

SAMPLE Emergency Communication Plan Your County Community College

The purpose of this plan is to provide guidance during a crisis in communicating our message. The overarching philosophy of YCCC's plan is honesty, transparency and speed. It is important to remember that no matter how bad the news is, the rumors will be worse. If we are honest and transparent, we will maintain credibility, which will go a long way to restoring faith by the public in YCCC.

A crisis is an event that prompts significant news coverage and public scrutiny and has the potential to damage the institution's reputation, image or financial stability. Crises fall into two categories: emergencies and controversies. An emergency may be a fire, active shooter, explosion, crime or other event that typically involves a response from off campus police, or other emergency responders. A controversy may be a major student protest or a case of employee misconduct.

Our guiding principle will be to communicate facts as quickly as possible, updating information regularly as circumstances change. Communication needs to be both accurate and quick, which may be mutually exclusive. Honesty and speed are the most effective means to avoid lasting damage to the institution and widespread second-guessing by the public, which expects immediate access to accurate information. At the same time, we realize that in a crisis, people will likely expect us to have more information than we may actually have. Speak with accuracy about what we know and do not speculate about details we do not know.

In the event of an ongoing threat to safety or security, the Clery Act requires colleges to make timely notifications to the campus community. Once an incident is determined to fall under the Clery Act, a notice will be promptly distributed to the YCCC community via a blast email and inclusion on the homepage. Such determinations will be made by the President, or Chief of Police or designee in consultation with the Vice President for Institutional Advancement or designee.

Immediate Response

The Vice President for Institutional Advancement or designee has the authority to begin taking action immediately until a decision can be made about how the College should proceed. Time is critical. News 12 is less than 10 minutes away, and we should expect TV trucks from other stations within 30 minutes or less.

The first steps are:

- Activate the Emergency Notification System.
- Update the Infoline message
- Add a message to the College website
- Add a message to the College's Facebook page.
- If appropriate, change the electronic sign.

Secondary Response

Set up a media center in a building near, but not part of, the crisis.

- Review and write down known facts – those that can and cannot be released to the public — and determine whether a response is needed, and if that response is needed for all of the College’s key audiences. These facts will be used to create news releases, text messages and other items.
- Develop several key messages that will be included in all university communications. One message typically will address what YCCC is doing to ensure the safety of students and other community members. Another may need to be forward-looking and address what we are doing to make sure the crisis, or a problem with our response, doesn’t happen again. All of the messages should evolve as circumstances change but will always aim to restore and maintain confidence and calm, balancing a sense of concern with resolve and action.
- Determine who will act as spokespeople – the individuals authorized to speak for the College include the President, Vice President for Institutional Advancement, and the director of Marketing Communications. Others, such as the Chief of Police and other administrators, may be asked to fulfill that role as well depending on the situation. In a major crisis, the College President will be the principal spokesperson.
- It is critical that senior leaders have copies of the most recent news releases and other messages so everyone is clear on what is being shared with the public. This is to ensure that consistent messages are being delivered by all parties to all audiences.
- Communicate the facts of the situation and our response to key audiences. Whenever possible, the first groups (even if just by a minute or two) that should be informed about a crisis are internal audiences directly affected, such as students, employees, faculty and trustees via email or phone. YCCC personnel would be assigned a communication role as follows:

Students	Director of IT (through blast email)
Parents	Dean of Student Affairs
Faculty	VP for Academic & Student Affairs
Administrators	VP for Administration and Finance
Staff	Individual directors, who will have been briefed by VP for Administration
Board & Government Officials	President
Media	VP Institutional Advancement
Public (Social Media)	Advancement Services Manager