

Minnesota State University, Mankato

Protocol on Responding to the Death of a Student

The protocol attempts to:

1. Assist those dealing with the death to respond appropriately in a timely manner;
2. Provide coordination with external individuals and agencies;
3. Provide communication within the University community;
4. Assist with post-death support and resolution;
5. Provide an empathetic and caring voice from the University to friends and family of deceased;
6. Guide University efforts to recognize or memorialize the student.

When implementing the protocols remember: FERPA applies until the death is verified. Disclosure of private or confidential student data must also comply with Minnesota Statutes, 13.10 Data on Decedents. <https://www.revisor.mn.gov/statutes/?id=13.10>

Depending upon student status upon death notification, the procedures of this protocol will be implemented as appropriate. It is also important to understand that each situation is unique and that staff response should reflect the specific nature of each death.

SECTION 1: Definition of an Enrolled Student

The following definition of an enrolled student will inform the University response:

1. An enrolled student is a student who has enrolled for at least one credit, or is enrolled in a zero-credit Co-Operative Experience.
2. In the event of a student death during a winter or summer break, and if the student is NOT enrolled for the following semester, the student will be treated as an enrolled student.
3. In the event of a death of a previously enrolled student, who is not enrolled in the current semester, the death is NOT treated as an enrolled student.
4. A high school student who is enrolled at Minnesota State University, Mankato through either PSEO option has a primary relationship with their high school and the University will act in a secondary role.
5. Exceptions to the above approaches are at the discretion of the Office of the President.

SECTION 2: Death of an Enrolled Student

When the deceased student lived in University-supervised housing:

6. The first responder will immediately contact University Security or Mankato Public Safety. Mankato Public Safety Officers will respond and take charge of the scene of the incident until all appropriate actions have been taken. A ranking University Officer will be available, as appropriate.
7. At the first opportunity, University Security officers will contact the Vice President for Student Affairs and Enrollment Management (VPSA).

Last Modified on November 28, 2017 by Vice President for Student Affairs & Enrollment Management

8. The VPSA will immediately inform the President and the Media Relations Director, and if appropriate, any other staff members to coordinate their efforts.
9. The President's Office, or designee may inform the Chancellor.
10. The Media Relations Director will coordinate all contacts with the media. In the case of a student athlete death, the Assistant Director for Athletic Communication may assist with media inquiries, under the direction of the Media Relations Director. In the case of an international student, the Dean of Global Education may assist with media inquiries, under the direction of the Media Relations Director.
11. Upon verification of the student's death (e.g. death certificate, news report, police report, etc.), the VPSA notifies select campus stakeholders (e.g. instructors, registrar, financial services, offices, etc.) of the student death. This is done to prevent bills, communication, etc., from reaching the family to appear insensitive to their loss.
12. A copy of the death verification will be distributed to the Registrar. The Registrar will close the student's academic record.
13. When appropriate, the VPSA will ensure that the families of any students with the same full name as the deceased student will be notified that their student was not the student involved.
14. The Chair of the Counseling Center, contacted by the VPSA, will contact appropriate Counseling Center faculty and respond to the scene or be available in the Counseling Center, as appropriate. The Chair of the Counseling Center will coordinate psychological counseling and emotional support for students affected by the death. Support for employees is available 24/7 through the LifeMatters Employee Assistance Program (EAP) 1-800-657-3719.
15. The VPSA, or designee, will serve as the primary campus contact for the family of the deceased student and will meet with family members should they decide to come to campus.
16. When appropriate, the VPSA will contact the family to express condolences and assist the deceased student's family in making arrangements to come to campus and other assistance as needed.
17. The VPSA will inform the Minnesota State Student Association (MSSA) leadership.
18. If appropriate, the President's Office, will write a letter of condolence to the family of the deceased student.
19. The VPSA or designee will inform the Director of Residential Life of the death of any student who was living in campus housing. The Director of Residential Life will facilitate the return to the family of any of the deceased student's property.
20. If the deceased student was an athlete, upon being notified by the VPSA, the Director of Athletics will coordinate the return to the family of any property that the deceased student may have left in the Athletics Department.
21. Upon being notified by the VPSA, the chair of the deceased student's academic department will facilitate the return to the family of any property that the deceased student may have left in the academic department's area.
22. The VPSA, in consultation with other appropriate staff and students, will coordinate assistance to those wishing to hold a memorial service on campus for the deceased student.
23. At a time after the death of a student, a meeting may be called by the VPSA to ensure that all appropriate measures have been taken in response to the student's death.
 - a. This meeting might include the following:
 - i. Provost or designee
 - ii. Dean of the student's College
 - iii. Director of Residential Life
 - iv. Director of University Security
 - v. Chair of the Counseling Center

