**Responding to Student Deaths UPPS No. 07.11.06**

**Issue No. 1**

**Effective Date: 05/06/2020**

**Next Review Date: 07/01/2024 (E4Y)**

**Sr. Reviewer: Associate Vice President for Student Success and Dean of Students**

**01. POLICY STATEMENTS**

* 1. A student’s death can have a significant impact on the Texas State University community. This impact calls for a sensitive and well-planned response. It is critical that all members of the university community conduct themselves with the highest degree of compassion and professionalism while maintaining clear communication among the various staff that will be performing specific tasks related to a student death.
  2. The Dean of Students Office is the primary administrative office responsible for coordinating the internal university response to a student death. This policy has been developed to ensure a caring, professional, coordinated, and consistent response to student deaths.
  3. Each student death may have unique circumstances that should be taken on a case-by-case basis; however, this policy will ensure proper notification to appropriate university administrative offices, identify support resources for university community members impacted by a student death, and indicate procedures for working with the affected family members.

**02. GENERAL PROCEDURES AND DEFINITIONS**

* 1. Appropriate Law Enforcement (LE) Agency – refers to the local LE agency with police jurisdiction. In an emergency situation, calling 9.1.1 is most appropriate. In general, the University Police Department (UPD) will have jurisdiction over university property, however, UPD has agreements and may collaborate with other LE agencies (e.g., San Marcos Police Department, Hays County Sheriff’s Office, Round Rock Police Department, Williamson County Sheriff’s Office, and state LE agencies). For jurisdictions outside of the United States (e.g., during Education Abroad programs), contact the local emergency agencies.
  2. Confirmed Student Death – refers to a death that has been declared by the appropriate LE agency authority and the next-of-kin has been notified.
  3. International Student – a student who has an F-1 or J-1 visa. It is recommended that a status be checked at GOAINTL by Education Abroad before contacting International Student and Scholar Services (ISSS).
  4. On-Campus Student Death – The death of a student shall be regarded as having occurred on campus if the death takes place on property owned, leased, or maintained by the university. A student death may be treated as having occurred on campus if it occurs while the student is participating in a program or function hosted or supported by the university (e.g., students participating in Education Abroad programs, in student-athlete competitions, or in conferences as university representatives).
  5. Student – includes the following:
     1. an individual who is enrolled in an undergraduate or graduate program at the university at the time of death whether enrolled part- or full-time;
     2. an individual who has completed the immediate preceding term at the university and is eligible for re-enrollment; and
     3. an individual who has been accepted for enrollment to Texas State

for the current or upcoming semester.

* 1. Support for Students and Employees Impacted by Student Deaths
  2. Students impacted by the death of another student can contact staff in the following departments for support and assistance:
     + 1. Dean of Students;
       2. Counseling Center;
       3. Department of Housing and Residential Life;
       4. Student Health Center; and
       5. their supervisor, if employed by the university.
  3. Any employee who encounters the death of a student in their employment capacity or is impacted by the death of a student should notify their supervisor or Human Resources for support and resources.
  4. Suspected Student Death – refers to a person who appears deceased, but has not been evaluated by emergency personnel or declared deceased by the appropriate authority (i.e., Justice of the Peace or a medical examiner).
  5. University Point of Contact – The dean of Students, or designee, will serve as the primary point of contact for designated family members who wish to speak with university faculty or staff concerning the death of their student.

