

Crisis Communication Policy

The University Of North Carolina at Greensboro

(Revisions approved by the Chancellor August 26, 2002)

(Revisions approved by the Chancellor February 8, 2007)

(Revisions approved by Chancellor April 19, 2010)

When the Crisis Management Group (CMG) activates the Crisis Communication Policy to warn the campus community of an incident, the Office of University Relations, in consultation with the Office of the University Counsel, and Police will immediately initiate dissemination of the CMG's messages to internal and external audiences. In a crisis*, the University should strive to send a consistent message to key audiences through a centralized and closely coordinated communication process.

NOTE: If UNCG is under any type of imminent danger the UNCG Police have the authority to immediately notify the campus community.

The University's Crisis Communication Policy is based on the following principles:

1. A strong concern for the safety and welfare of students, faculty, and staff;
2. The need to respond quickly and accurately as events unfold;
3. The need for effective, accurate communication through media and through other means (specifically the PIER System) to present a clear and consistent message of the University's response to the crisis at hand.

Key communication principles in a crisis include:

- Immediately informing students, staff and faculty.
- Showing concern for those involved and seeking out and speaking to affected publics.
- Following NIMS procedures, designate a key spokesperson or people to communicate messages to on-campus and off-campus audiences.
- Responding quickly to the situation and providing regular updates.
- Using simple, direct and positive messages. Sticking to the facts, not speculating, adhering to University policy and using common sense.
- If appropriate, involving off-campus officials closely involved in the situation to help explain the crisis to the campus community and beyond (through the Guilford County WebEOC).
- Quickly communicating actions taken to prevent future problems.

The Policy

- I. In the event of a crisis involving major crime or significant safety concerns on campus or in close proximity to campus, the Police are responsible for providing security and for notifying other law enforcement agencies as appropriate. Thereafter, the Police will notify the following individuals as soon as possible:
 - A. **During normal weekday work hours**, the Office of the Vice Chancellor for Business Affairs, Chancellor and Provost and Executive Vice Chancellor. The Vice Chancellor for Business Affairs (or designee) will notify the Vice Chancellor of the division most affected by the crisis,

the Office of University Relations, and University Counsel. In the event of a non-emergency crisis, the Police or other University official acting as first responder will notify the Vice Chancellor heading the division in which the crisis may exist, the Office of the Chancellor, Provost & Executive Vice Chancellor and University Relations.

- B. In case of an after hours or weekend emergency,** Police should call the Vice Chancellor of Business Affairs and the Chancellor. If necessary, the Student Affairs on-call person will be called. The Student Affairs on-call person will decide whether immediate notification of the Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs is warranted. The Vice Chancellor will then alert other appropriate University officials including University Relations personnel (Associate Vice Chancellor or Assistant Director) and University Counsel.
- II. In case of a major crisis, the Chancellor (or designee) will convene the Crisis Management Group (CMG). Core members of the CMG will be the Chancellor's Executive Staff and the Police Chief. Ex officio member is the Associate Vice Chancellor of University Relations. Other members may be added as needed, depending on the nature of the crisis.
- III. The first order of business for the CMG will be to gather essential facts related to the crisis. The University Counsel and Associate Vice Chancellor of University Relations will prepare a fact sheet through consultation with the Police and with others who have relevant information.
- IV. The Vice Chancellor for University Advancement (or the designee) is responsible for coordinating all communication, including public and internal release of information. Under the Vice Chancellor's direction, the Associate Vice Chancellor of University Relations is authorized to coordinate the release of all information to the news media. The Associate Vice Chancellor for University Relations will coordinate the release of non-media related communication. The Assistant Director of University Relations serves on the University Emergency Planning and Response Team (EPART).
- V. After assessing the crisis, EPART will make communication recommendations to the CMG. Based on recommendations, CMG will make determinations on such questions as the need for public and internal communication, targeted audiences (such as students, parents, members of the Board of Trustees, etc.), forms of communication, whether a news conference is needed, site of the news conference, the need for a news center and advice and support for the most appropriate University spokesperson.
- VI. The Police Chief will consult and advise the CMG on such matters as public safety and security. The University Counsel will consult with and advise the CMG on legal issues. The Associate Vice Chancellor for University Relations and the Assistant Director of University Relations will consult with and advise the CMG on public information and news media issues.
- VII. The CMG will consider all necessary issues and then will make its recommendations to the Chancellor.
- VIII. The course of action decided upon by the Chancellor will be communicated by the CMG to those responsible for its implementation. For example, in the event that a media briefing site or news conference is needed, the Assistant Director of University Relations will be responsible for setting up the briefing site, notifying the news media, and helping prepare the designated University spokesperson. Unless otherwise decided by the Chancellor, only the designated spokesperson may make official statements on behalf of the University concerning the crisis. In such cases, additional factual or

background information may be provided to the news media by the Associate Vice Chancellor and/or Assistant Director of University Relations.

- IX. In those instances, such as the occurrence of a major residence hall fire, where it is necessary to coordinate the release of information to the news media before the CMG can convene, the Assistant Director of University Relations will operate within the guidelines of the University's Press Policy. In case of a major crisis on campus, University Relations will assign staff members to accompany and assist members of the news media, as needed, while they are on campus.
- X. In case of a major crisis, the staff of University Relations will place a linked headline concerning the emergency on the university's home page (www.uncg.edu) and the emergency website (www.uncg-campus.info).
- XI. In case of a major crisis, it may be necessary to establish a Central Information Center (CIC) to handle the anticipated high volume of telephone inquiries. The Vice Chancellor for University Advancement (or designee) will have overall responsibility for this Center. It will be located in the Annual Giving Program's facility in the lower level of the Faculty Center due to ready availability of telephone service (336-334-5988). The Telephone Services switchboard and other University offices will direct telephone calls about the crisis to the Central Information Center. It should be understood that calls from media will not be channeled to this Center. Such calls will still be directed to University Relations. Each division will assign knowledgeable personnel as appropriate to help staff the Central Information Center.
- XII. University Relations, working closely with the Office of Public Safety and Police and with the Division of Student Affairs, will have responsibility for releasing the names of any deceased persons resulting from a crisis on campus. As a matter of standard procedure, such names will not be released until next-of-kin are notified and after University Counsel has been consulted concerning the applicability of privacy law requirements such as HIPAA. The Division of Student Affairs will have responsibility for notifying a student's next-of-kin if not accomplished in the normal protocols of police or health officials. The division where a deceased staff or faculty member worked will have the responsibility for notifying such individual's next-of-kin if not accomplished in the normal protocols of police or health officials. University Relations will rely on information provided by the Police or the Greensboro Police Department in obtaining the names of campus personnel who may be fatalities in a major campus crisis. As a general practice, the University does not release the names of student victims who are injured as a result of a major crime or accident on campus. Where educational records are concerned, except for what is termed directory information and specified exceptions, names of students are protected from public release by FERPA.
- XIII. Decisions will be made in accordance with the **decision tree** at <http://www.piersystem.com/go/doc/1365/855663/> (Attachment A). (PDF: requires a reader such as [Adobe Reader](#)). University Relations will share any information from the CMG with the campus community through the established **notification system** in Attachment B at <http://www.piersystem.com/go/doc/1365/855667/>. (PDF: requires a reader such as [Adobe Reader](#)).
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* A crisis covered by this policy includes either a highly volatile dangerous situation requiring immediate remedial action to protect the University and its community, or events that may adversely impact the University and its community in the absence of timely dissemination of accurate information.