- vi. Minnesota State System Legal Counsel
- vii. Media Relations Director
- viii. Director of Student Health Services
- ix. Registrar or designee

When the deceased student lived off-campus:

1. Anyone becoming aware of the death of a student will contact the Office of the VPSA to inform of the death.
2. Office of the VPSA begins to collect information to confirm if there has been a death of an enrolled student.
3. Items 3– 18 from above will be enacted, as appropriate.

SECTION 2: STAFF RESPONSIBILITIES IN CASE OF STUDENT DEATH

NOTE: This plan makes reference to specific individuals (job titles) in setting forth the notification and response sequence in the event of a student's death. The need for immediate action—particularly early in the timeline—may require a fluid response and the participation of designees or deputies, if key individuals are unavailable.

Director of University Security

1. If the death is on campus, the Director of University Security will assist Mankato Public Safety, who will be in charge of the scene and will conduct an initial investigation.
2. The Director of University Security will contact the VPSA, at the first opportunity, on the details of the situation.
3. The Director of University Security will coordinate with other campus staff, as appropriate, and maintain communication with University Media Relations staff to facilitate media response.

Vice President for Student Affairs & Enrollment Management (VPSA)

1. The VPSA will immediately contact and inform the President of the situation and consult with the Media Relations Director.
2. The VPSA will contact appropriate staff members and coordinate their efforts, respective to the student's involvement on the campus (Veteran, Athlete, Greek, International, etc.). If resident, contact Director of Residential Life.
3. The Office of the VPSA will craft a notice to select University contacts (see attached example) about the student death.
4. The VPSA will contact and inform the Chair of the Counseling Center of the situation.
5. It is the coroner's responsibility to notify the family in consultation with the appropriate police, as determined by jurisdiction.
6. The VPSA may then notify a member of the deceased student's family.
7. The VPSA will inform the Minnesota State Student Association (MSSA) leadership of the death of any student.
8. If necessary, the VPSA will request a copy of the Death Certificate from the family or some verification of the student's death. Copies of the death verification will be distributed to the Registrar.
9. The VPSA, if appropriate, will inform the family of any library materials or other College property that the deceased student may have been in possession of.

10. At some time after the death of a student, a meeting may be called by the VPSA of involved staff members to ensure that all appropriate measures have been taken in response to the student's death. A checklist of notifications and any documentation will be kept on file in the Office of the VPSA.
11. If applicable, provide information about the Minnesota Crime Victims Reparations Fund which covers the out-of-pocket expenses of a homicide victim's survivors and dependents.
12. If the student is near graduation, the VPSA will consult with the Registrar regarding a Posthumous Degree.

See Posthumous Degree Policy.

<https://www.mnsu.edu/policies/procedures/posthumousdegree.pdf>

Office of the University President

1. After receiving notification of a student death, may make the determination on whether an all-campus email notification of the student death is appropriate and warranted.
2. Within one week of the student's death, the VPSA will provide information to the President's Office, who will then coordinate the writing of a letter of condolence from the President and the University Community to the family of the deceased student, if appropriate. The letter may accompany a posthumous diploma, if appropriate and in keeping with University procedure. The letter may also include the return of the original death certificate to the family. The letter may also accompany academic documents (such as a thesis) which may be returned to the family.
3. In the event that the deceased student is an exchange student, the President will write a letter of condolence to the Leader of the exchange institution.
4. The President determines when and who will represent the University at any events related to the student death including funerals, memorials, etc.

