ROANE STATE COMMUNITY COLLEGE
RESPONDING TO STUDENT CRISSES

WHEN VIOLENCE ERUPTS ON RSCC CAMPUSES

(SEE ATTACHMENT A – RSCC RESPONDING TO STUDENT CRISIS CHECKLIST
(SEE ATTACHMENT B – FLOW CHART OF RSCC CRISIS RESPONSE PLAN)

Roane State has concerns for how to prevent and how to prepare for this kind of crisis which has been paramount on the minds of college/university administrators and their campus communities. Effective communications campus-wide as well as with local community support agencies is critical as colleges/universities develop prevention strategies or procedures for handling a crisis.

Roane State has been fortunate not to have had student violence erupt. However, we must remain on continuous alert to develop and maintain safeguards that support a safe learning environment for our campuses. It is difficult to identify individuals/students who could become violent. “There is no evidence to support that “profiling” of such individuals is useful because no one trait or set of traits can reliably distinguish a campus bomber from the perpetrator of an intimidating e-mail threat or arsonist.” Therefore it is suggested that schools remain pro-active in approach to crisis management by developing crisis response teams, providing education regarding violence prevention and crisis prevention for administrators, staff and students, a well defined communication system at all levels of the college hierarchy, and physically safe campus buildings.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT TEAM: Roane State Community College will establish a multidisciplinary team of professionals whose purpose is to provide compassionate and timely response and services to students and other members of the college communities in time of crisis or trauma. The Student Assessment Team will respond to both individual and community crises when appropriate, and serve as a communication link to the entire college when such events occur. Through meetings, training, and effective response plans the Student Assessment Team will strive to be prepared for crisis events that might arise in the college community. Each college/university can establish its crisis response team as appropriate for that institution and the resources available. This team will mostly come together during a crisis and in the aftermath of a crisis. However, if perceived in a timely manner, the team could meet to assess threat and possibly prevent the occurrence of a full blown crisis.

PROPOSED RSCC STUDENT ASSESSMENT TEAM MEMBERSHIP: Reporting to the President and Executive Council.

Primary Members:

Assistant Vice President for Student Services/Dean of Students – Chair
Director of Counseling, Career and Disability Services
Security Representative (Roane County)
Director of Physical Plant
Director of Public Relations
Vice President for Oak Ridge Branch Campus and Satellite Campuses
Academic Dean or faculty member

Other Members to Serve/Consult as Needed:

Vice President of Student Services and Enrollment Management
Vice President of Academic Affairs
RS defense Counselors
Site Directors (as appropriate per campus incident)
Coordinator of Disability Services
Vice President of Academic Affairs or Academic Dean
Director of Human Resources or designee
Coordinator of Student Activities
Student Government Representative
Local professionals as needed (local police, mental health specialists, emergency medical, etc.)
Coordinator for Volunteer Support

MEDIA INVOLVEMENT: Whenever student violence erupts on a college campus the media plays a critical role in the communication process to the campus and community. Our Public Relations Office has developed a Crisis Communication Plan for RSCC (see attachment C). According to Owen Driskill, RSCC Coordinator of News, it is important to be aware of the following information regarding the role of the media during a violent crisis on campus:

In a crisis involving violence on campus, the media will seek a reason for the violence and search for a source of blame. Why? Because human nature is to seek a reason for events that are out of the ordinary. Imagine if violence erupted at a school your child attends. As a parent, you would want to know how and why this happened. You would want to know if something, anything, could have been done to stop it. The media response is generally a reflection of the thoughts and feelings already out there among the public. While the media’s questions might be difficult, and sometimes unethical, they are, in many cases, asking the questions the mothers and fathers of our students would ask.

That’s why, in a crisis of violence, it’s important to remember that we are not talking to the media. Instead, we are talking to the audience that the media serves --- our students, our students’ families, future students, our alumni, our own families and friends. Yes, the media is the one right in front of us, with their cameras and tape recorders. But our audience is the faceless crowd watching events unfold in their homes all across our service area. As we consider what we want to say and how we want to say it, we must remember our true audience.

