

Southern Oregon University Communication Plan Annex

1 Introduction

1.1 Purpose

In the event of a crisis, emergency, or newsworthy event, these procedures will assist Southern Oregon University (SOU) in providing accurate, timely, appropriate, and easily understood information to internal and external audiences.

1.2 Objectives

- a. Communicate facts as quickly as possible, even if it's brief. Refer to Appendix 1 for pre-scripted initial emails from the President
- b. Be accurate and honest. Represent SOU as responsible, responsive, and caring.
- c. Do not speculate about unknown details.
- d. Send informational updates out frequently.
- e. Utilize multiple communication medias including text messages, web page, email, and social media, refer to Appendix 2 for communication tools available to SOU
- f. Work with our partners to coordinate the release of information.
- g. Respond to both the emotional as well as physical impacts of the crisis on victims, family members, and the greater university community.

1.3 General Facts

Disasters, emergencies, crises, and newsworthy events disrupt the University's normal activities and may require the activation of SOU's Emergency Operations Plan. A good offense is the best defense. Prompt communication is especially important in the first hours and days after a crisis or emergency. SOU will utilize multiple media to reach as many people as possible. A crisis usually attracts a large amount of media attention. While SOU can never control what the media reports, the SOU spokesperson can control the messages as well as the flow and content of the information released from the University. All SOU staff, employees, and students can help control the University's message by referring media inquiries to the office of Marketing and Communication.

1.4 Scope

This plan should act as a guide for dissemination of information from University officials.

A crisis is an event that has a major impact on the campus community and prompts significant, often substantial, news coverage and public scrutiny. There is the potential to damage SOU's reputation, image, or financial stability.

Possible triggering events include:

- Physical violence to members of campus community.
- Outbreak of food poisoning or disease.
- Civil disturbance or unrest.
- Staff, faculty or student accused of a high profile crime.
- Severe accident on campus.

- Natural or manmade disaster.
- Internet scandal, identity theft, or cyber attack.

This plan will be activated with natural or manmade emergencies in conjunction with the Emergency Operations Plan. During a newsworthy event, it may also be activated as a standalone plan by the President, a member of the cabinet, or the Public Information Officer (PIO).

2 Situation and Planning Assumptions

2.1 Situation

Each crisis or emergency will require a unique public and internal response. The extent of the response will depend upon the nature of the event. The Marketing and Communication office contacts include print, broadcast, and online media. Pre-existing media relations are an essential part of this plan.

2.2 Planning Assumption

Emergency Planning requires a commonly accepted set of assumed operational assumptions that produce a foundation for establishing protocols and procedures. The planning assumptions incorporated into this annex include:

- Disaster or newsworthy events occur at anytime with little notice.
- Critical utilities may be interrupted including electrical power, cell phones, and the internet.
- No one method of communication will reach everyone, every time, and everywhere. Utilization of frequent, numerous, and varied communication methods will be required.
- Even with varied and frequent communications, you cannot guarantee 100% delivery.
- During a crisis it may take some time to obtain accurate information.
- With internet technology, rumors will spread quickly by email, blogs, social network, etc. It is critical that responses be issued quickly, accurately and by various methods.

2.3 Audiences

SOU has the following audiences to keep informed of emergency or newsworthy events occurring on or near campus.

Internal: Students, faculty, staff, parents, Chancellor's office, Advisory Board, Foundation, and Alumni boards

External: Neighbors, Ashland residents, local elected officials, news media, state legislators, business community, and general public

Partners: emergency services, City of Ashland, EOC/Liasion, attorney general, other OUS schools, Rogue Community College, business community

2.4 Joint Information Center (JIC)

For large scale disasters affecting more than SOU, JIC allow PIO's from multiple agencies to co-locate and work together sharing information, developing standardized press releases, and dispelling rumors. JIC functions as a centralized location for the media, community, key contacts, and agency representatives. JIC facilitate the flow of information between agencies, allowing them to work in a cohesive manner, enabling them to "speak as one voice". By maintaining a centralized communication facility, resources are better managed and duplicating of effort is minimized. If a JIC is opened, the PIO should operate from the JIC. SOU's PIO will represent the university and at the same time participate in coordination of public information.

