

## Student Death Policy for Responding to Death of Student

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Issued By: Division of Student Affairs  
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### SUMMARY:

The death of a student is a tragedy for the family and friends of the deceased and a significant loss for the University community as well. This policy provides clear and consistent protocols regarding the actions to be taken and the notifications to be issued in the event of a student death.

### POLICY:

#### **I. Initial Response to a Student Death**

##### A. Occurring on Campus

1. The first responder should call 911 immediately. The University Police will respond and establish and maintain control of the scene.
2. University Police will request assistance from the Pennsylvania State Police and will determine in conjunction with PSP who will be the investigating agency.
3. The Chief of Police will notify the Associate Vice President of Finance & Administration and the Vice President for Student Affairs (VPSA). The VPSA will notify the President's Executive Committee.
4. The VPSA or Chief of Police will notify the President of Clarion University Foundation, Inc.
5. The VPSA will convene the Death Protocol Team in conjunction with appropriate members from relevant divisions immediately.
6. The VPSA will determine, verify and supply information about the deceased student to the University Police if needed.

7. It is the responsibility of the University Police, in collaboration with the local law enforcement, to notify the student's family of the death.

8. The VPSA will serve as the University's official contact with the family. Depending upon the cause of death and the police investigation, area sanitation may require departmental plans or arrangements with outside vendors to be implemented due to the inability to use/occupy the area on campus. These arrangements will be coordinated by the University's Facilities Management Department in consultation with the Chief of Police & VPSA or the VPSA's designee.

#### B. Occurring Off-Campus During the Academic Year

1. Anyone becoming aware of the death of a student that occurred off-campus should immediately inform the VPSA.
2. The VPSA will work with the Chief of University Police to verify the information.
3. The VPSA or Chief of Police will notify the President's Executive Committee.
4. The VPSA will convene the Death Protocol Team to determine appropriate support for campus community.

#### C. Occurring Off-Campus Not During the Academic Year

1. Anyone becoming aware of the death of a student that occurred off-campus should immediately inform the VPSA.
2. The VPSA will work with the Chief of University Police to verify the information.
3. The VPSA or Chief of Police will notify the President's Executive Committee.
4. The VPSA will convene the Death Protocol Team to determine appropriate support for campus community.

#### D. In All Cases

1. The VPSA will be the primary point of contact for the student's family. When appropriate, the VPSA will assist the family in making arrangements to come to campus, take care of University business, and other related assistance as needed.
2. The VPSA will work with the Death Protocol Team and Office of Marketing and Communication to determine the communication of a public announcement and a release to the press to be disseminated by either the Office of Marketing and Communications or the Office of the President.
3. All media inquiries concerning the student's death should be referred to the designated staff in Office of Marketing and Communication.

## II. Campus Communication and Actions

- A. The Office of the Vice President for Student Affairs along with the Death Protocol Team will:
1. Send an email notification of the student's death to the following: the Dean of the College the student was enrolled in, the student's current professors, the student's Academic Advisor, the SGA, and any campus employer of the student.
  2. Send an email to the campus community at large (after professors, family, friends, etc., have been notified) that includes the student's name, major, hometown, and grade level. A follow-up email may need to be sent to include funeral arrangements.
  3. Notify and coordinate with other University offices and departments as necessary in order to attend to the student's family, University students, student records, personal items, and return of University property. Include the student's ID number and the date of death.
    - a. Office of the President – including information so that flowers/memorials may be sent
    - b. Office of the Provost
    - c. University Marketing
    - d. Computing Services
    - e. Residence Life and Housing
    - f. Director of Student Development & Engagement
    - g. Center for Wellness/Counseling Center
    - h. Office of the Registrar
    - i. Admissions
    - j. Student Financial Services
    - k. Public Safety/University Police (Parking)
    - l. Dean of College in which the student was enrolled 1) Advisor 2) Professors
    - m. If applicable: 1) Athletics 2) International Programs and Services
  4. If the deceased student is eligible to receive a posthumous degree (refer to separate policy) the Provost is responsible for ensuring the degree is presented to the parent(s) of the deceased student. Upon receipt of the posthumous degree from the Registrar's Office, the Office of the Provost will coordinate with the family of the deceased to determine how they would like to receive the degree – either by the University President awarding it at the Commencement Ceremony respective to the deceased student's last semester of enrollment, or by other means. It is the choice of the parents of the deceased student by what manner the degree is awarded.
  5. Appropriate University representatives will attend the funeral if possible.
  6. The Center for Wellness will be available to work with students who may be affected by the death by making referrals to appropriate services and coordinating with the Registrar to contact professors upon student request.

B. Death Protocol Team will:

1. After family notification by the VPSA, and in collaboration with University Housing, inform the deceased's roommates, friends, and any others identified as having close ties with the deceased, along with their professors, of the student's death via email or phone.
2. Provide assistance to students who attend the funeral, e.g., note to professor(s) or email to professor(s) regarding student absence as requested.
3. Follow up with friends of the deceased student as needed.

C. Office of University Marketing and Communication will:

1. Handle all media inquiries.
2. Will determine, in collaboration with the Fatality Response Team and Chief of University Police, and in consultation with University Counsel if applicable, the appropriate timing for, and the content of information to be shared in, a public announcement and a release to the press. Said announcement and press release will be disseminated by University Marketing.

