Policies and Procedures for Responding to the Death of a Student

California State University
Bakersfield
UNIVERSITY POLICY AND PROCEDURES for Responding to the Death of a Student

INTENT
A student’s death has a significant impact upon the entire University community, calling for a sensitive and well-planned response. Campus personnel must respond with compassion, thoroughness, and most importantly, with a measure of dignity toward the student and his/her family and friends. The purpose of this policy is to establish certain responsibilities concerning the notifications that need to be made to the various campus administrative and services departments in the event of a student death, and to coordinate such actions expeditiously and sensitively with regard to the feelings of the family, relatives, and friends of the deceased.

Office of the Vice President for Student Affairs is responsible for coordinating the university’s response to a student’s death and will disseminate information to the appropriate areas in accordance with this policy. Therefore, if you become aware of a student’s death, please immediately contact the Student Affairs office at (661)654-2161.

IF YOU ARE CONTACTED:
- Be sensitive to the situation and assure the person we will assist the family during this difficult time.
- Always refer to the student by his/her given name, not “the deceased” or “the victim”.
- To make the necessary notifications and to provide support, let the person know you will be asking a few important questions.
- Collect the following important information:
  1. First, middle, and last name of the student
  2. CSUB Student ID number (if known)
  3. School and major
  4. Date of death
  5. Ask “What happened?” This allows the person to give as much or as little information as he or she feels comfortable sharing.
- Inform the person he/she will be contacted shortly by the Office of the Vice President for Student Affairs to provide University assistance.
- Immediately call the Office of the Vice President for Student Affairs (661-654-2161) and give them the information you have collected.

IF THE DEATH OCCURS ON CAMPUS:
1. If a deceased person is discovered in the Residence Halls or elsewhere on
campus, the room or area should be vacated immediately, leaving it untouched, and University Police should be contacted at 911 or (661)654-2111.

2. University personnel will take measures to ensure other dorm residents, students, and passersby are not viewing the body or disturbing the site in any way.

3. University personnel will notify the VPSA immediately.

INITIAL NOTIFICATION TO CAMPUS AREAS:
Upon learning of a student’s death, the Office of the VPSA will notify the President and all Cabinet officers or their designees by phone or email.

PROVOST AND VICE PRESIDENT FOR ACADEMIC AFFAIRS (Provost)
The Provost will notify:
   a. The Associate Vice President for Faculty Affairs
   b. The Associate Vice President for Enrollment Management
   c. The School Dean of the student’s major

VICE PRESIDENT FOR BUSINESS AND ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES (VPBAS)
The VPBAS will notify:
   a. The Student Financial Services Manager
   b. The Information Technology Services Associate Vice President
   c. The Public Safety (University Police) Director
   d. Human Resources/Payroll, if the student was employed as a student assistant

VICE PRESIDENT FOR STUDENT AFFAIRS (VPSA)
The VPSA will notify:
   a. The Counseling Center Coordinator
   b. The Associated Students, Inc. Executive Director
   c. The Housing Director
   d. The Student Health Services Director
   e. The Athletics Director (if applicable)
   f. The Services for Students with Disabilities Director (if applicable)
   g. The Children’s Center Director (if applicable)

VICE PRESIDENT FOR UNIVERSITY ADVANCEMENT (VPUA)
The VPUA will notify:
   a. The Public Affairs Officer
   b. The Alumni Relations Director
ASSOCIATE VICE PRESIDENT FOR ENROLLMENT MANAGEMENT (VPEM)

The VPEM will notify:

a. The Admissions and Records Director
b. The Registrar
c. The Financial Aid and Scholarships Director
d. The Assistant Vice President of Student Success, Retention, and Graduation Initiatives
e. The International Students and Programs Director, if the student was an international student.
f. The Director of any Enrollment Management programs the student was involved in (Educational Opportunity Program, College Assistance Migrant Program, etc.)

In order to remain sensitive to the dignity and memory of the student and his/her family, the following university areas shall be responsible for ensuring their actions are completed in a timely manner upon notification.

