integrity
- Help Seeking Protocol

## Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS)

- Individual Counseling
- Group Counseling
- Workshops
- Educational Programs
- Relationship Counseling
- Integrated Care Services (Identification of the appropriate on- or off-campus health and wellbeing resources; Expedited referrals to health and wellbeing support)

## Civil Rights & Title IX

- Sexual and interpersonal misconduct
- Discrimination/Discriminatory harassment
- Pregnancy or related concerns

# Campus Behavioral Intervention Team (CBIT)

The University has a multidisciplinary team, the student Campus Behavioral Intervention Team (CBIT), that is responsible for gathering information, assessing and implementing intervention strategies, as appropriate, for cases that include threats and/or violent behaviors concerning students.

## Identification & Referral/Reporting

Behaviors of concerns or warning signs that indicate an student may need behavioral intervention given the potential that they may pose a threat and/or commit an act of violent behavior.

Communicate concern through the [Concern for an Individual form](https://incidentreport.charlotte.edu) at [incidentreport.charlotte.edu](https://incidentreport.charlotte.edu)

- Imminent concerns contact Police and Public Safety (7-2200)

## Information Gathering

May include information from:

- Reporting party
- Campus partners
  - Academics
  - Disciplinary history
  - Criminal history
- Peers and/or colleagues
- Roommates
- Faculty members
- Family members
- Online platforms

## Assessment

An assessment consists of reviewing the available information to assist with understanding the totality of the situation, determining the level of threat posed, and informs the management plan.

- Preliminary Assessment
- Campus Behavioral Intervention Team (CBIT)

## Intervention & Management

May be done for the person of concern and/or other impacted persons

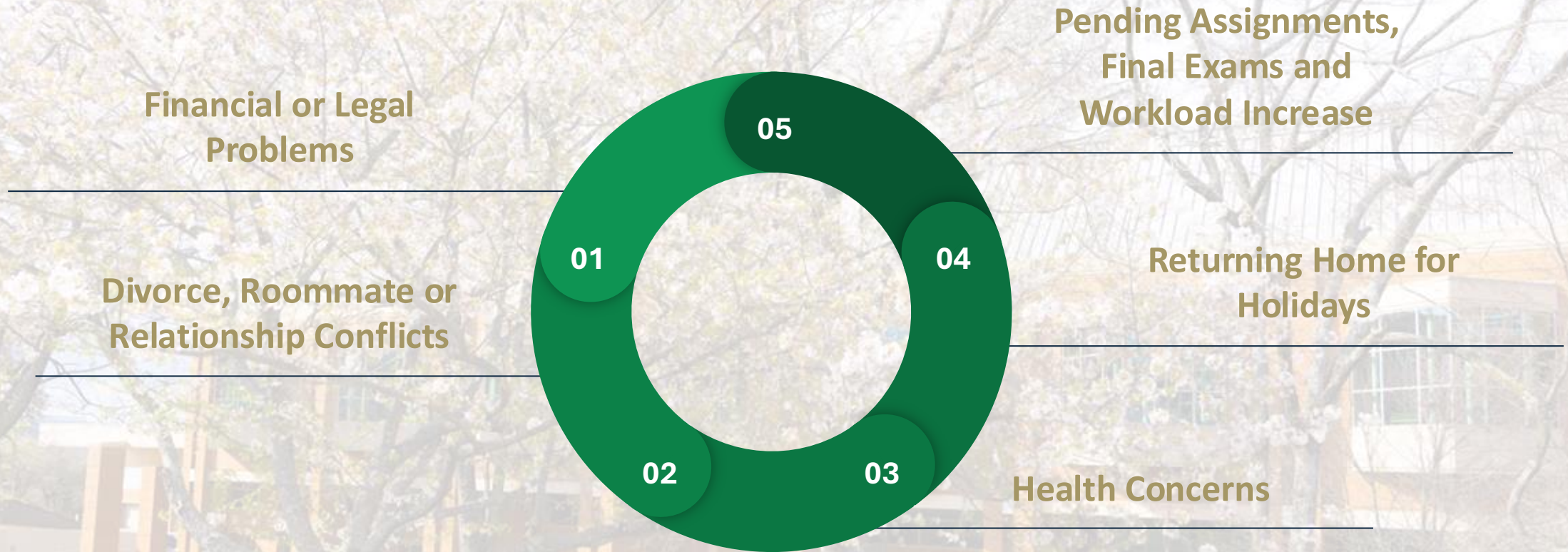
May include:

