



## Interim Response Protocol to the Death of UC Merced Community Member

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<b>Summary:</b>	Guidelines for consistent response to the death of a campus community member.
<b>Scope:</b>	Campus community members, including students, staff, faculty, and academic appointees.

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### TABLE OF CONTENTS

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I. SUMMARY & SCOPE.....	2
II. PROCEDURES.....	2
A. IMMEDIATE RESPONSE: REPORTING A DEATH .....	2
1. In all cases: .....	2
2. If death occurs on campus or at a UC Merced facility: .....	3
3. If death occurs off campus while on University business: .....	3
B. FIRST 24 HOURS: NOTIFICATIONS, COMMUNICATIONS, AND ARRANGEMENTS .....	4
C. CHECKLIST FOR DEATH OF UC MERCED STUDENT .....	5
D. CHECKLIST FOR DEATH OF UC MERCED FACULTY OR ACADEMIC APPOINTEE.....	6
E. CHECKLIST FOR DEATH OF UC MERCED STAFF MEMBER.....	8
F. CHECKLIST FOR THE BENEFITS REPRESENTATIVE .....	10
G. CHECKLIST FOR THE OFFICE OF THE CHANCELLOR.....	10
III. ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES .....	11
A. CHIEF OF POLICE .....	11
B. INTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS.....	11
C. EXTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS / PUBLIC RELATIONS .....	11
D. VICE CHANCELLOR FOR STUDENT AFFAIRS .....	11
E. VC STUDENT AFFAIRS EXECUTIVE ASSISTANT OR DESIGNEE .....	11
F. UNIVERSITY REGISTRAR.....	11

G. EXECUTIVE VICE CHANCELLOR AND PROVOST .....	11
H. DEAN .....	12
I. VICE CHANCELLOR OR ASSOCIATE CHANCELLOR .....	12
J. ASSOCIATE VICE CHANCELLOR OR DIRECTOR LEVEL SUPERVISOR.....	12
K. DESIGNATED COORDINATOR.....	12
L. OFFICE OF THE CHANCELLOR .....	12
M. HUMAN RESOURCES – BENEFITS REPRESENTATIVE .....	12
IV. CONTACT INFORMATION.....	13
V. PROTOCOL REVISION HISTORY.....	13

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## **I. SUMMARY & SCOPE**

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As we strive to celebrate one another’s accomplishments, we endeavor to be supportive and compassionate during difficult times. One of the most difficult of times is when a member of our campus community dies. When tragedy does occur, it is incumbent upon the University to respond in a sensitive and caring manner. These guidelines are designed to help employees respond to the death of a UC Merced community member in a consistent manner.

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## **II. PROCEDURES**

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### **A. IMMEDIATE RESPONSE: REPORTING A DEATH**

#### **1. In all cases:**

- a. Do not disturb the death scene.
- b. Unless rendering first aid, it is extremely important not to disturb a death scene.
- c. If possible, secure the area, being careful to touch as little as possible.
- d. If there is another person with you, one of you should stay at the scene to keep others from tampering with the death scene while the other calls the police.
- e. Under NO circumstances should staff or onlookers:
  - i. take photos or videos,
  - ii. make any comment or statement about the cause of death, or
  - iii. post information about the incident on social media.
- f. All requests for information from news media personnel should be referred to Public Relations at [pr@ucmerced.edu](mailto:pr@ucmerced.edu).
- g. At no time should any staff involved discuss the incident with any persons not directly responding to the situation.

