

Stay safe on campus this semester

by Julia West

When you think of customizable apps for the college crowd, the first thing that comes to mind is rarely public safety.

But that's exactly the goal of Ping4 this fall. Using innovative technologies such as geo-fencing — which allows users to target a specific area — Ping4 enables students to notify others of a dangerous situation. If you witness a mugging, for example, Ping4 lets you tell all other users who are within the area. You can provide details on what you witnessed, and if you snapped a photo or video of the suspect, that can be shared with your entire network.

“Or how about a missing person,” suggests Mike Welts, vice president of Ping4. “You can share a photo of them and provide a list of details. As time passes, you can increase the size of your geo-fence, alerting even more people. Rather than an alert that you would only know about if you were on a highway or listening to the radio, you just have to be near your phone to receive that report.”

To customize, choose the kind of notifications you want. Non-driving city dwellers may not care about

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Think about campus safety before you arrive.

traffic issues, so they can skip those notifications. Those same people, though, might want to know about the monstrous hail storm approaching or robberies happening near their dorms.

School smarts

Apps are great, but some good old-fashioned common sense is necessary when it comes to campus safety. We hit up Dallas Jessup of Just Yell Fire — an organization that empowers young women to protect themselves against violence and abuse — for her back-to-campus safety tips.

1. “Before heading off to or back to college, check if your school has a late-night police escorting system. A lot of colleges will have a number

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that you can call late at night if you have to walk back alone and they will walk with you to keep you safe. Find out the number and pre-program it into your cell.”

2. “Know your limits and values before heading off to college. Despite the fact that legally, if you’re under 21, you should not be drinking, a lot of young adults do and therefore it is important to be honest with yourself and know your limits if you find yourself in a compromising situation.”

3. “If you hear that a dorm or fraternity house has a bad reputation for rape, date rape drugs or similar issues, these rumors are usually out there for a reason. There are plenty of other places to be social, and until you know for certain that the reputation is false, go elsewhere just to be safe.”

4. “Know your campus and surrounding areas ahead of time before you go for a run. Most girls love running outside and exploring the area around campus. But if you’re not sure where you’re going, you may find yourself in a sticky situation. Bring a friend if possible. This will make it more fun and safer, and always have a cell phone with you.”

5. “Most importantly, always have a bag of tricks to utilize if you are ever in an attack situation.” ■