

Georgia Institute of Technology
Crisis Coordination and Communications Plan

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY AND AT-A-GLANCE GRAPHICS

Purpose and Guiding Principles

This Crisis Coordination and Communications Plan was developed to provide a framework for assessing whether a crisis exists and guidelines for managing the crisis and related communications. It is designed to assist in effectively and efficiently managing the effects of a crisis and recovering from it.

The primary focus in managing any crisis or incident is ensuring the safety and health of students, faculty, staff, and the public; restoring academic programs; protecting Institute property and resources; and safeguarding the integrity of the institution.

The effort is process-driven and designed to be repeatable for every event. It focuses on the basic tenets of crisis management communications: honesty, urgency, and transparency.

Crisis Management Team Activation

This process joins the Office of the President, Institute Communications (IC), the Office of Emergency Preparedness, and the incident or crisis leader to form the Crisis Management Team (CMT) to assess whether a crisis exists – as well as its potential magnitude. The process involves the collection of information, and development and execution of all internal and external communications.

It is the responsibility of the crisis communications manager and the CMT to proactively investigate whether a crisis exists using every possible resource. They will also determine the size and scope of the CMT necessary for each separate occurrence. And, they will connect with the team from the Office of Emergency Preparedness to enroll them to manage the specific issue at hand as needed.

Decision-Making

The CMT should manage the crisis or communicate associated information to any audience. The president has decision-making authority during an incident or crisis. The president's chief of staff has decision-making authority on behalf of the president (if the president wishes to yield), and the Executive Leadership Team should be consulted prior to finalizing decisions.

The CMT should also always include the role of incident or crisis leader, chosen from the area most affected in the incident, the president or chief of staff, and crisis communications manager.

This team should work in concert with the Emergency Preparedness team to determine whether the crisis communications manager comes from Institute Communications or within the EP office. The support roles needed to manage the incident or crisis will be determined at that point and may include a media relations manager, media monitoring coordinator, media interview coordinator, internal communications manager, community outreach manager, social media monitor, social media disseminator, emergency call center (ECC) coordinator, inquiries coordinator, writer, digital media and graphic support director, documentation manager, and logistics and technical support director.

Notifications

All faculty and staff leadership members and campus communicators should notify the CMT of a potential or unfolding event. That first step involves, crisis communications manager (On Call Crisis Communications Manager at 404-385-0211) of a potential event (See Pages 20-25 for detailed [assessment and notification processes](#).)

Once the crisis communications manager is alerted to a potential crisis, he/she will move quickly to alert the CMT and campus leadership that a crisis assessment is underway.

- The first alert is made to Group 1 (the president and chief of staff, followed as needed to the Office of Legal Affairs and vice president of Institute Relations).
- If necessary, Groups 2 & 3 will be alerted (support roles on the CMT, and leadership including the Executive Leadership Team and the president's Cabinet, and could also include deans of the various schools and colleges and their top staff).
- Follow up with results of the assessment: whether to activate the CMT or stand down.
- If activated: the team moves into incident/crisis and communications management mode.
- If the incident involves harm/potential harm to human health, consult the Institute's Emergency Action Plan managed by the EP team.

The crisis communications manager may also decide when campus leadership and the University System of Georgia (USG) should be made aware of potential events and/or the CMT's activation. It is strongly recommended that senior leadership and campus communicators across the Institute be notified immediately after it has been determined there has been an incident or crisis.

Communications

As facts are confirmed, and a clearer understanding of the magnitude of the unfolding crisis comes into focus, communications begin. All messaging should be geared toward factual representation of what has happened and demonstrate the leadership's plan to move past the crisis. The CMT will use social media to correct misinformation.

The following detailed plan provides notification processes, role and responsibility descriptions, decision-making and communications protocols, as well as examples to help determine whether or not a CMT should be activated and how communications should be created, implemented, and distributed. The following infographics from the plan are placed here for a quick, easy-to-follow overview of the process. Details for the groups referenced in the [Assessment and Activation graphic](#) can be found on Pages 23-25.

