



PHOTO BY BRYCE ALBERGHINI

## UNCA should enhance student safety after Florida shooting

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Since the 1999 Columbine disaster that began the modern era of school shootings, students, parents and teachers have worried the same will happen to them.

Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School lost 17 students and staff members in a deadly school shooting on Valentine's Day. This shooting is the second-deadliest public school shooting in the United States and the 10th school shooting since the start of 2018.

With school shootings and violent acts happening left and right, enhancing student safety is the main priority of the UNC Asheville police officers. In the past, UNCA collaborated with first responders in the area to create a simulated active shooter incident as a hands-on training. "We've been doing active shooter training for staff, faculty and student employees. In

my meeting with SGA, they have some wonderful ideas about how to incorporate this information into some curriculum programs that already exist as a better method of delivering to students," said Director of Emergency Management David Weldon.

Students who have not gone through active shooter training may not know what to do if put in this situation or they may not be aware of the signs to look for.

Our assistant vice chancellor for public safety and chief of police, Eric Boyce, expressed his concerns for students not speaking up when witnessing strange behaviors.

"The main thing we really want our students to be aware of and partner with is the 'see something, say something' concept. In a lot of these subsequent reports and debriefs behind a lot of these incidents that have recently occurred is that someone knew something whether by social media, personal

interactions or class interactions and didn't say something," Boyce said.

When witnessing strange behaviors from peers or classmates it's important that you let someone know. It is better to be safe than sorry.

"There is no such thing as over-reporting," Boyce said.

If going to file a formal report is out of your comfort zone, there are other options. Professional staff, community directors and resident assistants are all here to speak to. Anonymous reporting can be done by filling out a form online or through Rocky Shield, the school's safety app. This report will be kept confidential.

"Prevention is our best form of defense against this," Boyce said.

If there were to be an emergency on campus it is important to know what safety signals would sound and look like. The BulldogAlert Text & Voice Messaging System

and BulldogAlert Audible Warning System have been put in place to get important information out to students, faculty and staff very quickly.

A BulldogAlert message comes across via cell phone, digital signs, speakers on campus and email. The steps to sign up to receive alerts can be found online.

"We have indoor speakers in some buildings and we have two speakers raised outdoors," Boyce said, "The outdoor speakers would cover the entire campus. It is very important for students to know if an outdoor siren comes on and it doesn't say that it's a test then it is a very serious incident and you need to listen and take heed to what the siren is telling you to do."

In the case of an active shooter on campus, this siren would sound followed by an audible message, Weldon said.

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