

Fire alarm frenzy and other campus safety tips

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Across campus, fire alarms have been going off, and for freshman students on campus, that also meant midnight wake up calls. The Script sat down with Chief of Campus Security Zack Babcock to discuss these fire alarms along with other safety concerns on campus.

In response to the question of how often fire alarms are planned to go off, Babcock said, "In the residential housing facilities, we commence two drills a year, one in the spring semester and one in the fall. Typically these are done around October for fall semester and the other in March for the spring semester. For academic buildings we don't have to do active fire drills during the year. We do, however, have them inspected by a local system monitoring company that verifies that all our systems are working. At night we will test heat detectors, smoke detectors and all that stuff, but that happens on the backside of things."

The fall semester drill was completed at the beginning of October already, as Babcock noted, "A couple of weeks ago we did our fall checks, so there would have been a fire alarm in each of the buildings on that day. We also do unannounced drills. These are much more effective, and you want to put into practice handling the alarms. Say I was cooking dinner, students should be able to navigate how to exit the building safely from this event."

Students are typically not made aware of the cause for most drills. The only recognizable reason is when a campus safety officer and residential life staff are outside the buildings when they run the official semester test drill for on-campus housing. "Sometimes we've had people call and request a reason for why the alarm went off and if it's a simple reason, we will provide that reason. A lot of the time it's due to someone leaving the cardboard on their pizza in



This nonfunctional lightpole boasts an orange ribbon. Script photo/Jess Schatz

the oven, and sometimes it's mechanical related. The alarm that happened in the Science Center [on Oct. 11] was a mechanically related incident that involved the plumbing and the steam valves on the ground floor."

If something happens in one room, the entire building will evacuate. Babcock said, "Even if someone on the third floor of Somers burns a pizza, the entire Somers dorms and suites will evacuate."

Additionally, for students in the apartments on campus, there are smoke detectors in their rooms aside from the hallway building alarm. "If students can handle it yourself, great, but if it's any indication that it's more than you can handle, get us involved. There is no punishment involved in calling us. Starting a kitchen fire happens to the best of us. If you don't feel comfortable handling it, call authorities."

Babcock illustrated a desire for transparency with campus safety. "To be honest, I would really like to have posted somewhere on the webpage a list of the fire alarms that have gone off and the reasons for it. There are some things that we would choose to not share with the community, but the holdup there [with the webpage additions]

is being understaffed."

Another part of safety starts when students first come to campus. Babcock said, "For new student orientation, I would say yes, I think there should be more included in their orientation. There is a very basic part that is included, but not a lot of prevention. For the first-year students, the RAs are trained by campus safety to know what to do and they pass the information to those students. There should be a more robust component, but that comes down to staffing and financial issues."

In a follow-up to Babcock's student community email regarding the "Vehicle Prowl Prevention" that students can take part in, there are very simple ways to keep your items safe. "Since I sent that email about making sure students' vehicles are safe, two more incidents of theft have occurred, all of which involved an unlocked car. We do have cameras in parking lots, but with these thefts occurring late at night, the video quality is too low to interpret any suspects. It's very difficult to track these folks down, especially having only one officer on campus at night."

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CSS studio undergoes renovations

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In the far corner of the Science Center sits room 1132. For years this space was filled with wood paneling from the 1970's, torn couches and 3G Internet. Thanks to efforts from our students and staff, studio 1132 got some much needed renovations over the summer.

The Script sat down with Dr. Rob Larson, an assistant professor in the Communication, Theater and Art department, who spearheaded the renovations to the studio.

"There was a chain-link fence up, with all kinds of stored equipment behind it," Larson said, in reference to when he first saw the studio space almost 13 years ago.

its concrete flooring, there is now entirely new carpet in every area. The foam walls have been redone, and there is now a painted blue wall where an old makeshift green screen used to hang, which had just been a large green bedsheet. But the physical appearance of the studio is not the only thing that got upgraded.

"We had a substantial renovation to the space including changing the footprint, knocking out a wall, all new carpeting, new equipment, 4K cameras and brand new microphones for podcasting. New LED lighting, a lot of odds and ends needed for podcasting. They even updated the ethernet and wifi access. Worth waiting for," Larson said. When asked about his hope



The newly-renovated studio. Script photo/Jack Hagberg

Ever since then, he has been working to turn the space into a space where students can work, film, record and, most importantly, relax. "We cut that fence down and over time made the studio what it was in terms of functionality, but it needed a facelift....The last five years certainly it was in real need of a renovation."

The work began this summer, starting with the removal of a wall that separated the "living" space with the "work" space. The initial entrance used to lead to a room with couches and shag carpet. Now upon entrance there is a conference space, with brand new tables, chairs and whiteboards. Where the wall used to separate the couch room from the computer room there is now an open space, allowing the room to breathe.

After going almost a year with no carpet at all to hide

for the new studio, Larson said, "I wanted to create a place where students can have that maker's space, that creators' hub, where they can work together, brainstorm together, write, produce, edit. Just a one-stop-shop for all your multimedia/production needs. So to just be comfortable in the space, work on all aspects of a production, and have the equipment to make those ideas a reality."

Be sure to stop by the studio to check out all the new renovations, and feel free to email Larson with any questions or comments about the space.

Study abroad programs prove resilient during pandemic

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The College of St. Scholastica has a tradition of study and service abroad that goes back more than 40 years. There 14 different faculty led trips and exchange programs that reach each continent.

As soon as COVID-19 broke out, the travel abroad programs were vulnerable to cancellation and restrictions. However, as cases become more rare and vaccinations are commonly accessible, more programs and trips seem to open up. Though, it should be noted, the restrictions for each trip will be dependent on the

location's COVID-19 status. To get a better idea of this school year's study abroad program as a whole, The Script spoke with Callie Ronstrom, the education abroad advisor at the College. She said, "Usually we have programs that travel in December. To my knowledge they are not happening this year."

Ronstrom said, "It's ultimately a case by case basis, most are still awaiting final approval." Though winter trips are largely being canceled, she seems hopeful for the trips in the spring and summer.

When you first begin looking at study abroad opportunities it can be very

overwhelming. Ronstrom recommends beginning the process through a survey, such as one provided by VIA TRM (<https://csseducationabroad.via-trm.com>). Within 10 minutes, you will have individualized trips tailored to your favored trip lengths, locations, subjects and more.

In order to get a better sense of the trips this year, The Script spoke to Laurie Anderson, who is leading the "Science of Happiness" trip in the spring, which typically stretches across Northern Europe, including Denmark, Norway and the Netherlands. Due to COVID-19 measures, she reconstructed the trip,

remaining in Denmark exclusively. This is an all too common occurrence of a trip being forced to adapt and make changes.

As a result, the crew will be given the chance to dive further into the country of Denmark, visiting everything Copenhagen has to offer, from content based locations, to tourist must-sees. Anderson said, "The trip isn't all professional," explaining that the group gets to do sightseeing as well. To prepare for the trip, Anderson will hold a straightforward class once a week for the entirety of the spring semester, providing some background of the given topic and the

location's unique role.

Traveling abroad gives students the opportunity to leave campus and attain credits in an incredibly unique new way; providing a hands-on approach in almost every corner of the world. If you are looking for more information, don't hesitate to check out the website (<https://www.css.edu/academics/education-abroad/>) or reach out to Callie Ronstrom, the College's education abroad advisor.