CRISIS ASSESSMENT & ACTIVATION PROTOCOL



INQUIRY OR ALERT TO CMT

- Directed to on-call Crisis Communications Manager
- Shared with CMT (Group 1)
- Social monitoring begins
- Decision: Alert CMT support staff and larger leadership team (Groups 2 and 3) crisis assessment is underway



INVESTIGATION

STAND DOWN
Notify all groups of non-event as applicable



ACTIVATE

- Group 1 (CMT): Activate for assessment
- Group 2: Prepare for assignments
- Group 3: At Crisis Communications Manager's discretion



ACTIONS CONSIDERED

- Police involvement/police lead
- Activate emergency response website
- Crisis Communications Manager + PIO + APIO ensure roles activated
- Simple holding statement readied



CMT begins fact finding



CMT LAUNCH CONFERENCE CALL

ACTIONS CONSIDERED

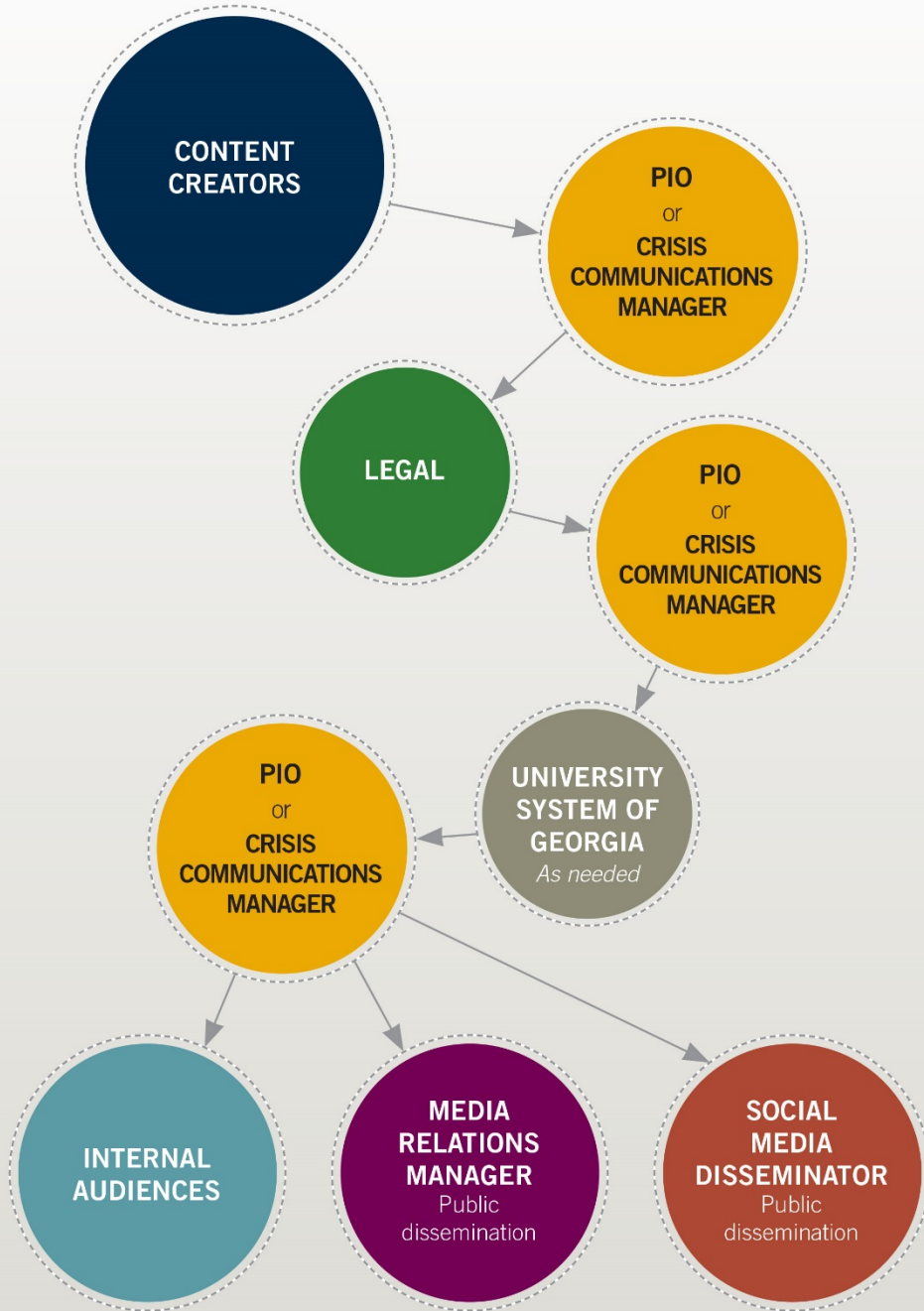
- Is crisis worthy of president's early visibility?
- What proactive steps can be taken with information?
- Crisis Communications Manager and team evaluate 2nd communication
- Learnings from initial investigation organized into statement or for interviews (Media Relations Manager, Writer, Social Media Disseminator)
- Communications readied for all important audiences



CRISIS IN FULL

Maintain rhythm of communications

CONTENT APPROVAL PROCESS



FULL CRISIS COMMUNICATIONS PLAN AND DETAILED PROTOCOLS

Purpose

The following guidelines provide a framework for assessing whether a crisis exists and for the collection and dissemination of information for the Georgia Institute of Technology (Georgia Tech).

