Cornell College

Crisis Communications Plan

Section C

GOALS

During a crisis, these are the communications goals:

1. Control the message and flow of information
2. Protect the College's image and reputation
3. Be open, accountable, and accessible.

These are the chief communications strategies to reach those goals:
1. Respond quickly to define and control public perception of how we are handling the crisis or the media will do it for us. Offer information to reduce the chance of speculation and inaccurate information being reported to the public.
2. Show care, concern, and compassion (3 C's) for the people involved.
3. Never speculate. If the interviewer says something that is not factual, correct the information.
4. Report our own bad news. If we think the media might find out about something that happened, then go to them first. If they have to dig, they may decide we're guilty before we've had a chance to respond.
5. Admit mistakes. If we made a mistake, we'll say so. Explain why that mistake occurred and what we are doing to fix the problem. Don't be afraid to say "I'm sorry."
6. Stay "on the record." If we don't want something reported, then we don't discuss it.
7. Never say "no comment." Instead, tell reporters the situation is still being reviewed and we will have a statement as soon as we have all the facts.

IMMEDIATE PROCEDURES

The following steps should be taken as quickly as possible and ideally within the first hour when the College becomes aware of an incident that:

1. Results or may result in significant damage to facilities
2. Results or may result in death, injury or health or safety threats to students, the public or employees
3. Disrupts operations
4. Calls into question workplace practices, or
5. Calls into question the integrity of the organization, its people, or its educational quality and services
6. Results in activation of the College's emergency response system

STEP 1
PIO (Public Information Officer, in this case the Director of Marketing and Communications) is notified by the appropriate Crisis Response Team (CRT) representative as per the protocol of the specific crisis.

STEP 2
PIO may gather additional information, including news releases, from law enforcement agencies and/or hospital public information officers.

STEP 3
PIO and CRT will determine what information, if any, should be released to the campus community, media and other constituents.
* All information is distributed to employees and students at the same time it is released to the public.

Personal information released must adhere to FERPA guidelines (students) and must be authorized by family or Cornell authorities (employees). PIO may prepare the text; President's Council representative and/or family, student, faculty or staff member involved will approve before distribution. Approval is also necessary before images, such as photos of victims, are posted online or released to media outlets.

Determine key audiences, based on the following Cornell constituencies:

- Faculty, staff, students
- Current parents
- Alumni, donors, friends of the College, emeriti faculty
- Board of Trustees
- Alumni Board
- Prospective students and parents
- Local community—Mount Vernon, Lisbon
- Local community—Corridor and beyond
- Area opinion leaders
- Media – local, regional, national
- Higher education peers
- United Methodist Church

Determine message -- usually up to three key points. "Bridge" from the media question to the key points if necessary ("That's not the issue, the issue is …" "Let's look at this another way" "I'm not sure I agree … but what I am sure of is …"). Questions are not important—answers are. Reiterate your key points, they are your safe harbor.

STEP 4
Information will be released to the following parties:
   a. Students, faculty, staff (via internal communications such as a campus-wide e-mail, Today@Cornell, Campus e-Newsletter, web gateways, and if needed, RAM alert texts)

b. News media (e-mail releases, Web site postings, Twitter or other social media)
c. Alumni, trustees, and other key audiences (e-mail, Web site, personal contacts to VIPs as necessary). Editors of official College electronic newsletters (Alumni e-News, Parent e-News, admission e-newsletter) will receive a crisis message for their publications, which should be tailored to fit their audience.
   - If law enforcement agencies are involved – in cases including fires, explosions, or damage from natural disasters; vehicle accidents; and criminal activity – the College may refer media to authorities for initial reports and subsequent details about the incident.

STEP 5
Supervisors must make this clear to all College personnel, including Information Desk, Campus Safety, and others who receive inquiries from news media:

Media inquiries should be directed to the Office of Marketing and Communications (OMC) as the official spokespersons for the College. Only official College information communicated through e-mail from Marketing and Communications or posted on an official Cornell web site can be released to the media if media are not directed to OMC.

