THE DAILY CLIPS

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East Carolina University on Monday activated a software update to improve its response during campus lockdowns like the one earlier this month.

The update allows ECU Alert operators to send messages to multiple subscribers simultaneously — including students, faculty, staff and community partners, spokeswoman Mary Schulken said.

When a man carrying an umbrella was mistaken for a gunman on Nov. 16, operators had to select three options to send alert text messages to all the groups. The option to alert students was left unchecked.

The new send-to-all option should ensure that alerts reach every subscriber by reducing the possibility of human error, Schulken said.

“One of the good things about undergoing a real-life experience such as Nov. 16th is that ECU got valuable real-life information about how to operate more effectively in such situations,” Schulken said.

“This change in our emergency text messaging process is a small but critical example.”

A review of response to the incident uncovered the problem and officials developed the update over the following days.

A text was sent to alert subscribers on Monday to inform them of the update.

Contact Jackie Drake at jdrake@reflector.com or 252-329-9567.
The price of big-time academics is going up about 40 percent at the flagship. (That’s the one in Chapel Hill, not the one where they played basketball for President Barack Obama recently.) That’s about $2,800 per student over five years and the flagship doesn’t even make a profit, which should please the Occupy WallStreet/Chapel Hill/Wilmington politically correct academic zombies.

On the other hand, Duke Power needs a 17 percent rate hike to cover escalating fuel costs because the politically correct Obama administration will not permit infrastructure necessary to reduce escalating fuel costs or the 20,000 jobs it would create. The rare increase will cost the consumer about $100 per year and that includes a little profit.

What’s wrong with this picture?

How come Duke Power can get along on a 17 percent increase and Joe Six-Pack on unemployment benefits while UNC Big-Time Academicians glibly raise tuition 40 percent? Why does it cost so much more to turn out kids who are brain-dead upon graduation? Not too long ago, you could get a good dedicated public servant for less than $100,000 a year.

The university has come a long way since C.D. Spangler was president — about $6,000 a semester. Scorners seem justified when they sneer at the image of the oldest state-supported university. UNC is not the oldest state-supported university; it’s just the latest university supported by the State Loan Administration in Washington, D.C.

JOE EXUM
Snow Hill
William Peace University's decrease comes at a time when most universities are raising tuition. The university also will admit men full time in fall 2012.

**Peace University lowers its tuition**

Students will see 7.73% decrease next fall

BY JANE STANCILL - jstancill@newsobserver.com

RALEIGH In a bold move to appeal to students and parents, William Peace University - formerly Peace College - has lowered tuition for next fall.

University trustees voted this month to decrease tuition by 7.73 percent to $23,700 for 2012-13. Room charges will remain flat at $6,186, and food charges will rise $120 to $2,814.

Students were notified by email this week.

"I am jumping up and down excited," said Caroline Mansfield, a first-year student from Cary. At first, she worried that her financial aid package would be affected, but she has since learned that she may not have to pay anything next year because of the decrease.

It's the latest big shift for the traditional women's college, which announced in July that it would admit men as full-time students next fall. That touched off Internet campaigns by angry alumnae and students, who staged protests at the gates of the downtown Raleigh campus just as signs ushered in the new name, William Peace University.
The university's president, Debra Townsley, said colleges have to become more cost effective to continue to keep the doors open to families hurt by the economy.

"We know that in private education, we have lost the middle-income student," she said.

Townsley set about cutting costs soon after she arrived at Peace last year, reorganizing academic programs. Significant numbers of faculty took buyouts or were let go.

"Higher education is going through large structural changes," Townsley said.

Some private colleges and public universities are suffering budget trouble because of a drop in students since the recession. Enrollment at lower-cost community colleges, meanwhile, has boomed.

**Part of overall strategy**

Townsley said the current enrollment at Peace is stable at about 725, counting residential students and those in the night program, which already is open to men. Federal data show Peace had about 760 students in 2010.