The effort is process-driven and designed to be repeatable for every event.

Notably, the process joins the Office of the President, Institute Communications (IC), the Office of Emergency Preparedness, and the incident or crisis leader to assess whether a crisis exists as well as its potential magnitude, collection of information and development and execution of all internal and external communications.

Actions to manage the crisis or communicate associated information to any audience shouldn't take place outside the crisis management team (CMT).

Definitions

A crisis is defined as anything that causes a significant threat to the Institute's operations or can have negative consequences if not managed properly — particularly related to public safety, operational or administrative consequences, or reputation loss.

An incident is defined as a single event that could lead to a loss of operations, services, or functionality. An incident, if not handled well, can lead to a crisis.

Roles

Crisis Management Team (Office of the President + Institute Communications):

It is the crisis communications manager's overarching job to advise the president about the incident. The president's chief of staff has decision-making authority on behalf of the president (if the president wishes to yield), and the Executive Leadership Team should be consulted prior to finalizing decisions.

The crisis management team should also always include the rotating role of incident or crisis leader, which goes to the Cabinet member or dean from the area most affected in the incident (e.g., Student Life for a student death, EVPR of Research for a challenge in research, EVP of Administration and Finance for an elevated staff issue, etc.). The chief of staff and crisis

communications manager will appoint the representative(s) from that department, college, or unit to join the CMT as the incident or crisis leader.

In addition, the incident or crisis leader may appoint representatives from their department or a related school (see school/department leader role description). This role could be filled by the dean, assistant dean, or director of marketing and communications — or all three.

One crisis communications manager will always be on call. Similarly, there are several potential public information officers (PIOs) in Institute Communications who are routinely scheduled for on-call duty. The schedule is provided to the police department and perhaps to the individual school/college leadership.

The rotating crisis communications manager may also elect to serve as the PIO, depending on circumstances that may keep the AVP of External Communications or the media relations leader from participating.

While the CMT is comprised of the Office of the President and top leaders from Institute Communications, there are also various support roles that will be staffed by others within Institute Communications and/or Georgia Tech's public relations agency. These individuals are not on the CMT but do report to the crisis communications manager and/or the PIO.

The support staff are on call to assist the CMT in executing the messaging strategy for internal and external audiences:

- Media Relations Manager
- Media Monitoring Coordinator
- Media Interview Coordinator
- Internal Communications Manager
- Community Outreach Manager
- Social Media Monitor
- Social Media Disseminator
- Emergency Call Center (ECC) Coordinator
- Inquiries Coordinator
- Writer
- Digital Media and Graphic Support Director
- Documentation Manager
- Logistics and Technical Support Director

It is important that all faculty and staff leaders, along with campus communicators, notify the crisis communications manager of a potential or unfolding event (404.385.0211). The crisis communications manager may also decide when campus leadership and the USG should be made aware of potential events and/or the CMT's activation. It is strongly recommended that senior leadership and campus communicators across the Institute be notified immediately after it's been determined that there has been an incident or crisis. (See [Crisis Assessment](#) and [Activation Protocol](#) – Pages 23-25).

Crisis Communications Manager

The crisis communications manager oversees all aspects of the response effort, ensuring coordination among the various departments toward a successful handling of the crisis and its communications. This includes advising the president on all aspects of the situation, leading the CMT, and designing a communications strategy that is aligned with the Office of the President.

The crisis communications manager tracks, monitors, and informs about what is known, what is being done about it, and how that is being communicated to the public.

This individual also ensures that external communications and talking points are approved by the Georgia Tech Office of the General Counsel — and the USG, if needed, and informs the vice president for Institute Relations. (See Content Approval Process, Appendix 1.)

The crisis communications manager may also choose to take on all or some of the responsibilities of the PIO, including serving as the Institute's spokesperson. (See the PIO role description below for a list of potential duties.)

The crisis communications manager is responsible for the following:

- Leading the assessment phase to determine if the CMT should be activated.
- Overseeing all aspects of the crisis response effort on behalf of the Office of the President.
- Activating and leading the CMT by notifying members and assigning tasks.
- Coordinating with the various departments.
- Ensuring the communications strategy/messaging are aligned with the Office of the President, the Executive Leadership Team, the Office of the General Counsel and Cabinet.
- Assuming the role of the PIO or assigning it to an IC team member.
- Serving as the president's liaison to the USG if necessary.
- Coordinating with PIO, Institute Relations, and the Office of the General Counsel for approval of external messaging.
- Establishing a rhythm with the PIO for the CMT by setting expectations related to regular meetings/calls, reports/updates, and more.
- Providing notice of deactivation of the crisis.

- Leading a debrief or business continuity plan to ensure normal Institute processes, following the activation stage.

