

8-8-2017

Crisis Communication in Higher Education

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CRISIS COMMUNICATION IN HIGHER EDUCATION
by
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May 8, 2017

Master of Science in Education: Winona State University

ABSTRACT

Given the relative infancy of social media, long-term studies of its impact and the impact of the evolution of digital technology are limited. In a similar fashion, the emphasis on crisis communication planning in higher education is somewhat new. Within the last decade, case studies have begun to emerge exploring the connection between individual campus crisis experiences, the proliferation of digital communication and diverse strategies for managing institutional communications. In addition, there exists a new field of study concerning the online behaviors and preferences of college-age adults in the United States. However, there are very few articles that combine these phenomena and investigate not only approaches to crisis communication but also the impact of digital technology, the evolving communication preferences of the target demographics, and best practices for how campus administration should respond. This study will work to establish best practices and content suggestions for the development of crisis communication plans at public non-profit four-year institutions of higher education in the United States, with the intent to assess, update and improve the crisis communication plan for a mid-size university in the Midwest.

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CHAPTER ONE

Crisis communication has risen to the forefront in recent years for public relations officials across the spectrum. Governments, businesses and schools have been motivated to develop crisis communication plans, assemble incident management teams and institute a plethora of communication tools to respond to potential crises.

At the same time, communication preferences among the target audiences for higher education are continuously evolving. In the year 2000, less than half of U.S. adults used the internet. Just slightly more than 50 percent of U.S. adults had cell phones. Social media and Web 2.0 tools didn't exist. By the year 2012, 82 percent of U.S. adults used the internet, 88 percent had a cell phone, and 65 percent of adult internet users participated on social networking sites (Purcell, 2012, p. 4-5).

The challenge for professional communicators is to determine what combination of outreach tactics, communication channels and media will result in the highest percentage of informed constituents. Nowhere is this struggle more evident than on a university campus, where audiences and individual communication preferences vary widely. Current research shows college students increasingly prefer communication through social media platforms and text messaging and that institutional email might become obsolete as a method of communication for the Millennial generation (Purcell , 2012, p.23).

Information in today's society comes at rapid-fire speed, 24 hours a day, seven days a week, through a multitude of platforms and vehicles. Today's audiences require engagement and up-to-the-minute reports. There is no more "one-size-fits-all" approach to messaging. The playing field of effective communication has shifted completely, and

an effective crisis communication plan can make or break an institution's response to a crisis situation.

Purpose of Study

The intent of this study is to establish best practices and content suggestions for the development of crisis communication plans at public non-profit residential four-year institutions of higher education in the United States, with the intent to assess, update and improve the crisis communication plan for a mid-size university in the Midwest.

Background

Crisis communication is a burgeoning field in the realm of higher education. In "The Multi-Dimensional Nature of Emergency Communications Management," authors E. Michael Staman, Mark Katsouros and Richard Hach (2009) note the increased focus on emergency preparedness at the university level as well as the "dual problems of notification and communications management" faced by institutions of higher education. The researchers point to the dichotomy created by the increased incidence of violence on campuses and the ever-expanding catalog of communication options available to respond to such incidents (p. 1).

Incidents of campus violence, such as the 2007 active shooter situation on the Virginia Tech campus that resulted in 32 deaths, fuel public and media scrutiny of higher education crisis management and create a culture of fear (Mastrodicasa, 2008, p. 49). In addition to crises of immediate health and safety on campus, high-profile negative publicity incidents such as the lacrosse rape scandal at Duke University and the rampant allegations of child abuse at Penn State have further injured public perception of higher education's ability to communicate and operate transparently. During these critical

epochs, communications professionals must assess and plan for communications needs from the initial report to the final denouement.

From a purely logistical standpoint, the diversity of available communication vehicles (university email, personal email, text messaging, social media, traditional media, university website, public address systems, etc.) multiplied by the diverse audiences served by a university (students, employees, parents, alumni, trustees, legislators, community members, etc.) can quickly overwhelm even the most proficient public relations response team (46). It stands to reason there is no one fail-safe method of communicating to all university constituents in a time of crisis, but that a clear, well-thought-out, accessible crisis communication plan is needed in order to disseminate a cohesive message efficiently and effectively.

Research Questions

The research objective for this study is to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the current best practices in crisis communication planning in higher education, including:
 - a. Components that make up the plan
 - b. How the plan is shared with the stakeholder community
 - c. How the plan is periodically reviewed and updated
2. How do current crisis communication plans in higher education integrate with:
 - a. Campus emergency response plans
 - b. University emergency operations plans
 - c. University business/operational continuity plans

Limitations/Delimitations

This study will be limited in scope because it focuses only on public non-profit four-year institutions of higher education in the United States whose plans were readily available online. A cross-sectional survey will be conducted with this small convenience sample to collect the data at one time.

This study also didn't explore other issues from the institutional environment that could influence crisis communication best practices—i.e. campus size, community size and location, access to technology and wifi, leadership structure, etc.

Assumptions

As a communications professional in the higher education field, this researcher makes basic assumptions about crisis communication and management from personal experience.

Definitions

Crisis: A crisis is an incident or situation that could affect or has affected the health, safety, or welfare of students, faculty, staff, or campus visitors; the environment; or the reputation of the University (University of Minnesota, 2014, p. 2)

Crisis communication plan: A document that “outlines policies and procedures for coordinating communication within the University and between the University, the media, and the public in the event of a public safety emergency or issue crisis” (University of Minnesota, 2014, p. 1)

Emergency operations plan (EOP): The purpose of the EOP is to set guidance, tasks, and responsibilities for strategic response and recovery to natural and human-caused disasters. Matters such as large-scale evacuations, dangerous storms, hazardous materials

incidents, and response and recovery are covered in the plans (University of Minnesota, 2014, p. 7)

Business/operational continuity plan: Operational Continuity Plans outline the steps critical operating units must take to keep their departments running in the event of an emergency. Departments that are deemed "critical operating units" must complete an Operational Continuity Plan, per the University's Operational Continuity Planning Policy (University of Minnesota, 2014, p. 7)

Crisis communication team (CCT): The team will develop a plan of action and oversee communications issues throughout the crisis. Depending on the nature of the crisis, others can and should be drawn into the crisis communications process as appropriate to address the specific issues and threats that need to be managed. The team will assess the situation and determine the facts of the crisis, determine the appropriate response/action, determine a plan of action for both internal and external communications, and assess what resources are necessary to manage the crisis (Youngstown University, 2016, p. 3)

Social media: Internet and mobile-based tools and devices that integrate technology, telecommunications and social interaction enabling the construction, co-construction and dissemination of words, images (static and moving) and audio (Dabner, 2012, p. 69)

Web 2.0: a wide variety of web-based technologies that enable users to contribute to, as well as consume, information (Dabner, 2012, p. 69)

Summary

Chapter one addresses the significance of this study, which is to establish best practices and content suggestions for the development of crisis communication plans at public non-profit residential four-year institutions of higher education in the United

States. Chapter two explores the author's research questions and connects them to the literature review, which in turn sets the stage for chapter three's methodology and survey approach. Chapter four is a review and analysis of the data collected. Chapter five provides the conclusion drawn from the findings and examines the benefits of this study. It is the author's intent to use this information to assess, update and improve the crisis communication plan for a mid-size university in the Midwest.

CHAPTER TWO

In this review, I will focus on crisis communication planning in higher education, specifically best practices in content, development and maintenance of an institutional crisis communication plan at a public non-profit residential four-year university in the United States. There were three predominant themes in the literature: Digital Evolution, Crisis Management and Communication, and Crisis Response Strategies. This review will address these themes, summarize the current thinking on best practices in the field, and point to the need for further research.

Digital Evolution

The evolution of digital communications has blossomed rapidly during the past decade. Facebook, Twitter, Wikipedia, Flickr, Tumbler, Pinterest—social media outlets that didn't exist 10 years ago—are the daily reality for teens and college-age adults in the United States today. In “Teens 2012: Truth, Trends, and Myths About Teen Online Behavior,” Kristen Purcell, Associate Director of Research for the Pew Research Center's Internet and American Life Project, describes the digital landscape for teens and young adults in the United States. Through a glut of statistics gleaned from a national telephone survey, Purcell paints a picture:

- 82 percent of U.S. adults use the internet (p. 5)
- Teens and adults ages 18 to 29 have the highest rates of internet use (p. 14)
- 88 percent of U.S. adults have a cell phone (p. 5)
- 87 percent of adults 18 to 29 use social networking sites (p. 10)
- 80 percent of teens 12 to 17 use social networking sites (p. 36)
- 93 percent of teen social media users have a Facebook account (p. 38)

Additionally, Purcell notes that email, which was revolutionary during the internet boom of the 1990s, is being outpaced: "Texting is the preferred method of communication among teens," with 63 percent of teens indicating they text every day. In comparison, only "six percent of teens use email daily, [and] 39 percent say they never use email" (p. 23).

In "'Breaking Ground' in the Use of Social Media: A Case Study of a University Earthquake Response to Inform Educational Design with Facebook," author Nicki Dabner (2012) gives a quick primer on social media and Web 2.0:

Social media can be described as Internet and mobile-based tools and devices that integrate technology, telecommunications and social interaction enabling the construction, co-construction and dissemination of words, images (static and moving) and audio. The term Web 2.0, often associated with social media, describes the range of user-centred, interactive web applications that facilitate these activities. Web 2.0 covers a wide variety of web-based technologies that enable users to contribute to, as well as consume, information. (p. 69)

Based on her research about the University of Canterbury's response following the 2010 earthquake that struck New Zealand, the author opines, "The role of social media in crisis events cannot be ignored by those involved in emergency management and provision, at both policy and organisational level" (p. 71). Dabner's research suggests social media, Facebook in particular, has become ubiquitous in the lives of today's youth, and universities should find ways to capitalize on pre-existing positive engagement students have with the platform. Dabner notes, "findings suggest that social media can play an important role in higher education settings when its use is evidently

beneficial to the institution and its students” and “higher education institutions must consider if, when and how [the potential of Web 2.0 tools] can best be realized” (p. 76).

Leysia Palen, Assistant Professor of Computer Science at the University of Colorado, Boulder, echoes Dabner’s stance that digital technology is changing the way the public responds to crises in her article, “Online Social Media in Crisis Events” (2008). Palen focuses on the field of “crisis informatics,” examining “information generation and dissemination activities by members of the public, which is playing an increasingly critical role across all phases of disaster” (p. 76). Her case studies on “the use of social media during and after the Virginia Tech shootings and the 2007 Southern California wildfires” led her to determine that “As social media—which includes blogs, social networking environments, person-to-person and broadcast messaging, and other Web 2.0 applications— becomes more pervasive, their use has significant implications for emergency management practice and policy” (p. 76).

Palen touches on the loss of control over messaging that many institutions are experiencing in the digital age, noting the high traffic of contributors to Virginia Tech’s Wikipedia entry the morning of the shooting, and the fact that a complete list of victims’ names was available online prior to the university’s official announcement the afternoon of the shooting (p. 77).

Palen's research also explores the phenomenon of "online social convergence," demonstrating that, "Online behavior parallels the social phenomenon of geographical social convergence that occurs at every disaster event. Social convergence, however, is no longer limited by geographical access; online access creates ways for people far afield

to participate." She cites the use of photosharing websites such as Flickr to create online visual galleries—grassroots journalism—as an example of this phenomenon (p. 78).

Crisis Management and Communications

Universities have particular challenges when it comes to crisis communications. A diverse pool of constituents, limited resources and bloated administrative controls complicate the ability of public relations official to prepare for and to respond effectively to a crisis situation. In addition, in "Technology Use in Campus Crisis," Jeanna Mastrodicasa (2008) explores how the evolution of technology has intensified expectations for crisis communication. For today's students, a 24-hour news cycle has always been the norm (p. 41). Information transmission is immediate and access to resources is expected. Similarly, the parents of today's college students (the so-called "helicopter" parents) are highly engaged in their children's lives. Timely and accurate communication on issues of health and safety is of utmost importance.

Public and media scrutiny of higher education crisis management planning has been heightened as a result of the 2007 active shooter situation on the Virginia Tech campus that resulted in 32 deaths (p. 49). Additionally, the diversity of options for communication complicates a university's ability to disseminate a cohesive message efficiently and effectively. There is no one fail-safe method of communicating to all university constituents in a time of crisis. University email, personal email, text messaging, social media, traditional media, university website, public address systems, etc., all have their place during a crisis, which can overwhelm even the most proficient public relations response team (p. 46). Emergency text messaging notification systems

are the current hot topic for universities, yet opt-in rates are not encouraging and the logistics of mass texting systems are not error-proof (p. 44).

Finally, while technology provides rapid-fire avenues through which to disseminate the institution's official message, the public's ability to transmit information (photos, videos, etc.) widely via social media as well as traditional media has the potential to significantly derail communication efforts on the part of the university (p. 50).

Many studies have been conducted to determine the effectiveness of mass notification systems, but results vary by population being surveyed (students vs. employees) as well as pairing expectations of the campus community to their willingness to participate. In "Campus Reactions to Mass Notification," Andrea Butler and Katheryn Lafreniere (2010) report the results of a survey conducted at the University of Windsor in Ontario to "determine how campus community members felt about the use of mass notification technologies" (p. 437). The majority of the survey's 2,000+ respondents were in favor of implementing a campus mass notification system, but a significant percentage of students indicated they would not provide a cell phone number for such a system (p. 437). It is imperative that campus leaders communicate effectively regarding the purpose for soliciting this type of information as well as safeguard access to and use of these communication systems (p. 438).

"The Multi-Dimensional Nature of Emergency Communications Management" takes a more in-depth look at campus notification and preparedness. Authors E. Michael Staman, Mark Katsouros and Richard Hach (2009) start off by noting the increased focus on emergency preparedness as well as the "dual problems of notification and communications management" faced by institutions of higher education (p. 1).

The researchers point to the dichotomy created by the growing incidence of violence on campus and the burgeoning catalog of communication options available to respond to such incidents (p. 1):

These tools range from something as simple as external sirens to solutions involving combinations of various technologies: a campus website, e-mail, landline phones, cell phones, text messaging, paging, external loudspeakers, digital signage, a campus CATV system, network pop-ups, RSS feeds, instant messaging (IM), fire panel alarms with voice enunciation, and/or social networking websites. This rich variety of tools and solutions leads to two important questions for colleges and universities to consider. First, how can these technologies be best leveraged to benefit emergency notification services? And second, what are the implications of all of these options on emergency communications management policies and operational procedures? (p. 1)

The researchers administered a survey to a select group of colleges and universities to determine what each institution was doing to prepare for and respond to crises on campus. The survey and discussion explore both the emergency notification system (ENS), a “specific technical service designed to achieve mass notification,” and emergency communications management (ECM), referring to the policies, procedures, and operations that dictate the utilization of the ENS (p. 1). Survey results indicate that institutions have implemented a variety of notification systems and communication management strategies, but most consider their efforts to be a “work in progress” (p. 2). In addition, survey responses revealed the flaws of virtually every communication tool and impressed the need for a multi-faceted communication strategy (p. 7).

The article includes in-depth case studies of crisis communications responses and management systems at Virginia Tech and University of Iowa. Lessons learned include:

No single notification mechanism is going to reach everyone.

The inherent fallibility of every notification mechanism mandates that a campus use an array of diverse approaches to increase the probability of making contact with everyone in its community.

Near real-time (i.e., instant) communication is very difficult to achieve in a large campus environment.

Any solution should focus on mechanisms for which the campus can manage as many of the technical elements as possible. (p. 6)

Crisis Response Strategies

In “Campus Communications in the Age of Crisis” Patricia McGuire (2007) shares the perspective of managing crisis communications from the standpoint of the university president. McGuire acknowledges that recent events “have focused higher education’s attention on crisis communications as never before” and campuses must react accordingly (p. 18). Her first rule for responding is, “Tell the Truth, Tell It Quickly, Tell It Often” (p. 18). Denial, delay and silence breed suspicion and contempt while honesty, even when the truth you’re telling may be damaging to the institutional reputation, sets the stage for recovery.

McGuire also recommends a proactive approach to preparing administrators for communicating under duress: “A track record of routinely interesting, thoughtful presidential communications can strengthen the president’s ability to communicate through difficult times” (p. 18). Finally she advocates for the continued presence of

institutional leaders throughout the duration of a crisis, publicly demonstrating continued attention and engagement at the top-level of administration.

In the field of crisis communication research, the Situational Crisis Communication Theory was developed to assess and compare crisis response strategies and crisis situations. In “Restoring reputations in times of crisis: An experimental study of the Situational Crisis Communication Theory and the moderating effects of locus of control,” An-Sofie Claeys, Verolien Cauberghe and Patrick Vyncke (2010) assess the three crisis responses (deny, diminish and rebuild) in combination with the three crisis types (victim, accidental and preventable). “The results show that preventable crises have the most negative effects on organizational reputation and that the rebuild strategy leads to the most positive reputational restoration” (p. 256).

Research shows that the timing of the crisis response is just as important as the content of the crisis communication. In “Crisis response and crisis timing strategies, two sides of the same coin,” An-Sofie Claeys and Verolien Cauberghea (2012) advise that reputational damage to an institution can be “minimized by the correct public relations strategy, namely saying the right words at the right moment” (p. 83).

The study analyzes two types of crisis communication strategies: “(1) the crisis response strategies (e.g., denial, apology) and (2) the crisis timing strategies (e.g., stealing thunder)” (p. 84). Proactive crisis timing strategy (revealing the crisis on your own terms rather than responding to someone else revealing the crisis) allows institutions to “frame the crisis in their own terms and downplay its severity” (84). Research shows organizations using this type of ex-ante crisis timing strategy are viewed as more credible (p. 84).

Case studies of university response to crisis are also effective learning tools. “Restoring a reputation: The Duke University lacrosse scandal,” by John A. Fortunato (2008), is an attempt to “summarize the actions and public relations communication emanating from Duke in its attempt to frame the story and restore its reputation” (p. 116). This study demonstrates the role of communications in reputational management during a crisis situation. Managed properly, the institution’s actions can protect its reputation. Managed poorly, the institution’s actions can further damage its reputation (p. 116). Duke University President Richard Brodhead aptly summarized the situation with this statement at a university news conference: “Duke will be judged not by the events of 13 March, but by how we face and learn from those events” (p. 117).

In responding to the 2006 allegations levied against three members of its lacrosse team, Duke University followed textbook crisis management strategies. President Brodhead was the spokesperson of choice for the majority of the communication, a none-too-subtle indicator that the situation rose to the highest levels of priority at the institution (p. 119). The overall strategy was to “accept responsibility for the incident and take corrective action” (p. 120), but the university also took the opportunity to simultaneously reinforce the positive attributes of the university and create a more comprehensive lens through which to evaluate the university as a whole (p. 121).

University officials took a multi-pronged approach to communication, issuing news releases, holding news conferences and working openly with traditional media as well as engaging the online community through its website (p. 119). “Duke also identified key stakeholder groups such as alumni, current students, and their parents and

in addition to the communication issued to the general audience sent them separate messages to keep them apprised of its response" (p. 120).

In contrast to the Duke example, research by Sora Kima, Elizabeth Johnson Avery and Ruthann W. Lariscy (2009) suggests crisis communications is a weakness for a great number of institutions: "The prevalence of organizations failing to choose and combine response strategies appropriately [...] suggests that the bridge between theory and practice may not be as solid as it should be after 18 years of crisis research" (p. 448).

The article "Are crisis communicators practicing what we preach?: An evaluation of crisis response strategy analyzed in public relations research from 1991 to 2009" attempts to provide a "benchmark for assessing the current state of practice in crisis communication" (p. 446). Using W. L. Benoit's Image Restoration Theory and W. T. Coombs' Situational Crisis Communication Theory the researchers compiled a comprehensive analysis of crisis communication research in public relations (p. 446). Among the findings, it was determined denial is one of the most common strategies employed during crisis communication even though it's been determined by experts to be the least effective response strategy (p. 448).

Summary

The available literature demonstrates many challenges faced by public relations officials managing crisis communication for institutions of higher education. The difficulties range from human behavioral issues (a heightened expectation of safety with no responsibility on the part of the individual to contribute to this environment) to issues of technology (mass texting systems that deliver messages too late or not at all). Current research supports constant evaluation and revision of communications tools and

strategies, as well as participation in drills and crisis scenario trainings, and learning best practices from actual crisis situations. The research confirmed the field of crisis communications is still evolving in the digital age, and more study on outreach tactics, communication channels and communication preferences of key audiences is needed, likely in the form of development of case studies as well as qualitative and quantitative data analysis.