Trustees decided to take a look at tuition as part of the university's overall new strategy, Townsley said. Also this fall, William Peace announced a new partnership with Wake Technical Community College. Wake Tech students who earn an associate's degree of applied science will be guaranteed admission to William Peace's business-degree programs. They can finish their coursework on Wake Tech's campus - taught by William Peace faculty.

The William Peace decrease comes at a time when most universities are raising tuition. Public universities plan increases next year in the aftermath of state budget cuts. The College Board reported last month that tuition and fees climbed 8.3 percent this fall at the nation's four-year public universities and 4.5 percent at private universities.

But a few are going against the grain. The University of the South, in Sewanee, Tenn., lowered tuition by 10 percent this year. The University of Charleston in West Virginia will cut tuition by 22 percent next fall to deal with a drop in enrollment.

"This is a topic that wouldn't have been on the table four years ago," Townsley said. "Presidents are talking about this."

**Male enrollment**
It's too soon to know how many men will enroll next fall, but Townsley said 15 percent to 30 percent of applicants so far are male.

Mansfield, the first-year student, said she was initially disappointed when she learned that Peace would become coed. Now she understands, she said.

"I realize if we don't grow with the times and open up the door to new opportunities," she said, "we may not be here in 10 years."

Her parents were delighted with the tuition drop.

"That's a great Christmas present," she said.

Stancill: 919-829-4559

**William Peace University**

**Location:** Raleigh

**Enrollment:** About 725

**History:** Founded, 1857. Peace Institute, 1872. Later, Peace College, offering two years of high school and two years of college. Finally, four-year college, awarding first bachelor's degrees in 1997. Affiliated with the Presbyterian Church (USA). It became William Peace University this year.
RALEIGH, N.C. Emily English was a bright and talented high school student with a dilemma: Her scores on the SAT exam were not exactly what she hoped for and she worried it would keep her from getting into a competitive, nationally prestigious university.

That was when Wake Forest University caught her eye.

The Winston-Salem university had just announced that for the first time, it would not require prospective students to submit their SAT or ACT exam scores in the admissions process. Hundreds of schools have adopted similar policies, but few of them have the reputation of Wake Forest. Three years later, English is a junior planning on attending graduate school to become a clinical mental health counselor, and Wake Forest officials have no second thoughts about their decision.

"I knew that when I got my scores back that it was not going to be indicative of my future college success," English said. "That one score I received from taking a four-hour test by no means captured the effort I had put forth through high school."

Since she became part of the first test-optional class at the university, the percentage of students at Wake Forest who graduated in the top 10 percent of their high school classes has gone from 65 percent of first-year students in 2008 to 83 percent in the current year, according to Dean of Admissions Martha Allman.

The student body has also become more diverse, with non-white students going from about 16 percent of the population to roughly 22 percent, she said. And tracking of student performance shows virtually no difference between those who chose to submit their scores and those who chose not to - no significant divergence in grades, dropout rates or other measures of performance.

"I think admissions officers have been talking about this for years," Allman said. "We also had sort of a discomfort with dividing students by test scores, because we knew all along the high school record was much more important."
The case for such policies is put forward in a new book of essays called "SAT Wars" edited by Joseph Soares, a Wake Forest sociology professor whose research was an important factor in the university's decision to make standardized testing optional.

The whole purpose of the admissions process is to give universities as much information as possible to determine which students will succeed. Colleges don't want students who will drop out after a semester, perform badly in class or take nine years to complete a bachelor's degree. But the process is more an art than a science, Soares said, and standardized test scores tell schools very little in comparison to a student's four-year record in high school.

"The point here is to supposedly help colleges pick students who are going to succeed at college," Soares said. "The vast majority of studies show the variable that best predicts grades in college is high school GPA."

But high school grade inflation is also a concern for admissions offices, and standardized tests represent a useful tool among others when making the decision about whether to accept students, said Kathleen Steinberg, a spokeswoman for the College Board, which oversees the SAT exam.