**2. If death occurs on campus or at a UC Merced facility:**

- a. Call 911 or local emergency responders; this ensures that both campus and local authorities are notified.
- b. Notify UC Merced Police Department at 209-228-2677 (24 hours/day).
- c. Call employee's emergency contact person, if designated, or other known family member to advise of employee's removal to hospital.
- d. Identify a designated campus spokesperson to travel to hospital to meet family.
- e. If death/accident is work-related, contact OSHA at 1-800-321-OSHA

**3. If death occurs off campus while on University business:**

- a. Call 911 or local emergency responders; this ensures that both campus and local authorities are notified.
- b. Notify UC Merced Police Department at 209-228-2677 (24 hours/day).
- c. If a death occurs during University sponsored travel, the University staff member accompanying the trip should:
  - i. immediately contact local emergency services, and
  - ii. as soon as possible, once the situation is secured, notify UC Merced Police Department.
- d. If a death occurs while a UC Merced community member is abroad:
  - i. First contact the US Embassy or Consulate.
  - ii. Then contact the UC Merced Police Department.
  - iii. If the deceased is a student, contact the Office of International Affairs.

## **B. FIRST 24 HOURS: NOTIFICATIONS, COMMUNICATIONS, AND ARRANGEMENTS**

1. If the death occurs on campus, at a UC Merced Facility or off campus, the Chief of Police will notify leadership listed below to ensure proper protocols are executed in a timely manner:
  - a. Chancellor
  - b. Executive Vice Chancellor and Provost
  - c. Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs
  - d. Vice Chancellor for Finance and Administration
  - e. Vice Chancellor for External Relations
  - f. Vice Chancellor for Research and Economic Development
  - g. Vice Chancellor for Physical Operations, Planning & Development
  - h. Associate Chancellor and Chief of Staff to the Chancellor
  - i. Associate Chancellor and Chief Diversity Officer
  - j. Chief Campus Counsel
  - k. Chief of Protocol (Director of Protocol and Special Events)
  
2. Upon notice, the appropriate leadership staff listed below will begin following protocols outlined in this document:
  - a. Death of a Student – Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs
  - b. Death of a Faculty Member or Academic Appointee – Executive Vice Chancellor and Provost
  - c. Death of a Staff Member – Vice Chancellor for the staff member’s unit
  
3. Internal Communications:
  - a. In consultation with the UC Merced Police Department and senior leadership, Internal Communications drafts the internal campus email notification to be sent to the campus community from the Chancellor.
  
4. External Communications and Media:
  - a. Public Relations is responsible for disseminating information to the media.
  - b. All media requests for information should be directed to Public Relations.
  - c. Public Relations will work with UC Merced Police Department, senior leadership, and General Campus Counsel to maintain the accuracy and ensure the legality of the information disseminated.

## **C. CHECKLIST FOR DEATH OF UC MERCED STUDENT**

### **1. Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs**

- a. Designate a coordinator (this may be the executive assistant)
  - i. Coordinator must have necessary authority to accomplish the required tasks.
  - ii. Coordinator should have good interpersonal and communication skills.
- b. Within 24 hours of death, or as soon as possible thereafter, make initial phone call to family. This initial phone call should focus on condolences and extending support. Let family know you will be calling in a few days with a follow up phone call.
- c. Within 24-48 hours after initial call, make follow-up phone call. Collect and/or share the following information:
  - i. Identify a family member as a point of contact. Include name, relationship, and phone number.
  - ii. Determine funeral services information: location, date and time.
  - iii. Does the family desire flowers to be sent?
  - iv. Can their home address be released for condolences?
  - v. Does the family want to attend the on-campus moment of silence?
  - vi. Are there students/faculty/staff on campus that the family would like us to notify or reach out to?
  - vii. Remind the family to consider media attention surrounding the death.
  - viii. If desired by the family, UC Merced staff can help gather the student's belongings to return to the family.
- d. Immediately, provide follow-up information to the Office of the Chancellor.
- e. Notify the following officials of the student death:
  - i. Director of Student Health Services
  - ii. Director of Counseling and Psychological Services
  - iii. Appropriate Deans
- f. If applicable, begin conversation about posthumous degree.

### **2. Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs Executive Assistant or Designee**

- a. Notify the Registrar's Office so they can execute the UC Merced Deceased Active Student Procedures.
- b. Notify Dean of Students Office to coordinate Moment of Silence.
- c. If the death is of a student studying abroad, notify the Office of International Affairs.
- d. Send letter of condolence from the Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs.

