

Death of a Student – Response Plan

The University of North Carolina at Pembroke intends to provide a safe and positive environment for all students. However, when tragedy does occur, it is the responsibility of the University to respond in a sensitive and sympathetic manner. The death of a student impacts the entire University community. These guidelines have been established to provide an orderly, effective, and caring response.

I. Student Death off Campus

- A. Response to any death occurring off campus will be handled initially by the local police agency and/or the hospital involved. It is the responsibility of these agencies to notify the next of kin.
- B. If the death occurs in Robeson County, Campus Police may be notified by that agency. In the event another campus official is informed of the student's death, that official should contact UNCP Campus Police and Public Safety at 910-521-6235.
- C. If a death occurs during a university sponsored trip, the University staff member accompanying the trip should immediately contact local emergency services and the local law enforcement agency. The staff member should also contact UNCP Campus Police; the appropriate Vice Chancellor and the department head.
- D. Proceed to Part III for Notification of Appropriate Campus Officials.

II. Student Death on Campus or in Residence Hall

- A. Upon discovering the body of a student who may be deceased, UNCP residence hall and apartment staff members should take the following steps immediately:
 1. Call Campus Police, state your name and position with the University, give your location and describe the nature of the incident. Campus Police will contact the appropriate emergency medical service to pronounce the death and transport the body and will seal the room or location and determine the most appropriate entity to investigate the circumstances of death.
 2. The Resident Administrator (and/or the Resident Administrator on duty) should confirm with Campus Police that the Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs has been notified. Then, contact the Associate Director for Residence Life. (The Associate Director will contact the Director of Housing and Residence Life.)
 3. Block off the area of the incident from all non-concerned persons. Information about the incident should be shared only with university officials.

4. **DO NOT MOVE THE BODY** or allow anyone to do so. Every attempt must be made to preserve an undisturbed scene. A medical examiner or other medical personnel will assume responsibility for moving the body.
5. Medical personnel, representatives of Campus Police or Residence Life Staff will assume responsibility for the incident upon arrival. Ideally, these individuals should be the only university personnel having access to the area.
6. All requests for information from all news personnel must be referred to the Office of University and Community Relations.
7. Resident Advisors and Resident Directors should not discuss the incident with reporters. Staff will not make any comments or statements about the cause of death. Only the medical examiner can determine or report the cause of death.
8. If a death occurs on campus at a location other than the residence halls or university apartments, staff members should call Campus Police immediately. Campus Police will contact the appropriate emergency medical service to pronounce death and to transport the body. See A.1. in this section.
9. Local law enforcement and/or the local hospital will make the initial call to the next of kin when a death occurs on campus.
10. Proceed to Part III for Notification of Appropriate Campus Officials.

III. Notification of Appropriate Campus Officials

- A. Campus Police will notify the following officials: Associate Vice Chancellor for Campus Safety and Emergency Operations: who will contact the Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs; who will contact the Chancellor when appropriate.
- B. The Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs will make the first call to the family or next of kin, once they are notified of the death, to extend the University's condolences as well as offer to be a point of contact for them. (Another administrator may be assigned as a family-liaison, if deemed more appropriate.)
- C. The Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs will convene a Student Death Response Team consisting of the following departments to begin coordinating follow-up activities.
 1. Housing and Residence Life (if a residential student)
 2. Chancellor's Office
 3. Academic Affairs
 4. Office of University Communications and Marketing (determine spokesperson)

5. Counseling and Testing Center
6. Student Health Services
7. Campus Ministries
8. Campus Police
9. General Counsel
10. Student's Academic Advisor
11. Others will be contacted as appropriate

D. The Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs along with the Student Death Response Team will be responsible for coordinating follow-up activities.