"The point of view espoused in publications like 'SAT Wars' is neither new nor supported within the mainstream research community," she said. More than 1.65 million students in the high school class of 2011 took the SAT, according to the College Board, the largest number in the exam's history.

Wake Forest's decision has not been matched by a stampede of other prestigious universities away from requiring test scores. The National Center for Fair and Open Testing, which advocates policies similar to Wake Forest's, says that about 850 schools have de-emphasized standardized testing in the application process in some way. The vast majority of those schools, though, tend to be smaller and less well-known. The center lists 14 "national universities," including Wake Forest, with test-optional or similar policies.

The most recent school with a national reputation to make the change is Clark University in Worcester, Mass., which announced last week it will make standardized test scores optional starting with the fall 2013 class.

For Steinberg, it's not a surprise that relatively few national universities have followed Wake Forest.

"The SAT is a proven and reliable measure of a student's college readiness, and is the only college entrance exam linked to the NAEP," she said,
referring to the National Assessment of Educational Progress, a yardstick of student performance run by the U.S. Department of Education often called the country's report card.

The decision to de-emphasize the test is still one that sits well at Wake Forest, and with Emily English.

"The idea of not submitting your SAT score was new, and obviously that brought on some apprehension," she said. "But I also found security in that I wasn't being judged on that score. It was scary, but I liked it."
Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University drum major Robert Champion, 26, died Saturday following a performance at the Florida Classic.

**Funeral services set for FAMU drum major**

By the CNN Wire Staff

(CNN) -- Funeral services will be held Wednesday for Robert Champion, a Florida university drum major who died this month in what officials have called a hazing-related incident.

The services at a church in Lithonia, Georgia, come two days after Champion's family said they will sue the school "to get answers."

"We are concerned about the culture of cover-up, that hazing has been covered up at the Band FAMU for generations," the family's lawyer Chris Chestnut said Monday, referring to the marching band at Florida Agriculture and Mechanical University.

The medical examiner has not issued a report on the cause of death of the 26-year-old student. But, Chestnut said, the facts that have emerged to date "point to the fact that hazing was a cause of Robert Champion's death, and it was under FAMU's watch."

"He loved the band -- so much, I always called him Mr. Band," Champion's mother, Pam Champion, told reporters of her son. "That was his life."

At a news conference with reporters Monday, she recalled the phone call she received informing her of her son's death.
The call came shortly after her son had called to say he was coming home for Thanksgiving. "I thought it was some kind of mean joke. ... Maybe it's the wrong kid, maybe it's somebody else."

Champion became ill at an Orlando hotel after a game on November 20. He reportedly threw up in the parking lot and started complaining of not being able to breathe, authorities said.

Champion was taken to a hospital, where he was pronounced dead.

Orange County Sheriff Jerry Demings said last week that hazing was involved but added that authorities were trying to determine an official cause of death. Under Florida law, any death that occurs as the result of hazing is a third-degree felony.

After the death, FAMU President James H. Ammons suspended all band performances and said he will convene a task force "to determine if there are any unauthorized and questionable activities associated with the culture of the Marching 100."

In addition, FAMU moved to fire longtime band director Julian E. White. White had led the 420-member band since 1998 and has hired an attorney to fight for his job.

White, who said he will speak at Champion's funeral, said he had told the victim's parents about their son's death.

"That was extremely difficult for me," he said. "I wish that this could have been avoided. I took the necessary steps that this tragedy could have been avoided."

Last week, Florida Gov. Rick Scott sent a letter to state Department of Law Enforcement Commissioner Gerald Bailey asking the department to join the investigation "to assure that the circumstances leading to Mr. Champion's death become fully known, and that if there are individuals directly or indirectly responsible for this death, they are appropriately brought to justice and held accountable."
As Occupy movement protests helped push spiraling college costs into the national spotlight, Education Secretary Arne Duncan urged higher-education officials Tuesday to “think more creatively — and with much greater urgency” about ways to contain costs and reduce student debt.