CHAPTER THREE

This study will work to establish best practices and content suggestions for the development of crisis communication plans at public non-profit four-year institutions of higher education in the United States, with the intent to assess, update and improve the crisis communication plan for a mid-size university in the Midwest. This chapter will discuss research questions, research design, data collection, and data gathering and analysis.

Research Questions

The research objective for this study is to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the current best practices in crisis communication planning in higher education, including:
 - a. Components that make up the plan
 - b. How the plan is shared with the stakeholder community
 - c. How the plan is periodically reviewed and updated
2. How do current crisis communication plans in higher education integrate with:
 - a. Campus emergency response plans
 - b. University emergency operations plans
 - c. University business/operational continuity plans

Research Design

To answer these research questions, the design of this study aims to provide a “quantitative or numeric description of trends, attitudes or opinions of a population by studying a sample of that population” (Creswell, 2009, p. 145). The convenience sample includes public non-profit four-year institutions of higher education in the United States

whose plans were readily available online. A cross-sectional survey will be conducted to collect the data at one time, and the study will include an in-depth review and inventory of the institution's most recent crisis communication plan. The inventory will itemize the components of each of the plans with the intent to identify common themes and best practices.

Population Sample

The sample of the population for this research design will include:

- Dominican College
- Duke University
- University of Georgia
- University of Kentucky
- University of Louisville
- University of Minnesota – Twin Cities
- University of South Florida
- University of Washington
- University of Wisconsin – Parkside
- Youngstown State University

These institutions were chosen because they are public non-profit four-year institutions of higher education in the United States, and the plans were easily accessible via the university website.

Data Collection

The following data will be collected from each of the crisis communication plans to determine if the plan includes:

- The university office or department that:
 - Compiled the plan
 - Is responsible for distribution and education on the plan
 - Is responsible for updating the plan
 - Date last revised
 - Designated schedule for updating the plan
 - Is responsible for executing the plan
 - Is responsible for practicing the plan (i.e. regularly scheduling drills and tactical exercises)
- Crisis communication team makeup
- Contact lists, and if so, which of the following:
 - Media
 - Campus
 - Community
 - Local or state government
 - Other
- Communication tactics
 - Immediate response tactics
 - Text alert system
 - University email
 - University website
 - University social media
 - Facebook

- Twitter
- Instagram
- Snapchat
- Other
 - Digital signage
 - Loudspeakers
 - Traditional media
- Secondary response tactics
- Process maps
- Template communication plans
- Message templates
- Directions on how to access other emergency situation resources, and if so, which of the following:
 - Campus emergency response plans
 - University emergency operations plans
 - University business/operational continuity plans
 - Other
- Case studies for review

Data Gathering and Analysis

The crisis communication plans were accessed and downloaded March 12, 2017 from http://www.case.org/Samples_Research_and_Tools/Samples/Crisis_Communications_Samples.html and google search. All plans are available as part of the appendix.

Each plan will be reviewed independently, and a spreadsheet will be created to capture data as outlined in the Data Collection section. From this spreadsheet, comparative tables will be created to illustrate popularity and prevalence of the various components of the crisis communication plans, as well as make note of any outliers of significance that may contribute to the research findings and best practices assessment.

These findings will be compared to the best practices as defined by the literature review, which included the capacity for immediate and proactive communication strategies, adequate preparation of administrators, constant evaluation and revision of communications tools and strategies, and participation in drills and crisis scenario trainings.

Summary

The research implications of this study will be to establish best practices and content suggestions for public non-profit four-year institutions of higher education in the United States.

Chapter four discusses the data collection results.

CHAPTER FOUR

This study inventoried crisis communication plans from a convenience sample of public non-profit four-year institutions of higher education in the United States who made their plans available online. The study is intended to help establish best practices and content suggestions for the development of crisis communication plans, with the intent to assess, update and improve the crisis communication plan for a mid-size university in the Midwest. The research questions included: “What are the current best practices in crisis communication planning in higher education, including: a) Components that make up the plan, b) How the plan is shared with the stakeholder community, c) How the plan is periodically reviewed and updated?” and “How do current crisis communication plans in higher education integrate with: a) Campus emergency response plans, b) University emergency operations plans, c) University business/operational continuity plans?” Chapter four provides the results of the research and discusses data findings.

Results and Discussion

The results and discussion will revisit the themes that emerged during the literature review: Digital Evolution, Crisis Management and Communication, and Crisis Response Strategies.

Theme #1 Digital Evolution

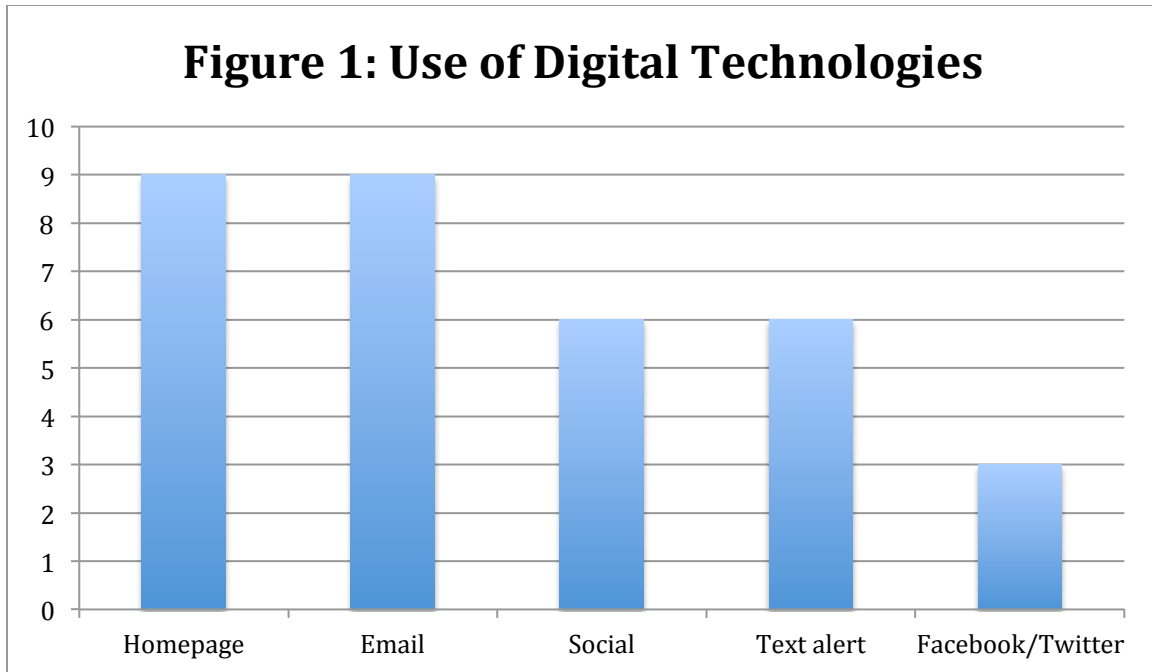
A major theme that emerged through the literature review was the impact of technology on crisis communication, ranging from the tools used to deliver messaging, the speed at which messages can be delivered, the increasing expectations of immediate and continuous outreach, and the potential to lose control of the message via audience-generated messaging.

When discussing the technology referenced in the plans, it should be noted that many of the plans in this convenience sample have not been recently updated. Table 1 shows the reported dates that each university's crisis communication plan was published or revised, ranging from more than 10 years ago to just one year ago. With the rapid rate at which technology evolves, the tools and practices described in these plans are likely outdated and not reflective of the university's current-day practices. For example, the plan for Dominican University (2007) references sending notices by "fax" (p. 8).

Table 1. In what year was each university crisis communication plan updated or revised?

University	Year (published or revised)
Dominican College	2007
Duke University	2009
University of Georgia	2005
University of Kentucky	2012
University of Louisville	2008
University of Minnesota – Twin Cities	2014
University of South Florida	n.d.
University of Washington	2015
University of Wisconsin – Parkside	n.d.
Youngstown State University	2016

Figure 1: Use of Digital Technologies provides a summary of how universities in this convenience sample describe their own implementation of digital technologies in their crisis communication plans.



Of the 10 university plans in the identified sample, all but one indicated the use of the university homepage as a crisis communication vehicle. (Note: University of Wisconsin-Parkside didn't make note of any specific communication channels within its crisis communication plan.) Further, the Duke University plan (2009) alludes to a partnership with the university's IT department for managing increases in public-facing website traffic during a crisis situation (p. 7). The Duke plan also includes a link to an online crisis resource center for team, making use of technology to support its team's internal crisis response capacity (p. 4).

Email was also universally identified as a standard crisis communication vehicle across the spectrum of the sample, with all universities that specified channels of delivery listing email as a main tactic. Yet in "Teens 2012: Truth, Trends, and Myths About Teen Online Behavior," Kristen Purcell describes email as a platform that is falling out of favor with younger generations (p. 23). Purcell's data indicates that texting has easily surpassed email in popularity with today's teens, which is reflected in the plans with six

of the universities in the sample—Duke University, University of Georgia, University of Kentucky, University of Minnesota, University of Washington and Youngstown State University—indicating the use of a text alert system during a university crisis situation.

Research by Dabner, Purcell and Palen reveals that social media is a crucial medium for dissemination of information to younger generations, with Dabner (2012) even going so far as to say that “The role of social media in crisis events cannot be ignored by those involved in emergency management and provision, at both policy and organisational level” (p. 71). However, only a little more than half of the plans in the sample—Duke University, University of Georgia, University of Kentucky, University of Minnesota, University of Washington and Youngstown State University—make reference to social media as a communication response tactic used during a crisis situation. Of those, only Duke, Washington and Youngstown specifically mention Facebook and Twitter as platforms for crisis communication response strategy. These data confirm the observation by Sora Kima, Elizabeth Johnson Avery, Ruthann W. Lariscy and Tatjana Hocke (2009) that crisis communication remains a weakness for many institutions and “that the bridge between theory and practice may not be as solid as it should be after 18 years of crisis research” (p. 448).

Conversely, the data also support the potential threat social media activity poses during a crisis. Leysia Palen (2008) describes the public’s role in crisis communication as “increasingly critical” with “significant implications for emergency management practice and policy” (p. 76). Several of the crisis communication plans in this sample account for the involvement of constituency groups on social media. Georgia and Youngstown proactively encourage university departments and the general public to share and retweet

official university posts and communications, and U of M actively monitors social media during crisis situations to surface possible rumors and customize messaging to confront and address misinformation (p. 6).

Theme #2: Crisis Management and Communication

A second major theme of the literature review delves into the communication expectations of the direct and indirect audiences in the higher education world (from students and employees to the media and general public). The theme deals with not only how universities respond to crisis situations, but the way in which they prepare for crises.

According to Mastrodicasa (2008), the higher education community has been under a microscope since a student shot and killed 32 people at Virginia Tech in 2007 (p. 49). This incident established a nationwide precedent to improve crisis management and crisis communication on college campuses. As demonstrated in Table 1, nine of the plans in this sample reflect a post-Virginia-Tech date. (The single outlier, University of Georgia, is potentially mislabeled. Digital content included in the plan point to a more recent date of revision.) The issue was as much a tactical problem for colleges and universities as it was a public relations problem. Not only were most colleges unprepared to respond in a crisis situation, this general lack of preparedness was laid bare by the national media in reviewing the crisis response timeline of the Virginia Tech incident.

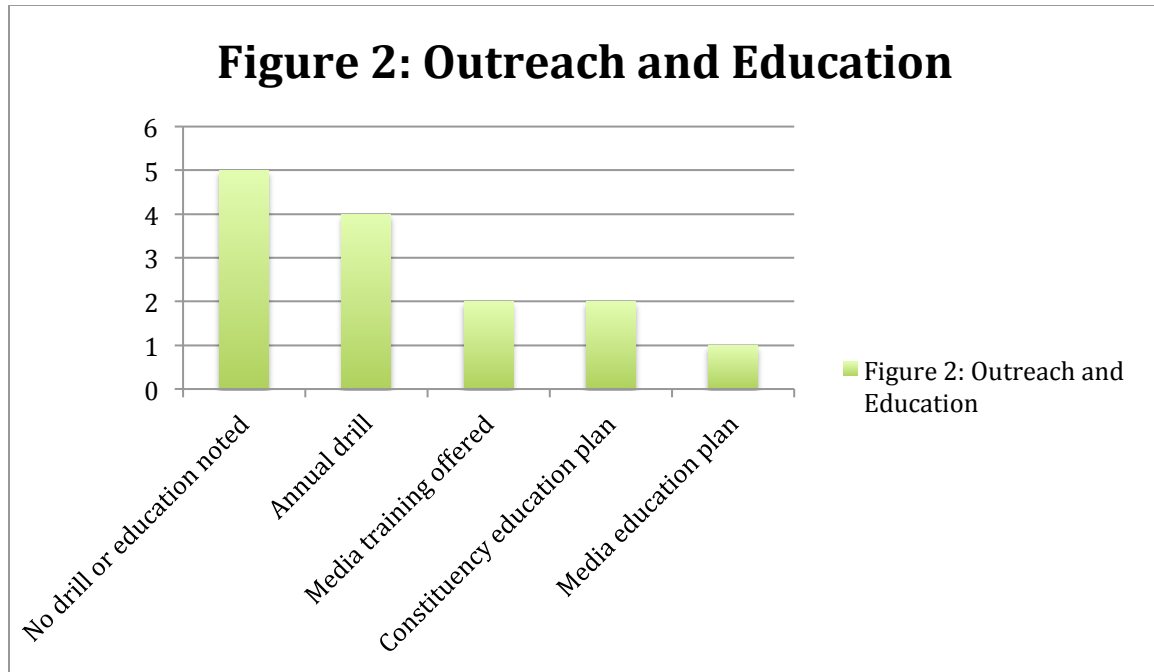
Mastrodicasa's research reinforces the expectations and need for immediate communication in the digital era (p. 41). Today's students—and their highly engaged parents—have an expectation of immediacy, especially when it comes to issues of health and safety. Both Duke University and University of Minnesota make note of this need for immediate communication and transparency. According to the Duke University Crisis

Communication Plan (2009): “In an emergency, our goal is to issue our first communication to key university audiences within 30 minutes of notification of the event, with regular updates as needed. Some situations may require even faster initial communications” (p. 3). In “Communicating in an Emergency or Issue Crisis: A Manual for Twin Cities Campus Communicators” (2014), the guideline expands to 60 minutes: “[...] our goal is to ensure that the University of Minnesota gives a credible public response within one hour after becoming aware of any incident involving health, safety, or the environment, or any media inquiry or potential issue crisis that may lead to a story that damages the University’s reputation” (p. 2).

In “Campus Reactions to Mass Notification,” Andrea Butler and Katheryn Lafreniere (2010) advocate for proactive outreach about campus crisis communication systems, methods and resources (p. 438), yet half of the study sample did not indicate a plan for outreach or education. Trinity Washington University president Patricia McGuire (2007) also recommends a proactive approach to preparing administrators for communicating under duress in “Campus Communications in the Age of Crisis” (p. 18), yet only two of the plans in the sample include a plan for annual media training for Crisis Communication Team members. Figure 2: Outreach and Education summarizes the outreach and education initiatives that were included as part of the 10 crisis communications plans in this sample.

Four universities—Duke, Kentucky, Washington, Wisconsin—stipulate that an annual drill is conducted on campus. (Youngstown indicates drills will be held “regularly.”) Duke and Youngstown make note of the need to offer media training for employees involved in crisis communication response, and Duke and South Florida

reference a constituency education plan aimed at sharing the plan and response tactics with campus groups in an effort to prepare them on how the university will communicate and where to find information during a crisis. South Florida is the only institution in the sample to include a directive to brief media partners proactively on the university's crisis communication plan.



The final finding that emerged related to crisis management is the lack clarity regarding how the crisis communication plan fits into the university's overall crisis response strategy. The plans were evaluated for information and links to other resources pertaining to: campus emergency response plans, university emergency operations plans, and university business continuity plan. The Duke plan (2009) references implementation in "coordination with the Emergency Management team" (p. 3) but provides little specific detail on how the crisis communication plan will be implemented in coordination with any university emergency pre-plan or university continuity post-plan. This lack of clarity was reflected across the sample, with three universities not mentioning EOPs,

three universities making reference but including no resources or contact information, two universities and making reference and including contact information, and two universities including links to either the University Emergency Management Plan or the university emergency response website. The University of Minnesota contains the most comprehensive listing of its emergency operations resources (Building Emergency Plans, Operational Continuity Plans, Emergency Operations Plan) as well as listing a contact in the Department of Emergency Management, but does not link to any online resources and makes no mention of coordination between the plans (deployment, timing, execution, responsibility, etc.).

Theme #3: Crisis Response Strategies

A final major theme of the literature review focuses not on the tactical crisis response but the overall thematic and public relations aspects of the crisis response.

As a general qualitative observation, many of the crisis communication plans in this convenience sample appear to be serving a dual-purpose. In addition to outlining *how* the institution will respond, the plans illuminate *why* the institution will respond in this fashion. The Duke plan (2009) exemplifies this quality literally in sections on gathering information, assigning a spokesperson, responding to media inquiries and monitoring media coverage, first offering the university practice then a justification and explanation as to why the university proceeds in this fashion. In effect, the plans serve double-duty as both tactical response plans and public relations tools. In fact, a few of the plans lack detailed tactical outlines and resources, and focus principally on a public accounting of the university's approach to crisis communication.

For example, the first page of the UW-Parkside plan lays out its objective as follows:

The University of Wisconsin-Parkside will take every step to be forthright and timely in its communications with the University community, the media, and the general public during a time of crisis. Decisions and actions will be guided by responsible concern for the right of privacy, personal security, legal liability, and the public's legitimate right to be informed. (p. 1)

Similarly the Youngstown State University plan (2016) includes a section on “Guiding Principles”:

In all communications during a crisis, the university strives to be accessible, prompt, compassionate, honest and informative. While such tenets may seem to be self-evident, it can be difficult to adhere to a clear style of communication when in crisis mode. One of the most important requirements for effective communications during an urgent situation is gathering and understanding the facts and implications of a given situation and then providing accurate and consistent information to all parties concerned. Communications from the university must be honest and forthright. It is crucial in a crisis to tell it all, tell it fast and tell the truth. (p. 1-2)

Both approaches are in line with the best practice identified by university president Patricia McGuire (2007) in “Campus Communications in the Age of Crisis”:

“Tell the Truth, Tell It Quickly, Tell It Often” (p. 18).

McGuire also advocates for the continued presence of institutional leaders throughout the duration of a crisis, which is echoed by the majority of the crisis

communication plans in the sample, all of which identify the need to immediately name a central spokesperson in each crisis situation, preferably the president or other high-ranking official to reinforce that the university takes the issue seriously and is responding appropriately.

Summary

Current literature supports constant evaluation and revision of communications tools and strategies, as well as participation in drills and crisis scenario trainings, and learning best practices from actual crisis situations. This study sample confirmed that the field of crisis communications is still evolving in the digital age, and more study on outreach tactics, communication channels and communication preferences, likely in the form of development of case studies as well as qualitative and quantitative data analysis. Ultimately the data confirm the conclusion reached by Sora Kima, Elizabeth Johnson Avery and Ruthann W. Lariscy (2009)—crisis communication remains a weakness for a great number of institutions (p. 448).

In the final chapter of this study, the researcher will provide leadership implications and survey conclusions.

CHAPTER FIVE

In chapter 4 we assessed the data in 10 crisis communication plans from a convenience sample of public non-profit four-year institutions of higher education in the United States. The data revisited the themes that emerged during the literature review: Digital Evolution, Crisis Management and Communication, and Crisis Response Strategies. The final chapter of this study will review leadership implications, recommendations for future research, lessons learned and conclusion.

Leadership Implications

According to author James M. Lang (2017): “For a very long time in human history we have had limited access to information beyond what we could see in our immediate environment. In 2017 and beyond we have instant access to a magical information source in our pockets.” Technology has changed the accessibility and availability of information, and today’s audiences—younger generations in particular—expect to have up-to-minute Information at the tips of their fingers. Laptops, tablets and phones have “rapidly and intensely penetrated the lives of students and the college classroom” (Lang, 2017). Current research shows college students increasingly prefer communication through social media platforms and text messaging (Purcell, 2012, p. 23), and today’s leaders must learn how to adapt to new technologies, new devices and apps, and closely study and account for the tendencies and usage patterns of their target demographics.