RESPONSIBILITIES

OFFICE OF THE VICE PRESIDENT FOR STUDENT AFFAIRS (VPSA)

1. The Office of the VPSA will verify the death via the County Coroner’s Office, police agency, funeral home, newspaper obituary, or family member.
2. The Office of the VPSA will work with the Registrar to verify the enrollment status of the deceased student.
3. If necessary, the Office of the VPSA, in collaboration with the Office of the President and the County Coroner Office’s jurisdiction protocol for notification, will notify family members of the deceased, and/or make notification of death to roommates.
4. The Office of the VPSA, in collaboration with the President’s Office and/or University Advancement, will gather and make available to appropriate parties’ pertinent information regarding cause of death, time of death, memorial arrangements, student involvement on campus, etc.
5. The Office of the VPSA will coordinate with the CSUB Counseling Center to offer counseling or crisis intervention services to classmates enrolled in the same courses as the deceased, and to any campus groups or student organizations affected by the loss.
6. The Office of the VPSA, in collaboration with the Office of the President and/or University Advancement, will contact the family to:
   a. Determine if the family has any immediate needs from the University (e.g.,
gathering items from the residence hall room, notifying other students, etc.).
b. Gather information about funeral, visitation, and memorial arrangements.
c. At the appropriate time, provide the family with information regarding returning library books or other University property.

7. The VPSA, or their designee, will assist family members who may come to campus. When possible, this should be the same staff member who initially contacted the family.

OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT
1. The President will inform the campus of the student’s death.
2. The President will send a letter of condolence to the family.
3. A Cabinet member, or their designee, will attend the visitation, funeral, or memorial service if appropriate and within a reasonable distance. Whenever possible, this will be the same staff member who initially contacted the family.
4. Approximately one month after the death, the President or his/her designee will send a card or letter to the family along with a certificate of attendance at the University, or a posthumous degree when warranted. The awarding of posthumous degrees is based on University policy.

OFFICE OF THE ASSOCIATE VICE PRESIDENT FOR ENROLLMENT MANAGEMENT (AVPEM)
1. If the student was enrolled in the current term, the AVPEM will provide a list of the student’s instructors to the Associate Vice President for Faculty Affairs as soon as possible.

OFFICE OF THE ASSOCIATE VICE PRESIDENT FOR FACULTY AFFAIRS (AVPFA)
1. Using the instructor list provided by the Associate Vice President for Enrollment Management, the AVPFA will work with the appropriate School Dean(s) to notify the student’s instructors and the department chair of the student’s major.

INTERNATIONAL STUDENT PROGRAMS
1. If the student was an International Student, the International Student Programs Director will work with the VPSA to:
a. Contact CSU Legal for guidance.
b. Contact the appropriate Embassy.
c. Contact the parent(s) or next of kin (arrange for a translator if needed).
d. Contact the insurance company carrying the student’s policy regarding guidance for financial reimbursement or coverage of costs.
e. Make arrangements for transportation of the deceased (and personal
belongings) once released by the County Medical Examiner, to the parent(s) or next of kin.

f. Contact the Counseling Center for roommate(s), fellow athletes if applicable, and/or other students as needed.

g. International Director will terminate the student’s SEVIS record.

2. If a CSUB student dies while participating in an International Student Exchange Program (ISEP), CSU International Program (IP), or International Direct (ID) program, the International Student Programs Director will work with the VPSA to:
   a. Contact CSU Legal for guidance.
   b. Contact CSU IP Director for assistance, if applicable.
   c. Contact the appropriate U.S. Embassy.
   d. Contact the parent(s) or next of kin.
   e. Assist parents with travel arrangements, if needed.
   f. Contact the Counseling Center for fellow ISEP, IP, or ID participants, as needed.

HOUSING AND RESIDENTIAL LIFE

1. If the death occurred in the campus dorms, the Housing and Residential Life Director will assist Police in identifying individuals who might have knowledge of the circumstances surrounding the death. In addition, Housing and Residential Life staff will attempt to identify those individuals who will be most affected by the death (family members, significant others, roommates, work supervisors, close friends, etc.). Housing and Residential Life staff may need to console the victim’s roommate and other campus friends.

2. The Housing and Residential Life Director will consult with the Counseling Center to determine whether counseling services are needed for the residents and staff members in the environment where the student resided.

3. The Housing and Residential Life Director will ensure the Incident Report Form is completed.

4. Housing and Residential Life staff may not release information about a death of a student to any non-staff person. Media representatives should be referred to the University’s Public Affairs Office.

