



South Carolina State University

CRISIS COMMUNICATION PLAN

Office of University Relations and Marketing

2019

August 2019

Introduction

The President or the Office of University Relations and Marketing will serve as the official spokesperson(s) for the university during a crisis.

Definition

A crisis is defined as a situation or event rendering impact on the operation or reputation of South Carolina State University. While each situation is unique, requiring customized messaging and in-depth evaluation of strategy, the plan outlined here is intended to provide a framework for effective coordination and communication should a crisis situation occur at the university.

Crisis Situation

A crisis may include (but is not limited to) to the following:

Abduction/hostage situation, accidental death, civil disturbance/riot, weather, communicable disease outbreak or other health threats (e.g., chemical spills), fire caused by accident or arson, hate crimes, homicide, natural disaster, physical assault, sexual assault, stalking, suicide, threat of danger, or violent crime, technological crises, organizational misdeeds, or terrorist attacks/man-made disasters.

When a crisis involving South Carolina State University occurs, perceived or actual, Campus Police should be contacted immediately at (803) 536-7188.

Note: Communication about situations that are controversial or sensitive in nature but are not crisis or emergencies (lawsuits, arrests, regulatory investigations, negative news coverage, etc.) will be handled by the appropriate administrative officer; however the official statement regarding those matters will be issued by the President or the Office of University Relations and Marketing.

Goals

The University's goals when a crisis occurs are to:

- Respond quickly to immediate threats to the well-being of students, faculty, staff and visitors.
- Respond to the emotional as well as physical impacts of a crisis on victims, family members, and the greater university community.
- Protect the human, physical and financial assets of the university.
- Communicate openly, honestly and proactively with the university's constituents, recognizing the importance of avoiding panic, speaking with one voice, and balancing individuals' legal rights to privacy with the public's need to know about the situation.
- Demonstrate through its management of the crisis that the university is maintaining responsible control of the situation, viewing each crisis as an opportunity to establish trust and build the University's credibility and reputation.
- Initiate internal review of the crisis situation as appropriate.

- Ensure appropriate follow-through on commitments made during the crisis and, after the crisis has subsided, evaluate the university's response in order to improve procedures.

Crises Communications Manual

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I. Purpose

This manual describes the roles of the Office of University Relations and Marketing in collecting and conveying information to the public during or immediately following a crisis or emergency situation.

II. Situation

Each crisis or emergency will require a unique public information response. The extent of the response will depend on the nature of the crisis.

The Office of University Relations and Marketing contacts include print and broadcast media; and the office serves as liaison with other campus units during a crisis.

III. Assumptions

Often the only information the public receives about an emergency is through the media; therefore, **media relations is an essential element of any crisis plan.** Time is critical and a response must be issued as soon as possible with the follow-up bulletins as required.

A crisis situation is big news and is likely to result in more public exposure for the university than hundreds of "good news" stories.

IV. Operations

General

To ensure that the University's public information response to an emergency is quick, accurate, sensitive and responsible, the Office of University Relations and Marketing will coordinate crisis communications with campus and off-campus media. The Office of University Relations and

Marketing will—at the President’s request—set up a crisis communication center in its offices to remain open 24 hours a day during a crisis. This is not to be confused with the command post in which the CMT will set up, or the staff in charge of making decisions pertaining to the handling of the crisis itself. **(See University Crisis Management Plan)**

During an emergency, the Vice President for Institutional Advancement and External Affairs (see “Crisis Team”) will serve, if designated by the President, as the University’s Spokesperson. Other University Relations and Marketing staff will be given the Spokesperson’s name and phone number for referral of media phone calls.

Phases of Response

The President and the Office of University Relations and Marketing will determine if (and when) an official statement should be prepared and released. If warranted, they will also develop answers to specific questions that may be asked by the media.

The spokesperson will brief all University Relations and Marketing personnel who are assigned to answer the phone.

Telephone contacts: In the event of a crisis, the media may call (803) 533-3603 or (803) 536-8597 in the Office of University Relations and Marketing to receive the latest information on the situation. Those phone numbers will be made available to the media at the beginning of a crisis period for dissemination to the public. A staff member will be assigned to update recorded messages for those phones. Also, campus wide advisories will be sent via e-mail.