Leaders must also work to communicate proactively and continuously in our data-driven culture. As advised by McGuire (2007) a culture of trust and perceived transparency will aid in the absorption of messaging in the case of a crisis situation (p.

18). To set themselves up to be successful, today's leaders should develop and adhere to a clear communication strategy for crisis response and outreach. This strategy should then be made available publicly and actively shared at regular intervals with key constituency groups. Further, this strategy should be consistently practiced with the leadership team.

Lessons Learned

Across the spectrum, I think the largest issue with the crisis communication plans in this sample is the need to isolate public relations outreach on crisis situations from tactical crisis response planning. The literature review revealed a rising incidence of campus violence and increased scrutiny of campus response, specifically in the wake of the 2007 Virginia Tech massacre (Mastrodicasa, 2008, p. 49). Universities across the board responded to this potential public relations disaster with a public relations strategy—they developed crisis communication plans that deal more with the “whys” of crisis response than the “hows.” These plans detail for curious onlookers just how prepared each university is to respond to potential crises, but in my estimation, the majority of the university plans fell short in adequately preparing leadership and the internal crisis communication team to respond tactically.

In this researcher's opinion, these two issues should be addressed separately. Proactive outreach and communication to target audiences is vital to inform how a university will respond in a crisis situation. However, explanations of crisis response and justifications for behavior have no place in a tactical response plan. A tactical response plan should be a clear, concise, action-based document that outlines who is involved, what tools can be used, who has access to the tools, in what order and to what end the

tools should be deployed, etc. The plans should also address the broader response of the university in a crisis situation to provide clarity on when and how the crisis communication plan is mobilized and where communications fits in the crisis recovery/business continuity phase. Ideally the plans would run in parallel with seamless integration and an active feedback cycle between the different plans and groups.

Overall, the use of crisis communication plans as a PR response to increased scrutiny was incomplete in this researcher's opinion, as the majority of plans in the sample didn't include a component for updates or education and outreach on the plans. A good example of how lack of education can stymie crisis communication efforts surfaced in the literature review: According to Purcell (2012), "Texting is the preferred method of communication among teens" (p. 23), yet in a separate study by Butler (2010), the majority of students surveyed reported that they didn't feel compelled to provide a personal cell phone number for university emergency alert services (p. 437). Crisis communication is not an "if you build it, they will come" scenario. Education and outreach about rationale, usage, limitations and benefits of the tools used by the university in a crisis situation must be proactive and continuous, perhaps even including incentivization or gamification of the process.

Recommendations for Future Research

Although this study revealed many best practices and content suggestions for the development of crisis communication plans, it was limited by the small convenience sample and focused specifically on findings from public non-profit residential four-year institutions of higher education in the United States. This study also didn't explore other issues from the institutional environment that could influence crisis communication best

practices—i.e. campus size, community size and location, access to technology and wifi, leadership structure, etc. A larger, more diverse sample and an active data gathering phase would likely yield more representative and possibly more accurate and up to date results.

The literature and research confirmed that the field of crisis communication is still evolving in the digital age, thus future research specific to higher education could benefit from inclusion of the following areas:

- Assessment survey of student communication preferences (digital and traditional)
- Best practices for campus emergency management coordination (pre- and post-)
- Best practices for website management during a crisis (university dark sites, crisis communication via specified blog or Twitter account)
- Best practices for digital communications during a crisis (assessment of alert platforms and tools like Blackboard, Rise Vision, Involvio, etc.)
- Best practices for social media communication, tactics and monitoring during a crisis (geofencing, IP address targeting, etc.)

Summary

Effective crisis communication must be a priority for each and every institution. In this study, the data confirmed the findings of the literature review—the field of crisis communications is still evolving in the digital age. No one institution in the sample exhibited communication best practices across the spectrum, and as noted in the recommendations for further research, ongoing study is needed on outreach tactics, communication channels and communication preferences.

From response to planning to communication, it is vital that an institution understand its own crisis strategy, the key players that need to be at the table and the tools and channels at its disposal, as well as work to identify and address its limitations and blind spots. An investment in a solid crisis communication policy is like buying an insurance policy that you hope never to have to use: It may not ultimately save you, but the road ahead is going to be much rougher if you don't have it.

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APPENDIX A. CRISIS COMMUNICATION PLANS



Crisis Communication Plan

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Purpose

Duke University's Crisis Communications Plan outlines the roles, responsibilities and protocols that will guide the university in promptly sharing information with all of Duke's audiences during an emergency or crisis.

This plan is a part of the Duke University Emergency Management Plan, administered by the Emergency Coordinator.

For the purposes of this plan, a crisis is defined as a significant event that prompts significant, often sustained, news coverage and public scrutiny and has the potential to damage the institution's reputation, image or financial stability. A crisis could be precipitated by an emergency or a controversy. An emergency is a fire, hurricane, crime or other event that presents a threat and typically involves a response from police, fire or emergency medical personnel. A controversy better describes events such as a major student protest or a case of employee misconduct.

1.2 Scope

The audiences for this plan include undergraduates, graduate and professional school current and prospective students, faculty, staff, alumni, parents, trustees, neighbors, city leaders, media, our Durham community, national and international publics, and state and federal officials.

The plan is designed primarily for the university rather than the Duke University Health System, which has its own plan. However, it will be carried out in close coordination with the Health System to align messages and operations, promoting effective communications across the entire Duke community.

2. OBJECTIVES OF THE PLAN

Our guiding principle will be to communicate facts as quickly as possible, updating information regularly as circumstances change, to ensure the safety of the Duke community and the continued operation of essential services. Our efforts to be simultaneously accurate and quick may mean that some communications are incomplete. We accept

this, knowing that how we communicate in an emergency or a crisis will affect public perceptions of the university. Honesty and speed are the most effective means to avoid lasting damage to the institution and widespread second-guessing by the public, which expects immediate access to accurate information. A good offense is the best defense. At the same time, we realize that in a crisis, people will likely expect us to have more information than we may actually have. That makes it imperative to speak with accuracy about what we know and not to speculate about details we do not know.

We will use multiple mediums to reach as many people as possible with accurate, timely information. This is especially important in the first hours and days of an emergency or a crisis. Our goal is to be open, accountable and accessible to all audiences, while also being mindful of legal and privacy concerns.

3. PROCEDURES

3.1 Convening the Crisis Communications Team

The Crisis Communications Team will convene when the Emergency Coordinator (appointed by the president) declares a Level 1 Emergency (the most severe category that presents significant risk to the community or the university's reputation and resources) or has requested to assess communication needs for Level 2 or Level 3 Emergencies.

Given the urgency of rapid communications, the Vice President for Public Affairs and Government Relations or his/her designee has the authority to begin taking action immediately, in consultation with the Emergency Coordinator or his/her designee, until a broader decision can be made about how the university should proceed. Also, the Vice President for Public Affairs and Government Relations may identify a potential crisis or controversy that is not an immediate emergency and assemble the Crisis Communications Team to prepare a communications strategy - again, as part of a coordinated university response.

In the event of an ongoing threat to safety or security, the Clery Act requires universities to make timely notifications to the campus community. Once an incident is determined to fall under the Clery Act, a notice will be promptly distributed to the Duke community. Such determinations will be made by the Assistant Vice President of Safety and Security or his/her designee in consultation with the General Counsel or his/her designee and the Vice President for Public Affairs and Government Relations or his/her designee. Duke's goal is to send timely notice after being notified of an emergency situation.

Depending on the nature of the emergency or crisis, it may not be possible for the Emergency Leadership Team, the Emergency Coordinator or his/her designee to convene prior to the timely notification. Once the Emergency Leadership and Emergency Management Teams meet and have the opportunity to determine whether the university is facing an emergency, execution of this plan can be adjusted accordingly.

3.2 Crisis Communications Team Representatives

- Vice President, Public Affairs and Government Relations - chair
- Associate Vice President, News and Communications
- Associate Vice President of News and Communications, Duke Medicine
- Assistant Vice President, Communication Services
- Others as needed

The vice president or his/her designee will add other team members, as appropriate under the circumstances. The vice president or his/her designee will contact each member by phone and/or email to convene immediately.

3.3 Location

The Crisis Communications Team headquarters for most crises will be the third-floor meeting room of the Office of News and Communications (ONC), 615 Chapel Dr. ONC also will maintain stocks of press packets, press identification badges, parking passes, and copies of this plan.

Since this room has limited conference capabilities, it may be replaced with another facility in the event of an extended crisis or emergency. The primary back-up location is the media room at Cameron Indoor Stadium. The team may move its headquarters to Cameron in a number of circumstances, including technical limitations at the news office or a need to be in close proximity to the news media if they are set up at the Wilson Recreation Center.

4. RESPONSE

4.1 Implementation

The Crisis Communications Team will implement some, or all, of the steps outlined below based on circumstances, coordinating with the Emergency Leadership Team. Throughout a crisis, the team will meet frequently to review changing facts, assess whether key messages are reaching audiences and determine whether strategies need to change. The success of this plan rests on open and frequent communications among Duke's Emergency Leadership Team, the Emergency Management Group and the Crisis Communications Team.

Contact information for leadership and communication officials is included in documents located on the [emergency wiki suite](#):

- Team Contact List (located under Important Documents);
- Senior Administrators; Crisis Communications Team (both lists are under Supporting Documents on the wiki home page).

Also, the document Checklist for Crisis Communications on the wiki site includes phone, pager and mobile phone numbers and e-mail addresses for key communications personnel tasked with providing initial response.

In an emergency, our goal is to issue our first communication to key university audiences within 30 minutes of notification of the event, with regular updates as needed. Some situations may require even faster initial communications.

4.2 Immediate Response

The team will carry out these initial tasks immediately:

- Activate outdoor sirens/public address system for immediate threats (tornado, gunman, etc.).
- Send DukeALERT e-mail and text message for any Clery incident or Level 1 Emergency.
- Activate and post notification on DukeALERT website (emergency.duke.edu) for any Level 1 Emergency.
- Initiate phone tree for Severe Weather/Emergency Conditions notification process for any Level 1 emergency.
- Send management memo as appropriate.
- Post message on Duke Today as appropriate.
- Update Severe Weather/Emergency Conditions phone line (684-INFO) for any Level 1 emergency.
- Create and distribute DukeALERT Bulletin (send to campus communicators, residence coordinator on call, campus service areas that do not have e-mail access) for any Clery incident or Level 1 emergency.
- Send notification text to Campus Communicators for dissemination as appropriate.

- Send media alert as appropriate.
- Send messages and update content through the Duke News accounts on Twitter and/or Facebook, as appropriate.
- Create incident-specific blogs to convey information directly to particular audiences.
- Convene the Crisis Communications Team for any Level 1 emergency.
- Convene other communicators for emergency call center or other needs.

4.3 Secondary Response

Once the Crisis Communication Team convenes, the following tasks will be carried out by this team:

- **Designate a secretary** who can maintain meeting notes, to-do lists, information files on the ongoing crisis and other items.
- **Review and write down known facts** - those that can and cannot be released to the public – and determine whether a response is needed, and if that response is needed for all of the university’s key audiences. These facts will be used to fill in templates for news releases, text messages and other items that have already been developed. A list of potential crises is included in this plan’s appendix, along with a list of audiences and who will be responsible for coordinating communications to each. It is critical as the situation changes for new fact sheets to be developed. **WHY?** These fact sheets can be used to update websites, emails, news releases and other communication channels. They will also help guide the team’s overall strategy as events unfold.
- **Develop several key messages** that will be included in all university communications. One message typically will address what Duke is doing to ensure the safety of students and other community members. Another may need to be forward-looking and address what we are doing to make sure the crisis, or a problem with our response, doesn’t happen again. All of the messages should evolve as circumstances change but will always aim to restore and maintain confidence and calm, balancing a sense of concern with resolve and action. Sample messages are included in the approved templates.
- **Determine who will act as spokespeople** - both a senior leader of the university and someone charged primarily with communications responsibilities. The senior leader will be the public face of the university, while the communicator will run briefings and handle media questions between such formal press gatherings. Designate one or more members of the Crisis Communications Team to communicate key messages and emerging facts to those spokespeople and handle any last-minute media training. It is critical that senior leaders, including deans and faculty leaders, have copies of the most recent news releases and other messages so everyone is clear on what is being shared with the public. **WHY?** In a time of emergency, it is critical for a high-ranking leader of the university - in most cases, the president - to be the university’s public face and take the lead in communicating key messages and answering questions. Such action illustrates that the situation is under control and that efforts are being made to address any questions that have arisen. It also serves to calm various audiences. As the situation evolves, the senior leader acting as the key spokesperson may change.
- **Assign responsibilities to the Crisis Communications Team** to communicate the facts of the situation and our response to key audiences. Each member will use approved messages and templates for this effort. Whenever possible, the first groups that should be informed about a crisis are internal audiences directly affected, such as students, employees, faculty and trustees. The next groups typically would include parents, alumni, community leaders and other audiences, as well as the media. The channels used to communicate to each audience may differ, so each team member will be expected to develop detailed plans to reach his/her designated audience. A complete list of the people responsible for each audience, and suggested channels to reach them, is included in Appendix A. An abbreviated list is here:
 - Students (Vice president for student affairs or his/her designee, in collaboration with dean of undergraduate

education or his/her designee)

- Faculty and staff (Assistant vice president for communications services)
- Senior leaders and trustees (Vice president for public affairs and government relations or university secretary, as appropriate)
- Deans (Provost)
- Parents (Vice president for student affairs or his/her designee)
- Alumni (Executive director of alumni and development communications)
- Durham community, neighbors and city leaders (Assistant vice president for community relations)
- Local law enforcement (Director for Duke University Police Department or his/her designee)
- Media (ONC director of media relations/Associate vice president for news and communications, Duke Medicine)
- Federal leaders, agencies and contacts (Associate vice president for federal relations)
- State leaders, agencies and contacts (Vice president for public affairs and government relations)
- Visitors (Assistant vice president for communications services in collaboration with manager of internal communications for News & Communications)

The Crisis Communications Team, depending on the circumstances, may identify other audiences and assign responsibility for them.

- **Update DukeALERT website.** ONC will use a blog posted and regularly updated on the [Emergency Website](#) and DukeToday as primary sources of updates, linking from there to other pages with detailed information. ONC may also create special pages or sites about a situation, linking to these from DukeToday and www.duke.edu. Duke Medicine may post information on <http://insidedukemedicine.org>. ONC has developed a template for a crisis website, with limited navigation, message boards and other features, that can be used as needed. It also has developed a “lite” homepage. ONC may also contact people via its [Twitter](#) and [Facebook](#) accounts. Other possible online steps include removing Flash features, taking down images or seeking backup web support from colleagues at Stanford University to ensure that download speeds and web effectiveness remain acceptable even as traffic demands increase.

The manager of internal communications, working with the ONC web projects manager and in consultation with the Office of Information Technology, will take responsibility for overseeing all of these changes and needed updates.

- **Assign communicators, as needed,** to handle phone calls, using a script developed from the key messages and facts the Crisis Communications Team has developed. These staffers should reach out to other units that handle multiple calls during a crisis, including our general number, Student Affairs, admissions and the communicators list. These employees will also monitor and update the recorded message on university hotline(s), 919-684-INFO. As part of this effort, a separate log will be maintained to record all calls and interview requests from members of the media. These staffers will be responsible for ensuring that all calls are returned. **WHY?** Our policy is always to be as responsive as possible to news media. During a crisis, it is important to maintain an organized log of interview requests so that calls are returned promptly. It is a missed opportunity if members of the media don't know our key messages and facts as we understand them.
- **Develop communications from the president,** as appropriate. It may be necessary for the president to communicate to the Duke community about the emergency. The vice president for public affairs and government relations will be responsible for generating and reviewing presidential communications, including correspondence,

e-mail messages, talking points, speeches or op-eds, in consultation with the appropriate members of the Crisis Team.

- **Open the media center**, and determine whether a press conference(s) should be held. It is Duke's normal practice to permit news reporters and photographers to have open access to the campus for the purpose of conducting interviews after they check in with the Office of News and Communications. However, during crisis situations the vice president for public affairs and government relations or his/her designee will determine if access needs to be restricted to ensure the safety of the campus and its residents, or to avoid disruption to essential services and programs. If that determination has been made, then news reporters and photographers will first be directed to a staging area between the Bryan Center and the Chapel. During a severe crisis or in severe weather, the media area may be moved to the Doris Duke Center or, if a larger space is needed, the Wilson Recreation Center. ONC may also use other rooms for press events, as needed. ONC's director of media relations or the associate vice president for the Medical Center News Office will be responsible for opening this facility, bringing needed supplies from the Office of News & Communications (including identification badges, parking passes, media guidelines and press packets) and determining a schedule for 24-hour staffing. Two carrying cases located in Steve Hartsoe's office at ONC (first floor) contain many supplies communicators will need if working away from their main office. These include Duke media badges, USB cables for printers, campus and Durham maps, tape, copier paper, pens, and notepads. The director of media relations/associate vice president will coordinate press conferences (including arranging needed equipment, such as microphones, mult box, etc.), and related media advisories, as needed. If the emergency requires the opening of a media center, the university must treat equipping this center - with such items as tables and chairs - as a high priority. Some emergencies may require that this media center remain open 24 hours a day for an indefinite period. Should that occur, the vice president for public affairs and government relations has the authority to use communicators from around the university for staffing. In such a situation, no single person can or should be expected to work around the clock. Rather, the vice president or his/her designee must tap and empower other senior-level communicators to assist with managing the facility and answering media requests.

Wilson Recreation Center was chosen because of its technological infrastructure, its food and bathroom facilities, and proximate parking for news crews and satellite trucks. Members of the media will be able to set up on the basketball court and have access to the interview room for private interviews. A security officer should be assigned to prevent access to other parts of the building.

According to OIT, Wilson Recreation center is fairly well covered for wireless service with the exception of the locker rooms and pool area. Card Gym has eight access points (AP) – wireless “base stations” with multiple antennae – in the basement for full coverage, plus an AP in the banquet room of Card Gym. There are two APs in plastic boxes on the outside wall of card gym facing K'ville. There are another three APs evenly spaced in window locations of Wilson Rec facing K'ville. There is also an AP in the hall of Wilson Rec at the main office, across from the juice bar. Classrooms 017, 018, and 020 each have an AP and there is an AP on the desk in the weight room. One of the APs that face K'ville from Wilson Rec is located in the window of the basketball court, which covers the court area.

As a backup media center, the Doris Duke Center is equipped with wireless capabilities, with three access points that allow 90 simultaneous connections (2 megs per connection). There are also seven access points in Duke Gardens. OIT says this should be sufficient since many reporters will use their own air cards that give them wireless access through their own cellular carriers. OIT says if cellular service is hindered by the crisis then Duke can within 2-3 hours install more wireless access points and/or request mobile cellular towers from Duke's main cellular vendors. Access to the network is managed by the Help Desk. The login is always “dukeguest” and the password changes every Monday, which the Help Desk can send weekly to a communicator.

- **Assign an ONC staffer to monitor media and online coverage** to anticipate any problems in the way information is flowing to the news media and on the Internet. ONC already has a system for daily monitoring of print coverage, broadcast media and blogs, and that system will be put to use for this effort. Summaries of relevant coverage will be provided to the university's senior leadership and Crisis Communications Team on at least a daily basis, or more frequently as needed. Under "Supporting Documents," the emergency wiki site now includes two helpful tip sheets: "Tracking International Media" and "Blog Monitoring Essentials." **WHY?** It will be critical to be aware of how the university is being portrayed in early and ongoing coverage to adjust the communications response as needed to limit rumors, correct errors and maintain confidence in the university.
- **Determine how we should report on the situation for internal audiences.** For instance, are there town meetings, protests or vigils? The manager of internal communications will be responsible for coordinating print, video and audio coverage, working with the Office of Communications Services, University Photography and ONC's Radio-TV Services, of the events for internal publications and web posting.
- **Evaluate how to help our community recover**, return to normal and, if needed, regain faith in the university after the trigger event of the crisis is over, in coordination with the senior leadership. This may include the need for town hall meetings, letters from the president expressing sympathy, detailed plans to prevent another such crisis, etc.
- **Within 10 days of the end of the event, assess how this plan functioned**, address any needed updates and recognize the work of partners whose help was invaluable. (i.e., assistance from communicators from other units or universities)

4.4 Approvals of outgoing information

Typically, we use a collegial approach of multiple approvals before we distribute communications pieces, including emails and news releases. That system will not work in a crisis. Seconds matter in a crisis, and we will be judged by how quickly we share information with key audiences.