## **D. CHECKLIST FOR DEATH OF UC MERCED FACULTY OR ACADEMIC APPOINTEE**

### **1. Executive Vice Chancellor and Provost**

- a. Immediately notify the following offices:
  - i. The faculty member's or academic appointee's Dean
  - ii. The Vice Provost for Faculty
  - iii. Human Resources – Benefits

### **2. Dean**

- a. Designate a coordinator.
  - i. Coordinator must have necessary authority to accomplish the required tasks.
  - ii. Coordinator should have good interpersonal and communication skills.
- b. Make initial phone call to family approximately 24 hours after death. This initial phone call should focus on condolences and extending support. Give the family the name and contact information of the designated coordinator. Let family know you will be calling with a follow up phone call.
- c. Make family follow-up phone call (24-48 hours later). Collect and/or share the following information:
  - i. Identify a family member as a point of contact. Include name, relationship, and phone number.
  - ii. Provide name and contact information of designated coordinator.
  - iii. Extend campus services such as HR and Benefits.
  - iv. Determine funeral services information: location, date, time.
  - v. Does the family desire for flowers to be sent?
  - vi. Can their home address be released for condolences?
  - vii. Remind the family to consider media attention surrounding the death.
  - viii. Does the family want to attend the on-campus moment of silence?
  - ix. Are there students/faculty/staff on campus that the family would like us to notify or reach out to?
  - x. Inform that UC Merced staff will gather the employee's belongings to return to the family.
- d. Immediately, provide family follow-up information to the designated coordinator and the Office of the Chancellor.
- e. Send letter of condolence.

### **3. Designated Coordinator**

The coordinator acts as a compassionate link between the family and the campus community and facilitates the business aspects of the guidelines. They may assign others to help with some of the tasks but retain responsibility for the outcome.

If possible, the same coordinator should talk to the same family representative throughout the process. The goal of the communication is to keep the family informed and to coordinate with them when necessary. Try not to burden the family with unnecessary communications or many details. Think through all the questions or information before actually speaking to them.

As soon as possible:

- a. Notify Academic Personnel Office
- b. Communicate that you are the internal point of contact to respond to colleagues' questions and concerns. Limit the number of employees trying to contact the family directly.
- c. Review info on Benefits and Payroll in order to discuss with the family of the deceased.
- d. Contact Chief of Protocol to coordinate Moment of Silence.
- e. Inform the staff of visitation and funeral arrangements once determined according to the family's wishes.
- f. Inventory personal and professional possessions and arrange for retrieval. Use your own judgment as to the appropriate timing of this task.
- g. Consider how donations are being handled.

Later Considerations:

- h. Determine how to reuse or dispose of the faculty member's electronic files and communications. Consider the following:
  - i. Which e-mail messages or network files should be transferred or deleted?
  - j. Is an e-mail absence message needed to redirect inquiries to the appropriate department contact?
  - k. Is setting up temporary network access to obtain copies of personal communications necessary?
  - l. Remove faculty member's access to electronic resources.
  - m. Terminate all other UC Merced services i.e. cell phone, credit cards, etc.
  - n. Inventory personal and professional possessions and arrange for retrieval. Use your own judgment as to the appropriate timing of this task.
  - o. Update contact information including:
    - i. Emergency contact list
    - ii. Internal forms
    - iii. Office security codes, access codes on keypads
    - iv. Security alarm lists
    - v. Web pages and directories
    - vi. Faculty/ staff directory

## **E. CHECKLIST FOR DEATH OF UC MERCED STAFF MEMBER**

### **1. Vice Chancellor for Division or Associate Chancellor**

- a. Immediately notify:
  - i. the employee's Dean, AVC or director level supervisor.
  - ii. Human Resources – Benefits

### **2. Dean, AVC, or Director level supervisor**

- a. Designate a departmental coordinator. The ideal coordinator has the necessary authority to accomplish the required tasks. The coordinator should have good interpersonal and communication skills.

### **3. Designated Coordinator**

The coordinator acts as a compassionate link between the family and the campus community and facilitates the business aspects of the guidelines. They may assign others to help with some of the tasks but retain responsibility for the outcome.