The Education Department characterized Mr. Duncan’s remarks, at a Las Vegas conference of college financial aid workers, as the start of a “national conversation” about high costs, which have prompted raucous protests across the country and ignited an angry push among some borrowers demanding debt forgiveness, federal grants and interest-free loans.

The department used the opportunity to call attention to steps the Obama administration had taken to reduce the net price that students and families pay for higher education and make it easier to repay student loans. But it was clear that the administration was taking heed of the rising furor over tuition increases, and a growing online debate about how much a college degree is worth at a time when few jobs are available for graduates.

“Three in four Americans now say that college is too expensive for most people to afford,” Mr. Duncan said. “That belief is even stronger among young adults — three-fourths of whom believe that graduates today have more debt than they can manage.”

College seniors with loans now graduate with an average debt load of more than $25,000. With outstanding student debt nearing $1 trillion — and exceeding credit-card debt — it makes sense that, as Patrick M. Callan, president of the Higher Education Policy Institute, put it, college costs are in the spotlight as never before.

“I’m glad to see the administration use the bully pulpit, but the problem issue won’t be solved by exhortation alone,” Mr. Callan said. “We’ve put huge amounts into Pell grants under Clinton, Bush and Obama, but the money that went to financial aid has been absorbed by tuition increases. And with all that we’ve invested, we have a less affordable system than we had a decade ago. We’re on a national treadmill.”
And he and other education experts point out that despite the power of the bully pulpit, the Obama administration has little power to force change. Terry W. Hartle, senior vice president of the American Council on Education, said that while he welcomed Mr. Duncan’s speech, he wondered how much the federal government could actually accomplish.

“The federal government can ease the burden of tuition increases with financial aid, but there is no mechanism for it to force the states to maintain funding for higher ed,” Mr. Hartle said. “And what legislators see is that tuition goes up and enrollment stays high.”

While devoting most of his speech to the cost problem, Mr. Duncan sketched out three department initiatives using the same kind of financial incentives he has previously used to spur K-12 reform. He described plans to replace the expiring Perkins loan program with campus-based, low-cost student loans awarded in part on how well the campus has done in graduating Pell recipients; incentive grants rewarding states and institutions for making changes that increase completion rates and close achievement gaps; and a fund to support programs that use innovation to accelerate learning and hold down tuition.

Even as college has become more expensive, Mr. Duncan said, it has also become an increasingly important investment, because those with bachelor’s degrees, on average, earn about $1 million more over their lifetime than those with only a high school diploma.

The widespread anger over rising college costs came into sharp focus Monday at two student protests. In New York, City University of New York students and their supporters held a raucous street protest, with signs saying “CUNY must be free” and “Abolish the board of trustees,” as trustees approved a series of $300 annual tuition increases extending through 2015.

And in California, Cheryl Deutsch, a U.C.L.A. graduate student who leads the union representing student workers, confronted the university’s regents to extended applause when she said that as bankers and financiers, real estate developers and members of the corporate elite, they were not representative of the people of California. “You are not representative of the students of U.C. You are the 1 percent,” Ms. Deutsch said.

Just before Thanksgiving, Occupy Wall Street spawned the Occupy Student Debt Campaign, which asks for zero interest on student debt, federally financed public higher education and the forgiveness of all existing debt. At Occupystudentdebtcampaign.com, the campaign asks donors to sign a
Pledge of Refusal, which promises that when a million signatures have been gathered, all will cease to make their debt payments.

“It’s basically a strike threat, but it gives debtors, many of whom have gray hair at this point, a way to act collectively, rather than suffer the agony and isolation of their debt,” said Andrew Ross, a New York University professor who is one of the organizers of the campaign. “We think education is a right and a public good, and we think federal funding is the only way the United States can join the list of other countries that offer free public education.”

Mr. Duncan lauded those colleges, universities and state programs that cut tuition — few enough that he was able to cite almost every effort — and those with programs increasing educational attainment, while lowering costs.