If the College, family, student, faculty, staff member involved names spokespersons other than OMC, the name and contact information should be given to OMC.

ASSIGNMENT OF DUTIES IN OMC

Director
1. Mobilize Marketing and Communications staff as crisis communications team.
2. Develop strategy for communication to each audience.
3. Work with the Crisis Response Team to designate spokesperson; selection is dependent on the crisis and the personnel best suited for working with the media.
4. Develop messages to off-campus and non-media audiences, including alumni, trustees, key audiences (page D -2) and other VIPs.

Digital News Director
1. Gather information and write message for campus and media.
2. Distribute news releases to media.
3. Use social media to announce new information as appropriate. Use Twitter and Facebook to link to news releases, announce media briefings and where possible, and respond to concerns from the community. Use livestreaming technology to broadcast media briefings online and promote them to our broader audience.
4. Respond to media inquiries.
5. Manage media briefings; schedule them before TV broadcast cycles.

Web Content Director

1. Post releases to Web site and maintain Web site on the crisis situation.

2. Monitor social media, Internet news archiving sites, and local media Web sites for references to and discussion of crisis.

Assist with livestreaming media briefings and promoting them to our broader audience.

Marketing and Communications Coordinator

1. Screen calls from media and log them for return (use template). (Media relations director phone forwards to Communications Coordinator.)
2. Distribute news release messages campuswide via Today@Cornell or other mass e-mail.
3. Track approval process of news releases (use template).
4. Ready "Fast Facts" (history of institution including enrollment, employment, etc.) for distribution to media.
5. If media briefings are needed, arrange for room, and refreshments if required.
6. Arrange for videotaping or audiotaping of media briefings.
7. Obtain cellular phones for spokespeople to call out.
8. Arrange for food for crisis communications team.
9. Contact Campus Safety, Commons Info Desk with reminder to send media inquiries to OMC.

Publications Director

1. Maintain and archive a record of all communications (news releases; copies of web page postings, incoming media call log sheets, media coverage including tearsheets and tapes).
2. Maintain image file of loaned and stock images of personnel, and real-time images of incident.
3. Create signage for media briefings as needed (directions to room, table top name tags).
4. If needed, create posters to publicize missing students, etc.

SITUATION REPORT FORM

USE: Remove and photocopy as necessary; return blank original to the Emergency Communication Plan manual.

Source of information: _____

Type of incident: _____

What happened? _____

Where did it happen? _____

When did it happen? Time: _____ Date: _____

Are there deaths or injuries? _____

Number of casualties: _____

What is the situation now? _____

What are we doing in response? _____

Other confirmed information:

Prepared by: _____

Date: _____ Time: _____

MEDIA HOLDING STATEMENT

Until a formal news release or response statement can be prepared, we may want to use a holding statement to respond to inquiry from the media or other callers.

We are in the process of preparing a statement based on the information we have at this time. We expect this information to be issued shortly. I do not have an exact time but expect it to be in about one hour.

(If appropriate) We will also be scheduling a briefing for the news media at _____ (insert location and directions if appropriate).

I'm sorry I don't have any additional information to give to you at this time. Thank you for calling.

STANDBY STATEMENTS

In response to questions about the cause of an accident:

> **It is much too early to talk about the cause of this incident. It may take days or weeks of investigation to determine why this happened so that we can prevent this kind of thing from ever happening again. The investigation will be conducted by the _____, and we will cooperate fully in the investigation. We will not speculate about what may have been the cause, and we encourage others not to speculate.**

When we have no more information to release:

> **We have released all of the confirmed information that we have at this time. As soon as we have additional facts, we will share them with you.**

In response to questions about victims:

> **Confirming identities of victims is one of the most difficult and sensitive matters we face after an incident like this. We are working as rapidly and as accurately as we can. This does not mean that we are ignoring the needs of the families; in fact, we are working closely with them. As names are confirmed, we will notify relatives first before we release any names to the public. This can be a time-consuming process but we want to avoid errors. We know that this process appears slow, but we hope you will understand.**

In response to safety concerns:

> **Safety is our top priority, and we are cooperating fully in the investigation to ensure that such an accident never happens again.**

<u>NEWS RELEASE APPROVAL FORM</u>

This form should be used to obtain a document for each news release or prepared statement.