1. Provide appropriate family members (parents, in most instances) with the name and telephone number of a campus official with whom they can discuss the situation.
2. Notify the campus community and include a photo of the student, if possible.
3. Determine appropriate representation at viewings and funerals. Decide who will represent the University at the funeral if feasible, and facilitate student attendance at the funeral as needed/appropriate. (Be respectful of the family's wishes.)
4. Contact the Chancellor's Office and SGA to send flowers on behalf of the University to the funeral service or family home, as appropriate.
5. Contact the Registrar to withdraw the student from classes, remove student's name from directories, and contact the student's professors, academic advisor, and/or department chair.
6. Contact Student Health Services to determine if student carried student health insurance with the university.
7. Contact the Financial Aid Office and Student Accounts Office to stop any billing process to the student or student's family and process any refunds that might be appropriate.
8. Consult with Housing and Residence Life (if the student lived on campus) to outline a plan of action to (a) work with the family in removing the student's possessions from his/her own room/apartment, (b) contact roommates, Residence Advisors and other concerned parties, and (c) evaluate the need for supportive services for those affected by the death.
9. Inform the Counseling Center, Student Health Center, and Campus Ministries to prepare them for any problems the death may cause for other students.
10. Contact Student Involvement and Leadership office, Athletics and SGA to determine the student's co-curricular affiliations and make appropriate contacts.
11. Contact DoIT to disable the student's account access to Network, BraveMail, and BraveWeb resources.
12. Contact the Director of Student Conduct to discontinue any disciplinary proceedings.
13. Contact the Career Center in reference to student employment status.
14. Contact the campus post office concerning the student's mail.

15. Notify UNC General Administration.

E. Media Involvement/Communication Protocol

1. The Office University Communications and Marketing will be responsible for collecting and disseminating information to the media. All requests for information should be directed to this office. It is important that the Campus Police and Student Affairs work closely with this office and General Counsel to maintain the accuracy of the information disseminated. A spokesperson will be assigned to speak on behalf of the University.
2. When a student death occurs on the University premises or at events under University control, it is imperative that no person involved in the University response speculate as to the cause of death or make statements assigning responsibility for the cause of death to any individual or group.
3. The Office of University Communications and Marketing will inform UNC General Administration, according to UNC protocol, as well as Board of Trustees, Foundation Board and other constituents of the University.
4. The Office of University Communications and Marketing will collaborate with Campus Police, the Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs and/or the crisis team to develop a plan of communicating information about the death to current students, parents, faculty and staff.

IV. Follow-Up Response Plan

- A. Students, faculty and staff may need assistance in dealing with their reactions to the death. The Counseling and Testing Center (CTC) will offer short-term services to any individual or group that can be identified as being affected by the death. Depending on the circumstances some regular CTC activities will suspend to accommodate the need for crisis counseling services which might include:
1. Provision of individual crisis counseling to students directly involved with the person or those who witnessed the death.
 2. Group meetings/counseling to those close to the person, e.g. residence hall floor, student organization, academic class.
 3. Crisis counseling to parents/family of a deceased student when/if they arrive on campus.
 4. Backup services to the Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs including answering special phone lines to counsel students or answer questions/control rumors, consultation with residential life staff or other groups.
 5. Extended intake hours in the days following the death to accommodate any need for crisis/grief counseling by students.

- B. Family members may want to talk with faculty, staff, or students concerning the death. At the discretion of the Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs, someone who is familiar with the situation may be assigned as a contact person to assist them with their concerns. If the student lived in the residence halls, a member of the Residence Life staff may facilitate this process. It is important that the staff member assigned to assist the family be supportive of the family's needs while also protecting the needs of the students and staff.
- C. Important considerations in working with parents/family are:
1. Parent/family requests for detailed information concerning the death;
 2. Parent/family desire to visit the campus or not;
 3. Parent/family desire for information about student academic status or circumstances, prior to death;
 4. Parent/ family desire for privacy;
 5. Parent/family desire to include members of the University community in the memorial/funeral/ burial process; and
 6. Parent/family practical concerns about student possessions, keys, refunds.
- D. The Vice Chancellor for Student affairs, in collaboration with appropriate personnel, will determine whether friends/close associates wish to sponsor a memorial service or other expression of respect and sympathy, under the direction of Campus Ministry. All recommendations regarding any type of memorial on campus will require approval of the Executive Staff.
- E. Letters of condolences may be sent from any office or person on campus to the student's family. If and when there is a question of whether or not this is appropriate, individuals will check with the Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs.
- F. The Chief Academic Officer will review conditions under which presentation of a university diploma might be appropriate (e.g., student dies just before graduation).
- G. The Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs will correspond with the parents/guardians or appropriate relatives to close any items of business. Items may include refunds for academics, parking, sports, or student travel/activities, and it may require a death certificate in the case of financial aid and student fee refunds.