5. Upon clearance by University Police, the Housing and Residential Life Director will coordinate arrangements with regard to packing the deceased resident’s possessions (at a time determined appropriate by Housing and Residential Life Director and the VPSA). The packing of possessions may be completed by the resident’s family or contracted out to an approved vendor. If a vendor is used, the vendor must create an itemized list of the student’s belongings. The Housing and Residential Life Director or designee will be responsible for arranging pick up or delivery of the items with the student’s family.
REGISTRAR’S OFFICE
1. The Registrar will coordinate with the Office of the VPSA for proof of death, if the institution has not already received such documentation.
2. The Registrar will update pertinent information on the student’s record, such as:
   a. Post the deceased indicator on the student’s record.
   b. Update enrollment and matriculation indicators to reflect the reason for the closure of the academic record.
   c. Place a FERPA (Family Educational Rights & Privacy Act) block on the student’s record.
3. The Registrar will verify enrollment information for the Public Affairs Officer and/or the VPSA as needed.
4. The Registrar will not disclose information (other than directory information) to third parties without consent by the parents, next of kin, certified power of attorney, or executor/executrix authorization, unless requested by law enforcement or by subpoena. All requests for student information made by law enforcement agencies must be coordinated through the Vice President of Business and Administrative Services Office.

FINANCIAL AID & SCHOLARSHIPS OFFICE
1. The Financial Aid Director will communicate with the Registrar to determine the withdrawal date, if applicable, for the student under 34 CFR 668.22©(1)(iv). The withdrawal date cannot be later than the date of the student’s death.
2. If the student died prior to the 60% point of the term, the Financial Aid Director will perform a pro-rata Return Calculation to determine if the institution is required to return any Title IV funds to the government.
3. The student’s estate is not required to return any Title IV funds. Therefore, an institution should neither report a grant overpayment to NSLDS, nor refer a grant overpayment to Debt Resolution Services.
4. The Financial Aid Director will provide the address of the student’s loan servicer, if applicable and upon request, for the estate to send a copy of the Death Certificate so any federal student loans may be discharged.
5. The Office of Financial Aid and Scholarships will maintain the documentation it received that the student has died.
6. A school may NOT make a post-withdrawal disbursement of Title IV funds to an account or estate of a student who has died.

STUDENT FINANCIAL SERVICES OFFICE
1. If the student died prior to the term Census Date, the Student Financial Services Manager will process a full refund as an exception, with Refund Committee
2. If the student died after Census Date, but prior to the 60% point of the term, the Student Financial Services Manager will calculate a pro-rata fee for the student, in accordance with the Title 5 Education Code.

3. Housing and meal plan fees are charged until the date of the student’s death. The Student Financial Services Manager will ensure all prepaid amounts after the date of death are refunded, unless doing so would require the University to make a refund to a government program. Any processing fees associated with the refund will be waived.

4. The Student Financial Services Manager will attempt to identify and remove any other outstanding charges, such as parking tickets or library fines.

5. The Student Financial Services Manager will send any refund check due to the student (if applicable) to the executor of the estate, along with an explanation of the check.

UNIVERSITY ADVANCEMENT PUBLIC AFFAIRS OFFICER

1. The Public Affairs Officer, in collaboration with the VPSA and/or Office of the President, will coordinate campus-wide e-mails to provide accurate information regarding a student’s death.

2. If the student death is likely to generate media inquiries, the University Advancement Public Affairs Officer will collaborate with the President and/or appropriate Vice President, or their designee, to determine the appropriate spokesperson(s) and media contact(s).

3. The Public Affairs Officer will communicate with the Alumni Association and University Advancement Office to ensure the student is removed from their contact lists.

UNIVERSITY POLICE

1. Investigations of a student death occurring on-campus will be coordinated by University Police, who will determine if the Bakersfield Police Department needs to be involved.

2. If the student lived in the residence halls and/or had a vehicle on-campus, University Police will work with the Housing Director to secure the student’s property and prevent inappropriate ticketing or towing of the vehicle.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

1. The Associate Vice President of Information Technology Services will secure the student’s electronic accesses.

2. Information Technology Services will close the student’s campus e-mail account.
COUNSELING CENTER

1. The Counseling Center Coordinator will collaborate as appropriate with agencies such as University Police, Student Health Services, ASI, and Deans to offer assistance to the members of the community most likely to be affected by the loss.

2. Upon request, the Counseling Center Coordinator and staff will provide written materials and presentations to Schools, departments, or classes about counseling services and coping with grief and loss.

3. If requested, the Counseling Center Coordinator and staff will organize times to talk individually or in groups with students, faculty, and staff directly affected by the death.

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