



SOUTH CAROLINA STATE UNIVERSITY

CRISIS COMMUNICATION PLAN

OFFICE OF UNIVERSITY RELATIONS AND
MARKETING

2012

Introduction

The President or the Director 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.

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 Director 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 had 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 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 Director of the Office of University Relations and Marketing (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 Director 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.

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

Telephone hot lines: Two telephone lines (803) 536-7061 and (803) 516-4791 in the Office of University Relations and Marketing will be designated as crisis hot-line phones with recorded messages of the latest information on the situation, one for the campus community (803) 536-7091, and one for all other incoming external calls (803) 516-4791. 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.

1. Spokesperson will 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. Spokesperson will verify all sources of information.
3. Spokesperson will 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. Spokesperson will 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 Director 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 Evans Walnut Room, Board Room 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 Crawford-Zimmerman Complex.

Contact Person: Interim Police Chief, Kenneth McCaster (803) 536-8319 (O), (M) (803) 290-1473

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; H=Home Telephone; M=Mobile Phone

- Executive Assistant to the President, Shondra Abraham
(O) 803-536-8972, (M) 803-347-4488
- Vice President for Institutional Advancement, Anthony L. Holloman
(O) 803-516-4871, (M) 803-347-4325
- Interim Vice President for Student Affairs, Dr. Valerie Fields
(O) 803-516-4969
- Financial Affairs and Management Information Systems, Gary Cathcart
(O) 803-516-4549 or gcathcart@scsu.edu.
- Interim Vice President for Academic Affairs, Dr. Rita Teal
(O) 803-516-4586, (M)
- Interim Campus Police, Kenneth McCaster
(O) 803-536-8319, (M) 803-290-1473
- Brooks Health Center, Nurse Pinky Carter
(O) 803-536-7053 or 803-536-7055
- Sports Information Director, William Hamilton
(O) 803-536-7060, (M) 803-378-6165
- Director of University Relations and Marketing, Erica Taylor
(O) 803-533-3617, (M) 803-378-1407 or 803-296-2872
- Director of Facilities Management, Ken Davis
(O) 536-8756

VI. Direction and Control

The President will approve the work of the Director of University Relations and Marketing.

VII. University Relations and Marketing Team Members

O=Office Telephone, M=Mobile Telephone, E=Email

Primary: Erica S. Taylor

(O) 803-533-3617, (M) (803) 378-1407 or (843) 296-2872, (E)

esprioleau@scsu.edu

Secondary: Ashley Elliott

(O) 803-533-3802, (M) 803-290-0392 (E) aelliott@scsu.edu

Secondary: Carl A'see

(O) 803-536-7485, (M) 803-290-6016, (E) cdasee@scsu.edu