He named, for example, Duquesne University in Pittsburgh, which is offering a 50 percent discount on tuition and fees for freshmen who enroll in the school of education; the University of Oregon’s PathwayOregon, guaranteeing a tuition-free education to qualified Oregonians from low-income families, and, in West Virginia, the University of Charleston’s plan to cut tuition 22 percent for next year’s incoming freshmen and transfer students.

Mr. Duncan also mentioned Western Governors University, a lower-cost online nonprofit institution whose students earn degrees not by putting in a set number of hours but through demonstrated mastery of their field.

While such programs are now the exception, Mr. Duncan said, “I want them to be the norm.”
In a Nov. 26, 2011 file photo, Derrik Sweeney, 19, of Jefferson City, Mo., smiles along side his mother, Joy Sweeney, left, after arriving at Lambert-St. Louis International Airport in St. Louis. Sweeney and two other American students were arrested in Cairo Sunday, Nov. 20 accused of throwing firebombs at security forces fighting with protesters. A court ordered the three to be released Thursday, Nov. 24. (AP Photo/Jeff Roberson, File)

**US students: Turmoil can be dangerous lure abroad**

By CHRIS WILLIAMS, Associated Press

MINNEAPOLIS (AP) — American universities send tens of thousands of students to study abroad every year, thrusting them into one of the most exciting periods of their lives with a heavy dose of maternal advice: Mix with the locals, but be careful. Don't get in any tight spots. Avoid protests.

It's practical guidance that can be forgotten in the heady political ferment in countries like Egypt, where three American students were recently arrested near demonstrations at Tahrir Square.

The Americans made it safely home, but only after an ordeal they said lasted several days and included being struck, forced to lay for hours in the dark and threatened with guns. It's an experience schools and other students say they try very hard to avoid, balancing personal safety against the desire to engage with the culture that drew them in the first place.

Wittney Dorn, 20, from Appleton, Wis., said she traveled to Egypt because she wanted to study Arabic at the American University in Cairo. In an email Tuesday, the political science major wrote of "the beautiful change" she is
seeing as her Egyptian classmates talk about voting for the first time. She said she could understand the urge to get nearer the protests.

"I think the temptation is there, to wrap up in a keffiyeh and try to look like any other Egyptian revolutionary, to feel a little exhilaration from a kind of danger you don't get in America," Dorn wrote.

But she said she wouldn't be doing that. More than 40 protesters were killed, mostly in Cairo, during clashes with police last week and nearly 900 more died in the uprising earlier this year that ousted Hosni Mubarak from power.

"It's not a brilliant idea to go exploring an area where people are being killed, despite how tempting it may be to watch history unfold before one's eyes," wrote Dorn, a student from St. Olaf College in Northfield, Minn.

A survey earlier this month from the nonprofit Institute of International Education found more than 270,000 U.S. students studied abroad during the 2009-10 school year, up about 4 percent from a year earlier. The great majority went to western Europe: Britain, Italy, Spain and France. But the survey found increasing numbers in less traditional destinations; Egypt hosted 1,923 Americans, up 8 percent.

"A lot of students are trying to find places that will help them understand the emerging world," said Peggy Blumenthal, who oversees research at the institute. They are preparing for careers in public health, the sciences and national security, for example, she said.

Many universities and study abroad program coordinators have been trying to prod students out of what can become a comfort zone of huddling with their fellow Americans. The push to engage can be broadening in a "safe" country; in a country with a suddenly dicey political situation, it can be hazardous.

Blumenthal said universities give students traveling abroad a fairly standard list of do's and don'ts, including blending in with the locals, obeying local laws and customs and staying sober. Students should avoid large crowds, seedy areas and steer clear of political events, she said.

"Really, these are not new, these guidelines, but they are even more vigorously stressed now," she said.