Date: _____Time:_____Release#_____Draft#_____

Headline:_____

To Be Released on (date) _____at (time)_____

Source(s) of Information: Information in the attached news release was obtained from:

Name:_____

Name:_____

Approved By: **OK:___** (initials)

President (or designee):

Chief Spokesperson:

Public Relations:

Other:

Other:

Legal (if necessary)

Human Resources (employee information)

Source(s) of information (see above)

Name:

Name:

Additional Information

	Supplied By	**Approved By**
Picture(s)		
Drawing, Diagram, Map		
Charts, Tables		

Attach this approval for to the final news release and store for future referance.

WORKPLACE VIOLENCE OR DISRUPTION NEWS RELEASE

For more information, contact:

_____

(Contact name and telephone number)

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: (insert day and date)

(NATURE OF EVENT) REPORTED AT _____ OFFICES

(DATELINE) (Number) people (killed-wounded-injured-taken hostage) today when (nature of event) took place at _____ offices (of: name of specific offices if appropriate) at (street address).

(All or Number) of those involved are _____ employees and the rest are (insert description).

Full details regarding the incident are not yet available.

"We are shocked that such a horrible event could occur," (President or Spokesperson) said of the incident, which began about (time) today. "The safety of our students, faculty, and staff is our top priority, and our thoughts are with them now."

If there are deaths, "Our thoughts and our sympathy are with the families, and _____is at work trying to help these family members in every way we can."

(Name of spokesperson) added, "We are cooperating fully with the authorities. No one wants to know more than we do how such a terrible thing could occur at_____, and we will do whatever we can to prevent it or ever happening again."

Insert any other confirmed facts about the situation. For example:

This particular _____ facility employs about (number) people who work in (kinds of work done at these offices).

MEDIA BRIEFING

Guidelines for deciding whether to have a media briefing: Media briefings are an effective and efficient way to give one set of answers to many questions and many reporters at one time; a briefing also conveys openness and accountability. In general, we should *consider* holding a briefing only when:

1. There has been a loss of life, serious injuries or significant property damage
2. There has been significant inconvenience to or endangerment of the public, employees, etc.
3. There are damaging accusations or questions about the institution's integrity, workplace, practices, or citizenship, especially with respect to responding to the crisis situation.
4. The situation depends on in-person response
5. The designated spokesperson has the skills and demeanor to conduct a briefing. A briefing should include *new informatio*n about the situation as well as key messages.

On-Campus Location	Off-Campus Location
Alumni Center; Sport Center; West Science 100; FacilitiesContact: TBA	Sleep InnContact: Sleep Inn Manager, 895-0055

CONDUCTING A MEDIA BRIEFING

A PIO should open the briefing and:

1. Bring the room or conference call to order
2. Give the speaker's name, spelling and title
3. Set any ground rules (length of briefing, time for Q&A, etc.)
4. Give TV crews time to prepare (ask if everyone is ready and wait for them)
5. Introduce the speaker
6. Supervise the briefing, and bring it to a close

The spokesperson should begin with a prepared statement containing key messages.

The briefing should be videotaped and streamed live on the Web site.

The Media Briefing Facility for in-person briefings should be equipped with:

1. Lectern and one microphone with mult-box for TV and radio microphone
2. Chairs (and tables?) arranged classroom style
3. Electrical outlets for cameras and computers
4. Neutral background curtain behind the lectern; do not hang College logos!
5. Snacks and beverages
6. Restroom facilities should be available nearby

MEDIA BRIEFING ROOM

- Room should be located so that TV crews can run cable to vans and trucks in a parking area, if possible
- No signage or logos should be displayed
- Tables allow the media to use portable computers easily
- The speaker should be able to exit the room without walking by or among the media. If there is only one door, place the lectern at that end of the room.