- Resource referrals
  - On-Campus
  - Community Based
- Case management
- Accountability measures
- Interim actions
- Safety planning

# Students of Concern

What student of concern trends  
have you noticed?

# Students in Distress



During the beginning of the semester, late October through mid-November, mid-March through mid-April, holidays and the end of the semester are peak times where a students stress levels may increase.

# Indicators of Students in Distress

## Academic

- Sharp decline in academic performance
- Disproportionate response to graded work
- Inappropriate or disruptive behavior in the classroom \*
- Excessive absences or stop attending classes altogether
- Repeated requests for extensions on assignments
- Very demanding of instructors time
- Written expression of concerning thoughts in academic work

## Physical/Mental Health

- Disordered eating
- Disordered sleeping behaviors such as insomnia
- Extreme mood swings
- Agitated and/or incoherent statements
- Inconsolable grief
- Self-harming behavior such as cutting, hitting, and/or biting
- Suicide ideation or attempt
- Appears disconnected

# What is disruptive behavior?

- Refusal to comply with faculty or staff direction
- Challenges to authority
- Behavior that distracts from the subject matter or discussion
- Often speaking without being recognized/called on
- Repeatedly leaving and entering the room without authorization
- Loud, distracting or erratic behavior inappropriate to the setting
- Overt hostility, defiance, or insults
- Verbal or physical threats to self/others or physical intimidation
- Verbal assaults or abuse (cursing or inappropriate language)
- Excessive emails, phone calls or demands for attention outside of class

# Managing Disruptive Behavior

01	Faculty members and professional staff are responsible for the management of the classroom/meeting/event environment
02	Standards and expectations are set prior to the experience
03	A student who persists in disrupting the session may be directed to leave the classroom/event for the remainder of that specific class period or the meeting/event
04	Note: A student cannot be prohibited from returning to class the next day by a faculty member. During an abroad experience, consult immediately with Education Abroad staff for repetitive disruptions by the same student.
05	Set healthy boundaries

# Managing Disruptive Behavior

- Remind the entire group of your behavioral expectations per your syllabus or other communicated trip documents
- Set expectations and communicate them in advance
- Find a natural break in the event/experience to address a specific person, if needed, regarding their behavior
- Stand in close proximity (without hovering) to a student, particularly during group activities, to monitor behavior
- Be clear and firm in expectations individually and to the group as a whole
- Follow up with a student after an incident via email or request a meeting, as necessary

**If a student does not comply with faculty/staff directives and clear expectations have been set and communicated with a student, faculty/staff should then refer the student to Student Accountability & Conflict Resolution.**

# How should you respond to concerning behavior?

## Emergency Situations

- Homicidal threats
- Imminent suicidal thoughts or threat of action
- Weapons are involved, threatened, or implied
- Engaged in a fight
- Exhibits out of control behavior that is unable to be redirected or escalated



**Contact Emergency Services of Trip Location**

# How should you respond to concerning behavior?

## Non-Emergency Situations

- Significant changes in behavior and/or appearance
- Recent or past suicidal thoughts or other mental health concerns
- Missing classes/events and not responding to outreach
  - Referrals should include specific information about the types and dates of attempted outreach
- Significant personal or academic challenges