As a matter of policy, Duke is committed to trying to meet these expectations. It recognizes the need for unusually crisp decision-making during a crisis to enable rapid, accurate communication in coordination with the institution's broader process. We have developed templates that have been approved in advance by senior officers and legal counsel to expedite the approval process during a crisis. Final approval for all communications - for the university and health system - rests with the vice president for public affairs and government relations, or his/her designee.

4.4 Staffing

When a Level 1 Emergency has been declared, employees of the Office of Public Affairs, Office of News & Communications, and Office of Communications Services will be relieved of their typical job responsibilities to help execute this plan.

It may also be necessary to have additional help. The vice president has the authority to enlist the help of communicators from across Duke and assign them as needed to the crisis response.

4.5 The End of the Crisis

The Emergency Coordinator will determine when an emergency has ended and routine communications processes can resume. The decision to declare the emergency over will trigger a review of how the crisis was handled and how communications can improve.

5. EDUCATION AND PLAN MAINTENANCE

5.1 Education and Testing

The assistant vice president for communication services will take the lead in educating our community about how and when members would get messages from Duke in an emergency. The procedures may be similar to those used to educate the community about the university's severe weather policy. The university will also conduct at least one test annually of the DukeALERT communication tools, which include the siren/public address system, email, text messaging, website, and phone line.

The university will conduct an annual drill of emergency management with participation by members of the Emergency Leadership Team. The crisis communications plan will be tested at these times with participation by members of the Crisis Communications Team.

As part of this process, the associate vice president for news and communications and assistant vice president for communication services will schedule media training sessions for senior administrators and key team members. After the initial session to train all key officials, sessions will be scheduled annually for people who are new to the Emergency Leadership Team, the Emergency Management Team or the Crisis Communications Team. Every two years, all members will attend a refresher course in media training.

Media training also will be necessary for certain officials who are neither part of the Emergency Leadership Team nor the Crisis Communications Team. For instance, the executive director of Counseling & Psychological Services, the director of occupational and environmental safety and the sexual assault support services coordinator may be among those needed to speak to the media in the event of an emergency. The associate vice president for news and communications or his/her designee will develop a list of such officials and offer media training on an annual basis.

5.2 Updating

Twice a year, we will need to update a number of items contained in the appendix of this plan.

The assistant vice president for communication services, or his/her designee, will update phone lists for members of the Emergency Leadership Team, Emergency Management Team and Crisis Communications Team. The assistant vice president, working with the Office of Information Technology, will oversee updates and improvements to email lists for internal audiences.

The associate vice president for news and communications, or his/her designee, will oversee updates of media lists and fact sheets.

Posted: December 2007

Revised: May 2009

Crisis Communication Plan

Introduction

The Youngstown State University Crisis Communications Plan provides procedures for the coordination of communications both internally and externally in the event of a crisis situation. The plan outlines the roles, responsibilities and protocols to guide the university in sharing information with all of YSU's audiences during an emergency or crisis.

The crisis communication plan is part of a larger set of plans to manage the university's affairs during situations that threaten operations, the safety of the community and/or the reputation of YSU. This document focuses on the communications aspect of potential crisis situations. (Please also refer to YSU communications procedures under the federal Clery Act, specifically "Emergency Notifications" and "Timely Warnings," attached as Appendix 1 and Appendix 2.)

This plan is not intended to change the manner in emergencies are initially reported. All emergencies on campus should be reported immediately to the YSU Police.

Guiding Principles

In all communications during a crisis, the university strives to be accessible, prompt, compassionate, honest and informative. While such tenets may seem to be self-evident, it can be difficult to adhere to a clear style of communication when in crisis mode. One of the most important requirements for effective communications during an urgent situation is gathering and understanding the facts and implications of a given situation and then providing accurate and

consistent information to all parties concerned. Communications from the university must be honest and forthright. It is crucial in a crisis to tell it all, tell it fast and tell the truth.

Operational Definition of Crisis

For the purpose of this plan, the word crisis refers to:

A significant emergency, dangerous situation or disturbance in the university's activities which has the potential to have a significant impact on the university's operations and public image and which results in extensive news coverage and public scrutiny.

A crisis includes serious threats to life, limb and/or property, significant threats to the university's reputation, or serious threats of interruption to university business.

A crisis may include, but is not limited to: hostage situations, weather, disease or other health threat, fire, natural disaster, violent crime, civil disturbance, sexual or physical

assault, homicide and the threat of danger. (The federal Clery Act provides the following examples of significant emergencies or dangerous situations: fire, outbreak of a serious illness, earthquake, gas leak, terrorist incident, armed intruder, bomb threat, civil unrest or rioting, explosion, nearby chemical or hazardous waste spill.)

There is bound to be a degree of judgment required to determine whether any one or more of such threats are serious enough as to constitute a crisis.

Initial Response

Many crises occur quickly, without notice and may require immediate communications, particularly to students, employees and others on campus who are threatened or impacted by the crisis. As per the university's Clery Act Emergency Notification procedures and YSU Alert Protocol, the YSU Police Department has the authority to assess the crisis at hand, determine what immediate communications is needed, and move forward to deliver that communication to the campus. For instance, if there is a major fire in an academic building, YSUPD would be responsible for initial communications (via YSU Alert and other means) with the campus.

Crisis Communications Team

In the event of a crisis, a core group of nine people will constitute the university's Crisis Communications Team:

President

Provost

Vice President for Finance and Business Operations

General Counsel and Vice President, Legal Affairs and Human Resources

Associate Vice President, Student Experience

Associate Vice President, University Relations

Chief of Police

Director of University Communications/Public Information Officer

The team will develop a plan of action and oversee communications issues throughout the crisis. Depending on the nature of the crisis, others can and should be drawn into the crisis communications process as appropriate to address the specific issues and threats that need to be managed. The team will assess the situation and determine the facts of the crisis, determine the appropriate response/action, determine a plan of action for both internal and external communications, and assess what resources are necessary to manage the crisis.

The President has the primary responsibility for convening the Crisis Communications Team. If the President is not available to make the convening decision, then the Provost, Vice President for Finance and Business Operations, General Counsel and Vice President for Legal Affairs and Human Resources can make that decision.

The President, at any time, may convene the team if she/he confronts a situation that she/he deems to be a crisis as defined above. Any member of the Crisis Communications Team or the Tod Hall Leaders may also, upon discovery of a situation that she/he believes constitutes a crisis (as defined above), recommend to the President that she/he convene the Team. At the time of convening the Team, the President should determine whether the nature of the crisis requires that additional individuals with special expertise be added to the Team. For example, in instances in which there are potential interruptions to university business, the President may wish to ask the Chief Technology Officer to join the Team. Or, if there is significant damage to buildings and/or property, the Executive Director of Facilities may be asked to join the Team.

Team Communications

All members of the Crisis Communication Team should have cell phones in their possession at all times. Upon the decision to convene the Team, the President will call the Associate Vice President for University Relations, who will call all other members of the team. Other individuals will be notified as needed.

If it is feasible to do so (depending on the time of day or night and/or any physical limitations of the situation), the team should gather together in person. The location of the team will depend on the severity of the crisis:

- In the event of a major campus crisis or disaster, particularly an event that is police-oriented, an Emergency Operations Center will be set up in the YSU Police Department. In such a situation, the YSUPD will become the center of all information for the crisis at hand; therefore, it is advisable that the Crisis Communications Team convenes at the YSU Police

Department. The Police Department will dedicate space and resources (i.e. telephones and computers) for the Team in the PD during the crisis.

- In the event of a lesser crisis, or a crisis more of a public relations or administrative level, the Team will convene in the Leaders Conference Room in Tod Hall. (It is possible that the Team would first convene in Tod Hall and then move to the YSUPD as the crisis evolves, or vice versa.)

If it is not feasible to meet physically, the Team may be convened by telephone.

Responding to the crisis

Among the duties of the Crisis Communications Team:

- Assess the situation and determine the facts of the crisis.
- Create a plan of action for both internal and external communications.
- Determine what messages will be communicated and by whom.
- Determine to whom those messages will be communicated, both internally and externally. Among the key constituencies:
 - Students
 - Faculty
 - Staff
 - Parents of students
 - News media
 - Trustees
 - Public officials—Governor, Legislators, Mayors
 - Alumni
 - Neighbors
 - General Public
- Determine how those messages will be communicated.
- Determine how to react as the crisis evolves.

- Keep the appropriate spokespeople informed of the latest developments and messages to be conveyed.

The Team will develop several key messages to be included in all university communications. The messages will evolve as the crisis evolves and circumstances change. The messages must be communicated as quickly as possible and regularly updated.

University Spokespeople

The chief spokespeople in the event of a crisis will be a senior leader of the university, most likely the President, as well as the Director of University Communications/Public Information Officer.

- In most situations, the Director of University Communications/Public Information Officer will act as the chief spokesperson and will be the point person for news media communications during a crisis. He/she will organize and run press briefings and handle general media questions. In the event that the Director of University Communications/PIO is unavailable, another individual identified by the President and/or the Crisis Communications Team will act as the spokesperson. Depending on the nature of the crisis, the person possessing the direct knowledge of the crisis (for example: The chief of police in the event of a campus crime) can also be designated as spokesperson.
- In the time of a significant crisis, it is critical for a high-ranking leader of the university such as the President to become the face of the university and to take the lead in communicating key messages. Only a high-ranking leader such as the President can convey that a situation is under control, provide a sense of calm and set an example for the entire campus.
- The release of information and comments to the news media and the public should be limited to the designated spokespeople. All other staff should be professional and helpful to the news media by connecting them with

the spokespeople, but should refrain from speaking to and providing any information. As the crisis evolves, it is likely that secondary spokespeople will need to be appointed.

Media Relations

Often the only information the public receives about an emergency is through the news media; therefore, media relations is an essential component of any crisis plan. Timing is critical. *Responses to a crisis must be issued as soon as possible and along as many communications channels as possible.* Remember that the news media is borderless and operates 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

In consultation with and the approval of the Crisis Communications Team, the Office of Marketing and Communications will develop appropriate statements and other communications for the news media. The Office will also arrange and lead news conferences and media briefings. Keeping the news media informed gives the university a certain amount of control over the message. The media's job is to report the latest information available. If reporters don't get that information directly from the organization in crisis, they will look elsewhere and be more likely to report inaccurate facts and even rumors. The location of news conferences and briefings may largely depend on the location and nature of the crisis. One location could be the Board of Trustees Meeting Room in Tod Hall. Ideally, however, the location should be away from the University's administrative offices, including the President's office. Other suitable locations could be the Chestnut Room or Ohio Room in Kilcawley Center or in larger areas in either Beeghly Center or Stambaugh Stadium.

Communications Tools

Effective university crisis communications programs employ multiple and layered methods of communication with its constituencies, including students, employees, parents, alumni, trustees and community members. In the event of a crisis, the Crisis Communications Team can deploy one or all of these communications vehicles:

- **YSU Alert** allows the university to notify students and employees via text message and email. (Responsibility: YSU Police and Office of Marketing and Communications)
- **Campus-wide mass communications and alarm system** broadcasts emergency voice notifications targeted to specific buildings via loudspeaker. (Responsibility: YSU Police)
- **YSU homepage** ([//www.ysu.edu/](http://www.ysu.edu/)), (Responsibility: Office of Marketing and Communications)
- **Campus Alert website.** In the event of a major campus crisis, the university has the capability of activating a pre-designed webpage that will provide up-to-the-minute

details of the crisis as it unfolds. (Responsibility: Marketing and Communications)

- **Emergency Information Line (330-941-2222)** will include updated information. (Responsibility: Office of Marketing and Communications)
- **MyYSU portal.** Through the portal, the university will post “Campus Announcements”, providing faculty, staff, students and the entire campus community with updates in the event of an emergency. (Responsibility: Office of Marketing and Communications)
- **Campus Marquees.** (Responsibility: Office of Marketing and Communications)
- **Social media.** Regular updates will be posted on the YSU Facebook (<https://www.facebook.com/youngstownstate>), Twitter (<https://twitter.com/>) and other social media venues. (Responsibility: Office of Marketing and Communications)
- **WYSU-FM.** WYSU 88.5 (Ashtabula 90.1, New Wilmington 97.5) is the official radio source regarding information about university operations. In addition, WYSU can provide information on its website, www.wysu.org (<http://www.wysu.org/>). WYSU has an extensive Disaster Response and Recovery Plan that includes a backup generator and a backup transmitter and studio at Stambaugh Stadium. With these capabilities, WYSU could be a 24/7, real time, interactive critical source of information to the campus

and the community in the event of a major crisis.

- **News media.** The university has a detailed news media call list that would be activated in the event of an emergency. (Responsibility: Office of Marketing and communications)

The offices/departments listed as responsible for each of these communications vehicles are responsible for developing individual implementation plans for each of the vehicles.

Awareness, Training and Assessment

It is imperative that all members of the Crisis Communications Team, Tod Hall Leaders and others on campus are familiar with the details of this plan prior to a campus crisis. The team should also undergo regular training, including running simulations in the actual use of the plan's procedures and principles, and the training of spokespeople in communicating with the media during crisis moments. Routine simulation training should be provided.

Finally, the Crisis Communications Team should meet at least once after the emergency situation has subsided to assess the university's handling of the situation and to make future recommendations to streamline and improve its procedures and communications tools.

The Crisis Communications Plan was initially developed in December 2007 as recommendations to the President and President's Cabinet. The Plan was developed by a Crisis Communications Planning Group, chaired by the Vice President of University Advancement. The Office of Marketing and Communications modified the Plan in October 2008. The plan was revamped in June 2011 and updated again in March and September 2012. This version was updated in January 2016.

Appendix 1

EMERGENCY NOTIFICATION

Notification to the YSU community about an Immediate Threat

YSU will immediately notify the campus community upon confirmation of a significant emergency or dangerous situation involving an immediate threat to

the health or safety of students or employees occurring on the campus. Examples of significant emergencies or dangerous situations are: fire, outbreak of a serious illness, approaching extreme weather condition (i.e. tornado), earthquake, gas leak, terrorist incident, armed intruder, bomb threat, civil unrest or rioting, explosion, nearby chemical or hazardous waste spill.

In the event of a potential emergency situation, the YSU Police Department (YSUPD) will consult with the Office of the President and/or the Provost and/or the Vice President for Student Affairs and confirm that there is an emergency or dangerous situation that poses an immediate threat to the health or safety of some or all members of the YSU community.

YSUPD and/or the Office of Marketing and Communications will collaborate to immediately notify the campus community of the situation. YSUPD and/or M&C will, without delay and taking into account the safety of the community, determine the content of the notification and initiate the notification system, unless issuing a notification will, in the judgment of the first responders (including, but not limited to YSUPD, Youngstown Police Department, Youngstown Fire and Emergency Medical Services), compromise the efforts to assist a victim or to contain, respond to, or otherwise mitigate the emergency.

YSUPD and/or M&C will use some or all of the systems described below to communicate the threat to the YSU community or to the appropriate segment of the community, if the threat is limited to a particular building or segment of the population. The entire campus community will be notified when there is at least the potential that a very large segment of the community will be affected by a situation, or when a situation threatens the operation of the campus as a whole. The situation will be continually assessed to determine if additional segments of the campus should be notified.

Some or all of the following notification methods will be used:

- YSU Alert emergency text messages (<http://penguinalert.yzu.edu/>) and emails.
- YSU campus-wide mass communications and alarm voice broadcast system.
- YSU homepage (<http://www.yzu.edu/>).
- Campus Announcements channel of the MyYSU portal.

- YSU Emergency Information Line (330-941-2222).
- University Facebook (<https://www.facebook.com/youngstownstate>) and Twitter (<https://twitter.com/>) pages.
- WYSU 88.5 FM, the official radio source of YSU.

Members of the larger community outside campus will receive information about a campus emergency via many of the same methods listed above. In addition, the University will disseminate information via local news media (TV, radio and newspaper).

Those responsible for carrying out the actions above include:

- Confirmation of an emergency: YSUPD in consultation with the Office of the President and/or the Provost and/or the Vice President for Student Affairs.
- Content of message/segment of campus to be notified: YSUPD and/or Office of Marketing and Communications.
- Initiation of the notification system: YSU PD and/or Office of Marketing and Communications.

Appendix 2

TIMELY WARNINGS

Issuing Timely Warnings

YSU will issue a Timely Warning to the campus community in the event of crimes (i.e. murder and non-negligent manslaughter, negligent manslaughter, sex offenses, robbery, aggravated assault, burglary, motor vehicle theft and arson) and other situations that, in the judgment of the Chief of the YSU Police Department (YSUPD) or his/her designee, constitutes a serious or continuing threat to students or employees. In determining if a Timely Warning should be issued, the Police Chief will consider the nature of the crime, the continuing danger to the campus community, and the possible risk of compromising law enforcement efforts.

Timely Warnings will be distributed by one or all of the following methods:

- Posted as a Campus Crime Alert on the YSUPD website (<http://cms.ysu.edu/administrative-offices/police/ysu-police>) and/or YSUPD Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/pages/Youngstown-State-University-Police/294976274506>).
- Sent via e-mail and/or text message to subscribers of Penguin Alert (<http://penguinalert.ysu.edu/>).
- Posted on the Campus Announcements channel of the MyYSU portal.
- Posted on Crime Prevention Bulletin Boards in buildings across campus.

The Timely warnings will provide the following information if possible:

- The date the alert was issued.
- A succinct statement of the incident.
- Physical description of the suspects.
- Other relevant and important information.

Timely Warnings will be issued for circumstances that occur on campus, on public property within or immediately adjacent to the campus, and in or on non-campus buildings or property that YSU owns or controls.

Anyone with information warranting a Timely Warning should report the circumstances to the YSUPD at 330-941-3527.

Appendix 3

Crisis Communications Best Practices for YSU Social Media

If you are aware of an emergency situation on campus, contact the YSU Police first (330-941-3527), and then the Marketing and Communications office (330-941-3519). Do not post about the situation on social media until official messaging is released from the university. During an emergency situation on campus, official posts regarding the crisis will come from four accounts:

1. Youngstown State University Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/youngstownstate>)
2. Youngstown State University Twitter account (<https://twitter.com/youngstownstate>) (or @youngstownstate)
3. YSU Police Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/Youngstown-State-University-Police-294976274506/>)
4. YSU Police Twitter account (<https://twitter.com/ysupolice>) (or @ysupolice)

If you control an official social media page of the university, look for these posts and update your own page(s) by sharing or retweeting posts from any of these four accounts. Do not try to craft your own message or retype the message on your own. Sharing the exact post from YSU's accounts or the Police's accounts will help ensure that a unified campus message is presented. In addition, during an emergency on campus, be sure to:

- * Check to make sure that no content is scheduled to be posted on your YSU social media accounts until the end of the emergency. If content is scheduled, delete it.
- * Refrain from posting to your YSU social media sites after sharing official messaging/posts.
- * Refrain from engaging with followers during this time so that timelines do not get cluttered. This gives important updates more of a chance of being seen.
- * If you receive private messages on your YSU accounts, reply by referring the individual to the main university sites or the YSU Police sites for information.

Contact: Ross Morrone, Director of Marketing, 330-941-1424.

Related Pages

[PenguinAlert \(http://ysu.edu/penguin-alert\)](http://ysu.edu/penguin-alert)

[Cancellation and Closing Procedures \(http://ysu.edu/cancellation-and-closing-procedures\)](http://ysu.edu/cancellation-and-closing-procedures)

[Emergency Response \(http://ysu.edu/emergency-response\)](http://ysu.edu/emergency-response)

Communicating in an Emergency or Issue Crisis

A Manual for Twin Cities Campus Communicators

Prepared by University Relations • July 2014

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Purpose

This manual outlines policies and procedures for coordinating communication within the University and between the University, the media, and the public in the event of a public safety emergency or issue crisis.