MEDIA BRIEFING ADVISORY FORM

Use this form to alert media of a briefing concerning the emergency.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: _____(insert time and date)

ATTN: <u>Assignment Editor:</u>_____(insert appropriate others)

        Cornell College SCHEDULES MEDIA BREIFING
        To Discuss (nature of emergency event)

WHAT _____**(Name of person and/ or institution)** will conduct a media briefing regarding today's (insert nature of event)

Follow an opening statement reporters will have a question and answer period.

WHO (Name, title of briefer)

WHEN Time and Date

WHERE Location and parking, driving instructions, if appropriate or How to participate by conference call

ON-LINE ACCESS (if available) The media briefing will be available live on line at (web address)

CONTACT (Name), (Title and Affiliation) (phone)

NEWS MEDIA BRIEFING SIGN- IN

USE: Remove and make multiple copies; return blank original to Manual

Date:_____ **Time:**_____ **Location:**_____ **By:**_____

NAME	AFFILIATION	PHONE/E-MAIL/TWITTER

<u>MEDIA INQUIRY REPORT</u>

USE: Remove and make multiple copies of this form; return blank original to Manual. Submit completed forms to Media Relations Director.

Date: _____ Time: _____ Taken By:_____

Call Received From:

Name _____ News Agency _____

Location:_____ Phone:_____ FAX: _____

E-mail:_____ Deadline_____

Message: _____

_____

_____

_____

Call returned by:_____ Date: _____ Time: _____

Priority:
　　__Local (headquarters, on-site)
　　__Wire service/State
　　__National broadcast, newspaper, magazine

　FORUM
　　__Employee Base (campus Update and Faculty focus)
　　__International media
　　__Other: _____

Notes: _____

_____

_____

_____

MEDIA INQUIRY LOG

USE: Remove and make multiple copies of this form; return blank original to the Crisis Communication Plan manual. This form serves as a record of responses to calls on MEDIA INQUIRY REPORT forms (preceding page) and should be updated periodically throughout a prolonged crisis.

DATE	TIME	NAME, AGENCY & CONTACT INFO.	RESPONSE BY	NATURE/SUBJECT OF INQUIRY

BASIC RULES of FERPA

FERPA stands for Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (sometimes called the Buckley Amendment). Student educational records are considered confidential and may not be released without the written consent of the student.

Some information is considered public (sometimes called "Directory Information"). This information can be released without the student's written permission. However, the student may opt to consider this information confidential as well.

Directory Information is defined by Cornell College as:

- student's name
- local and home address and telephone numbers
- campus e-mail address
- date and place of birth (only if the student is currently enrolled)
- academic level
- enrollment status (full-time/part-time)
- major field of study
- participation in officially recognized activities and sports
- height and weight (if a member of an athletic team)
- dates of attendance
- degrees and awards received
- the name of the most recent educational institution previously attended by the student
- the student's photograph
- the name of the student's parents

If you are ever in doubt, do not release any information until you contact the Registrar's Office at 319-895-4374 or registrar@cornellcollege.edu. The Registrar's Office is responsible for student record information.

To avoid violations of FERPA rules, **DO NOT**:

- use the Social Security number of a student, or any portion thereof, in a public posting of grades or link the name of a student with that student's Social Security number in any public manner;

- leave graded tests in a stack for students to pick up by sorting through the papers of all students;

- circulate a printed class list with student name and Social Security number or grades as an attendance roster;

- discuss the progress of any student with anyone other than the student without the consent of the student or verifying that the student has granted access to the third party by contacting the Registrar's Office;

- provide anyone outside the College with lists of students enrolled in classes;

- provide anyone with student schedules or assist anyone other than College employees in finding a student on campus.