The Spokesperson will:

1. Get basic information (type of emergency/disaster; time of disaster; actions taken; areas and number of people involved; fatalities, injuries and extent of damage) and prepare an official news release. All University Relations and Marketing staff members will be kept apprised of breaking news to enable them to answer media questions.
2. Verify all sources of information.
3. Clear press release with the President’s Office as quickly as possible before releasing it to the media.
4. In cases involving employee or student injuries or deaths, families will be notified by appropriate personnel before the information is release to the public.
5. Coordinate the release of factual information with local hospitals and other disaster agencies, providing as prompt, accurate and complete information as possible.

Ongoing Period

In a crisis, the Office of University Relations and Marketing staff will:

1. Provide—via the news media—the public and constituents with basic information about an emergency or threatened emergency.
2. Keep the public, media and constituents informed of the situation and provide advice on what they should or should not do to prevent further damage or loss of life, panic or interference with emergency response efforts.
3. Keep the public, media and constituents informed of where to seek temporary housing, food, etc.
4. Instruct the public on how to obtain further advice or information.

Recovery Period

The Office of University Relations and Marketing will issue media updates as long as necessary, then scale back activities as warranted. Upon termination of the crisis situation, the Director of University 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 to be forwarded to the President and any other appropriate university departments.

V. Organization and Assignment of Responsibilities

A. Organization

The Office of University Relations and Marketing will supervise crises communications with the media.

B. Responsibilities

University Relations and Marketing will provide assistance for compiling and relaying official statements to print and broadcast media.

Press Conferences: When a press conference is called, the Director of University Relations and Marketing will attend, as well as a third party who will phone information to the Office of University Relations and Marketing as soon as it becomes available, enabling staff there to pass along this information to the media as they call with their questions. The President will speak at a press conference when a major crisis needs to be announced or when he wishes to issue updates on the situation.

Site: Press Conferences will be held either in the Administration Building lobby or in front of the Administration Building; however, if press conference site is not available due to crisis situation, then an alternate site will be determined.

Time: Must be convenient to university personnel but also early enough for media to make their evening news deadlines (no later than 3:30 p.m.); however, the time may be altered dependent upon the time at which the crisis event occurred.

Parking: Request that a Campus Police officer be stationed at the front of campus in the kiosk to allow media with credentials to park in the lot near the Administration Building.

Contact Person: Chief Joseph D. Nelson Clarkson, (O) (803) 533-3740 or Dispatch (803) 536-7188

C. Crisis Team

Based upon the type of crisis, certain key people will work directly with the Office of University Relations and Marketing and the President’s Office to facilitate dissemination of information.

O= Office Telephone; M=Mobile Phone

Name	Title	Office	Cell
Shondra Abraham	Chief of Staff	(803) 536-8972	(803) 378-4488
Sonja Bennett-Bellamy	Vice President for Institutional Advancement and External Affairs	(803) 813-1147	(803) 747-1735
Betty Boatwright	Special Assistant to the President	(803) 536-8556	(803) 928-6842
Curtis Bradley	Interim Director of Information Technology	(803) 536-8738	(803) 747-2327

Teare Brewington	Vice President for Finance and Management	(803) 536-8775	
Pinkey Carter	Brooks Health Center (Infirmary)	(803) 536-7053 or (803) 536-7055	(803) 707-1476
Stacey Danley	Athletics Director	(803) 536-8714	(803) 747-6053
Ken Davis	Director of Facilities Management	(803) 516-4565	(803) 378-5113
Dr. Louis Whitesides	Executive Director, 1890 Programs	(803) 536-8616	(803) 707-1419
Cammy Grate	Director of Housing	(803) 516-4510	(803) 539-1146
Dr. Tamara Jeffries-Jackson	Vice President for Student Affairs	(803) 536-8103	(803) 928-6775
Dr. Learie B. Luke	Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs	(803) 536-7180	(803) 378-6663
Joseph D. Nelson	Chief of Police	(803) 533-3740	Dispatch (24/7) (803) 536-7188
Art Pinckney	General Manager, Sodexo	(803) 536-8467	(803) 513-8343
Mercedes Pinckney	General Counsel	(803) 536-7084	(803) 596-1652
Paul Platt	Deputy Director of Facilities	(803) 536-8145	(803) 614-5929`
Kay Snider	Director of Marketing	(803) 516-4935	(803) 707-6850

VI. Direction and Control

The Vice President for Institutional Advancement and External Affairs will approve the work of the Director of University Relations and Marketing.

VII. University Relations and Marketing Team Members

Sonja Bennett-Bellamy, Vice President for Institutional Advancement and External Affairs

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Chaundra Mikell, Public Relations Coordinator

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