3 Roles and Responsibilities

3.1 Chief University Official

In cases of significant events the President or other high ranking University official should take the lead in conveying SOU’s response to the crisis. This lead will aid in calming public concern by showing that SOU has control of the situation. The Chief University Official will work with the PIO to compose official University messages. They may also be required to speak at a press conference. Individuals other than the president may fill the Chief University Official role.

Position	Possible Newsworthy Event
Vice President for Student Affairs	Student conduct, advocacy, death of a student
Provost / Vice President for Academic Affairs	Academic affairs, faculty conduct, closing academic programs
Vice President for Finance and Administrative	Financial issues, loss of funding / jobs and reduction in force
Director of Human Resources	Personnel issues, race relations, sexual harassment, death of employee

3.2 Chief Liaisons

Dependent upon the event, certain campus individuals may be asked to assist in providing event specific information and/or talking with the media. This may include:

- Athletic Director
- Director(s) for Campus Public Safety
- Director for Environmental Health and Safety
- Director for Facilities, Management and Planning
- Director for International Programs
- Director for Student Disability
- Director for Student Health and Wellness Center

3.3 Director of Government Relations

Work with the PIO in regards to notifying state legislators, government agencies, and the business community.

3.4 Public Informational Officer (PIO)

During a crisis or newsworthy event, the Director for Marketing and Communications will act as the PIO. In the event of their absence, this position will be filled by the Associate Provost. The PIO is responsible for the formation and release of timely accurate information to the campus, its constituents, the public, and the media. In smaller events the PIO may also be the designated University spokesperson. Every PIO should have a “go-kit” ready that includes the following work items: laptop, cell phone, SOU letterhead paper, tablet, power strip, extension cord, pens, pencils, highlighters, USB Flash drive, sticky notepads, stapler, and paper clips, and personal items: tooth brush, medication, snacks, etc.

3.4.a Assistant PIO:

In large scale events (level orange or red) the Assistant PIO will work with the Executive Leadership Team (ELT) in drafting Presidential statements for the campus community.

3.5 Crisis Communication Team (CCT)

When the President or designee activates SOU's Crisis Management Team (CMT), the PIO will respond to the Emergency Operations Center (EOC). Following ICS principles, the PIO will decide when he/she needs to activate the crisis communication team to assist him/her and will direct the team where to meet.

The Crisis Communication Team may be composed of:

- Director of Marketing and Communications
- Media Engineer
- Web Designer
- Minute and note recorder
- Assistant PIO
- Creative Manager

3.6 Major controversy

When there is a major isolated newsworthy event that is not a campus wide emergency with an activated CMT, the PIO will activate any needed members of the CCT. They will meet in the Marketing and Communication Office (Churchill 210).

4 Concept of Operations

4.1 General

Due to the unpredictable nature of disasters or emergency situations, this plan has been designed to act as a guide. It is intended to be flexible to accommodate emergencies of all types, magnitude, and size. The event will determine who on the Crisis Communication Team are activated along with the frequency of news releases.

4.2 Media Communications

To encourage the media's confidence and trust, they should be treated with honesty and respect. The spokesperson's attitude toward the media reflects the image of the University. Withholding information will generate suspicion and distrust. If one receives new information, reach out to the media. In addition to telling them information, listen to the information they have received. Remember to give credit to other agencies, groups, or individuals working on the crisis, including your own staff, refer to Appendix 3 for list of media numbers and Appendix 4 for the Record of Media Information Request

4.2.a Message Maps

These act as messaging frameworks and assist in the creation of simple concise key messages. The maps allow you to send out one central message which is supported by a number of key quantitative statements. Message maps give a quick representation of the key message and needed supporting statements. Mapping allows one to see the interrelationship between the key point and supporting statements. Additionally, mapping helps to ensure relevant information is included, refer to Appendix 5.

During an active event the message map template can be utilized as a starting point to construct written press releases or to prepare for press conferences/media interviews.

When developing messages make sure to address the following:

- What SOU is doing to ensure the safety of students and other community members, if applicable?
- What is SOU doing to ensure the crisis or problem does not happen again, if applicable?
- Messages should be aimed to restore and maintain confidence and calm; balancing concern and empathy with resolve and action.

4.2.b Media Press Releases

The releases are written documents shared via email with news media. They should meet the news cycle times of local media and provide most up to date information, refer to Appendix 6.