**Step 1: Inquire and Express Concern with the Student**

**Step 2: Refer the student using the appropriate tool**

**\*When abroad, use Education Abroad reporting form**

**\*At any other time, submit a care and concern referral form**

REPORTING AN INCIDENT

EMERGENCY INFO

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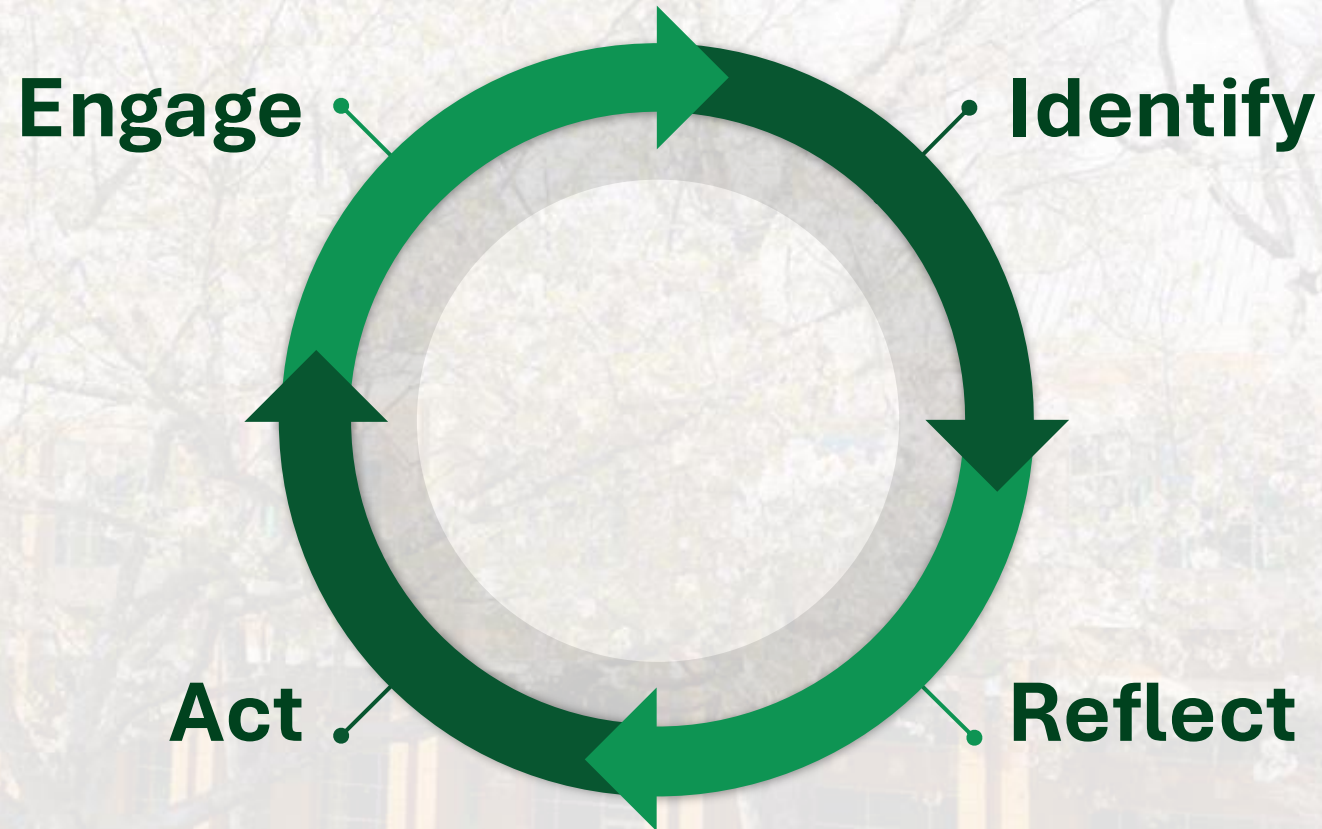
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- Report Academic Misconduct
- Report Non-Academic Behavior
- Report Care and Concern for an Individual
- Report Sexual or Interpersonal Misconduct
- Report of Discrimination or Discriminatory Harassment
- Report a Grievance
- Report Any Other Concern