Public safety emergencies include fires, bomb threats, natural disasters, major crimes, and accidents. Issues that could become crises include police investigations, protests, riots, or other situations that demand a public response. The procedures and policies outlined in this manual are not intended to change the way public safety emergencies are initially reported. All such emergencies on campus should be reported immediately by calling 911.

This manual addresses media relations and communication issues in an emergency or issue crisis, and includes procedures to rapidly identify potentially harmful situations and a process for handling communications in these situations quickly and effectively. Campus officials and communicators should be familiar with these procedures and their individual roles in case of a crisis.

According to University policies, the Office of University Relations is primarily responsible for coordinating, managing and leading all communications efforts during emergency and crisis situations. In the event of a crisis, the University will always try to notify those most affected and the immediate University community (administration, students, faculty, staff, and parents) before communicating more broadly to the public.

The procedures outlined in this manual are to be used in conjunction with the normal decision-making hierarchy of the University and do not replace that decision-making process. Specifically, this manual will be used in conjunction with:

- Emergency Operations Plan and Emergency Procedures Manual—produced, updated, and distributed by the Department of Emergency Management
- University Administrative Policy on Campus and Building Closing—produced and updated by the Office of the Executive Vice President and Provost
- The BSL3 Communications plan—produced and updated by the AHC Office of Emergency Response

Communications Objectives

- Factually assess the situation and determine whether a communications response is warranted.
- Assemble a Crisis Communication Team that will develop and assist with implementing recommendations on appropriate responses.
- Implement immediate actions to:
 - identify constituencies to be informed about the situation
 - communicate facts about the crisis
 - minimize and correct rumors
 - restore order and/or confidence

The one-hour objective

In addition to the objectives above, our goal is to ensure that the University of Minnesota gives a credible public response within one hour after becoming aware of any incident involving health, safety, or the environment, or any media inquiry or potential issue crisis that may lead to a story that damages the University's reputation.

Types of Crises

A crisis is an incident or situation that could affect or has affected the health, safety, or welfare of students, faculty, staff, or campus visitors; the environment; or the reputation of the University.

The procedures in this manual will be used for all types of crises.

Public safety emergency

A public safety emergency is any situation that significantly threatens the health or safety of individuals; the safety of animals, research, or projects at the University; University mission-critical facilities; the University environment; or the University in general. 911 dispatchers should always be the first point of contact in these situations. Dispatchers will automatically contact Public Safety. The Department of Emergency Management will contact the News Service, the “officer of the day” (policy decision-maker in an emergency response), and other University officials involved in emergency situations.

Issue crisis

An issue crisis is any situation that significantly and negatively affects the stature or public perception of the University of Minnesota. An issue crisis may be triggered, for example, by an investigative news story or a public allegation of misconduct or mismanagement. An issue crisis, by definition, is a situation that escalates rapidly with little or no preparation time and, by its damaging nature, requires a prompt response from the University and often involves multiple internal and external constituencies.

Potential issue crisis

A potential issue crisis is defined as above except that the situation is still developing; it has not yet come to a conclusion or reached a crisis level. Not addressing potential issues in a timely manner often results in the most damaging type of crisis.

Very few issue crises are total surprises. Usually, key leaders have information suggesting the possibility or probability of a crisis; it is at this stage that developing a communication plan is most critical. This manual provides people the tools to begin planning before a crisis has occurred, thereby better serving the University. Ultimately, it is critical for communicators to contact the News Service/University Relations when an issue crisis is possible so potential plans can be discussed.

Knowing about a potential issue crisis allows the University to:

- respond to and manage a situation before it becomes public
- prepare a thoughtful and timely response
- ensure that key internal and other stakeholders are aware of the situation and provided with the facts

Following this plan when a potential issue is developing allows the University to take control of the situation by announcing the bad news itself and, to the extent possible, to frame the issue and develop a solution before the media or a third party can do so for us.

Communications Procedures

Assess the crisis

If an emergency that requires response from emergency personnel (e.g., police, fire, EMS) occurs, immediately call 911. Dispatch will notify Public Safety personnel. The Department of Emergency Management will notify the News Service and senior leadership. Also call the director of public relations (612-625-8510) or, if he or she can't immediately be reached, the News Service main line (612-624-5551) to determine next steps. This should be part of any college or unit-specific emergency communications plan.

University Relations will determine whether to form a Crisis Communication Team and will inform the president and Board of Regents Office, if necessary.

Assemble a crisis communication team

The crisis communication team will include at minimum:

- Chief communications officer/deputy chief of staff, or designee
- University general counsel, or designee
- Dean, director, VP in area affected, or designee
- Communications staff from the appropriate college or unit
- Director of public relations
- UR senior public relations consultant tasked with safety and News Service staff as needed

If the crisis is a public safety emergency, the team will include:

- Chief of police
- Director of Emergency Management
- Director of AHC Office of Emergency Response (for all health emergencies on campus and all incidents — of any nature — in the AHC)

Depending on the incident, other personnel will be consulted with and/or added to the Crisis Communication Team to help formulate a response. Those added may include:

- President
- Senior vice president for academic affairs and provost
- Vice president for health sciences
- Chief of staff for the University president
- Vice president and CFO
- Vice president for human resources
- Vice president for research
- Vice president for University Services
- Associate vice provost for student affairs and dean of students
- Executive director of Board of Regents
- Special assistant to the president for government relations
- Other senior University personnel as needed

The individuals listed above need to designate a backup contact if they are unreachable. All backups are responsible for the information outlined in this manual. The unit or college(s) involved in the crisis may also task their communications director and/or other senior administrative staff to be part of the Crisis Communication Team.

Refer to online *Confidential Administrative Telephone Directory* (<https://www.ur.umn.edu/confdir>) for Crisis Communication Team access numbers.

The Crisis Communication Team will assess the nature and scope of the situation, consult with others as necessary, and develop a plan of action.

Develop an action plan for communicating in an emergency or issue crisis

Designate a spokesperson(s)

In most cases, the spokesperson will be the highest-ranking person possessing the most direct knowledge of the crisis (for example, the chief of police in the event of a campus crime). The director of public relations or a designee may also be a spokesperson.

The spokesperson is responsible for conveying the administration's response to the crisis, demonstrating that the University has control of the situation, calming public concern, correcting misinformation when possible, and setting an example for the entire campus.

The Crisis Communication Team will also identify any other individuals who may serve as spokespersons, or who could comment to the news media, and will assign a News Service staff person to brief them on the facts of the situation and on tips for speaking effectively to the media. Draft talking points and/or a fact sheet

Determine whether the Department of Emergency Management is establishing an Emergency Operations Center (EOC) (for Public Safety and University officials) and whether the crisis merits establishing a media-briefing center (for larger media briefings or press conferences), per the Emergency Operations Plan. If an EOC is established, all communications must be coordinated through the EOC public information officer (e.g., director of public relations or designee) and the vice president for University Services, who is the primary officer of the day for any EOC Activation.

A talking points/fact sheet should contain a summary of the situation, including all known details appropriate to the circumstances. This information will be made available to and approved by the Crisis Communication Team. This fact sheet should be analyzed with respect to the public's right to know and concerns for privacy and security in consultation with the general counsel.

Identify audiences

Members of the Crisis Communication Team will be responsible for communicating the facts of the situation and the University's intended response to internal and external constituencies. While the spokesperson (as defined earlier) will be primarily responsible for conveying the administration's response to the crisis and communicating with the media, the Crisis Communication Team must determine whom else to contact and how to do so. Effective communications with key constituents will help quell rumors, maintain morale, and ensure continued orderly operations of the University. Among the groups to be considered:

Internal

- President
- Senior leadership team
- Board of Regents
- Campus administrators, faculty, staff
- Deans, directors, department heads, chancellors, vice provosts and other U leaders (AEL list)
- Students
- University of Minnesota Foundation Board of Directors and donors
- University of Minnesota Alumni Association Board of Directors and members
- Gopher Athletics

External

- Local law enforcement
- Parents of students
- Local community
- Media
- Government agencies and elected officials (via Government Relations when appropriate for state legislators/governor)
- Accreditation or other oversight or grantmaking organizations (NCAA, federal agencies)

Determine the most effective means of communication

After the Crisis Communication Team determines whom to contact, it must decide how to do so. The following issues and mechanisms should be considered, generally in the following order of priority.

Key Phone Contacts

These locations, which receive high volumes of incoming telephone calls to the University, should be notified regarding the key facts of the crisis (fact sheet) and where to refer calls pertaining to the crisis.

- News Service, business hours: 612-624-5551; after hours: 612-293-0831
- Board of Regents, 612-625-6300
- President's office, 612-626-1616
- Campus switchboard (on campus), 0
- Campus switchboard (off campus), 612-625-5000
- Campus Police, 612-624-COPS (2677)
- Human Resources, 612-625-2000
- University Relations, 612-624-6868
- Student Development, 612-624-3533

HelpDesk/HelpLine

In an emergency, calls coming into 612-625-5000 will be triaged and managed by OIT's Help Desk. University Relations will work closely with the HelpDesk/HelpLine to provide support with messaging.

Social media

Work with University Relations and the Crisis Communication Team to determine if there is a need to communicate through the U's social media channels and/or to monitor social media use related to the crisis. It may be important to monitor student, staff, faculty, and public posts about the crisis to see if critical information is being shared, for accuracy, to correct misinformation, and to minimize speculation and panic. Coordinate all social media monitoring and outreach with the University Relations social media manager.

Websites and email

The Twin Cities home page and other campus web pages can be used to communicate with internal and external constituents and provide updates as necessary. University Relations staff will follow the protocols for posting emergency information on the home page and taking over the home page if necessary. Emergency mass email can be sent systemwide by University Relations staff. (Note: The Safety and Security website can also be used for emergency communications if needed over an extended period of time. An example of this was during the H1N1 pandemic.)

Media logistics and access

Work with the News Service to determine whether to proactively alert the media or be ready with a response plan. The News Service, in cooperation with the Crisis Communication Team, will determine logistics of all media contact, including when, where and how the media will be contacted, which media will be contacted, who will coordinate the news conference (if one is necessary), who will appear, etc. When the emergency operations procedures are in effect, the incident commander will determine media access to an incident site.

The Crisis Communication Team will work with the News Service to determine if updates are needed, how frequently they will occur, and who will speak.

TXT-U

TXT-U is the University's emergency text messaging system. TXT-U should be used as soon as possible after a serious threat or crisis has been identified. (Other features through our TXT-U vendor, such as email and social media, may be available.) The University of Minnesota Police Department, the Department of Emergency Management, University Services, or University Relations determines when to use TXT-U.

Follow-up

Following any emergency or crisis, appropriate action must be taken to ensure that members of the University community, and others as necessary, receive needed information and assistance to help bring closure to the crisis, as well as relief from the effects of the event.

Communications

Addressing needs of those affected

Immediately following a crisis, it is imperative that the University be sensitive to the needs of faculty, staff, students, and parents who may have been personally affected by the crisis. There may be a need to assist a victim, or victims, with obtaining information and/or a referral to available resources. The Crisis Communication Team will be responsible for notifying appropriate employees and students. Also, representatives from affected units should follow up with their respective constituents to ensure their needs are being addressed and offer further assistance.

Addressing continued concerns

In many instances, there may be a need to continue providing information after the crisis has passed. Take full advantage of email, websites, etc., and report facts as appropriate to address continued concerns.

Thanking outside partners

Depending upon the nature of the crisis, services and assistance may have been rendered by agencies, companies, or individuals from outside the University. University Relations will work closely with emergency response departments to compile needed follow-up information and draft "thank you" letters to partnering agencies.

Debriefing after the crisis

The Crisis Communication Team shall meet within 10 days following a crisis and review all actions taken as a result of the crisis to determine effectiveness and efficiency of operations and make any needed changes to the Communicating in an Emergency or Issue Crisis Manual.

Emergency Plans

The Department of Emergency Management coordinates the development of emergency plans on campus. There are three levels of emergency plans at the University of Minnesota. These plans are in place to ensure appropriate handling and response to emergencies arising at the University. Contact the Department of Emergency Management at 612-625-8047 or dem@umn.edu if you have questions about these plans.

Building Emergency Plans

Each building on campus should have a Building Emergency Plan. The plan outlines evacuation procedures and other emergency instructions. In order to complete the plan, each building should identify one representative from each department located in the building to participate in a working group that will complete the plan template.

Operational Continuity Plans

Operational Continuity Plans outline the steps critical operating units must take to keep their departments running in the event of an emergency. Departments that are deemed "critical operating units" must complete an Operational Continuity Plan, per the University's Operational Continuity Planning Policy.

Emergency Operations Plan

The University has an emergency operations plan (EOP) that is reviewed and approved every four years by the Minnesota Department of Homeland Security and Emergency Management. There is a separate plan for each campus. Due to the sensitive nature of the information contained in the plan, it is a secure document and only given to certain departments that are involved in emergency operations.

The purpose of the EOP is to set guidance, tasks, and responsibilities for strategic response and recovery to natural and human-caused disasters. Matters such as large-scale evacuations, dangerous storms, hazardous materials incidents, and response and recovery are covered in the plans. There are individual plans for facilities such as TCF Bank Stadium, Northrop, Williams Arena, Mariucci Arena, and Ted Mann Concert Hall. Eventually, all buildings will have individual plans.

All Dominican College day classes and offices will be closed, Friday, March 10, due to the anticipated snow storm, with the following exceptions: (1) The Sullivan Library will open at 1 p.m. (2) The ABSN Orientation for the incoming 2017-2018 students will meet as originally scheduled (1 pm in the Prusmack Center). (3) Friday evening Occupational Therapy courses will run as scheduled. (4) The “Night in Spain” Event will run as scheduled.

Why Dominican College? (<https://www.dc.edu/whydominican/>) Undergraduate (<https://www.dc.edu/undergraduate/>)
 Adult (<https://www.dc.edu/adult-programs/>) Graduate (<https://www.dc.edu/graduate/>)
 Online (<https://www.dc.edu/online-courses/>)

Email (<http://outlook.office365.com>)

my.dc.edu (<https://my.dc.edu/ics/>)



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Crisis Communication Plan

A crisis plan provides a protocol for coordinating an effective response to events or issues that require communication between Dominican College and the media, the College and the public, the College and its own constituency. For the purpose of this plan, a crisis is defined as any situation that threatens the integrity or reputation of the College. Emergencies may include fire, legal disputes, theft, natural disasters or manmade disasters. They may also include controversial issues such as investigations, protests or any other situations that can be attributed to the College that requires a public response. Crisis readiness may also be required when the College needs to release potentially damaging or negative information.

This plan is not intended to supplant in any way how emergencies are currently reported. Initially all incidents should be reported to the Director of Campus Security (ext. 4061). However, this plan is intended to familiarize all campus officials and staff with the procedures in the event of a crisis and their responsibilities to the College during these incidents.

In this section

[Our People](https://www.dc.edu/people)
 (<https://www.dc.edu/people>)

[Alumni of Distinction](https://www.dc.edu/people/alumni-of-distinction)
 (<https://www.dc.edu/people/alumni-of-distinction/>)

[Palisades Institute](https://www.dc.edu/people/palisades-institute)
 (<https://www.dc.edu/people/palisades-institute/>)

[Testimonials](https://www.dc.edu/people/testimonials)
 (<https://www.dc.edu/people/testimonials/>)

[Board of Trustees](https://www.dc.edu/people/board-of-trustees)
 (<https://www.dc.edu/people/board-of-trustees/>)

The procedures outlined in this plan will provide a standard of conduct for determining an appropriate response to crisis. The plan is divided into four steps, Preparation, Assessment, Response and Recovery.

Swift response to an adverse incident is imperative. The actions of the College during the first few hours of an emergency are critical in setting the record and minimizing misinformation or rumors. It is imperative that all staff, administrators and faculty of the College are aware of, understand, accept and adhere to the principles set out in this plan.

PREPARATION

Core Crisis Communication Team

- President
- Administrative Council
- Director of Facilities
- Director of Security
- Depending on nature of crisis, other pertinent representatives will be added to team
- Media Liaison

An up-to-date and complete contact sheet of the Core Crisis Team members will be available to the Campus Security Office. This includes cell, beeper and home numbers. Core Team members will also have a copy of this information and are advised to keep a copy of these details at home as well as on campus.

The Director of Security will be the College liaison with local police and fire services. Contact information including, cell, beeper and home numbers should be provided to these services and updated regularly.

The designated meeting area for the Team will be the Fury Room in Cooke Hall. The designated area for news briefings and interviews will be the Holt Room in the Hennessy Center. If a larger venue is needed, the media can be directed into the gymnasium.

ASSESSMENT

In the event of potential crisis, the Vice President with oversight responsibility for affected area will be responsible for gathering data/situation analysis and bringing these details to the Core Crisis Communication Team for assessment. Proper issue

President’s Message
(<https://www.dc.edu/pe-message/>)

Departments and Offices
(<https://www.dc.edu/pe-2/>)

Bursar
(<https://www.dc.edu/2/bursars-office/>)

Communications and Media Relations
(<https://www.dc.edu/2/public-relations/>)

Op-ed Guidelines
(<https://www.dc.edu/2/public-relations/op-ed-guidelines/>)

Crisis Communication Plan
(<https://www.dc.edu/2/public-relations/crisis-communication-plan/>)

Facilities
(<https://www.dc.edu/2/facilities/>)

Online Instruction
(<https://www.dc.edu/2/online-instruction/>)

Payroll Office

management requires that the Team be able to determine when an event warrants a broad response. Equally important the Team must determine when an event does NOT warrant a public response and would be better managed internally. Guarding against overreaction is as important as resisting the inclination to lie low.

Members of the team will be responsible for information and activities related to their own departments. For this reason, Team members should make certain that information vital to their area of responsibility is available and easily accessible at all times. Pre-assigned tasks will enable the Team to come together ready to focus all their energy without concerns about duplication of efforts or oversights.

TASK ASSIGNMENT

Director of Security: Compiles initial incident report in cooperation with Vice President (as stated above) as well as securing incident site. Assure that meeting site is accessible. If new site has to be secured, make certain that Team members have been advised of changes. Assign a member of the security team to man switchboard until an operator can come on duty.

VP for Student Development and Dean of Students: With the assistance of Campus Security, determine which, if any, Dominican College students are directly or indirectly involved with incident. Compile a list of students' names and contact numbers. If Police or other emergency personnel have removed students from Campus, the VP will make contact with these services and get updates.

VP for Institutional Advancement: Bring to the meeting a contact sheet of all Board of Trustees and President's Advisory Council members. Have available the names and contact numbers of local and regional government officials. VP will also have available names and contact numbers of all school officials who may be called upon to assist with crisis management. If a response is deemed necessary, the team will immediately inform the Chancellor and legal counsel. Under some circumstances, the Chairperson of the Board of Trustees should be advised of current events.

Media Liaison: The Media Liaison will provide a complete listing of all media outlets. The Liaison will also field any initial calls by media with the statement that "We are looking into the situation and will get back to you promptly." Make this statement available to switchboard. Give switchboard a callback sheet and instruct that all calls (from the media, or other sources) be logged in with instructions that names/organizations/phone numbers be noted.

RESPONSE

(<https://www.dc.edu/2/payroll-office/>)

College Directory
(<https://www.dc.edu/people-directory/>)

The job of the Team will be to determine a course of action and the prompt execution of that plan. The extent of the response will depend on the nature and scope of the crisis. From the perspective of the media, the College community and the general public, the actions of Dominican College should be perceived at all times as organized and well thought out.

Assume that the media have been alerted to the crisis. If an event is newsworthy, it is only a matter of time before the media will approach the College. It is strongly advised that the College convey the facts promptly and in a straightforward manner. Legal matters and issues of confidentiality must be taken into consideration before any statements are made.

Withholding information from the media will generate suspicion and mistrust. The College should not hesitate to be preemptive when necessary. It is strongly advised that the College take it upon itself to disclose any negative or embarrassing information. Hesitation to do so may put the College in the unfortunate position of defending its public statements down the line.

During an emergency the College will have to function under the pressures of time, with limited resources and manpower. To be effective, communication activities must be prioritized. Below is a suggested priority list.

1. Address the needs of those most directly affected by events. In cases of personal injury or death, be certain that families are notified before information is released to the public.
2. Address the potential concerns of students, their guardians, faculty, staff and administrators.
3. Prepare to address the public/media. Produce a clear and concise fact sheet, stating the confirmed facts: who, what, where, when and how of the event.

