



Policy Title:	UNIV-404
Policy Number:	Response to Student Death
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Policies Superseded:	FINA0178; STUD-CLSE 328
Policy Management Area(s):	Student Affairs

## 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 instructions as to 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 Department of Public Safety, along with the City of Conway Police Department and/or the Horry County Police Department, will respond, and establish and maintain control of the scene.
    2. At the first opportunity, the chief of the University Department of Public Safety will notify the South Carolina State Law Enforcement Division of the death. SLED is responsible for investigating deaths.
    3. The chief of the University Department of Public Safety will notify the president, provost, and dean of students, as soon as is practicable. The appropriate members of the executive staff will convene at least once with a briefing from the chief.
    4. The dean of students will determine, verify, and supply the following information about the deceased student to the University Department of Public Safety and to the Horry County Coroner:
      - a. Name
      - b. Age/date of birth
      - c. Hometown

- d. Employment contact information, on- or off-campus
  - e. Class status
  - f. RMAS (Room Assignment) information and roommates
  - g. Campus affiliations.
5. It is the responsibility of the Horry County Coroner, in collaboration with the dean of students, to notify the student's family of the death. The dean of students, will serve as the University's official contact with the family. Depending upon the cause of death and the police investigation, area clean-up may require departmental plans to be implemented due to the inability to use/occupy the area on campus.
  6. Hazardous clean-up may need to be coordinated through the Environmental Health and Safety Department.
- 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 dean of students.
  2. The dean of students will verify the information and notify the president, the provost, vice president for student success, enrollment management, and student affairs, and the Office of University Marketing and Communication as soon as possible.
  3. The president, or their designee, will determine if the members of the executive council should convene depending upon the circumstances of the death (e.g., if the student died while engaged in University activities/travel; if the death was accidental or criminal, etc.).
- 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 dean of students.
  2. The dean of students will verify the information and notify the president, the provost, immediate supervisor, and the Office of University Marketing and Communication as soon as possible.
- D. In **All** Cases
1. The dean of students will be the primary point of contact for the student's family. When appropriate, the dean of students will assist the family in making arrangements to come to campus, reserve local accommodations, take care of University business, and other related assistance as needed.
  2. The vice president for University Marketing and Communication, associate vice president for University Marketing and Communication, and the director of public safety, in consultation with University Counsel, will determine, 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 the Office of University Marketing and Communication.

## II. Campus Communication and Actions

### A. The Dean of Students Office will:

1. Provide email notification of the student's death to: the dean of the college the student was enrolled in, the student's current professors, the student's academic advisor, and any campus employer of the student.
2. Send a mass email to the campus community at large (after professors, family, friends, etc., have been notified) including the student's major, hometown, and grade level. A follow-up email may need to be sent to include funeral arrangements, support available for impacted students, and information regarding a campus memorial service.
3. Securely notify, where appropriate, and coordinate with other offices and departments, such as, but not necessarily limited to, those listed below, regarding student records, personal items, and return of University property. [If the campus Emergency Management Team (EMT) is called to convene, most of these areas will be notified at some level by the respective EMT member.]
  - a. Office of the President – including information so that flowers/memorials may be sent
  - b. Office of the Provost
  - c. Office of University Marketing and Communication
  - d. Information Technology Services
  - e. University Housing
  - f. Dean of Students Office
  - g. Counseling Services
  - h. Student Health Services
  - i. Office of the Registrar
  - j. Office of Student Accounts
  - k. Financial Aid and Scholarships
  - l. Department of Public Safety
  - m. Risk Management and Insurance Services
  - n. Dean of college in which the student was enrolled
  - o. Advisor
  - p. Professors
  - q. Other departments as appropriate
4. Prepare a "Certificate of Memoriam" (for attendance) and provide same to the Office of the President for inclusion with the president's letter of condolence to the family of the deceased student, or assist with processing/awarding of posthumous degree if applicable, sending letters of

invitation to the family. Accompany family to the appropriate ceremony, e.g. memorial service, commencement. If the deceased student is eligible to receive a posthumous degree (see II.H.6.), the vice president for student affairs 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 vice president for student affairs 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. When appropriate and feasible, attend funeral, or arrange for a University representative or alumni representative to attend funeral.
6. Work with students who may be significantly affected by the death by making referrals to appropriate services and contacting instructors.
7. In collaboration with Counseling Services and University Housing, if appropriate, inform the deceased's roommates, and friends, etc., of the student's death in person or by phone.
8. Provide assistance to students who attend the funeral, e.g., note to professor(s) or email to professor(s) regarding student absence as requested.
9. Follow up with friends of the deceased student as needed.

B. Information Technology Services will:

1. Disable all access to student accounts, including WebAdvisor, Moodle, and campus email, to prevent unauthorized access. Once this is accomplished, all of the student's accounts will follow the normal process of retirement.
2. Inform the surviving family member(s) that, upon review and approval by the University Counsel of their written request, the student's emails can be forwarded to them.

C. University Housing and Auxiliary Enterprises will:

1. Support law enforcement with controlling and securing the scene and with any investigative needs.
2. Notify 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 student is away from campus, notify roommates from the previous year and the upcoming year.
3. Work in partnership with Counseling Services and Dean of Students staff to provide appropriate support for residents.