We must make certain our true audience knows, at all times, that we are on top of the situation --- sincere in our sympathy, vigilant in our safety procedures, and accountable
for our mistakes. In a crisis of violence, the leader of the college must be on campus at all times, including overnight. The public relations staff and other college leaders should also stay. The president should be kept constantly updated on developments, and be willing and eager to talk to the media constantly throughout the crisis.
RSCC RESPONDING TO STUDENT CRISIS CHECKLIST

The following checklist was developed to facilitate an effective crisis response during, and in the aftermath of, a crisis. This list will require modification to address the nature of the crisis situation and should not take the place of competent professional services.

I. Fact Gathering
   - Notify Assistant VP/Dean of Students
   - Clarify facts surrounding the crisis
   - Contact college administration
   - Contact parents/guardians (of individuals involved/affected)
     - Obtain consent for release of information
   - Contact Campus Security/ Director of Physical Plant, police and/or fire department
   - Assistant VP/Dean of Student consults with Campus Security, and Director of Counseling Center to determine the appropriateness of assembling the Student Assessment Team

II. The Call to Action
   - Assemble the Student Assessment Team
   - Share facts with team members and assess the impact of the crisis
     - When did the event occur (e.g., during an intersession, over the summer)?
     - Where did the event occur (e.g., on campus)?
     - How did it happen (e.g., accidental, intentional, expected)?
     - How many students and staff are affected by the event?
     - Which students and staff are affected?
     - How are the students and staff affected?
     - How are the college personnel responding?
     - Should classes be suspended temporarily or assignments altered?
     - Should students be released from the college?
     - How are students indirectly being affected (e.g., siblings/friends at other buildings in the college, etc.)?
   - Determine if additional support services are needed (e.g., psychologists/social workers/counselors from the community)
     - Weigh efficacy of “unknown” professionals (coordinate volunteer support)
   - College to consider the provision of alternative/replacement faculty
   - Consult with department directors or deans
   - Update college administration

III. Notification Procedures
   - Consider:
     - An announcement to students and faculty,
     - An assembly or gathering in a lecture hall,
     - A mailbox or e-mailed memorandum to faculty and staff,
     - Posting on college website,
     - Announcement on college radio or ITV, and
     - An emergency faculty meeting (first thing in the morning for those on-campus).
IV. Student Assessment Team in Motion

Administrators and security circulate through the campus.

• “Pockets” of grieving students should be directed to location of support personnel

All staff can utilize the *Acute Traumatic Stress Management* model.

• “Connect, Ground, Support, Normalize and Prepare”

Professors and Instructors should allow opportunity for students to ventilate.

Counseling with individuals and small groups by psychologists, social workers and/or Counselors.

• Attempt to cultivate a “helping relationship” characterized by empathy, warmth and genuineness.
• Encourage people to express their feelings.
• Be careful not to lecture and allow periods of silence.
• Avoid clichés such as, “Be strong...” and “You’re doing so well...”
  Such clichés may only serve to reinforce an individual’s feelings of aloneness.
• Attempt to “normalize” grief reactions.
• Remember that cultural differences exist in the overt expression of emotions.
• Maintaining confidentiality, when possible, is crucial.
• Provide snacks (e.g., juice, cookies, etc.) to students and support staff.
• It is important to remember that we have support while helping others during this difficult time.

Identify high risk individuals.

Contact parents, spouses and families of high risk students.

Provide referrals for outside support (if indicated).

Provide hot-line numbers.

Carefully document events.

Schedule follow-up by support personnel for high risk individuals.

Schedule faculty/departmental/staff meetings.

Remain sensitive to how team members are being perceived.

V. Addressing the Media

Director of Public Relations consults with university administration.

Develop a response - consider confidentiality, family wishes, liability of erroneous information.

Designate a spokesperson - “no one else talks.”

Designate alternate spokesperson.

VI. Debriefing

Review the events of the day.

Revise the intervention strategies (e.g., plan for upcoming days).

Monitor reactions of crisis team members - “compassion fatigue.”

VII. Funeral

Consider the wishes of the students’ family.

Consider the wishes of the victim(s) family regarding attendance.

Consider the number of staff attending.