Ideally, the College switchboard will be staffed throughout the duration of the emergency. The Team will prepare a statement indicating, for example, "Facts are being gathered and all inquiries will be addressed as soon as possible." The operator will convey the statement to all callers. A recorded message will handle overflow calls, assuring that all individuals will get the information they are seeking. As events unfold, the operator will be kept informed and revised statements will be issued as they become available.

All incoming media inquiries will be forwarded to the Media Liaison. If the Team is not ready to speak with media at that time, the operator will relay a prepared statement and note inquiry in call log. The name of the media outlet as well as the

contact and phone number will be noted. If a news briefing has been scheduled, the operator will advise the media of time and location.

SPOKESPERSON

Designation of a spokesperson is a critical decision and can greatly influence the handling of the crisis. In most cases, the spokesperson will be the **Media Liaison** or the **Vice President** of the area most affected by the crisis. In cases of significant events, the President or other high-ranking College official designated by the Team will take the lead. The spokesperson will convey to the public the College's wish to be **Open, Truthful and Responsive** to the needs of the students, staff and community.

A spokesperson must be comfortable in dealing with the media. The best spokesperson will have credibility with the media, be able to function with confidence in front of an audience and be able to remain calm in stressful situations. The best candidate may not be the most obvious choice and the committee must carefully consider all salient points before designating a representative.

As events unfold it may become apparent that because of the duration and scale of the crisis, an alternate spokesperson will be necessary to handle the influx of public inquirers. More than one point person is advisable in such situations with the understanding that they are speaking with one voice. If more than one spokesperson is working the event, be certain that each spokesperson keeps a record of whom they spoke with for purposes of follow-up.

Anticipate that other parties involved with the crisis — police, fire or other outside parties — may have a spokesperson. Obtain their identities so all statements and contacts with the media can be coordinated.

Under certain circumstances, it may be advisable to supplement the knowledge of a spokesperson with that of a technical expert or outside advisor to answer media questions that fall beyond the scope of the College.

- News Releases

All releases should be issued through the Public Relations Department. Limit statements to facts that have been gathered from reliable sources and confirmed. You add information as it becomes available, being very careful never to overreach or speculate. Always be aware that what you say and what is written is **On The Record**. A suggested legal caveat: make no estimates of dollar damages, injuries, or loss of life; and do not venture to guess causes or responsibility for incident. Lawyers and insurance companies will be measuring these words carefully, and

these statements can come back to haunt you. For this reason, the President or leading administrator on the Team should approve all news releases, fact sheets or verbal statements.

- Internal Communications The College community should be advised that in times of emergencies they should check their e-mail or voice mail and can refer to the Crisis Communication section of the College website for up-to-date information. News releases and other relevant information will be posted to this site and updated frequently. Addressing the needs of the school community is vital if order and calm are to be maintained or restored. Updates will be provided by the Media Liaison and presented to the appropriate personnel for posting on website and distribution through e-mail and voice-mail.

Sensitive or private information will not be conveyed to administrators, staff, faculty and students by memo or e-mail. This information can be deliberately or accidentally leaked. If sensitive facts must be conveyed, it will be done verbally, making clear that this information is for internal use only.

- Media Relations During times of crisis, do not change the rules already in place for dealing with the media. The current guidelines at Dominican College stipulate that the media will be accompanied at all times while on campus grounds. While we respect the right of the college staff and students to speak to media, it is strongly advised that during a crisis all interviews be restricted to the designated spokesperson.

Management of information during this time is critical. Management of information does not in any way imply avoidance of issues or deceptive behavior. It is the job of the media to seek out the answers to questions. It is our job to make information and access to key personnel available in a timely manner if we wish to establish and maintain a good working relationship with the media.

The Media Liaison will prioritize incoming media inquiries according to deadlines. Local media will get first priority. They are our communication link to the community and will be following the story long after Regional and National media have gone home.

Anticipate the different needs of media outlets. Pictures speak louder than words. Don't let a camera crew or photographer move through a sensitive area unless you have secured the site and are certain that the privacy of students and personnel is protected.

- Dress Rehearsals

Preparation for news conferences and interviews should include time to rehearse. Do a run through of the statement, anticipate tough questions by the media and formulate your answers. Repeat this process before newly scheduled conferences and interviews. A statement read aloud has a very different impact than a written statement. The rehearsal will allow time for the Team to redraft a statement that upon reading aloud seems contrived, incomplete or rambling. A spokesperson that engages the media by talking to them rather than reading stiffly from a script implies that we are secure in our actions and in command of the situation.

Communication Do's and Don'ts

Do's

- Do make available copies of any prepared statement for the media.
- Do time your presentation; leave opportunity for questions and answers.
- Do schedule the conference in consideration of news deadlines.
- Do have background facts about the College available.
- Do maintain eye contact with the audience.
- Do make sure that any graphics or pictures used are large enough for the entire audience to see clearly.
- Do speak, slowly and distinctly. Do test microphone and confirm with your audience that you can be heard.

Don'ts

- Do not speak off the record.
- Do not respond to rumors and negative comments.
- Do not improvise. If you don't have the answer, ask the reporters' names and assure them you will get back to them ASAP.
- Do not wander off the prepared text or make off the cuff remarks.
- Do not become defensive or emotional.

Do not answer more than the question itself. The moment you elaborate is the moment you are wandering off the prepared text.

Do not speak on behalf of the College or anyone else unless you have authorization.

Notify Key Constituents

In the rush to manage the media coverage of an emergency, it is important not to overlook or delay notification to key constituents of the College. The constituency is the public face of the College. The morale of the College community will be directly impacted by how well these groups are kept informed. Swift and effective communication will halt the spread of panic and rumors and demonstrate to the constituency that the College is in full control of the situation.

It is an error to assume that through the media coverage alone these groups will be informed and updated. Depending upon the extent of the crisis some or all of the following constituents should be personally contacted. Obviously, limited manpower and time constraints require that the list be prioritized. The Crisis Team will make this determination. (Sample List of Key Constituents can include all or some of the following)

- Administration, faculty, staff
- Alumni
- Board of Trustees
- Donors
- General Public
- Local government officials
- Parents/Guardians of Students
- President's Advisory Council
- Students

Select a member of the Team as the point person for individual constituent groups. Support staff can assist with follow through. By use of e-mail, a Crisis Communication section on the College website, phone calls, letters, and faxes, a chain of communication should be established and maintained throughout an event.

RECOVERY

As soon as possible after the conclusion of a crisis (this should not exceed 5 work days), a final statement providing a comprehensive wrap-up of the events will be issued. Do not hesitate to convey bad news as well as the good in this statement. Although on-going contact has been maintained with the school community, the purpose of this communication is to provide closure. Include a system (point person, phone number, or e-mail address) by which the questions of students, staff and faculty can be answered.

Immediately following a crisis, it is imperative that the College be sensitive to the needs of faculty, staff and students who may have been directly or indirectly affected by the events. Human Resources, Campus Ministry and the Vice President of Student Development should be prepared to offer guidance and to provide information about referral services.

Add Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) to the Crisis Communication section of the website, including an e-mail address for questions and feedback. Be certain that all e-mails are answered promptly. Update this section as necessary and keep the information posted for at least 30 days after the initial occurrence of the event.

Within a week of the closure of a crisis, the Crisis Communication Team will gather to evaluate the effectiveness of their actions and, where necessary, make changes to the plan.

Revised February 9, 2007

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(<https://www.dc.edu/people/390-2/public-relations/crisis-communication-plan/?share=linkedin&nb=1>)

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UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA

Office of the Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs and Provost



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Policies



News & Events

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HEALTH AND SAFETY

5.04-9 University of Georgia Crisis Communication Plan

UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA CRISIS COMMUNICATIONS PLAN

I. Purpose

A crisis communication plan provides policies and procedures for the coordination of communication within the university, and between the university, the media and the public in the event of an emergency or controversial issue. Emergencies may include fires, bomb threats, natural disasters or major crimes. Controversial issues may include police investigations, protests or other situations that demand a public response. **The plan is not intended to change the way emergencies are initially reported. All emergencies on campus should be reported to University Police at 542-2200.**

This plan not only addresses media relations and communication issues, but also includes procedures for the rapid identification of potentially harmful situations and the methods for responding to these situations quickly and effectively.

It is the goal of this crisis communication plan to establish guidelines for dealing with a variety of situations, and to ensure that campus officials and communicators are familiar with those procedures and their roles in the event of a crisis. The plan is to be used in conjunction with the normal decision-making hierarchy of the university and crisis plans developed by other administrative units and does not supplant that decision-making process.

II. Objectives of the Plan

1. To factually assess the situation and determine whether a communications response is warranted.
2. To assemble a Crisis Communication Team that will make recommendations on appropriate responses.
3. To implement immediate action to:
 1. Identify constituencies that should be informed about the situation
 2. Communicate facts about the crisis
 3. Minimize rumors
 4. Restore order and/or confidence

III. Procedures

1. *UGAA/ert*. UGAAAlert may be used in cases of extreme urgency, where there is a severe threat to public safety and the health of the entire campus that has not been contained or controlled, and when immediate action is required by recipient groups. UGAAAlert is an emergency notification system that sends short recorded messages to electronic devices as designated by users. UGAAAlert is not used for non-emergency notifications such as lane closures, crime updates, inclement weather closings, localized building emergencies, situations that have been contained,

situations where a threat does not exist, rumor control, situations where notification is merely a convenience or other situations when ArchNews is the most appropriate communication method. UGAAAlert can be authorized and initiated by the following individuals: the UGA president, VP for Public Affairs, the UGA police chief or the acting chief if the chief is not available, the director of the Office of Emergency and Security Preparedness or the acting director if the director is not available

2. *ArchNews*. ArchNews is a campus-wide listserv that can be designated for all students; all faculty and staff; or faculty, staff and students. E-mail messages can be sent through ArchNews to registered email addresses of recipients. This method should be used to communicate information about a crisis that does not require immediate action by the recipient because it is not assumed that users will always have immediate access to e-mail.

3. *Social Media*. The Public Affairs Division will be the official social media voice of the institution during a crisis. Other UGA entities are encouraged to retweet or share messages in their entirety. Because of the brevity necessitated by social media and the need to send a consistent message across all channels, posts and tweets will contain essential info and will link the user back to further information on www.uga.edu. Posts and tweets will be time-stamped when possible so as to not further the crisis as news is retweeted or shared. Social media channels will be monitored for additional crisis info and rumor control.

4. *Further media contact*. Determine whether a news conference and/or news release is an appropriate means of conveying information to faculty, staff, students, the news media and the public. Public Affairs will determine logistics of the news conference including when, where and how the

media will be contacted, which media will be contacted, who will supervise the news conference, who will appear, etc.

5. *Establish Crisis Command Center.* Determine whether the magnitude of the crisis merits establishing a Crisis Command Center (for police and university officials) and/or a media briefing center (for larger gatherings of the media for briefings or press conferences).

6. *Photography.* Decide the need to assign videographers and photographers to take pictures of the scene. This may prove helpful in responding to media inquiries or possible later litigation, as well as documenting events. Determine need to supply video footage from files. Decide whether to provide TV footage for immediate distribution. Determine whether it is appropriate to allow location shooting by TV and newspaper photographers. Determine when, where and who will accompany the media.

7. *Radio responses.* Discuss need to produce live or taped responses for radio and decide who will be available for radio sound bites. Contact Broadcast Media Coordinator.

8. *Other spokespersons.* Identify any other individuals who may serve as spokespersons or who might be made available to the news media. Counsel those individuals in terms of appropriate ways to deal with the media.

9. *Internal communications.* Determine strategy of internal communications to be used if the crisis affects university students and employees, working closely with Human Resources, the student newspaper, Columns, and the university's Web site UGA Today (www.uga.edu/news). The ArchNews campus-wide listserv is available for mass e-mail distribution of important information in rapidly developing situations. It can be segmented for distribution to faculty, staff, students or any combination of the three. The separate Administrative Memos listserv reaches some 400

senior deans, directors and department heads.

10. *Alternative communications.* Discuss alternative or additional means of conveying information such as letters to parents of students or selected constituencies of the university, letters to newspaper editors and consultation with editorial boards.

11. *Rumor control.* Consider establishing rumor-control hotline and/or a dedicated call-in line for media use. A Web page with hot link from the university home page can also be used for posting up-to-date information and FAQ. Use the campus-wide listserv, ArchNews, and social media to quickly disseminate the accurate information

IV. **Assessment.** The individual who encounters the potential crisis should gather accurate information from the appropriate sources. A potential crisis is defined as an event or situation that could affect or has affected the health, safety or welfare of students, faculty, staff or campus visitors. After fact gathering, the appropriate individual should determine whether an immediate response is necessary and, if so, should contact the Vice President for Public Affairs or, in his absence, an appropriate Public Affairs representative. The Vice President will determine whether to convene a Crisis Communication Team and will immediately inform the President and Provost.

Assembling Crisis Team. Composition of the crisis team will include at minimum (Core Team):

- Vice President for Public Affairs
- Department Head or chief contact in area affected
- News Service director
- Broadcast Services director

Other personnel will be added to this core team to form the larger

Crisis Communication Team, which will then formulate a response based on the nature of the crisis. Those added could include the following, depending on the situation:

- President
- Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs and Provost
- Vice President for Finance and Administration
- President's Chief of Staff
- Vice President for Government Relations
- Other individual vice presidents
- University Counsel
- Associate Vice President for Human Resources
- Dean of the appropriate college
- Athletic Director or Sports Information Director
- Director of University Health Center
- Associate Vice President of Environmental Safety Division
- Director of Housing
- Director of Community Relations
- others as appropriate to the situation

Initial Steps. The Core Crisis Team, after assessing the nature and scope of the situation, should call together all members of the Crisis Communication Team to develop a plan of action including some, or all, of the following:

1. *Designate a spokesperson.* In most cases the spokesperson should be the Vice President for Public Affairs. The person possessing the direct knowledge of the crisis (for example: the Chief of Police in the event of a campus crime, or the Director of the Health Center in a medical emergency) can act as spokesperson.

In cases of a significant crisis, the President or the highest-ranking university official must take the lead in conveying the administration's response to the crisis, showing that the university has control of the situation, calming public concern and setting an example for the entire campus.

2. *Draft a fact sheet.* The fact sheet should contain a summary statement of the situation including all known details to be released to the media. This information should be made available to the President or Provost, and appropriate Deans or Vice Presidents. This fact sheet should be analyzed with respect to the public's right to know and concerns for privacy and security in consultation with General Counsel.

3. *Notify key constituencies.* Determine key constituencies that should be informed of the crisis. It is important to keep administration, faculty, staff and students, as well as the general public, informed of appropriate details and actions taken by the university during an emergency. Effective communications will help quell rumors, maintain morale and ensure continued orderly operations of the university. A member or members of the Crisis Team should be assigned to communicate the facts of the situation (contained in the fact sheet) and the university's intended response. Among the groups that should be considered for communication in a crisis situation are:

- Law enforcement agencies – should be notified by Police Department representatives.
- Campus administrators, faculty, staff – Information to administrators other than those selected to serve on the Crisis Team should be provided via appropriate communications vehicle, usually e-mail and Web postings, UGAAlert, social media, and/or mass meetings. Regular e-mailed

updates of important changes in information and situation status should be distributed. This should be handled by the senior member of the core crisis communication group, usually the Vice President for Public Affairs or designee.

- Students – All students can be contacted in a mass e-mail through ArchNews and/or UGAAlert or social media. Additional communications with students may be considered through mass meetings as necessary, in such venues as housing, Stegeman Coliseum or the Tate Student Center.
- Board of Regents – The Vice President for Public Affairs, or designee, should routinely keep the Assistant Vice Chancellor for Public Affairs informed in crisis situations. This is most efficiently accomplished either by telephone or e-mail. In matters of institutional policy, the Chancellor or members of the Board of Regents may be informed or consulted, but only with the President or an appropriate senior administrator, or with their specific authorization.
- Parents of students – All students can be contacted via ArchNews e-mail, UGAAlert or social media in a timely fashion, and when appropriate, may be encouraged to share the information directly with their parents. Parents who inquire may also be directed to the UGA Today Web site or other appropriate informational sites on the Web. The university switchboard can double as a rumor control hotline.
- Local community – If the situation has an impact on local residents, fliers can be distributed or use mass media. Social media also should be used. If appropriate, meetings can be arranged with leaders

of the neighborhood associations near the university. The Director of Community Relations will take charge of such communications as part of the crisis communications team.

- Mass media – Public Affairs may prepare news releases for distribution. All media inquiries should be directed to Public Affairs and all releases to the media should come through Public Affairs or be made with their specific knowledge. The institution should speak with one voice in time of crisis to assure consistent, official and accurate information is disseminated.
- Government agencies – If government entities (Mayor, Governor's office, etc.) need to be informed, this should be handled only by the Vice President for Government Relations, the Vice President for Public Affairs, Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs and Provost, the President or designees.
- Others – Other possible constituents that may need to be contacted concerning an emergency or crisis include UGA Foundation Boards of Directors, Alumni Association Board, accreditation organizations, and school/college/unit-based constituent support organizations.

4. *Switchboards*. The following locations, which receive high volumes of incoming telephone calls to the university, should be notified regarding the key facts of the crisis (fact sheet) and where to refer calls pertaining to the crisis:

Location	Phone
Public Affairs	542-8090
University Police	542-2200
Campus switchboard	542-3000

Tate Center information	542-3816
Human Resources	542-2621

5. *Loss of telephone service.* Cellular phones should be used in the event that land-lines are down. Public Affairs will maintain a list of cellular phone numbers for key university officials. UGA's Police Department and Physical Plant are among campus units with walkie-talkies and short-wave radios that can serve as additional means of communicating.

Secondary Steps. Depending on the nature of the crisis, other decisions and/or actions may be necessary. These could include:

V. Facility Evacuation/Operational Shutdowns

It may become necessary to evacuate buildings and/or areas surrounding facilities to protect and ensure the safety of people and, in some instances, animals. If such a situation occurs, decisions regarding work space accommodations and/or leave requirements for faculty and staff, as well as class schedules and possibly housing accommodations for students, would need to be addressed.

Issues surrounding leave for staff employees should be directed to Personnel Services (Note: normally time away from work is accounted for through current leave policies).

Student questions should be directed to the Vice President for Student Affairs; faculty should address concerns to the Provost's Office.

VI. Aftermath Component

Following any crisis, appropriate action must take place to ensure that members of the university community, and others as necessary, receive needed information and assistance to help bring

closure to the crisis as well as relief from the effects of the event. Attention also should be placed on identifying and implementing measures to improve the action plan used during the crisis.

Possible steps include:

1. *Public forum.* If appropriate, a public forum should be scheduled and coordinated by Public Affairs to communicate details of the incident and events to all interested members of the university. The timing of this meeting is critical and every effort should be made to see that it occurs within only a few working days from the close of the crisis. Representatives from University Police, Human Resources and the University Counseling Center should attend and be prepared to answer questions and share pertinent information. Specific departments and/or individuals also may be requested to attend and participate depending on the nature of the crisis.

2. *Victim assistance.* Immediately following a crisis, it is imperative that the university be sensitive to the needs of faculty, staff and students who may have been personally affected by the event. There may be a need to assist a victim or victims with obtaining information and/or a referral to available resources. The core team will be responsible for coordinating this assistance with appropriate university offices and units.

3. *Accurate information.* It is not unreasonable to expect that rumors would follow a crisis, further creating an atmosphere of anxiety. One means of combating rumors would be to take full advantage of electronic mail, rumor-control hotlines, social media, etc. and report facts as appropriate.

4. *Acknowledgments.* Depending on the nature of the crisis, services and assistance may have been rendered by agencies, companies and/or individuals from outside the

university. Public Affairs should ensure that applicable follow-up information and appropriate thank-you letters are disseminated, including a potential blanket thank-you to be published in local media and on university Web sites.

5. *Debriefing.* The core team shall meet within 10 days following a crisis and review all actions taken as a result of the crisis to determine effectiveness and efficiency of operations and make any needed changes to the Crisis Communications Plan.

Sources:

Office of Public Affairs; as revised July 15, 2005

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University of Kentucky Crisis Communication Plan Summary

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INTRODUCTION

Communication is an essential component in the University's plan to handle a crisis situation. How the University communicates with the students, faculty, staff, parents, media and the general public can have a lasting impact on its reputation. An effective communications plan, coupled with the early involvement of communications professionals, will help limit possible negative impact of the crisis and allow those charged with mitigating the crisis to fulfill their responsibilities.