Director of Media Relations

1. The Director of Media Relations will coordinate media inquiries, and when appropriate may consult with the VPSA and Director of University Security,
2. All media inquiries concerning the student's death will be referred to designated staff in the Media Relations Office, or the Athletic Department in the case of a student athlete.
3. Upon the University President's request, prepare an all-campus email notification regarding the student death.

Registrar

1. Upon notification of a student's death, the Registrar will close the student's official record, and mark deceased on record. This codes the student information system so that no communication is sent to the student, parents or spouse.
2. Registrar will review registration activity, adjusting the record as appropriate. The registrar will notify financial aid and bursar to adjust their financial records. The registrar will notify NSC so that lending agencies are notified of student's death. The registrar will review academic record to see if student is eligible for a posthumous degree, and if so, will contact the Office of the Provost for inclusion in the commencement ceremony.

Student Financial Services (SFS)

SFS-Financial Aid

1. Update system status of deceased student's financial aid application, if applicable, to stop further processing and communications for current and future award year.

2. Review deceased student's current and future award year financial aid awards. Contact private scholarship donor(s) and/or external non-FAFSA funding agency sources to determine appropriate disposition of awards for funds received but not yet disbursed. If the deceased student was attending another school or study abroad program via a consortium agreement, notify the host institution or study abroad program.
3. Provide appropriate guidance and contact information for student loan service provider(s) to VPSA to share with deceased student's family as part of overall guidance document.
4. Coordinate aid adjustments and return of funds with SFS-Accounts Receivable upon completion of Return to Title IV Federal Financial Aid calculations.

SFS-Accounts Receivable/Bursar

1. Initiate processing of Official Withdrawal based on date of death provided by VPSA to determine appropriate adjustments to course registration charges and housing charges, if appropriate. Complete required Return to Title IV Federal Financial Aid calculations and coordinate with SFS-Financial Aid all appropriate adjustments and returns to Title IV and Non-Title IV aid programs.
2. Review for 3rd party authorization or other sponsored program funds; follow up as needed with funding source contact(s).
3. Review other miscellaneous charges & payments on student's account for the current term; coordinate adjustments as deemed appropriate.
4. Coordinate completion of all student account adjustments, including tuition refund appeal approval as needed. If result is a balance due, waive to zero; if result is a credit balance, process refund and disburse by check, direct deposit, or back to credit card as required and inform VPSA of results.

SFS-MavCARD Office

1. Review MavCASH declining balance account status; coordinate adjustments with SFS-Accounts Receivable to process refund of unspent funds.
2. Confirm deceased student's MavCARD is deactivated via routine student record data feed to ID card software system.

Business Services – Student Payroll

1. Check student employment status and notify employing department(s). Ensure update of all hours worked for current pay period.
2. Process final payroll earnings; disburse by check or direct deposit as required and inform VPSA of results. Close out all active payroll assignments.

IT Solutions

1. The Vice President for IT Solutions will have the deceased student's record set to private status. This will also trigger other systems and processes for manual removal as appropriate.

Chair of the Counseling Center

1. The Chair of the Counseling Center will assist the VPSA, as needed, to coordinate the campus response to the student death.
2. The Chair of the Counseling Center will contact other Counseling and Student Health Services staff, as appropriate.
3. If the death occurred on campus, the Chair of the Counseling Center and/or counseling faculty will respond to the scene or be available in the Counseling Center, as appropriate, and will coordinate psychological counseling and emotional support for those affected by the death.
4. The Chair of the Counseling Center and/or Counseling Center faculty will support staff and faculty in conveying needed information about Counseling Center services to those students affected by the student death, such as significant others, friends, roommates, teammates, others living in the deceased student's building, and will offer appropriate services.
5. Offer information about the Yellow Ribbon suicide prevention hotline to students who are despondent over the suicide or death of a friend.
6. The Chair of the Counseling Center and/or Counseling Center faculty, will provide consultation and support to MSSA leaders, VPSA, and others who are coordinating a memorial service on campus for the deceased student.

