When Tragedy Strikes: Healing and Action after a Campus Crisis

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Learning Outcomes

• Participants will gain insight into the tragedies at Penn State University and the University of Maryland and the impact on their campus communities.
• Participants will learn how professional staff helped manage communication and messaging.
• Participants will reflect on the issues raised by these tragedies, including Greek life, alcohol use, racism, and community standards, and the role of parent/family professionals in helping the campus community to move forward.
• Participants will understand the importance of other-care and radical self-care.
WARNING

The following slides include details that some may find hard to hear.
Penn State’s Greek System

• One of the largest in the country
• 17% of student population
• Sororities housed on campus
• Fraternities housed in private, off-campus residences
• Three fraternities have houses within campus boundary, but sit on private property
What Happened?

On February 2, 2017, Tim Piazza, a 19-year old sophomore, attended a pledging event at Beta Theta Pi at 9:00pm. There is excessive drinking (Tim participates). By 10:45pm he is noticeably intoxicated. After falling down the basement stairs, showing visible signs of injury, the brothers attempt to keep him awake (this is followed by a second fall down the stairs). Brothers call for help nearly 13 hours after the first fall. Tim is “life-flighted” to Hershey Medical Center with traumatic injuries and pronounced dead when he arrives to the hospital. His BAC is estimated at .28 - .32. He suffered significant brain and internal injuries. Security camera video captures most of the events.
# Timeline

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>February 2</td>
<td>Beta Theta Pi pledging event</td>
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<td>February 4</td>
<td>1:23am - Tim Piazza pronounced dead at the hospital</td>
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<td>February 7</td>
<td>All social functions suspended, effective immediately</td>
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<td>February 17</td>
<td>Beta Theta Pi (a “model” fraternity) loses University recognition</td>
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<td>March 29</td>
<td>Beta Theta Pi permanently banned from campus and new restrictions placed on Greek-letter groups</td>
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<td>May 5</td>
<td>Grand jury presentment shared publically; 18 fraternity brothers charged</td>
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<td>June 1</td>
<td>New safety initiatives for Greek-letter groups; essentially eliminates ability for self-governance</td>
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<td>Summer</td>
<td>Preliminary hearings held; felonies eliminated; charges dropped for 10</td>
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Parents React

• It’s Penn State’s fault, they are not doing enough
• It’s about time
• Lack of understanding of the independence of Greek-letter groups
• Don’t do something that might impact my student’s experience (in others words, don’t take away their fun)
• Sense of entitlement for information
• But, the Greek-system brings endless benefits
• Significant “conversations” on private parent Facebook group; eventually a “Greek Parent” private group
“Underage drinking and drinking in general is out of control on and off campus. I'm glad they are taking steps to try and address the issue.”

“You will no longer receive a dime of our donations after such an unjust act. The bad actions of a few should never seek to harm all that are good in the system.”

“...keep deluding yourself that scape-goating the Greek community will eradicate alcohol abuse issues at PSU”

“What about house parties?”
Penn State’s Response

• Communications were strictly controlled by Strategic Communications Office
• Created a website: pennstateupdate.psu.edu
• Administration significantly involved
• Swift changes made to Greek-life
• Still dealing with legal issues
University of Maryland
Campus Murder
What happened?

On Saturday, May 20, 2017, at approximately 3:03 a.m., Lt. Richard Collins III, a senior from Bowie State University, was waiting at a bus stop on campus with his friends from the University of Maryland. Collins and his friends were approached by Sean Urbanski, a UMD student. Urbanski told Collins to step out of his way “if you know what’s good for you,” and then stabbed Collins in the chest with a knife. Collins was later pronounced deceased. The investigation revealed that Urbanski was a member of the “Alt-Reich” racist Facebook group. Urbanski was indicted with one count of murder and was most recently indicted on a hate crime charge by a grand jury. This murder was precipitated by several hate and racial bias incidents on campus.
<table>
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<th>Timeline</th>
<th>Event Description</th>
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<tr>
<td>Spring 2017</td>
<td>Noose found hanging outside of fraternity house; White nationalist propaganda found in several academic buildings on campus.</td>
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<td>May 20</td>
<td>Lt. Richard Collins III murdered</td>
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<td>Aggressive investigation begins &amp; Bowie State University and University of Maryland campuses react; national media everywhere</td>
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<tr>
<td>May 21</td>
<td>UMD holds moment of silence during Commencement</td>
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<td>May 24</td>
<td>Bowie State holds Commencement</td>
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<td>UMD launches UMD Reflects: <a href="http://www.umdreflects.umd.edu">www.umdreflects.umd.edu</a></td>
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<td>Summer</td>
<td>Urbanski indicted for murder and hate crime</td>
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<td>UMD campus discussions continue; “Fear the Turtle” slogan questioned</td>
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<td>August 28 &amp; 29</td>
<td>UMD Marching Band bans “Maryland, My Maryland”; UMD president announces robust action plan</td>
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<td>August 30</td>
<td>University System of Maryland moment of silence for Lt. Collins</td>
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Parents and families react

• What the hell is going on there?
• Concerns about safety and security, especially for minoritized families, are heightened.
• Appreciative of the dialogue and progress.
• What are you doing about the Greeks?
• You can’t eliminate hate speech and have free speech.
• No more “Maryland, My Maryland?” No more money from me.
“Thank you for taking a stand on the world we are living today.”

“Please move strongly ahead with this good work.”

From a father to his daughter:

“I suspect the tolerance agenda is being jammed down our throats. May God bless and protect your mind from the desensitization and brainwashing that occurs from constantly being bombarded with the stuff.”

“What a bunch of liberal biased crap!”
UMD’s response

• Communications controlled by University Communications
• Created a website: www.umdreflects.umd.edu
• Administration, faculty, staff, and students significantly involved
• Swift action plan developed and implemented by president
• Office of Parent and Family Affairs considering how best to support families around safety/security concerns and racial trauma
Tips for PFP professionals

• Follow the lead of the communications team
• Make judgement calls (if you are able) regarding communication with parents and families
• Remember that not all emails require/deserve a response
• Incident response takes a team. Where are you in that process?
• Consider how your mission (institutional/departmental) can guide your response
• Be kind to yourself
Campus crises/issues can create a mental, emotional, physical and spiritual toll on our selves.

- Societal unrest
- Images of violence
- Daily microaggressions
- Professional stressors
- Chronic stress

From Kerry Ann Rockquemore, Ph.D.
President, National Center for Faculty Development & Diversity
BE RADICAL!
What does your body need?

Sleep – Eat – Hydrate - Hugs

What does your mind need?

Be present

What does your spirit need?

From Kerry Ann Rockquemore, Ph.D.
President, National Center for Faculty Development & Diversity
What does your spirit need?

Make a **strategically meaningful contribution**

Develop a regular **rage practice**

Intentionally experience **joy, love, and gratitude**

*From Kerry Ann Rockquemore, Ph.D.*

*President, National Center for Faculty Development & Diversity*
Questions?