**03. PROCEDURES FOR RESPONDING TO STUDENT DEATHS**

* 1. Student Deaths On Campus

1. All student deaths on campus shall be reported to UPD.
2. UPD will determine the need to conduct a death investigation in accordance with [Texas Code of Criminal Procedure](https://statutes.capitol.texas.gov/Docs/SDocs/CODEOFCRIMINALPROCEDURE.pdf).
3. UPD will notify or coordinate notification of next-of-kin, as necessary.
4. UPD will notify the Dean of Students Office when there is confirmation of a student’s death.
5. If the student is an international student, UPD will notify the Office of International Affairs/assistant vice president and director for International Affairs as soon as possible to coordinate notification of next-of-kin and any other necessary process.
6. Under no circumstances should there be any comments about the cause or suspected cause of death. No comments on the cause of death will be issued by the university without approval from the vice president for Student Success.
   1. Student Deaths Off Campus
7. Response to any death occurring off campus will be handled initially by the appropriate LE agency, medical examiner, or hospital involved. It is the responsibility of these agencies to notify the next-of-kin. UPD may be notified to assist in this process. When the information is communicated to the dean of Students, the same process of internal communication within the university will be followed.
8. If a death occurs during student travel as part of a university-sponsored event (see [UPPS No. 05.06.03](https://policies.txstate.edu/university-policies/05-06-03.html), Student Travel) or an off-campus official university-sponsored event:
   * + 1. If a university faculty or staff member is accompanying the students, the staff member should immediately contact local emergency services and the local LE agency. As soon as possible, once the situation is secured, the university staff member shall contact UPD, Education Abroad, and the Dean of Students Office, when applicable.
       2. If no faculty or staff member is accompanying the students, the surviving students or program liaisons should contact UPD, Education Abroad, and the Dean of Students Office, when applicable, so they may identify the employee with greatest authority to make decisions regarding that program or student travel and to support any other university travelers impacted by the student’s death.
       3. If travel was part of an Education Abroad program, the accompanying faculty or staff member, surviving students, or liaisons must contact the Office of International Affairs/assistant vice president and director for International Affairs, in addition to UPD and the Dean of Students Office.
       4. Travel scheduled by a regular registered student organization is not a university-sponsored event. In this situation, the individuals traveling should contact local authorities immediately. They should contact UPD and the Dean of Students Office at soon as possible once the death occurs so that the internal process and support given to students or families can occur.
   1. Reporting Confirmed Student Deaths – Anyone who learns of a confirmed student death not attended by UPD should report the death to the Dean of Students Office. The Dean of Students Office will confirm if the person was a student and notify appropriate campus officials.

**04. PROCEDURES FOR CAMPUS COMMUNITY NOTIFICATION**

* 1. The Dean of Students Office will coordinate institutional follow-up actions, as needed, and maintain internal procedures and notification lists for this purpose. These actions may include, but are not limited to:

1. coordinating expressions of condolence on behalf of Texas State to the next-of-kin or other appropriate persons;
2. notifying appropriate college and enrollment service staff of verification of a student death to update university records, initiating relevant procedures, and communicating with the deceased student’s family; and
3. interfacing with the family of the deceased to coordinate university services and resolve administrative details.
   1. University President Notifications

a. In the event that the student death occurred on campus, the university president, or designee, will notify faculty, staff, and students through official communication channels to include:

1. student’s name, class level, and major;
2. date of death;
3. location of death;
4. a statement regarding whether there is a security risk to others or not; and
5. a statement of support resources available, if needed.

b. The university president has the discretion to notify the campus community about a student death off campus as deemed appropriate.

* 1. The Dean of Students Office and UPD will work with the Office of Media Relations if it becomes necessary to respond to media inquiries. Responses to the media will be in accordance with [UPPS No. 06.05.02](https://policies.txstate.edu/university-policies/06-05-02.html), Responding to Media Inquiries, and will focus on sharing, as deemed appropriate, the:

1. student name, class level, major;
2. date of death;
3. location of death;
4. a statement that there is or is not a security risk to others and if there is an ongoing investigation;
5. notification of Counseling Center services and other appropriate offices to assist those in the university community impacted by the student death; and
6. appropriate university contact information.
7. **ON-CAMPUS REMEMBRANCE**

05.01 Names of students who are deceased will be posted throughout the academic year on a [memorial page](https://www.dos.txstate.edu/in-memoriam).

05.02 Each year, the Texas State Student Foundation and the Dean of Students Office sponsor Bobcat Pause, a memorial service to remember and honor members of the university community who passed away during the preceding year. The event is held every spring (for more information, visit the Bobcat Pause [website](https://www.dos.txstate.edu/in-memoriam)).

**06. PROCEDURE FOR AWARDING POSTHUMOUS DEGREES**

* 1. A posthumous degree may be awarded for a deceased student with the approval of the dean of the college in which the student was enrolled or majoring. A family member of the deceased may contact the appropriate dean to begin the process of requesting a posthumous degree. For more information regarding this process, visit the Office of the University Registrar [website](https://www.registrar.txstate.edu/our-services/diplomas-certificates/Posthumous.html).

**07. REVIEWERS OF THIS UPPS**

07.01 Reviewers of this UPPS include the following:

Position Date

Associate Vice President for July 1 E4Y

Student Success and Dean of Students

Associate Provost, Academic Affairs July 1 E4Y

Assistant Vice President for University July 1 E4Y

Communications

Director, University Police Department July 1 E4Y

**08. CERTIFICATION STATEMENT**

This UPPS has been approved by the following individuals in their official capacities and represents Texas State policy and procedure from the date of this document until superseded.

Associate Vice President for Student Success and Dean of Students, senior reviewer of this UPPS

Vice President for Student Success

President