If possible, the same coordinator should talk to the same family representative throughout the process. The goal of the communication is to keep the family informed and to coordinate with them when necessary. Try not to burden the family with unnecessary communications or many details. Think through all the questions or information before actually speaking to them.

- a. Make initial phone call to family approximately 24 hours after death. This initial phone call should focus on condolences and extending support. Give the family the name and contact information of the Benefits Representative. Let family know you will be calling with a follow up phone call.
- b. Make family follow-up phone call (24-48 hours later). Collect and/or share the following information:
  - i. Identify a family member as a point of contact. Include name, relationship, and phone number.
  - ii. Notify the family that a Benefits Representative will contact them with information regarding benefits and available resources.
  - iii. Does the family wish to communicate funeral services information to campus? (location, date, time)
  - iv. Can their home address be released for condolences?
  - v. Does the family wish to attend the on-campus moment of silence?
  - vi. Remind the family to consider media attention surrounding the death.
- c. Provide family follow-up information to the Benefits Representative and the Office of the Chancellor.
- d. Arrange for Moment of Silence
  - i. Notify Staff Assembly to initiate the coordination of moment of silence.
  - ii. Notify the family of the date and time.



- iii. Arrange for flowers at the moment of silence.
- e. Communicate internally:
  - i. Inform that you are the internal point of contact to respond to colleagues' questions and concerns.
  - ii. Limit the number of employees trying to contact the family directly.
  - iii. Inform the staff of visitation and funeral arrangements once determined, according to the family's wishes.
- f. Check with Alumni Relations Office to determine whether employee is an alumnus.
- g. Consider how donations are being handled. (consider partnering with Staff Assembly)
- h. Inventory personal and professional possessions and arrange for retrieval. Use your own judgment as to the appropriate timing of this task.
- i. Determine how to reuse or dispose of the employee's electronic files and communications. Contact Records Management and Information Practices for guidance.
- j. Consider the following:
  - i. Is an e-mail absence message needed to redirect inquiries to the appropriate department contact?
  - ii. Is setting up temporary network access to obtain copies of personal communications necessary?
- k. Remove employee's systems access.
- l. Terminate all other UC Merced services, i.e., cell phone, credit cards.
- m. Update contact information
  - i. Emergency contact list
  - ii. Internal forms
  - iii. Office security codes, access codes on keypads
  - iv. Security alarm lists
  - v. Web pages and directories
  - vi. Faculty/ staff directory

## **F. CHECKLIST FOR THE BENEFITS REPRESENTATIVE**

1. Provide employee address information to the Office of the Chancellor.
2. Notify Payroll Services
  - a. Coordinate with Payroll Services on final pay and one-month equivalent payment.
  - b. Review info on Benefits and Payroll to discuss with the family of the deceased.
3. Contact Employee Assistance Program (EAP) to schedule onsite counseling services for staff.
4. Coordinate with UCPATH and RASC for death benefits, e.g., life insurance, AD&D.

## **G. CHECKLIST FOR THE OFFICE OF THE CHANCELLOR**

1. Ensure that campus communication around the death is timely and correct in detail and tone.
2. Advise communications staff on media releases.
3. Attend on-campus as well as off-campus services on Chancellor's behalf if Chancellor is unavailable.
4. Ensure that a condolence letter and/or a call to the family by the Chancellor are forthcoming.
5. Assist designated coordinator with arrangements for a campus moment of silence including logistics and communication.
6. Ensure campus participation in off-site services.
7. Coordinate sending of flowers to off-site services.

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### **III. ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES**

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#### **A. CHIEF OF POLICE**

1. Notify leadership within 24 hours of being notified.

#### **B. INTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS**

1. In consultation with the UC Merced Police Department and senior leadership, Internal Communications drafts the internal campus email notification to be sent to the campus community from the Chancellor.

#### **C. EXTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS / PUBLIC RELATIONS**

1. In consultation with UC Merced Police Department, senior leadership, and General Campus Counsel:
  - a. disseminate information to the media, and
  - b. maintain the accuracy and ensure the legality of the information disseminated.