4.2.c News Conference

The PIO, in consultation with Chief University Officials, will determine whether to hold a news conference. The Incident Commander (IC) or an Executive Cabinet member should be the main speaker at the news conference, although liaisons from other departments may also be utilized. News conferences should be held two hours before the news deadlines, or as soon as possible after an event. See Appendix 7 for news conference checklist. The PIO or designee will coordinate the logistics of the local news conference. Refer to Appendix 8 for a list of commonly asked media questions.

4.2.d Media Briefings

Briefings are less formal than a news conference and are generally presented by the PIO or a designee. The briefings quickly provide certain types of information such as where cleanup crews will be working. They are also useful to notify the reporters of the day's schedule, time of next news conference, etc.

4.3 Media Surge

During a large emergency or significant newsworthy events, a large number of local, regional, and even national media may arrive on campus. The PIO and his/her team are responsible for overseeing these various media organizations.

4.3.a Media Center

When a large number of media personnel arrive, SOU will need to provide an area large enough for the press to work. This area will need to have internet access, cell phone connectivity, landlines for fax machines, tables, chairs, easy access to public restrooms, and press conference area. Refer to appendix 9 for media center set-up checklist. Depending on the nature and location of the event, one of the following should be used for the media center:

- Primary location is the Britt Ballroom.
- Secondary location is the Rogue River Room in SU.
- If unable to access main campus, then use the McNeal Pavilion or RVTV.

4.3.b Media Parking

Parking will need to be close to the media center and large enough to accommodate vans, trucks, and satellite dishes. Each media center has an associated parking lot that will need to be closed off for media use only. A person will need to be assigned to this parking lot to allow entrance only to those with media credentials.

- Parking lot in front of Britt building, lot 29
- Rogue River Room, parking lot 37 on University Way (near the Education/Psychology. Building, access off of Ashland Street.)
- McNeal Pavilion or RVTV building, parking lot 38 across from McNeal entrance.

4.4 Response Actions

The nature and size of event will help drive which of the following should be implemented to assist with providing correct and current information to the campus, community, and media.

4.4.a Initial Actions to Consider

- Send out SOU Alert or All Campus email.
- Post information to SOU web page.
- Add crawler to SOU home page.
- Ask RVTV to post a crawler on their television stations.
- Develop press release.
- Have president send out initial Presidential messages.

4.4.b Ongoing Actions to Consider

- Schedule media briefings and news conference.
- Open media center.
- Send SOU representative to JIC.
- Consider photographing and/or videoing the damages at the location of the event. This documentation may prove helpful for any possible medical claims, litigation, and insurance claims.
- Assign someone to accompany media and determine when and where they may photograph or video.
- Assistant PIO, working with the Executive Leadership Team, develops Presidential Communications by drafting presidential correspondence, talking points, and other material.
- Monitor media coverage during newsworthy events or large scale crisis. Rumor control is of utmost importance. Assign a person to monitor television, web coverage, and social networks in real time to ensure accurate reporting.

4.5 Campus Recovery

In coordination with the ELT and possible mental health counselors, develop a plan to assist the campus in the recovery phase. This may include:

- Counselors available to debrief.
- Town hall meetings.
- Focus groups.
- Letters from President expressing sympathy.
- Procedural change to help prevent repeat occurrence.

5 Plan Review and Testing

5.1 Review

This plan will be reviewed biannually at the same time as the Emergency Operations Plan. The Marketing and Communications Department will check and update the media contact information twice a year as well.

5.2 Teaching

The Crisis Management Communications will be tested at least once a year with a functional table top or drill exercise. This may be done in conjunction with testing of the EOP.

5.3 Education

New members to the Executive Leadership Team (ELT), Crisis Management Team (CMT), and Department of Marketing and Communication will be oriented to this plan.

5.4 Debriefing

After large scale events where CMT was activated, this plan will be evaluated during the debriefing. Changes and updates will be made based on recommendations from the After Action Report.

In isolated newsworthy events, the PIO and other individuals who dealt with the event will meet within 10 days, post event, and evaluate the Communication Plan functionality. Changes and updates to the plan will be made accordingly.

Appendixes

Crisis Communication

Annex