# Approach to Meeting with Students of Concern



# Meeting with Students of Concern

## Setting the Stage

- Gather information
- Find a private and comfortable place to talk
- If you are concerned about your own safety, do not meet with the student alone
- Set aside adequate time for the discussion
- Be aware of how the student shows up to the space
- Be calm and stay relaxed; Pay attention to your demeanor and tone of voice; Listen carefully and attentively

## Having the Conversation

- Express your concern directly to the student
- Be as specific and provide examples
- Do not make assumptions or diagnosis
- Ask questions
- Use “I” statements, not “you” statements to reduce the likelihood of the student feeling they need to defend themselves
- Approach from a place of understanding
- Do not use shame as a tool (i.e. avoid qualifying statements)

## Asking the Difficult Questions

- Be willing to engage and reiterate your concern
- Be direct with questions around self-harm and suicidal ideation
- Restate and/or summarize the student’s perspective
- Use open-ended questioning
- Be comfortable with silence

## Creating an Action Plan

- Be familiar with campus resources and assist the student in getting connected
- Be willing to acknowledge if you do not know the answer, but explain you will work to find it
- Craft a plan of action together with the student vs. prescribing a plan
- Know your limits and when to refer
- Discuss directly with the student if you plan to refer and what they can expect

## Following Up

- Document the conversation
- Make referrals directly
- Submit any necessary care and concern referrals
- Follow through on any other action items you need to complete
- Check in with the student on any action items they need to complete
- Circle back with the student to see how they are doing

# Referring and Consulting

## Questions to Ask Yourself

- Is the student's behavior distressingly out of the ordinary?
- Is the behavior getting worse?
- Does the behavior place anyone at risk?
- Is dealing with this behavior beyond my skill level?
- Does my "gut feeling" tell me something is wrong and the student needs more resources than I can provide?

**If you answer "yes" to any of these questions, submit the appropriate referral for the student.**

## Consult Directly...

- With the appropriate offices based on the concerns (SASS, CAPS, SACR, Civil Rights & Title IX, etc.)
- If you want to discuss your observations with a staff member
- When the efforts to manage a behavioral issue have not resolved the issue
- If you are concerned about the general safety and well-being of an individual, yourself or others
- If you have questions about the most appropriate plan of action
- If you have referred the student in the past and there seems to be no behavioral improvement or the situation has gotten worse



**Bookmark: [incidentreport.charlotte.edu](https://incidentreport.charlotte.edu)**



# Fundamentals of Incident Reporting

Details • Objectivity • Timing

123



# 01

*Details*

1

23

What happened?

Why? (important context)

Who was involved?

What was said?

Were there any witnesses?

What actions were taken?





# 12

## 02 *Objectivity*

Remove personal perceptions like “I think” or “They seemed angry.” Instead, use “I observed they had their fists clinched.”

If you’re stuck, ask yourself “why” questions.

Create a balanced narrative without diagnosing, speculating or minimizing.



# 3



# 123


## 03 *Timing*

Same day reporting (if possible).

Timely documenting ensures greater accuracy, detail and credibility. Also, a positive reflection of your diligence.

Puts campus resources in the best position possible to assist students in need.





# Fundamentals of Incident Reporting

## Remember D.O.T.

123

1. Details- who, what, when, where?
2. Objectivity- balanced reflection of observed behavior.
3. Timing- the key to effective assistance.

A large, bold, green number '5' is positioned on the left side of the image. The background features a brick building with a glass-enclosed walkway, a taller brick building in the distance, and a sky with white clouds. In the foreground, there are out-of-focus pink flowers.

**5**

**Things  
to  
Avoid**

## Avoid including irrelevant details

Ask yourself, “Does this detail help someone understand the current risk, ensure safety?”

