

Columbian College of Arts & Sciences Crisis Communications Plan

The CCAS Crisis Communications Plan establishes a process and guidelines for dealing with a variety of situations, and ensures that relevant faculty and staff are familiar with their roles in the event of a crisis or controversy. The plan is designed to be used in conjunction with the normal decision-making hierarchy of the college and is not meant to supplant that decision-making process or decisions made at the university level regarding crisis response.

Purpose

- Keep stakeholders/constituents informed and updated
- Decrease the likelihood of exacerbating the situation through lack of timely communication
- Reduce the length of time required to bring resolution to the issue
- Minimize any reputational and/or legal repercussions of a crisis

Crisis Communications Team: Roles/Responsibilities

- Paul Wahlbeck: Informs members of the GW senior administration and/or GW legal counsel as appropriate
- Kim Gross: Manages response to any crisis involving programs/special initiatives
- John Philbeck: Manages response to any crisis involving faculty members
- Rachel Riedner: Manages response to any crisis involving undergraduate students
- Chad Heap: Manages response to any crisis involving graduate students
- Evie Downie: Manages response to any crisis involving research integrity
- Mafona Shea: Manages response to any crisis involving staff
- Taoran Sun: Manages response to any crisis involving global issues
- Denise St. Ours: Manages drafting and review of messaging; coordinates with GW central communications as necessary; ensures dean has been kept in the loop on response

Formulate a Response

- Who are the primary and secondary stakeholders that need to be addressed?
- What is the most important outcome you wish to achieve?
- What is your core message to achieve that outcome?
- How will the message and the medium differ depending on stakeholder group?
 - Decide what channels will be used to convey information, i.e., prepared statement to the community, letter to the editor, social media posts, dedicated webpage, email to parents or faculty, a townhall, etc.
- Who will draft and be assigned to review the message?

Response Tips/Best Practices

- Assess the situation and determine whether a response is warranted
- Determine scope and impact of issue
- Keep crisis team informed, as appropriate, of any potential controversy
- When possible, prepare messaging in advance of potential crisis
- Defuse the controversy through early action and communication
- Be timely, factual and respectful of privacy issues
- Refrain from providing information not relevant to the issue