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VCU Notifies Students of Possible Data Breach

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Virginia Commonwealth University has notified more than 17,000 current and former students that their names, Social Security numbers and test scores may have been exposed after someone stole a computer from the school library.

The desktop computer was stolen in mid-April, and the person who took the machine admitted taking it, the university said Friday. VCU police think the person got rid of the computer shortly afterward and it was highly unlikely that the data was accessed. But university officials still planned to contact government agencies and credit-reporting companies.

VCU officials said the Richmond Commonwealth's Attorney's office is considering whether to charge the person who stole the computer, which was part of a scanning system used to score tests and to record grades for university classes.

Chief information officer Mark Willis said Friday in a release that the university wrote letters to 17,214 students and former students to notify them of the theft. VCU also is offering them one year of identity-theft insurance, and plans to upgrade security in the area from which the computer was stolen.

University officials have notified an additional 22,500 students that their names and test scores may have also been on the computer. No Social Security numbers were recorded with those names, but in some cases, computer-generated student identification numbers were involved.

The university stopped using Social Security numbers to identify students in January 2007. The test scores from the stolen computer ranged from October 2005 to the present.

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