Derrik Sweeney, one of the three Americans arrested Nov. 20, said he had heard just such cautions from the American University and the U.S. State Department. He went to demonstrations anyway — including one in early September and one the Friday before he was arrested.
"I value democracy and liberty, so I wanted to go to those protests more to witness them and to see them than to participate in them," said Sweeney, a student at Georgetown. "I wanted to see history being made."

Sweeney, 19, of Jefferson City, Mo., was arrested along with Luke Gates, 21, who attends Indiana University and is from Bloomington, Ind., and Gregory Porter, 19, who studies at Drexel University and is from Glenside, Pa.

Egyptian officials said they arrested the students on the roof of a university building and accused them of throwing firebombs at security forces fighting with protesters. Sweeney said it didn't happen that way; he said he and the other Americans were with a group of protesters on the street near the Interior Ministry and fled when police dispersed the crowd.

Sweeney said he thought he could recognize danger and leave. He acknowledged it "seems kind of silly" now that he didn't stay away, but he said he doesn't regret it.

"I would have regretted it if I had gone to Egypt and never had gone to a protest," he said.

Georgetown hasn't pulled its other students out of Cairo because the U.S. State Department hasn't recommended it, spokeswoman Stacy Kerr said, but it has reminded them of policies against getting involved in demonstrations.

Drexel University also isn't telling its students to return to the U.S., said Daniela Ascarelli, director of the university's study abroad program. She said the university has spoken with the three students still in Egypt and all of them feel safe and want to stay.

Indiana University urged its two remaining students in Egypt to return to the U.S. One complied, but the other didn't, telling school officials he felt safe and wanted to finish the semester.

Last January, most schools followed a State Department recommendation to bring the students home as protests first broke out in Egypt.

Alex Hanna, a graduate student in sociology at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, was in Egypt in February after the unrest began. Hanna did attend protests, saying he was able to fit in because he's of Egyptian descent.

Hanna said American students who want to lend their support to what they see as a Democratic movement can unwittingly play into the government's hands, allowing it to use reports of foreign protesters to argue the dissent is being stirred up by outsiders.
"U.S. students going over there can actually hurt the efforts," he said. "They need to be cognizant of that."

Katrina Gray, 22, of Madison, Wis., was finishing a year of study in Alexandria, Egypt, when she was evacuated in January. Gray was disappointed to miss "a huge part of history" but said she never considered defying the University of Wisconsin's order to come home.

"My mother would have killed me," she said.

Chris Blank contributed to this report from Jefferson City, Mo., Rich Callahan contributed from Indianapolis and Dinesh Ramde contributed from Milwaukee.

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University of Oregon President Is Ousted

By TAMAR LEWIN

The Oregon State Board of Higher Education voted Monday afternoon to terminate the contract of the University of Oregon president, Richard W. Lariviere.

At the start of the emergency board meeting, when the chancellor, George Pernsteiner, recommended that Dr. Lariviere’s contract be ended as of Dec. 28, the room erupted in boos.

The decision came after a public comment hour in which speaker after speaker implored the board to retain the president, or at least defer the decision.

“This has been a long dysfunctional ride,” said Matt Donegan, the board president. “It is heartbreaking to be here right now.”

Still, the decision came as no surprise; indeed, news media reports last week said Dr. Lariviere had already been notified that his contract would not be renewed when it expired on June 30. But at Monday’s meeting, the board said that last week’s discussions were confidential consultations, and that no decision had been reached before the meeting.

At the meeting, the University Senate president, Robert Kyr, presented a petition with 6,300 signatures, asking the board to renew Dr. Lariviere’s contract, and saying that his departure would shatter morale and lead many employees to leave the university.

Speakers were passionate about how much Dr. Lariviere had accomplished since arriving at the university two years ago, calling him “the embodiment of hope at the university.”

In his own statement, Dr. Lariviere said the university had been impoverished by decades of disinvestment by the state. “The demand for fresh thinking and new models has never been more urgent,” he said.