Director of Residential Life

1. If the deceased student lived in University-supervised housing, the Director of Residential Life will contact appropriate Residential Life staff and will coordinate Residential Life's response to the student's death.
2. The Director of Residential Life and other Residence Life staff will work to assist other residents who may be affected by the student's death.
3. Residential Life seeks to determine relationships with deceased and makes plans for follow-up with students:
 - i. Same home town
 - ii. Floor mates and roommates
 - iii. Significant other
 - iv. Circle of friends
 - v. Students with emotional fragility
4. In the residence halls, when appropriate, a floor meeting may be conducted in the style of a critical incident stress debriefing. Floor members are offered a chance to state what they have learned about the incident, when and how they have learned it, the impact of learning that information, and their immediate feelings about the loss. Basic facts, as known and approved for release, are shared with attendees. Counseling Center staff are invited to offer services.
5. In coordination with the VPSA and the deceased student's family, the Director of Residential Life will facilitate the return of the deceased student's property which may remain at Residential Life.
 - a. Residential Life will coordinate disposition of belongings.
 - i. Parents must give permission.
 - ii. Roommates should be present to assist in determining ownership of belongings.
 - iii. If parents/family members wish to meet with friends of the deceased, staff need to coordinate this meeting in a location other than the deceased's room to prevent attrition of belongings.

- iv. Provide boxes. As needed, provide staff to pack belongings or assist family or family designee in packing.
- v. End date Card Access.
- vi. End meal plan.
- vii. Complete check-out of room, including return of room key or core change.
- viii. Clean room

Director of Student Health Services

1. Upon being notified of a student death and the cause of death, the Medical Director will review any medical history for the student. If there are any concerns about a relationship between the cause of death and care received at Student Health Services, legal counsel will be consulted.
2. If there are no concerns, any outstanding patient payment balance or claims will be eliminated and the chart will be marked "Deceased" and inactivated.

Director of Athletics

1. Upon being informed of the student athlete's death, the Athletics Director will inform appropriate coaching staff of the death.
2. The Director of Athletics will coordinate the return to the family of any property that the deceased student may have left.

Dean of Global Education

In the case of international students, the following considerations are important.

1. The nearest consulate and/or embassy must be notified and consular officials may need to be consulted before contacting family members or releasing the name of the student.
2. United Health Care must be notified because the international student health insurance covers the repatriation of the student's remains.
3. The student's passport must be sent to the U.S. funeral home in order to arrange release of the remains and shipment abroad.

Academic Chairs/ Program Directors

1. Upon being notified of a student's death by the Office of the VPSA, the Academic Chair/Program Director of the deceased student's academic department will inform appropriate department faculty and staff of the death.
2. The chair/program director of the deceased student's academic department will coordinate, through the VPSA, the return to the family of any property that the deceased student may have left in areas controlled by the department.

SECTION 3: Memorial Arrangements

Note: In an effort to best serve the student's family and friends, it is important that we select an approach that is respectful, consistent, manageable, and scalable.

Student Funerals

1. Flowers may be sent from the college(s) in which the student majored. As a reminder, University and Foundation funds may not be used for the purchase of flowers.

2. The Office of Student Affairs may handle flower arrangements, if the student is an Undeclared major.

Student Memorials

1. All student memorials will be coordinated through the Office of Student Affairs. Impacted University units and Colleges will be involved as appropriate to guarantee a steady approach and streamline communication regarding memorial scheduling.
2. Current student deaths may be memorialized with an 8" x 8" brick in the memorial plaza. University Advancement funds these bricks (\$45 cost; \$250 donor cost). The VPSA will inform the family and offer an opportunity to purchase a tower brick, bench, or planter at an additional cost. (This will be possible until the campus needs for these are met. Alumni Affairs and Student Affairs will then work together to introduce other options at that time).
3. When requested by the family, friends, or University unit, a brief memorial service will be held in the Memorial Plaza during warm weather months and in the Centennial Student Union in colder months. The Office of Student Affairs will take the lead in managing these events.
 - a. A memorial service may include comments from a University Official, friends of the deceased, and a playing of the University Hymn over the Bell Tower.
 - b. When appropriate, the memorial service can be scaled into a larger event.