- If no, leave it out.
- If yes, include it and provide full context.

# 1



“The female student was being emotional”



“The student reported feeling **unsafe** at home **because** of their nonbinary status.”

## Avoid using “labels”

Avoid using general terms like “drunk” or “aggressive.”

- Describe the observed behavior provides much stronger evidence for a conduct hearing.
- Keep in mind University officials in multiple offices may need to use this information for different processes.

# 2



“The student was intoxicated and aggressive”



“The student spoke with slurred speech, smelled like alcohol, and shouted obscenities during the encounter”

## Avoid conclusions

# 3

In many cases the “how you got there” is more important than the actual conclusion. Focus on clarifying what helped you form your conclusion. Including all critical details helps support other offices who will need to respond to the IR. By explaining the path to a conclusion, you create a defensible record.



“Emergency Services were not contacted, because the student was not suicidal”



“The student stated, ‘I no longer want to harm myself.’”

# 4

## Avoid mixing internal & external findings

Always clarify which information you learned independently verses what information you learned from a third party.

When you need to include external knowledge, clearly acknowledge the source. Presenting someone else's account as your own observation undermines the report's credibility.



“The fire alarm didn’t go off in the student’s room”



“The student stated that the fire alarm did not sound in their room.”

## Avoid making clinical diagnosis

# 5

This helps maintain an objective record that doesn't overstep into clinical interpretation. Do the best you can to describe what symptoms you observed that allowed you to understand the situation.



“The student is suffering from generalized anxiety disorder.”



“The student reported chest pain, shortness of breath and dizziness.”

# Final Reminders and Tips

- Be able to **identify** students of concerns in crisis or distress
- Be willing to **meet** with students, if need be
- Be **knowledgeable** of campus support services
- **Recognition** of when a student issue or behavior is beyond your skill set to intervene and refer students to appropriate support services (Education Abroad, SASS, CAPS, Local Police, or Campus Police)
- Be **mindful** of how and where you share information but remember to submit the appropriate referrals for any incidents or situations of concern
- Know **when and how** to refer a student of concern
- **Never put yourself in physical danger**
- Confronting problematic situations must **focus** on behavior
- **Document** specific behaviors of concern



Scan for Resources

# Online Resources

## CAPS Virtual Resources

[caps.charlotte.edu/services/self-help](https://caps.charlotte.edu/services/self-help)



### SELF HELP

**SERVICES** | Home | Services | Self Help

**Make An Appointment**

**Group Counseling**

**Workshops**

**Individual Counseling**

**Relationship Counseling**

**Crisis Assistance**

**Self Help**

#### CAPS Virtual Resources

Coping with Anxiety and Living Mindfully (CALM) is one of our most popular workshops and a great resource for building coping skills and more effectively managing anxiety. We have made videos of the workshop content available. Work through the entire workshop in order or pick and choose topics that match your interests.

#### Coping with Anxiety and Living Mindfully (CALM) Video Modules - Session 1

- Part 1: Introduction
- Part 2: Stress, Anxiety, and Avoidance
- Part 3: Fight/Flight/Freeze Response
- Part 4: CBT Model
- Part 5: Deep Breathing and Relaxation Exercise
- Part 6: Sleep Hygiene

#### Coping with Anxiety and Living Mindfully (CALM) Video Modules - Session 2

- Part 1: Deep breathing and homework review
- Part 2: Automatic thoughts
- Part 3: Unhelpful thinking styles
- Part 4: Research made relevant

- Reporting an Incident



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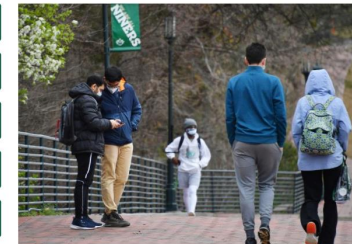
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# Please contact us for additional questions?

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