Dr. Lariviere annoyed the board during the last legislative session, when he proposed that his flagship university form its own governing board and become more financially independent of the state.
The board renewed his contract in June, but only for one year — and with several conditions, including that he no longer push for a separate board. Tensions with the board were exacerbated further this year, when Dr. Lariviere gave raises to some administrators and faculty members, at a time when the university system was in the midst of contract negotiations with the union representing clerical and support staff.

Over the weekend, Gov. John Kitzhaber said the board would be “fully justified” in ending Dr. Lariviere’s reign.

“There have been a number of well-publicized incidents involving Dr. Lariviere that have eroded trust and confidence with the Board of Higher Education,” said the governor, a Democrat. “His decision to bypass the board and lobby for increased independence for the University of Oregon was a clear violation of policy and made our larger, collective efforts to advance systemwide reform much more difficult.”

The governor also said Dr. Lariviere’s salary increases “disregarded my specific direction on holding tight and delaying discussion about retention and equity pay increases until the next biennium to allow for a consistent, systemwide policy on salaries.”

Over the weekend, there was an outpouring of support for Dr. Lariviere. Early Sunday morning, vandals struck the home of Mr. Pernsteiner, the Oregon University System chancellor, with eggs and a spray-painted message, “The Hat,” referring to the fedora Dr. Lariviere often wears. At the university’s football game Saturday, the stadium was decorated with posters and banners saying, “I Stand With the Hat.”

Phil Knight, the chairman of Nike and an important university donor, standing with Dr. Lariviere’s campus supporters, has said the ouster was an “astonishingly bad decision” that amounted to an “application of Oregon’s assisted suicide law.”
College administrators worry that use of prescription stimulants is increasing

By Jenna Johnson

The American University junior never finishes her monthly prescription of instant-release Adderall used to control her ADHD. She says taking the medication daily might result in sleeplessness or the pills losing their effectiveness. So she shares the extras with friends who promise to use it as a study aid, not a party drug. She sells whatever is left to friends of friends for $5 to $10 each.

“I really try to avoid doing it because it makes me feel like a drug dealer,” said the student, who didn’t want her name used because sharing or selling prescription drugs can be a felony and a violation of university policies. If caught, she could get kicked out of school or face jail time, but she doubts that would ever happen.

For more than two decades, college students have illegally taken prescription stimulants such as Ritalin and Adderall to stay awake and hyper-focused while studying. As sales of medications for attention deficit hyperactivity disorder soar, administrators worry that illegal use also is increasing.

The White House Office of Drug Control voiced concern about the increase in its latest strategy report, which promises to introduce policies in the next few years that will target college students and a range of substance abuse issues.

But cracking down on study drugs is nearly impossible, said several college administrators who have worked on the issue as it has gained wider attention in recent years. Students who abuse study drugs don’t reek of marijuana or show the tell-tale signs of excessive drinking. They rarely end up in hospital beds or jail cells.

“People on Adderall don’t pee in the hallways,” said Daniel Swinton, president of the Association for Student Conduct Administration and an assistant dean at Vanderbilt University. Study drugs are “kind of a silent issue. Everyone’s aware of it, but I think we’re all focused on the more prevalent one — alcohol.”
Hard to catch

During an average school year, a major local university typically will respond to hundreds of cases involving alcohol, dozens involving drugs and only a handful, at most, involving prescription stimulants, according to a Post analysis of statistics from area schools.

At more than a dozen major universities in the Washington region, there were nearly 1,400 drug-related cases during the past two school years. Of those, only three dozen were related to prescription drugs, most of which were ADHD medications.

When students using study drugs are caught, it is often in connection with another crime. University of Maryland police had three cases involving prescription stimulants in the past two years. Last spring, an officer investigated the smell of pot in a residence hall and found a student with marijuana and Adderall. During traffic stops in December 2009 and February 2010, officers found pills when they searched cars.

