

their football team reported being robbed and assaulted in his dorm room on Feb. 19. He later confessed to making up the incident.

Classes were canceled for the evening at Appalachian State University in Boone, N.C., after a student reported seeing a gunman on campus. He later recanted, saying he feared having to pay for damages he had made to the front door of his campus apartment.

Kennedy says motivations for the false reports are usually below the reporter's surface of consciousness.

"Sometimes, they make the false calls, but don't know why they're doing it," he says.

"It's just like people who continue to go to every doctor in the city for the same thing. The problem is they go, but they don't really know why. It's sort of similar to a person with Munchausen syndrome."

Kennedy says he could not see a clear way to fully resolve the hoax reports, citing public reaction to large events and the way the events will continue to trigger feelings in people.

"People have certain power needs," he says. "And you get that power if, because of you, 1,000 people had to be evacuated from the building you were in. (Those who make false reports) get a real kick out of that. It makes them feel more powerful and all-knowing." □

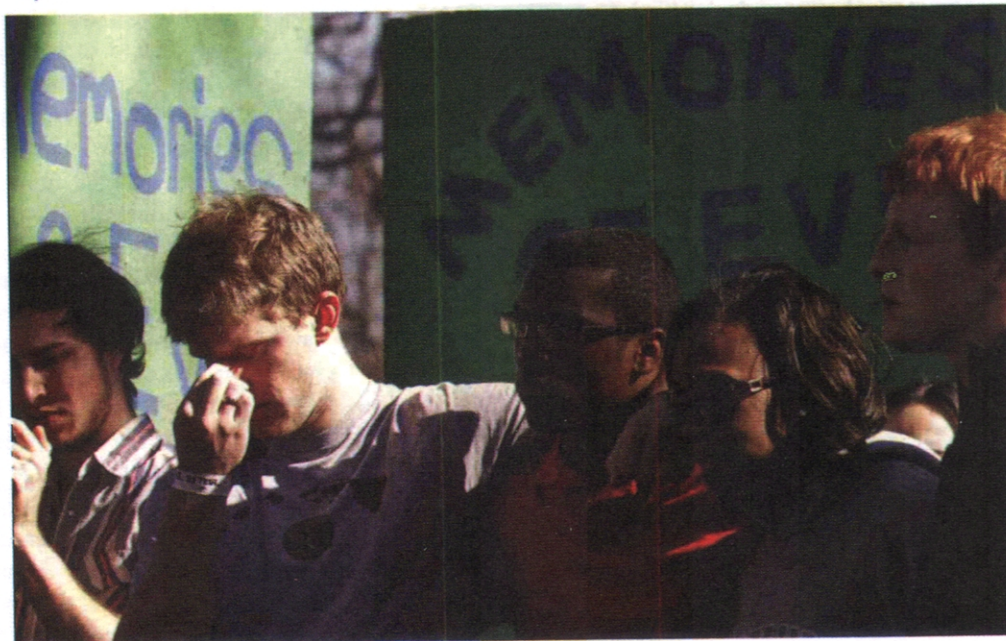


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Students and friends gather during a memorial for slain University of North Carolina student body president Eve Carson in Chapel Hill, N.C., on March 6. Weeks after, student Brian Sharpe filed a false claim that he was attacked. Experts say those who file false reports are trying to generate the campus and media response to real tragedies.