D. Computing Services will:

1. Inactivate the student's computer accounts (MyClarion & EagleMail). Accounts will be purged in one year.

E. University Housing will:

1. Support law enforcement with controlling and securing the deceased student's room, if necessary, and with any investigative needs.
2. Assist with notification of deceased student's roommates/suitemates if student death occurred on campus. Coordinate the relocation of roommates/suitemates to another location if requested. If death occurs during the summer months when the student is away from campus, assist with notifying roommates from the previous year and the upcoming year.
3. Work in partnership with Center for Wellness staff to provide appropriate support for residents.
4. In coordination with the VPSA and the deceased student's family, facilitate the return of his/her property from the residence hall.
5. Refund a prorated amount of meal plan and room fee charges based on by-the day costs for the term in which the death occurred.
6. Review and cancel any building card access or key the deceased student may have had.
7. Upon clearance by University Police, the Director of Residence Life Services will coordinate arrangements with regard to packing the deceased student's possessions (at a time determined appropriate by the Director of Residence Life Services and the VPSA). The packing of possessions may be completed by the deceased student'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 Director of Residence Life Services will be responsible for arranging pick up or delivery of the items with the student's family.

8. Coordinate the collection and return of retrieved mail to the deceased student's family and ensure mail forwarding as necessary.

F. Center for Wellness will:

1. Coordinate counseling and support services for students as requested.
2. Contact students who might have been affected by the student's death – including but not limited to significant others, friends, roommates, classmates, teammates, others living in the same building as the deceased student – and offer additional services as appropriate.
3. Assist with contacting appropriate support (County Crisis) for deceased student's family if needed.

G. Center for Wellness will:

1. Close the deceased student's private health records and mark as "DECEASED."
2. Maintain confidentiality of deceased student's health records unless request for same is approved by University legal counsel.
3. Provide assistance as directed by the VPSA.

H. Registrar's Office will:

1. When notified of a student death by the President, Provost, or Vice President of Student Affairs, place a deceased code on the student's academic record. This code alerts University departments that no additional communication should be sent to the deceased student, the student's parents, legal guardian or spouse.
2. Obtain external verification of the student's death for inclusion with the academic record. The University needs to be provided with a copy of the "Probate Court Short Certificate" naming the executor of the estate. That person named as the executor would be provided with the transcript/records upon request. External verification is generally obtained through online news articles (in the case of accidental death) or by obituary
3. Process an official University Withdrawal. Close the student's official record, and mark it with a deceased code.
4. Mark all mailing addresses as inactive and update the address to 'Deceased – Do Not Use' in order to block the mailing to, or generation of mailing labels for, a deceased student.
5. Audit the deceased student's academic record to ensure the conservation of complete and accurate records and electronic data base elements (e.g., admission data, grades, registration activity, etc.) such that the information is intact and viewable in the student information

system and optical imaging system. All semester, course, grade and other academic notations will remain on the student's record.

6. Determine whether the deceased student is eligible to receive a posthumous degree and report that finding to the Provost.

I. Student Financial Services will:

1. Settle the deceased student's financial accounts with the University, in conjunction with other appropriate offices, and process allowable refunds.

2. Allowable refunds include:

a. Prorated refund of tuition based on total days from start of semester's classes to date of student death (less financial aid which needs to be returned to the appropriate agencies).

b. Prorated refund of housing fees based on number of days occupied.

c. Prorated refund of meal plan charge based on total days from start of semester's meal service to date of student death.

d. Prorated Parking permit fees.

e. ID balances.

3. Perform a Return to Title IV funds calculation based on the deceased student's actual last date of attendance, if applicable.

4. Ensure that the required funds are returned to the appropriate agencies.

5. Issue a refund check made payable to the deceased student's estate and send it via USPS along with a letter of condolence from the Director of Student Financial Services, once a Withdrawal Form is received from the Registrar and approval is received from the VP for Finance and Administration.

6. Finalize any Federal Work-study remaining payroll payments and close any related employment records.

7. If a balance due is remaining on the student's account a write-off request will be sent to the PA Attorney General's office for approval to remove the debt from the university account..

8. Issue a refund check made payable to the deceased student's estate and send it via USPS along with a letter of condolence from the Director of Student Financial Services, once a Withdrawal Form is received from the Registrar and approval is received from the VP for Finance and Administration.

L. University Police/Public Safety:

1. Secure site if the death occurred on campus. Contact Coroner's office.
2. Serve as the point of contact with other law enforcement officials.
3. Notify the Pennsylvania State Police (PSP) and determine the primary investigating agency. PSP will be requested to handle all death investigations, but may request for the University Police to conduct investigations that are apparent suicides absent suspicious circumstances.
4. Review the deceased student's parking record. If there are outstanding unpaid tickets, they will be administratively forgiven.

M. Athletics will:

1. Inform appropriate coaching staff of the death of any student athlete.
2. Coordinate through the VPSA the return of any property that the student may have left at University athletics facilities to be delivered to the deceased's family with other belongings.
3. Provide support for athletes as necessary.

N. International Programs and Services will:

1. Serve as a point of contact to the international community.
2. Assist in securing translators, if needed.
3. In collaboration with the University Police, assist with notification of family, if needed.

### **III. Records Disclosure Procedure**

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), which protects the privacy of student educational records, does not extend past death. Non-educational records are governed by various other laws based on the record type. In order to ensure that the requirements of these laws are being adhered to, any request for information concerning a deceased student's record must be reviewed by the Vice President for Student Affairs and the Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education Legal Department prior to release.

Requests for access to the student's EagleMail must follow this same protocol. Request approvals will have a defined duration of no more than 30 days. If a given access request is approved by Student Affairs/Legal, Student Affairs will notify Computing Services and provide the e-mail address for the approved contact. The Computing Services AVP will reactivate the account with a new password and provide the password to the contact along with the expiration date of the access.