

CRISIS COMMUNICATION: WHAT FAMILIES WANT TO KNOW

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Background: The Who

- All Families of Undergraduate Students
- Gator Parent and Family Association members
 - Membership is free, families just have to activate
- Sent from IHaveAGator@ufl.edu email account
 - Responses come to myself and our director
 - Forward any concerning emails to Dean or Care Team

Background: The What

- Included in these messages:
 - Information from the Dean of Students
 - What happened and how we responded
 - Resources that are available to students
- Incidents included:
 - Student Death
 - Impending Inclement Weather
 - Campus Safety Messages

Background: The Why

- Text message alerts
 - Families can sign up to get text alerts through Twitter
 - Immediate communication, but short messages with little detail
- Communication from GPFA
 - Goes out within 24 hours
 - Approved by University Relations, UF Police Department, and Legal Counsel
 - More details than text alerts
 - Resources for students – method of disseminating information to students



U Matter, We Care

- UF community members care about each other and proactively reach out to help when needed. U Matter, We Care extends UF's caring culture by educating our community about signs and symptoms of distress, and providing those in distress with appropriate resources to receive professional, confidential assistance.
- Care Team
 - 4 professional staff members to meet with students
 - Response from families

Examples

- Student Death Notification
 - 26,952 Opens (66.4% Open Rate)
 - ~30 Students Referred
- Hurricane Safety Message
 - 19,870 Opens (48.5% Open Rate)
 - Out of State Family Response
- Emergency Notification Follow-Up
 - 21,801 Opens (56.7% Open Rate)
 - Debunking Misnomers

Thank you for the timely reaction for our students and communication with parents. It is greatly appreciated. We've been in touch with our son :)
Go gators,
Pearl and Marty

The Response

Please give the family my deepest sympathy. It's always so awful to lose a child. They are in my prayers.

Richard

I appreciate the email notice, the prompt action by local law enforcement, AND your prompt response.

Thanks and Go Gators,

Andy
Class of '89

The Response

"struggle from inside."

My daughter current dealing with this as well , she already tried get help with your programs . Couldn't get no help . (Scheduled for weeks) I'm currently paying skipe sessions with a therapist every week since she move inn .

This is my biggest fear . As a father.

I ask she never get to know about this email , but she's at YULI hall 2nd floor her name is Bianca Ferreira.

She's very sad and had no friends .

Her roommate sleeps at boyfriend's room every single night , then she's by herself all week long . She's been sad and unhappy actually VERY.

As a parent I push hard to keep up saying this is normal , is just a phase . But after seeing what happened, this became something way more then sad!!!!

The Call Center

- Rumor Control Hotline
 - Majority of calls are family members
 - Staffed by Dean of Students Office Professionals
- All DSO phones able to connect to call center if needed

Emergency Dean

- Call 24/7/365
- Responds to:
 - Medical transports – Meet the student at the ER
 - Accidents
 - Student Death on Campus
- Communication Philosophy
 - Health and Safety #1
 - If a student's life is in danger, family is called
 - Emergency Dean waits at hospital until family arrives

Considerations

- Who is responding?
 - Capacity to respond to messages coming in
 - Capacity to address concerns - ~30 students referred per email
- Potentially Removing family – Student death
- Notifying the UF Foundation
 - They are likely to get questions from the Parent and Family Leadership Council

Lessons Learned and Implementation

- Email communication is huge for establishing trust
 - If families know that the university will send information when it is important, they are more likely to trust the university.
- Opt in vs. Opt out
- Establishing Expectations at Orientation
- Utilize campus partners



Questions?