A crisis situation is any situation or event that has a major impact on the campus community and the broader public. Examples of a crisis situation may include fires, bomb threats, deaths or serious injuries, natural disasters, major crimes or major disruptions of campus operations, such as a campus-wide power or network outage or severe weather. Crisis situations may include police investigations, protests or other situations that require a public response.

This plan is not intended to change the way emergencies are initially reported. **All emergencies on campus should be reported immediately to University Police.**

PURPOSE

The purpose of this plan is to establish and delineate the procedures and methods for disseminating accurate and timely information to the UK campus community, media and public during a crisis situation.

OBJECTIVES

1. To factually assess the situation and determine whether a communications response is warranted.
2. To notify crisis communication group
3. To implement immediate action to:
 - o Identify constituencies that should be informed about the situation.
 - o Collect information about the crisis
 - o Communicate facts about the crisis.
 - o Minimize rumors.
 - o Restore order and confidence.

PROCEDURES

1. **Assessment:** People who become aware of a potential crisis or emergency must contact the Office of Public Relations and Marketing. The Executive Director or a designee, in conjunction with other campus authorities, will determine whether it is appropriate to invoke this plan and notify crisis communication team.

- To ensure that the University's public information response is timely, accurate, sensitive and responsible, the Office of Public Relations and Marketing will coordinate campus communications with campus and off-campus media. If necessary, the Office of Public Relations and Marketing will set up a crisis communication center in its office, or at an alternate location dictated by the nature of the crisis, to remain open 24 hours a day during the crisis. This is not to be confused with the Emergency Operations Center located in the Office of Crisis Management and Preparedness or the University police staff in charge of making decisions pertaining to the handling of the crisis itself.
- The President or his designee shall serve as the chief university official. If they are not available, the Provost or his designee shall serve as the senior university official.
- During an emergency, the Executive Director of Public Relations and Marketing or his designee or a designated member of the Crisis Communication Team will serve as the chief spokesperson.
- During an emergency, the Executive Director of Public Relations and Marketing or his designee will work with the Crisis Communication Team to ensure pertinent information is promptly distributed via the UK website, UKNow news website, social media, broadcast email, news release to media and other methods if necessary.

2. Crisis Communication Team: The Crisis Communication Team is comprised of UKPRM employees and others whose organizations may play a critical role in addressing the crisis. Members may be called into action during a crisis based on each individual situation.

Time is of the essence in communicating crucial information to the university community and the news media, and the team will be assembled as quickly as possible. Based on the timing, location and severity of the incident(s) or event(s), this may occur either in person or virtually. The Executive Director of Public Relations and Marketing will determine when a sufficient number of the team is engaged.

3. Information: As soon as possible after the incident, informational material will be prepared to supplement communication with key constituencies and information provided to reporters by the spokespersons. It will be approved by the Executive Director of Public Relations and Marketing and checked for accuracy by those with a direct knowledge of the crisis. Information released publicly or posted to the Internet will be updated as information changes.

4. Notifying Key Constituencies: The Crisis Communications Team will determine which groups need to be informed first. It is important to keep in mind that people will seek – and believe – other sources of information (e.g., news reports, rumors, word of mouth) in the absence of official communication. Effective communication will help quell rumors, maintain morale and ensure public safety.

Key constituencies include:

- Students
- Staff
- Board of Trustees
- Alumni
- General Public
- Faculty
- Parents of students
- Public officials—Governor, Mayor
 - Neighbors
- News Media

5. Alerting the media: UK Public Relations and Marketing shall decide the best way(s) of reaching the news media. In cases where a crisis is likely to be prolonged and/or especially complex, the Executive Director may choose to create a Joint Information Center and/or a news media briefing center to coordinate the information flow and assure that the appropriate people are involved in collecting and disseminating information. Consideration will be given to appropriate media staging locations that can accommodate vehicles such as satellite trucks. Communication with the media will occur as new information becomes known. Information from news briefings may be captured in audio and/or video and posted to the Internet, along with updated informational material. Effort will be made to monitor news

coverage in key media and correct significant inaccuracies, either in those media themselves or in material distributed by the university. In general, the university will welcome reporters and allow them as much access as public safety and common sense permit. Public information officers will facilitate access to key knowledgeable individuals and respond quickly to as many requests as possible.

6. Phases of Response

Decision Criteria

Five criteria shall be considered to determine the type of communication response necessary:

- Hazard Type
 - What is the hazard? (Fire, tornado, active shooter, inclement weather)
 - What is the impact to UK? (Minor, major, catastrophic)
 - What is the potential for the situation to worsen?
 - Is the situation under control?
- Life Safety / Property Protection
 - What is the potential for death?
 - What is the potential for serious injury?
 - What is the potential for minor injury?
 - What is the potential for damage?
 - What is the potential for disruption to normal course of business
- Urgency
 - How soon does the message need to go out? (immediately, minutes, hours, days)
 - Is there time for approval?
 - Whose approval is needed?
- Audience
 - Who needs to be notified? (Administration, faculty, staff, students, guests, parents, media, etc.)
 - How many people need to be alerted? (Dozens, hundreds, thousands)
- Capabilities / Limitations
 - What are the limitations of the system? (Limited audience, lengthy delivery time, mass panic)
 - Which system should be used or should all be used? (news release/conference, broadcast email, mass notification, website, social media, etc.)
 - How quickly can the messages be sent? (Immediately, minutes, hours)

Phases of response include the immediate phase which incorporates the time between when Public Relations officials learn of the crisis and the first communication about the crisis is made to the constituencies. The ongoing phase constitutes the time period following that first communication; this is when the crisis may be continuing or may have ended but new information is being learned and its communication is critical. The recovery period follows resolution of the crisis and its aftermath and involves reviewing the success of the crisis communications efforts.

1. Immediate

- The Office of Public Relations and Marketing and the official spokesperson will determine if an official statement should be prepared and released. If warranted, Public Relations staff members will also develop answers to specific questions that may be asked by the media.
- The Public Relations staff will obtain basic information (type of

crisis/emergency; time of emergency; actions taken; areas and number of people involved; injuries or fatalities; extent of damage; etc.) and prepare an official news release. Public Relations staff is authorized to obtain information from all emergency personnel to enable a timely and accurate flow of information.

- Determination of the means of communicating – i.e. broadcast email, UK Alert, news release/conference, website update, social media, etc.
 - The Public Relations staff will verify all sources of information.
 - The Public Relations staff will clear news releases with the chief university official and/or official spokesperson as quickly as possible before releasing to the media.
 - To the extent possible, the Public Relations staff will log all media inquiries.
 - In cases involving student injuries or deaths, families will be notified by appropriate personnel before the information is released to the public.
 - Spokesperson will coordinate the release of factual information with local hospitals and other disaster agencies, providing as prompt, accurate and complete information as possible.
2. Ongoing Period
- Public Relations staff members will continue to monitor the unfolding nature of the emergency and collect information; will provide ongoing communication with public, media and other constituencies; will make determinations on and contact with possible experts to address questions about the circumstances of the crisis; will provide ongoing communication as new information is learned. The Office Public Relations and Marketing will issue media updates for as long as necessary, then scale back activities as warranted.
3. Recovery Period
- Upon resolution of the crisis situation, the Executive Director of Public Relations and Marketing will schedule a meeting of all key players to review all actions taken and lessons learned. These will be included in an after-action report (AAR) to be forwarded to the President and other appropriate university officials or departments. Changes to this Crisis Communication Plan may be made as a result of lessons learned.

PLAN TESTING AND VALIDATION

This plan shall be updated and tested at least once a year. Full activation of the plan will be incorporated into the University's annual Emergency Operations Center disaster exercise. Responsibility for updating the Crisis Communications Plan rests with the Executive Director of Public Relations.

AFTER-ACTION REPORT/REVIEW (AAR)

Following resolution of the crisis, the Executive Director of Public Relations and Marketing will convene the Crisis Communications Team for a review of lessons learned. The AAR may be used to provide summary information to a more comprehensive campus-wide AAR coordinated through the UK Office of Crisis Management and Preparedness.

Questions/Comments: [Chuck Ham](#)

Last Updated: July 11, 2012

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USF CRISIS COMMUNICATIONS FLOW

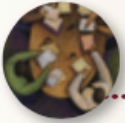




PURPOSE & OBJECTIVES

The purpose of the Crisis Communications Plan is to ensure pro-active and efficient dissemination of information before, during and after a crisis situation. Specific objectives include:

- Disclose relevant and accurate information in a timely manner.
- Avoid insensitive, unsubstantiated, legally libel or private disclosures.
- Ensure accurate media and electronic reporting.
- Use communication to ensure safety or minimize danger.
- Provide staff with clear direction so they can proceed with confidence.



SUMMARY & SCOPE

It is not the intention of this plan to duplicate or usurp the Emergency Operations Plan (EOP), which defines and deals with the handling of a variety of critical incidents. This plan focuses on communications only and supplements the EOP. It covers the communications function for the entire USF System.



RULES

1. Critical incidents must be reported to 911 or University Police at (813) 974-2628.
2. No one speaks to the media during a crisis except those designated in this plan or by the Director of Media Relations.
3. Refer to Emergency Operations Plan for detailed descriptions of crises and other operational procedures.

Before The Crisis

- 1 Conduct an information campaign to staff, students, parents, board members and community contacts on how they can obtain information during a crisis. List websites, hotlines and media outlets on posters, flyers, email announcements and web postings. Continually reinforce the information so people automatically know what to do. Use space on web for emergency updates and background information and drive traffic to it.
- 2 Periodically review and update fact sheets, historical information, contact lists, campus maps, and profiles or bios of key management personnel with photos.
- 3 Identify secondary or "expert" spokespersons on key topics.
- 4 Discuss and decide various sites on and off campus for communications command center for press conferences, media briefings, place for reporters to work, etc.
- 5 Brief media representatives on Crisis Communications Plan.
- 6 Train probable spokespersons and role play high-pressured interviews.
- 7 Make sure communication vehicles are in place:
 - a. Inbound calling hotline
 - b. Web site
 - c. Telephone trees
 - d. Email databases
 - e. Media contact lists
 - f. Internal contact lists
- 8 Learn all aspects of Florida's public records laws and consult with General Counsel on the Crisis Communications Team if there is any doubt about compliance. Generally follow these guidelines:
 - In response to a direct inquiry about a student, you may only release information that is already published in a USF Directory, which is usually name, address, possibly a phone number, major and enrollment status. For sports figures, it may also include height, weight and other information published in a game program.
 - Do not offer any additional information or even amplify on directory information in any context other than straight, directory information. For example, student courses, financial aid, interests, etc., may not be released.
 - You may discuss incidents in a broad, general context to explain USF policy or procedures, but not in the context of the individual student.
 - You may confirm if someone is NOT a student.

Responsibilities For Notifying Key Constituencies

- President's Office and University Relations are notified by University Police.
- Law enforcement agencies are notified by University Police.
- Board of Trustees, Cabinet, Campus CEOs, and Chancellor are notified by Chief of Staff or designee.
- Regional Campus Boards are notified by CEO's.
- Staff and faculty are notified electronically by University Relations.
- Students and parents can be notified through email by Student Affairs and/or by web, media and hotline by University Relations.
- Local community is notified through media, web, and hotline by University Relations.
- Media is notified by University Relations.
- Other government agencies are notified by Associate Vice President, Government Relations.
- Alumni are notified by Executive Director of Alumni Association.

Crisis Communication Team

- ▶ Chief of Staff
 - ▶ Executive Vice President
 - ▶ Assistant VP for University Relations
 - ▶ Director of Media Relations
 - ▶ General Counsel
 - ▶ Department Head, Dean or chief contact in area affected
 - ▶ Director of Human Resources
 - ▶ Vice President for Student Affairs
 - ▶ Chief of Police or University Police Spokesman
- * If Regional Campus incident, Campus CEO and Chief Communications Officer

Regional Campus Responsibilities & Contacts

Any incident on a regional campus that involves agencies outside the campus or will be reported in the media MUST be coordinated with the USF University Relations office in Tampa. Common sense prevails, but if there's any doubt, make the call to Tampa. Regional campus CEO's and/or spokespersons are entrusted to provide leadership and use good judgment while following procedures in this plan, and specifically:

- 1 Contact University Relations BEFORE taking any definitive action or generating any media responses. Email notifications may not be sufficient. Keep cell and home phone numbers of key contacts handy at all times. Do not be concerned with bothering University Relations personnel at odd hours.
- 2 Follow the Communications Action Checklist in this plan, which includes designating a spokesperson(s) for each incident in coordination with University Relations and the Crisis Communications Team.
- 3 Develop a local version of this plan, with regional campus contact information listed, along with communication command locations and media contacts.
- 4 If necessary, University Relations will dispatch personnel to the regional campus for assistance. Conversely, regional campus personnel should be willing and able to assist the Tampa campus, if called upon.
- 5 At the completion of the incident, report findings and observations about media coverage and any follow-up activities needed.

Regional Campus Contacts

USF St. Petersburg University Relations

Holly Kickliter: Office: 727-873-4455 Cell: 727-709-9390

USF Sarasota-Manatee University Relations

Leah Williams: Office: 941-359-4726 Cell: 727-278-0425

USF Lakeland University Relations

David Steele: Office: 863-667-7055 Cell: 863-944-9119

Tampa Campus Contacts

USF University Relations

Ken Gullette: Office: 813-974-8476 Cell: 813-758-9915

USF Health Communications

Michael Hoad: Office: 813-974-3300 Cell: 813-545-6134

USF Police Communications

Meg Ross: Office: 813-974-2451

USF General Counsel

Steve Prevoux: Office: 813-974-1669



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Crisis Communication at the University of Louisville

Policies and Procedures

Introduction

The way the University of Louisville communicates in a crisis has a lasting impact on its reputation. As a publicly assisted institution, U of L is obliged to keep the public informed of its activities. Invariably, the news media act as powerful agents in this process.

How well the university gets its message across to the public depends to a great extent on what is reported in the news. This is especially true in crises, when people rely primarily on the information they receive from newspapers, television and radio to form their opinions.

For purposes of this plan, a crisis is defined as:

A significant disturbance in the university's activities which results in extensive news coverage and public scrutiny, and which has the potential to cause long-term public relations damage.

The actions U of L takes in crises, and how it interacts with the news media during these periods of intense public scrutiny, can critically shape the way it is perceived, which in turn can affect the degree of support it receives.

This plan, a supplement to U of L's existing Public Information Policy, addresses crisis communication on two levels by offering:

- Policies aimed at gaining control of reputation problems before they become public relations crises.
- Standard procedures for limiting damage in crises that cannot be avoided.

A Crisis Action Checklist ([new window](#)) outlines the basic approach to crisis management. It was prepared for use as a ready reference for all U of L personnel who at some point may be involved in a crisis.

Pre-emptive vs. Reactive Crisis Management

Adopting a pre-emptive approach to media relations is critical in successful crisis management.

Disclosing information as soon as it is verified can be a highly effective strategy, since it keeps the institution on the initiative and quickly eliminates the "breaking news" interest in a story. This technique

often summarily defuses a public relations crisis, even when the subject is unpleasant or embarrassing.

The policies and procedures in this plan are based on disclosure as a preferred strategy for managing crises.

General Assumptions

- Uof L is located in Kentucky's largest city, where it is subject to a considerable degree of media scrutiny.
- Sentiment is growing for more accountability in higher education, and news coverage has become more investigative.
- Public perceptions are a key factor in the support U of L receives from legislators, alumni, donors and the community, and in U of L's ability to attract and retain qualified students, faculty and staff.
- Negative news coverage can damage U of L's reputation.
- Although crises can pose a threat to U of L's public image, they also present an opportunity for communicating a desired message.
- U of L can safeguard its reputation by adopting an active, effective approach to crisis communication.

Crisis Communication Policy

General policy

The University of Louisville is committed to taking a pre-emptive approach to public relations crises, using disclosure whenever possible as the preferred strategy for preventing or minimizing public relations crises.

No one is authorized to speak to the news media in a crisis without clearance from the Office of Communications and Marketing.

Communications and Marketing will be responsible for developing crisis communication strategies.

Final approval of these strategies will rest with the University President or his designee.

Crisis prevention

Communications and Marketing will maintain regular contact with vice presidents, deans, directors, department heads, campus police, and faculty, staff and student leaders, advising the appropriate administrator(s) when internal issues or developments appear likely to lead to public relations problems.

Similarly, U of L's administration will regularly notify Communications and Marketing of internal developments that may escalate into public relations crises.

Communications and Marketing also will monitor local, state and national news coverage of higher education, advising the appropriate administrator(s) of issues and/or trends that might lead to negative stories.

Crisis response

When crises erupt, Communications and Marketing will gather and verify information about the crisis, assess the severity of the crisis, and develop strategies concerning how information is to be released, who should speak for the institution and who is to be notified.

The office also will confer with U of L's national media consultant, as appropriate, work out logistical details of releasing information, and distribute verified information as quickly as possible to internal and external audiences.

Crisis Communication Procedure

I. Forseeable crises

A. Crisis assessment

Communications and Marketing Director Denise Fitzpatrick will be notified immediately of an emerging crisis.

1. Fitzpatrick will confer with the appropriate U of L official(s) to assess the nature and severity of the crisis.
 - a. Fitzpatrick may be able to devise a simple strategy to forestall the crisis, particularly if it is confined to a single U of L unit
2. If issues and events are of sufficient complexity that they require input from several U of L units, or if a simple strategy is not likely to be effective, Fitzpatrick will:
 - a. Recommend to Associate Vice President for Communications and Marketing John Drees that U of L quickly form a crisis team OR
 - b. If Drees is not immediately available, recommend to President James Ramsey (or his designee) that a crisis team be quickly formed

B. Formation of a crisis team

Drees or Ramsey (or his designee) will assemble and chair a crisis team made up of the highest-ranking officials available from the units involved in the crisis.

1. The composition of the team will vary according to the situation.
2. The crisis team will convene in the President's Conference Room unless another meeting location is specified by Ramsey or his designee.
3. At the session, Drees and/or Fitzpatrick will:
 - a. Gather as many details as possible
 - b. Recommend strategies for internal and external communication
 - c. Select an appropriate spokesperson (see University Spokesperson)
4. Final approval of the recommendations by Drees and/or Fitzpatrick will rest with Ramsey (or his designee).

II. Sudden crises

A. When the sudden occurrence of a severe crisis precludes convening a crisis team, the following emergency procedures will take effect:

1. Drees and/or Fitzpatrick will:
 - a. Be notified immediately of the crisis
 - b. Be apprised of all known facts/background
 - c. Have direct, priority access to Ramsey or his designee to develop a "first-wave" communication strategy
2. Communications and Marketing will implement the strategy immediately upon approval by Ramsey or his designee.

B. After implementing "first-wave" communication strategy, Drees and/or Fitzpatrick will assist in

forming a crisis team to develop ongoing strategy.

III. Establishing a clear line of communication

A. Communications and Marketing will be authorized to gather and verify information in a crisis, and will be the only department authorized to release information.

1. A representative of the operating unit "working" the crisis will quickly supply Communications and Marketing with all known details.
2. All news media contacts will be directed to Communications and Marketing.

IV. Releasing information internally

A. Whenever practical, Communications and Marketing will attempt to inform U of L employees of crises before details are released externally.

1. Communications and Marketing may:
 - a. Notify U of L units by telephone, personal contact or courier.
 - b. Issue news bulletins on Groupwise, U of L's administrative computer network, on ULink and/or the university's main page on the World Wide Web.
 - c. Post details on News Break and ULink.
 - d. Distribute informational flyers.
 - e. Set up a telephone hotline.
 - f. Offer follow-up coverage the News Web site (www.louisville.edu/news/) and on ULink.

V. Informing outside parties

A. Communications and Marketing will coordinate notification of outside parties likely to be affected by or strongly interested in the crisis.

1. Whenever practical, attempts will be made to:
 - a. Inform affected parties of impending media calls.
 - b. Supply them with written information before it is distributed to the news media.
 - c. Notify them of any planned U of L news briefings.
2. The U of L officials with the closest working relationships to the parties will handle actual notification.