Have support personnel available there.
VIII. Memorials
   Consider appropriateness.
   Consider a method:
   • A moment of silence
   • A plaque
   • Planting a tree
   • A dedication
   • Mural
   • Flying college flags at half-mass
Crisis Response

Violence on Campus

911

Public Relations

Campus

College President (Executive Council)

General Public

Asst. VP/Dean of Students

Student Assessment Team

Security
911
• 911 will dispatch personnel and equipment to campus
• Contact RSCC Security to coordinate response

Security
• Start lockdown, evacuation, or severe weather alerts
• Contact Building Coordinators
• Contact Public Relations
• If needed set-up command post
Public Relations
- E-mail alert to faculty, staff and students
- Activate RaiderAlert
- Establish media HQ
- Monitor media statements for accuracy
- Gather Information and assist in the formation of public statements

Asst. VP/Dean of Students
- Activates Student Assessment Team
- Maintain contact with President and Executive Council to assist with decision making
- Determine if additional social support services are needed
- Document events
College President
In the absence of College President, Executive Council

- Interact with press and public as official spokesperson for the institution
- Designates alternate spokesperson
- Consult with command post for updates and strategies being used in the crisis situation
Attachment C

CRISIS COMMUNICATION PLAN (PUBLIC RELATIONS)

The following actions are to be taken in the event of a crisis affecting the college. Examples of potential crises include, but are not limited to: Personal Injury/Death; Accident; Health Issues; Fire or Person-made Disaster; Natural Disaster; Financial or Personnel Crisis; and Legal Matters

I. General Student Crisis Action Plan (Daytime Business Hours or Anticipated Crisis)

1. Persons who are notified about a crisis should immediately contact the Director of Public Relations; or, if unavailable, the designated Public Relations staff member. (Security Officers DO NOT serve as Public Relations contacts during a crisis. In the event of an emergency, Security should contact the Public Relations Director as a part of the official notification process.)

2. The Public Relations Director will immediately brief the President regarding media responses and the Public Relations media plan. Public Relations will write a brief summary of the crisis, the college's reaction, and our involvement with the media.

3. Public Relations staff will prepare statements for the media and then identify and prepare spokespersons. Public Relations will draft a position paper to release to key publics (students, employees, the community, etc.)

4. Public Relations will inform campus offices that may get calls about the crisis. Public Relations will give information about the situation along with advice on what to say about it.

5. A Public Relations staff member will be assigned to monitor local newspaper and TV and radio broadcasts to check for accuracy of media reports.

II. Student Crisis Action Plan (Evening Hours or Weekends)

1. In the event of a crisis affecting the college during the evening hours or on weekends, the Public Relations Director should be contacted immediately.

2. If the developing situation is not deemed to be one in which media involvement is expected, it is not necessary for the Public Relations Director to be on-site.

3. If the crisis is deemed to be an emergency situation, the Public Relations Director should adhere as closely as possible to the daytime business hours plan.
III. Specific Student Crisis Action Plans

1. Accident or Injury
   a. If a student is injured on campus and the injury is serious enough to warrant medical intervention, the Public Relations Office should be notified immediately.
   b. The Public Relations Office should receive updates after the crisis subsides to keep the media informed about the student's condition.
   c. The same procedures apply to similar circumstances involving faculty, staff, and/or visitors.

2. Fire/Natural or Person-Made Disaster
   a. If the college suffers any type of disaster during the daytime or after hours, the Public Relations Director should be contacted immediately.
   b. A command post should be established near the disaster site. This center would include access to telephone lines (assuming they are operable) and large enough to accommodate 20 or more people. The library, the gymnasium, and the Exposition Center are three potential sites.

3. Legal, Financial, Personnel
   a. In the event of a legal, financial, or personnel crisis, the Public Relations Director will meet directly with the President and appropriate Executive Council members to develop a plan of action and a public statement.

4. Health Issues
   a. In the case of any type of health crisis, the College will maintain the strictest confidentiality.
   b. While the identification of affected students, faculty and/or staff members will not be released, the College will cooperate as much as possible with media inquiries.
   c. In the case of a Pandemic Outbreak, which forces the college to be closed, PR staff will provide regular news updates using email, webpage, radio, TV, telephone message and, for more in-depth coverage, local newspapers. PR will piggyback on its inclement weather calling system. People will be directed to the web for further updates.