#### **D. VICE CHANCELLOR FOR STUDENT AFFAIRS**

When the deceased is a student:

1. Designate a coordinator or notify executive assistant.
2. Make initial and follow-up contact with family, provide relevant information to the Chancellor's office.
3. Notify appropriate officials as outlined in procedure section.
4. Begin conversation about posthumous degrees, if applicable.

#### **E. VC STUDENT AFFAIRS EXECUTIVE ASSISTANT OR DESIGNEE**

When the deceased is a student:

1. Notify offices as outlined in procedure section.
2. Send letter of condolence from VC Student Affairs.

#### **F. UNIVERSITY REGISTRAR**

1. When the deceased is a student, execute UC Merced Deceased Active Student Procedures (a checklist internal to the Office of the Registrar).

#### **G. EXECUTIVE VICE CHANCELLOR AND PROVOST**

1. When the deceased is a faculty member or academic appointee, immediately notify appropriate officials as outlined in procedure section.

## **H. DEAN**

When the deceased is a faculty member:

1. Designate a departmental coordinator.
2. Make initial and follow-up contact with family and provide relevant information to the designated coordinator and Chancellor's office.
3. Send letter of condolence.

When the deceased is a staff member:

1. Designate a departmental coordinator.

## **I. VICE CHANCELLOR OR ASSOCIATE CHANCELLOR**

1. When the deceased is a staff member within your organization, immediately notify appropriate officials as outlined in procedure section.

## **J. ASSOCIATE VICE CHANCELLOR OR DIRECTOR LEVEL SUPERVISOR**

1. When the deceased is a staff member within your organization, designate a coordinator.

## **K. DESIGNATED COORDINATOR**

1. Act as a compassionate link between the family and the campus community and facilitate the business aspects of the separation, as outlined in procedure section.

## **L. OFFICE OF THE CHANCELLOR**

1. Coordinate with internal communications and public relations to ensure communications are timely and correct in detail and tone.
2. Attend services and send condolence letter on behalf of the Chancellor.
3. Assist with arrangements for Moment of Silence, including logistics and communication.
4. Send flowers to and ensure campus participation at off-site services.
5. Other duties as outlined in procedure section.

## **M. HUMAN RESOURCES – BENEFITS REPRESENTATIVE**

1. Provide address information to the Office of the Chancellor.
2. Notify Payroll Services, coordinate payments, and review information.
3. Arrange onsite counseling services for staff.
4. Coordinate with UCPath and RASC for death benefits.

#### IV. CONTACT INFORMATION

Office	Contact	Phone	Email
UC Merced Police Department	Chou Her, Chief of Police	209-228-8273	cher@ucmerced.edu
UC Merced Police Department	Non-Emergency	209-228-2677 (24 Hours)	police@ucmerced.edu
International Affairs	Garett Gietzen, Director	209-285-9780	international@ucmerced.edu or ggietzen@ucmerced.edu
Public Relations	General		pr@ucmerced.edu
Internal Communications	General		internalcomms@ucmerced.edu
University Registrar	Erin Webb	209-228-4501	ewebb2@ucmerced.edu
Office of the Chancellor	Molly Elazier, Executive Assistant to the Chancellor	209-382-4508	melazier@ucmerced.edu
Academic Personnel	General		academicpersonnel@ucmerced.edu
Human Resources	General	209-228-8247	hr@ucmerced.edu benefits@ucmerced.edu
Human Resources – Benefits	Sana Ramzan, Benefits Analyst	209-355-7178	sramzan2@ucmerced.edu
Payroll Services	General		payrollservices@ucmerced.edu
Alumni Relations	General		alumni@ucmerced.edu
Records Management and Information Practices	Eric Kalmin, Director	209-285-8708	ekalmin@ucmerced.edu

#### V. PROTOCOL REVISION HISTORY

Date	Action/Summary of Changes
April 2021	Updated protocol and contacts, adapted to policy template
June 2017	Protocol issued