When misused, prescription stimulants can cause an irregular heart beat, panic attacks and in rare cases death, especially when mixed with alcohol or other drugs. These prescription medications are similar to cocaine and can be addictive. But experts say there is little evidence of a widespread medical crisis or growing rates of addiction.

In the past decade, University of Virginia students have made about 16,000 visits to the emergency room. Only a handful of those visits involved stimulants, said James C. Turner, executive director of U-Va.’s Department of Student Health and former president of the American College Health Association.

“Maybe they just use it once to stay up late to study, but they’re not becoming chronic users,” Turner said.

It’s difficult to pinpoint the amount of illicit use taking place, as studies often use different measures that result in a wide range of results. Most college substance-abuse policies now include the words “prescription drugs,” and many schools educate students about the dangers of study drugs during orientation or health seminars. They also are trying to identify the issues that drive abuse, such as excessive stress, poor study skills or too much partying on school nights.

At some schools, including American, parents are told to check in with their students during midterms and finals and ask questions about how they manage stress. At U-Va., students are told that if they need drugs to make it
through their homework, they should get tested for ADHD or a learning disability. Duke University declared that illegally using prescription stimulants is academic dishonesty.

Other schools are targeting potential dealers. At George Washington University, students with ADHD prescriptions are told to purchase a safe for their dorm room.

**Academic steroid?**

Students who want to try the drugs usually don’t have to look far for a classmate with a prescription. Millions of children and adults have received a diagnosis of ADHD. Last fall, 5 percent of incoming college freshmen had the disorder, according to the Higher Education Research Institute.

Without prescription drugs, many of these students might not have made it to college. In the 1980s and '90s, Ritalin became the first ADHD drug to gain renown. But most of today’s college students are more familiar with Adderall, an amphetamine introduced in the United States in 1996 that comes in a variety of generic forms with different names. Sales of ADHD medications have increased from $4 billion in 2006 to $7.2 billion last year, according to IMS Health, a health-care information company.

For many students, college is an ongoing experiment in risk assessment. As they contemplate popping one of the illicit drugs, they probably weigh the potential benefits (hours of laser-like focus) against potential consequences (getting in trouble or getting hurt).

“I think that’s the calculation that a lot of college students are making,” said Molly Young, 24, a New York writer. “It can be really helpful. That’s the truth.” Young said she often took extended-release Adderall without a prescription when she was an undergraduate at Brown University. Her pills mostly came from friends, although she also ordered some online.

While some students flaunt the fact that they take study drugs, others hide it. Young said she told very few people at Brown about the habit because, “there was something shameful in conceding that you needed chemical help.”

One of the many nicknames for ADHD medications is “Ivy League crack,” and “The Onion,” a satirical news publication, once published a piece about Harvard University presenting an honorary degree to the drug.

But the average user is often a below-average student, according to a study by the University of Maryland’s Center on Young Adult Health and
The center surveyed 1,250 students and found that those using stimulants had a grade-point average of 2.82, lower than the non-user average of 2.96. Users also studied two hours less per week, socialized three and a half hours more and missed more classes.

Such evidence suggests that some students party so much they fall behind academically, and turn to study drugs in an effort to catch up. So, are these students cheating? Are ADHD pills a kind of academic steroid?

Some colleges have begun to pose these ethical quandaries in hopes they will curb study-drug abuse in a way that health warnings and legal threats have failed.

This fall, the Duke University Office of Student Conduct added another bullet-point to its list of things that are considered cheating: “the unauthorized use of prescription medication to enhance academic performance.” If the office learns that a student might have violated the policy, the charge would go through the disciplinary process and, if warranted, a punishment would be assigned.

The student newspaper’s editorial board largely backed the decision, comparing a scholar on stimulants to a football player on steroids. But it cautioned that stimulants are only symptoms of a bigger problem — unhealthy academic competition.

“Students see their peers as direct competition for job offers or spots in graduate and professional school,” wrote the Duke Chronicle staff. “With this mind set, many students strive not only to do well themselves, but also to do better than their competitors — that is, their classmates.”