4. In coordination with the vice president for student success, enrollment management, and student affairs, and the deceased's family, facilitate the return of their 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. Work with the CINO Card Office to review and cancel any building card access or key the deceased student may have had.
7. If the death occurred in or around a University Housing facility, University Housing Facilities will coordinate or perform repairs and cleaning as necessary and appropriate, after the coroner and the police complete their investigation.

D. Counseling Services will:

1. Work with the Dean of Students Office to coordinate psychological counseling and emotional support for those requesting.
2. Seek out students and staff who might have been deeply affected by the student's death – such as 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 support for deceased student's family, if needed.
4. Upon request, will assist students, other offices, or individuals on campus to arrange vigils or memorial services.

E. Student Health Services 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 through the Records Disclosure Procedure as outlined in III. A. and B. of this policy.
3. Provide assistance as directed by the vice president for student affairs.

F. Registrar's Office will:

1. When notified of a student death by the president, provost, or vice president for student success, enrollment management, and student affairs, place a "DC" (deceased) privacy code on the student's academic record. This code prevents unauthorized access to the deceased's record within the student information system and 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. External verification is generally obtained through online news articles (in the case of accidental death) or by obituary.

3. Process an official University Withdrawal Form, utilizing the date of death as the date of withdrawal. Close the student's official record, and mark it with a privacy code of "DC" for deceased.
4. Mark the local and permanent mailing addresses as "former" in order to block the mailing to, or generation of mailing labels for a deceased student.
5. Provide notification of the death and processed withdrawal to the vice president for student success, enrollment management and student affairs, the provost, the dean of students, the associate vice president for enrollment management, the chief information technology officer, the associate vice president for University Communication, the department chair and dean of the deceased's academic major, and the directors of the Departments of Financial Aid, Student Accounts, University Housing, and Alumni Engagement.
6. 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.
7. Determine whether the deceased student is eligible to receive a posthumous degree and report that finding to the vice president for student success, enrollment management, and student affairs.
  - a. Prior to graduating, any undergraduate student who died while officially enrolled at the University (Fall and Spring semesters, or during a summer or interim period following a major semester of enrollment), and who was within 18 credit hours of completing the degree requirements of the academic program/major of record, is eligible to be awarded a posthumous bachelor's degree.
  - b. Prior to graduating, any graduate student who died while officially enrolled at the University (Fall and Spring semesters, or during a summer or interim period following a major semester of enrollment), and who is within nine credit hours of completing the degree requirements of the academic program/major of record, is eligible to be awarded a posthumous master's degree.
  - c. The Registrar's Office will review the deceased's completed credit hours. If the credit hours are within the range where a posthumous degree may be considered, the Registrar's Office will request a formal graduation audit from the department chair of the student's major and academic dean to verify the actual remaining hours.
  - d. If the posthumous degree is approved by the dean/chair of the college in which the deceased student was enrolled, the Registrar's Office will receive final certification from the provost, notify the vice president for

student success, enrollment management, and student affairs of the awarding of the degree, and order the degree. Upon receipt, the Registrar's Office will furnish the posthumous degree to the vice president for student success, enrollment management, and student affairs.

- e. The Registrar's Office will initiate an ITS ticket to disable deceased student accounts.

G. Office of Student Accounts 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. Parking permit fees.
  - e. CINO Card balances.
3. 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 accounts, once a Withdrawal Form is received from the Registrar and approval is received from the chief financial officer.

H. Financial Aid & Scholarships will:

1. Collaborate with HREO to finalize any Federal Work-Study remaining payroll payments and close any related employment records.
2. Perform a Return of Title IV funds calculation based on the deceased student's actual last date of attendance, if applicable.
3. Ensure that the required funds are returned to the appropriate agencies.

I. Department of Public Safety will:

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 State Law Enforcement Division (SLED) who, with the University Department of Public Safety, shall participate in a joint investigation of the death. SLED will lead the investigation.
4. Work directly with the director of Environmental Health and Safety, Dean of Students Office and the vice president for student success, enrollment management, and student affairs throughout any police investigation.

5. Review the deceased student's parking record. If there are outstanding unpaid tickets, they will be voided.

J. Athletics will:

1. Inform appropriate coaching staff of the death of any student-athlete.
2. Coordinate through the dean of students 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

K. Center for Global Engagement will:

1. Serve as a point of contact to the international community.
2. Assist in securing translators, if needed.
3. Assist with notification of family, if needed.
4. Coordinate with partner program or institution to ensure support of other students who may be impacted.
5. Assist family in coordinating with any issues related to communicating with authorities and/or staff if death happens on an international trip.

L. Mail Services will:

1. Coordinate the collection and return of un-retrieved mail per University policy.
2. Coordinate mail forwarding with deceased student's estate representative, if desired.

III. Access Within the Student Information System to a Deceased Student's Record

- A. After the "DC" deceased privacy code has been placed on the student's record within the student information system, only select individuals with a specific need to know will have the ability to override the code and review the student's record.
- B. Each department/entity that needs access to the record in order to perform their duties must furnish a list of individuals that require deceased code override access to the University Registrar. The University Registrar will then apply the privilege to those individuals in the student information system.
- C. As personnel changes are made within their offices, the director/leader of each department is responsible for providing updated access information (who to add or remove) to the University Registrar.

IV. Records Disclosure Procedure



The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), which protects the privacy of student educational records, does not extend past death. Noneducational 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 University Legal Counsel prior to release.

V. Former Student or Alumni Death

Upon notification of the death of a former student or alumni of the institution a person should notify the Office of the Registrar, Dean of Students Office, and the Alumni Engagement Office.