VI. Releasing information to the news media

A. Communications and Marketing will work to supply verifiable details to the news media as rapidly as possible.

1. This may be done through personal contact, telephone, FAX transmission, radio feed, video feed, background session or news briefing.
 - a. It may become necessary to schedule periodic news briefings.

B. After releasing information, Communications and Marketing will monitor the news coverage and quickly correct any errors that are made.

VII. Evaluation and follow-up

A. Communications and Marketing will document the news coverage surrounding a crisis, including wire stories, newspaper articles, radio and television broadcasts.

B. When the crisis is past, Communications and Marketing will supply the crisis team with a summary of news coverage.

1. Members of the team will review this report and evaluate U of L's performance under fire. The team will note:
 - a. Overall success or failure of the crisis communication effort
 - b. Problems to be avoided in the future
 - c. Appropriate follow-up measures
2. Upon request, Communications and Marketing will report the findings of the team to the

President's Office.

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Governance

University of Wisconsin–Parkside

UW–Parkside HOME
262-595-2384

University of Wisconsin–Parkside Managing Communication During A Time of Crisis Crisis Communication Plan Policy #55

Communication is a key factor in the University's response to any crisis situation. Good communications policy and practice can assist in the management of the crisis; provide direction to faculty, staff and students; and disseminate information to appropriate constituents and the general public while maintaining the University's credibility.

The University of Wisconsin–Parkside will take every step to be forthright and timely in its communications with the University community, the media, and the general public during a time of crisis. Decisions and actions will be guided by responsible concern for the right of privacy, personal security, legal liability, and the public's legitimate right to be informed.

Authority of the Chancellor

During a crisis, communications--both internal and external--will be under the direction of the Chancellor or his/her designee. In a time of crisis, all written or oral statements (including news conferences, news releases, open memoranda or letters, interviews, and messages from information desks) to campus groups, the media, and the public require authorization of the Chancellor or her/his designee.

Definition of Crisis

A crisis may be the *result of catastrophe* or the result of circumstances with *potential for adverse public relations*. Some examples of possible crises are violent or criminal behaviors, civil disturbances, political or racial-oriented controversies, sexual harassment, accidental death or suicide, explosion or fire, storm damage, employee misconduct, and bomb threats.

Relationship to Disaster Action Plans

This crisis communication plan, while dealing with a broader range of concerns than those covered by campus disaster action plans*, shall be incorporated into each disaster plan. Where necessary, steps specific to any given type of disaster will be added. The campus risk manager and the director of public relations shall be responsible for developing disaster-specific action plans.

* Disaster action plans pertain to events or actions that have the potential for bodily harm, e.g. Bomb Threats, Tornado Warnings and Alerts, Fire, Chemical Spills or Smoke Evacuations.

Before A Crisis Occurs

1. *Orientation*. Annually, the University will provide organized training on managing campus communication in times of crisis for campus leaders. Persons required to participate will include but not be limited to members of the Chancellor's Cabinet, deans, dean of students, director of university police, risk manager, director of physical plant, director of student health and counseling, and the director of public relations.

2. *Crisis Management Team*. The Crisis Management Team (CMT) shall serve as the group responsible for advising the Chancellor and coordinating the University's actions in time of crisis or potential crisis. The Chancellor shall designate persons to a CMT. In addition to the Chancellor, the standing members of the CMT will be the Provost/Vice Chancellor, the Vice Chancellor and the Executive Director of University Advancement. Other members of the University community most likely to be designated to a CMT, depending upon the circumstances, include college deans, dean of students, director of university police, risk manager, director of physical plant, director of student health and counseling, and the director of public relations. Others may also be designated by the Chancellor.

3. *Communication Chain*. A list of names, titles, and phone numbers of those persons most likely to serve on the CMT (see designated positions in 1 and 2 above) and a procedure for contacting each person, regardless of when a crisis occurs, will be distributed to the Chancellor and her/his Cabinet. Lists of other persons to be contacted in case of a crisis--both those working for the University and key community people including media representatives--

need to be prepared in advance and distributed to the Chancellor and His/her Cabinet. These lists should include names, titles, affiliations, office and home phone numbers, and alternate contacts in case a particular individual is not reachable. The director of public relations shall be responsible for developing and maintaining accurate lists and providing them to the Chancellor for distribution.

4. *Logistical Details.* The director of public relations will prepare, in advance, logistical arrangements for such things as potential news conference/media availability sites, designated phone lines for media representatives, inventory and availability of equipment and space, parking for media including satellite broadcast trucks, and names and availability of support and technical staff so the director of public relations can deal directly with media representatives. The director will provide written outlines of these arrangements to the Chancellor and His/her Cabinet and keep them up-to-date.

Anticipating a Crisis

5. *Situation Analysis.* Whenever possible, staff and faculty should assess situations for their potential to result in a crisis, using the definitions in the first paragraph of this document to determine

the meaning of crisis.

6. *Briefings.* When staff anticipate potential for a crisis, they should brief (a) their senior administrative officer (dean, provost, vice chancellor, executive director) who will, in turn, be responsible for briefing the chancellor and (b) the executive director of university advancement. In the absence of the executive director of university advancement, they should brief the director of public relations. When time permits, as when potential for crisis is determined, the situation analysis and briefing should be prepared in writing and used for future reference.

Briefings should include all relevant information, including but not limited to:

- Who is involved and what are their titles or responsibilities?
- How, when, and where did the problem begin or occur?
- What's happening now?
- What are the possible ways in which this situation could play out?
- Are there legal or ethical ramifications? How does the open records law apply?
- What are the existing University plans, procedures and time lines for dealing with such a crisis?
- Is there a history of similar problems? If so, how were they resolved or what resulted?
- Are outside parties aware of this potential problem/crisis? If so, who are they?

Responding to a Crisis

7. *Develop a Communication Plan.* Discuss these briefing facts with the chancellor, the appropriate senior administrative officers, and the director of public relations in order to develop a strategy for communicating with the media and other campus constituencies, including the designation of spokespersons.

8. *Report Changes in Circumstances.* Whenever the potential crisis dissipates or begins to escalate, the Chancellor, the senior officer, and the Executive Director of University Advancement should be notified immediately.

9. *Coordinate Communications.* During a crisis the Division of University Relations will be responsible for working closely with the Chancellor and those directly involved in executing communications strategies, including:

coordinating inquiries from media representatives preparing and distributing statements to both internal and external audiences answering inquiries from internal and external audiences serving as the collection point for up-to-date information assisting/controlling media representatives, including working with University Police to designate a safe place at which they can learn about the situation in case of an emergency correcting false information

When the Crisis is Over

10. *Debrief.* The Crisis Management Team should convene to discuss what the crisis means for the University and its constituents, faculty and staff, the communities, etc., and to develop a follow-up communication plan to give closure to the incident or to keep people informed of post crisis developments.

SHORT LIST OF ACTION STEPS

1. **NOTIFY THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF UNIVERSITY ADVANCEMENT (OR DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC RELATIONS IN HER/HIS ABSENCE)** when potential exists for a crisis situation to develop or when a crisis occurs.

2. **ASSEMBLE ALL PERTINENT FACTS AND COMMIT THEM TO WRITING.** Be sure to determine what University, System and/or legal provision/procedures apply to the circumstances. Keep these for future reference.

3. **DISCUSS THE FACTS WITH THE CHANCELLOR, APPROPRIATE SENIOR ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICERS AND DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC RELATIONS** to determine appropriate institutional actions and communications

strategies.

4. ACT QUICKLY. Give highest priority to completing these action steps.



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Mission & Vision

Crisis Communications Plan

**University of Washington
Office of Media Relations and Communications
Updated October 15, 2015**

I. Purpose

This plan provides guidelines for communicating within the university, and from the university to the media and the public, in the event of an emergency, crisis, or incident where there is a need to provide crucial information immediately to the university community.

Disasters, emergencies and crises disrupt the university's normal activities and may require activation of the UW's Emergency Management Plan (<https://www.washington.edu/uwem/plans-and-procedures/uw-all-hazard-plan/>). This Crisis Communications Plan describes the role of the University of Washington Police Department (UWPD), Media Relations and Communications, News & Information, and Web Communications in communicating vital information to members of the UW community and the public.

This plan is to be flexibly used with emergency decision-making procedures of the university.

Elements of this plan are tested periodically as well as annually in conjunction with campus-wide emergency exercises and drills. Appendices should be checked for accuracy and completeness at least annually.

II. Objectives

1. Determining whether the situation requires invoking this plan.
2. Convening a Crisis Communications Team to recommend responses.
3. Implementing immediate actions to:
 - a. Identify key constituencies who need to be informed.
 - b. Communicate facts about the situation and minimize rumors.
 - c. Restore a sense of confidence and order.

III. Procedures

1. Assessment – People (including the general campus public as well as members of the UW's Crisis Communications Team) who become aware of a potential crisis or emergency must contact UWPD immediately. UWPD will determine whether to invoke this plan and convene a Crisis Communications Team, or confer with the Associate Vice President for Media Relations and Communications (AVP). Other members of the Crisis Communications Team may also invoke this plan for other incidents as well in order to

begin the initial group assessment of the incident(s). If the plan is invoked, the AVP will inform the President and the Vice President of External Affairs, as well as other appropriate university officials.

2. Sending UW Alert Messages – except for an incident involving an active shooter, the Crisis Core Team (CCT) will convene on a bridge-line conference call to assess the situation and determine if a UW Alert message is warranted.

- If it is decided to send a message, normally the first message will be sent by the UWPD on-call administrator. Subsequent messaging will be handled by other university public information and communications staff.

If the UWPD on-call administrator is unavailable, the initial message will be sent by Emergency Operations staff, followed by university public communications staff as third back-up and UW- IT staff as fourth back-up.

- In situations involving an active shooter, UWPD may send a UW Alert message without convening the Crisis Communications Core team.

2. Crisis Communications Team – The Crisis Communication Team comprises people whose organizations may play a critical role in addressing the crisis, including representatives of the following:

- Media Relations and Communications
- University Police
- UW Information Technology
- UW Emergency Management
- Web Communications
- Human Resources
- Student Life
- Environmental Health and Safety
- Attorney General's Office
- Office of the President
- Facilities Services
- The affected unit(s)

The above list is not meant to be exhaustive.

Time is of the essence in communicating crucial information to the university community and the news media, and the team will be assembled as quickly as possible. Based on the timing, location, and severity of the incident(s) or event(s), this may occur either in-person or virtually. The AVP or other senior administrator will determine when a sufficient number of the team is engaged.

Appendix A contains a list of key Crisis Communications Team members and their contact information. For each primary member, there is at least one alternate designated and trained.

The Crisis Communications Team will authorize the following:

3. Spokesperson(s): Generally, this is the highest-ranking individual who has direct knowledge of the events or the AVP. The individual selected will have the highest credibility and understanding of the events surrounding the crisis. Public information officers may fill in for these individuals if the crisis is prolonged, but they should not be the initial responders to the general public, the media or the university community.

4. Notifying Key Constituencies: The Crisis Communications Team will determine which groups need to be informed first. It is important to keep in mind that people will seek – and believe – other sources of information (e.g., news reports, social media, rumors, word of mouth) in the absence of official communication. Effective communication will help quell rumors, maintain morale and ensure public safety. Appendix B contains a description of the communication tools, their possible applications in a crisis, and who can operate those tools.

Key constituencies include:

- Students
- Faculty
- Staff
- Parents of students
- Board of Regents
- Public officials—Governor, Legislators, Mayors
- Alumni
- Neighbors
- General Public
- News Media

5. Fact sheet: As soon as possible after the incident, a fact sheet will be prepared to supplement communication with key constituencies and information provided to reporters by the spokespersons. It will be approved by the AVP and checked for accuracy by those with a direct knowledge of the crisis. Fact sheets released publicly or posted to the Internet must be time stamped and updated as information changes.

6. Alerting the media: The Director of News and Information, in consultation with the AVP, should decide on the best way(s) of reaching the news media. In cases where a crisis is likely to be prolonged and/or especially complex, the director may choose to create a Joint Information Center (JIC) and/or a news media briefing center to coordinate the information flow and assure that the right people are involved in collecting and

disseminating information. Consideration will be given to appropriate media staging locations that can accommodate vehicles such as satellite trucks. Communication with the media must occur frequently as new information is known. Information from news briefings may be captured in audio and/or video and posted to the Internet, along with updated fact sheets. Effort will be made to monitor news coverage in key media and correct significant inaccuracies, either in those media themselves or in material distributed by the university. The Media and Communications Room/JIC in the UW's Emergency Operations Center (EOC) located in Suite C-140 of the UW Tower may act as the central location to coordinate media relations if required.

In general, the university will welcome reporters and allow them as much access as public safety and good taste permit. Public information officers will facilitate access to key knowledgeable individuals and respond quickly to as many requests as possible. Communication must occur early and often but be confined to the facts. All information must be conveyed with an eye toward what will be most important to various publics.

IV. Plan Testing and Validation

This plan shall be updated and tested at least once a year. Full activation of the plan will be incorporated into the UW's annual Emergency Operations Center functional disaster exercises. Responsibility for updating the Crisis Communications Plan rests with the AVP.

V. After-action Report/Review (AAR)

Within a week of the crisis, the AVP will convene the Crisis Communications Team for a review of lessons learned. This AAR may be used to provide summary information to a more comprehensive campus-wide AAR coordinated through UW Emergency Management.

Attachments

Appendix A: Crisis Communications Team contact information

Appendix B: Crisis and Mass Communications Tools

Appendix A: Crisis Communications Team Call-out List (October 2015 Update)

NAME	WORK	CELL/PAGER	HOME	E-MAIL
<u>Media Relations & Communications</u>				
Norm Arkans*	543-2560			arkans@uw.edu
Victor Balta*	543-2580			balta@uw.edu
<u>University Police</u>				
John Vinson*	543-0521			vinso1in@uw.edu
Steve Rittereiser*	616-8347			ritters@uw.edu
Sue Carr	543-4548			suecarr@uw.edu
<u>UW Information Technology</u>				
Kent Kurth	685-6281			kkurth@uw.edu
Ben Roy	616-8258			benroy@uw.edu
Andy Ward*	221-4522			award@uw.edu
Peter White	221-1054			pewhite@uw.edu
<u>Web Communications</u>				
Gina Hills*	543-2561			ghills@uw.edu
Jeff Hendrickson*	543-2736			jh1@uw.edu
<u>Human Resources</u>				
Mindy Kornberg	685-4730			mindyk@uw.edu
Liz Coveney	543-2815			econ@uw.edu
<u>Student Life</u>				
Denzil Suite	543-0128			djsuite@uw.edu
Lincoln Johnson	221-6323			ljlj@uw.edu

NAME	WORK	CELL/PAGER	HOME	E-MAIL
<u>Facilities Services</u>				
Charles Kennedy	685-1428			kennec@uw.edu
John Chapman	543-3860			jchapman@uw.edu
<u>Attorney General's Office</u>				
Quentin Yerxa	685-5372			quentiny@uw.edu
Karin Nyrop	685-7234			knyrop@uw.edu
<u>Office of the President</u>				
Rolf Johnson	616-8550			rolfj@uw.edu
<u>Environmental Health and Safety</u>				
Jude Van Buren	616-4146			judev@uw.edu
Gene Hutchinson	616-3770			geneh@uw.edu
<u>Emergency Management</u>				
Steve Charvat*	897-8080			charvat@uw.edu
Scott Preston*	897-1882			scottpre@uw.edu
Siri McLean*	897-8081			sirim@uw.edu
<u>UW Bothell</u>				
Laura Mansfield	(425) 352-5406			lmansfield@uw.edu
Lisa Hall	(425) 352-5461			lhall7@uw.edu
<u>UW Tacoma</u>				
Mike Wark	(253) 692-5771			mwark@uw.edu
John Burkhardt	(253) 692-4536			johnbjr@uw.edu

*Asterisk indicates member of Crisis Communications Core Team

Crisis Communications Plan

Appendix B: Crisis and Mass Communications Tools

Note: In a crisis situation no single medium will suffice to notify all constituencies. Depending on the particular situation, some combination of the communication tools listed below may be employed to reach the widest number of people as quickly as possible.

Communication Tool	Application	Characteristics (characteristics in bold indicate more unique aspects)
UW Website Banner Postings <ul style="list-style-type: none"> UW Homepage MyUW 	Short messages posted as banners on official UW Web sites	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Used to disseminate official information during emergencies or crisis situations that may disrupt the normal operation of the UW or threaten the health or safety of members of the UW community. Great source of information if UW community knows when and where to check. Does not provide active notification. Crisis Communications Team posts information. Messages are usually less detailed and shorter. Banners are color-coded by the severity of the event.
“UW Alert Blog” web site <ul style="list-style-type: none"> emergency.uw.edu 	More detailed messages posted on this Web site	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Used to disseminate official information during emergencies or crisis situations that may disrupt the normal operation of the UW or threaten the health or safety of members of the UW community. Great source of information if UW community knows when and where to check. Does not provide active notification. Crisis Communications Team posts information. Messages can be as detailed and as long as needed.

Communication Tool	Application	Characteristics <i>(characteristics in bold indicate more unique aspects)</i>
<p>UW Information Hotline</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 206-897-INFO (4636) • 1-866-897-INFO(4636) 	<p>Messages recorded on official UW hotline.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Used to disseminate official information during emergencies or crisis situations that may disrupt the normal operation of the UW or threaten the health or safety of members of the UW community. • Great source of information if UW community knows when and where to check. • Does not provide active notification. • By default, the content of messages is automatically taken from the UW Alert Blog website, but can be manually updated as needed. • Messages are usually less detailed and shorter, but can be manually updated to provide more detail as needed.
<p>UW Alert</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • e2Campus (service provider for the mass notification system) • Facebook • Twitter 	<p>Short messages sent to SMS text, email, and social networking accounts.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SMS text message • UW email • Alternate email • Facebook • Twitter 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Used to disseminate official information during emergencies or crisis situations that may disrupt the normal operation of the UW or threaten the health or safety of members of the UW community. • Provides active notification to subscribers (opt-in) of UW Alert. • Subscribers need to sign up separately for the Facebook and Twitter capabilities. • Crisis Communications Team posts information. • Messages limited to approximately 140 text characters due to SMS text and Twitter limitations.
<p>UW Indoor Alert</p>	<p>Short messages broadcast to loudspeakers inside UW Seattle campus buildings. UW Bothell and UW Tacoma have separate systems.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Used to disseminate official information during emergencies or crisis situations that may disrupt the normal operation of the UW or threaten the health or safety of members of the UW community. • Messages sent using the mass notification capabilities of the fire alarm system inside buildings. Full broadcast capabilities available in approximately 100 buildings.

Communication Tool	Application	Characteristics (characteristics in bold indicate more unique aspects)
		<p>Paging in common areas or reader boards available in approximately 45 buildings.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provides active notification to people within earshot of the broadcast. Crisis Communication Team broadcasts messages. Messages are usually less detailed and shorter, but can be customized to provide more detail as needed.
UW Outdoor Alert	Short messages broadcast to loudspeakers on UW Seattle Campus. UW Bothell and UW Tacoma have separate systems.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Used to disseminate official information during emergencies or crisis situations that may disrupt the normal operation of the UW or threaten the health or safety of members of the UW community. Provides active notification to people within earshot of the broadcast. Crisis Communication Team broadcasts messages. Messages are usually less detailed and shorter, but can be customized to provide more detail as needed.
UW ListServ Email	Messages sent directly to recipients' email.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Can be used to disseminate official information during emergencies or crisis situations that may disrupt the normal operation of the UW or threaten the health or safety of members of the UW community. Provides active notification to email. However, recipients may not necessarily be able to read/receive email messages. Examples of recipient groups include building coordinators, deans, chairs, AVPs, directors. Message delivery dependent on network conditions and the number of recipients. Messages can be as detailed and long as needed.
Bulk Email	Email message sent to entire campus or large-scale recipient list	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Can be used to disseminate official information during emergencies or crisis situations that may disrupt the normal operation of the UW or threaten the health or

Communication Tool	Application	Characteristics <i>(characteristics in bold indicate more unique aspects)</i>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • safety of members of the UW community. • Provides active notification to email. However, recipients may not necessarily be able to read/receive email messages. • Message delivery dependent on network conditions and the number of recipients (expect the entire campus list to take at least two hours or more to complete). • Messages can be as detailed and long as needed.