



## College of Family and Consumer Sciences

Dean's Office

UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA

# FACS Crisis Communication Plan

### Overview:

The FACS Crisis Communication Plan provides policies and procedures for the coordination of communication within the College of Family and Consumer Sciences, and between the college, the university, the media and the public in the event of an emergency or controversial issue. Emergencies may include fires, major crimes and issues involve the health and well-being of students, faculty, staff, and children enrolled in the Child Development Lab. Controversial issues may include police investigations, protests or other situations that demand a public response. This plan is not intended to change the way emergencies are initially reported. All emergencies in the college should be reported to University of Georgia police at 706-542-2200.

This plan addresses communication procedures for the rapid identification of potentially harmful situations and the methods for responding to them quickly and effectively. This plan is to be used in conjunction with the normal decision-making hierarchy within the college and is designed to meet the recommendations of the *University of Georgia Crisis Communication Plan* (UGA Academic Affairs Policy 5.04-9)

<https://provost.uga.edu/policies/academic-affairs-policy-manual/5-04-other-policies/>

The UGA Office of Security and Emergency Preparedness, EITS and the Division of Marketing and Communications are jointly responsible for developing web-based crisis communication strategies. The Division will use the designate emergency website ([emergency.uga.edu/](http://emergency.uga.edu/)) as the primary source for disseminating and updating information on emergency situations that could pose danger to the campus and students, faculty, staff and visitors.

### Initial Notifications

- Notify appropriate emergency agencies (police, ambulance, fire department) if required.
- Notify the dean and director of communications by phone, email or in person.
- Notify appropriate department heads and associate deans.

### Establish Crisis Committee

The committee should include those who have direct knowledge of the crisis and college or university understanding of rules and procedures involved in dealing with it. Composition of the core crisis team will include at minimum:

- Dean
- Director of Communications
- Appropriate Associate Dean(s)
- Appropriate Department Head(s)

- Other personnel will be added to this core team to form a larger crisis communication team, which will formulate a response based on the nature of the crisis.

Those added could include the following, depending on the situation:

- UGA Marketing and Communications
- UGA Office of Emergency Preparedness
- UGA Legal Affairs Office
- Associate Deans
- External Relations Committee
- Director of the FACS Office of Technology and Instructional Services
- Director of the Business and Finance Office
- Director of the Child Development Lab
- Director of the Student Success and Advising Center
- Building Supervisor
- FACS County Agents
- Appropriate University Services

### Initial Steps

1. **Designate a spokesperson.** In most cases this will be the director of communications for the college.
2. **Develop a fact sheet with talking points.** The fact sheet contains a summary statement of the situation including all known details to be released to the media and all other audiences. This information should be made available to everyone on the crisis communication team. This fact sheet should be analyzed with respect to the public's right to know and concerns for privacy and security in consultation with UGA's General Counsel. The fact sheet can also serve to provide talking points for spokespeople.
3. **Notify key constituencies.** Using face-to-face contact, email, video monitors, and other resources, it is important to notify the college's key constituencies as quickly as possible. Even if all of the facts are not in hand, it is important to let key constituencies know the administration is aware of the crisis and is taking steps to deal with it. Among the groups that should be considered are:
  - a. University administration. This should be handled by the dean, the director of communications or the dean's designate.
  - b. Faculty and Staff. The dean, director of communications, or the dean's designate should provide up-to-date information as quickly as possible to faculty and staff, primarily mass email through college listserv [fcs@fcs.uga.edu](mailto:fcs@fcs.uga.edu). If possible, faculty and staff should be provided copies of the fact sheet. Information should include who is handling the crisis, what steps are under way, and when additional information will be provided. Regular follow-ups should be provided. Faculty and staff should be instructed to share this information with students and parents.
  - c. Students. Students may be notified via a mass email, information on the video monitors, or through class announcements by faculty.

- d. Child Development Lab Parents. CDL parents should be notified by the CDL director via email and/or a printed letter that is given to parents when they come to the CDL to drop off or pick up their children. CDL staff should be prepared to provide information to the parents.
- e. Alumni and Donors. The director of alumni relations and student leadership should call or email the FACS Alumni Board, past FACS alumni presidents and the FACS Ambassadors. The director of development and the development officer should call key donors.
- f. FACS Extension agents. The associate dean of Extension and outreach should call or email Extension district directors and county agents.
- g. Local and Campus Media. The director of communications will work with UGA Marketing and Communications in developing appropriate news releases for the local and campus media and will serve as the key contact for reporters.

### **Secondary Steps**

**Internal Communications.** In the event a crisis continues for several days, it is important that those stakeholders previously identified be kept informed of how it is being handled. Depending on the nature of the crisis these updates may occur on a daily basis and posted to a web page. Once the crisis is under control, it is important that FACS constituencies receive some version of a “final report” explaining what occurred, how it has been handled, and any changes that are being made to prevent a recurrence. This message may be conveyed via email to faculty, staff, students, CDL parents and alumni who use email regularly. It may be best to call donors and some alumni who don’t frequently use email. It’s possible that information may also be placed on social media sites.

**FACS Extension Agents.** If the crisis extends outside the College of Family and Consumer Sciences, it may be appropriate for FACS specialists and county agents to develop materials and programs for interested individuals.

Aftermath components to consider to bring closure to the crisis include directing students, faculty and staff to victim assistance programs at UGA and hosting a public forum open to all interested parties. A debriefing of the core team should occur within 10 days following a crisis to review all actions taken and necessary changes to the Crisis Communication Plan.

*The Crisis Communication Plan for the College of Family and Consumer Sciences was updated by Cal Powell, Director of Communications, for:*



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Dean

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