Public Information Officer (PIO)

The PIO, typically the AVP of External Communications or Media Relations leader, reports to the crisis communications manager and is responsible for working with the media and general public to provide timely, accurate information about response efforts. (Or, if the crisis communications manager decides to be the PIO, an Institute Communications representative would continue to support the crisis communications manager with all the other duties enumerated below.)

The PIO works closely with the crisis communications manager to ensure that messaging to the general public and Institute audiences accurately represents the Office of the President. The PIO also conducts various administrative activities to ensure that the CMT is performing its duties.

When the CMT is activated, the PIO has responsibility for informing and updating all important constituencies in accordance with best practices. The PIO has a designated assistant PIO (APIO) to share in the following duties:

Strategic Communications:

- Articulating an incident action plan to ensure public information objectives, messages, and issues are included as appropriate. Reviewing media strategy with the crisis communications manager.
- Working with the school/department leader to determine whether special communications should come from a dean, school, or department.
- Briefing the crisis communications manager on all communications issues and potential adverse political, social, and economic impacts.
- Developing, review, and approving public information-related documents (in coordination with the crisis communications manager).
- Coordinating with the crisis communications manager, Institute Relations, Georgia Tech Office of the General Counsel, and USG for approval of external messaging.
- Providing information materials to the crisis communications manager for media briefings, VIP visits, and town hall meetings.
- Establishing contact with other public information personnel, including GTPD, local emergency responders, etc. Serve as the CMT's liaison with these organizations.

Administrative:

- Assisting the crisis communications manager in managing the CMT and PR agency; assign tasks as appropriate.

- Setting a schedule of meetings and/or calls with the CMT and PR agency.
- Directing Logistics and Technical Support to requisition the supplies needed to support the response effort.
- Ensuring all public information activities are documented.
- Creating and maintaining CMT staffing plans.

If the Emergency Operations Center (EOC) is activated:

- Sharing EOC briefing information with the CMT and the Emergency Call Center (ECC).
- Serving as the liaison between the CMT and EOC.
- Taking the lead in setting up a Joint Information Center (JIC), if warranted.

Incident or Crisis Leader

This is a rotating role, which goes to the Cabinet member or dean from the area most affected in the incident. The chief of staff and crisis communications manager may appoint representative(s) from that school or unit to join the CMT. This ensures the subject matter expert or leader in the area of the incident or crisis can provide context, background, and important information related to the challenge at hand.

The incident or crisis leader is responsible for the following:

- Alerting the crisis communications manager of an incident or crisis as soon as becoming aware of it.
- Collaborating with the crisis communications manager and the chief of staff on the assessment to determine if a CMT should be formed.
- Informing the crisis communications manager about all communications issues and potential adverse political, social, and economic impacts.
- Developing, reviewing, and approving public information-related documents (in coordination with the crisis communications manager).
- Ensuring the CMT’s crisis response and communications strategy account for any subject matter-, college-, or unit-specific factors.
- Working with the necessary school/department leaders to determine whether special communications should come from a dean, school, or department.
- Distributing approved subject matter-, department-, college-, or unit-specific messaging to stakeholders closely tied to the department, college, or unit.

School/Department Leader

The school/department leader is a member of the CMT and is activated when a crisis event

impacts or is related to a specific school or department within the Institute (e.g., the Scheller College of Business or the Alumni Association). This individual works with the PIO and providing school- or department-specific intelligence that helps to inform the crisis response effort and communications strategy. The role should be filled by one or more individuals (e.g., dean, assistant dean, or the Marketing and Communications director).

The school/department leader is responsible for the following:

- Ensuring the CMT’s crisis response and communications strategy account for any school- or department-specific factors.
- Providing guidance to the CMT on school- or department-specific communications aimed at students, staff, or faculty, if warranted by the situation.
- Distributing approved school- or department-specific messaging to students, staff, or faculty of the affected school or department, if directed by the crisis communications manager.

Each of the following support staff members are also scheduled for on-call duty, but they are not members of the CMT. The outside public relations firm will maintain a schedule of on-call staff, which is shared with the crisis communications managers and PIOs.

Media Relations Manager

The media relations manager is responsible for setting up the emergency website, if warranted, and distributing approved materials to media. The media relations manager also gauges media needs and identifies opportunities to keep reporters updated.

Note: Social media channels are handled by the social media disseminator.

The media relations manager is responsible for the following:

- Upon approval, activating the emergency response website and post the holding statement or other messaging.
- Distributing the latest approved media updates to key reporters and news outlets.
- Coordinating with the inquiries coordinator to ensure that media questions are received and answered.
- Maintaining a comprehensive, updated media list containing points of contact, phone numbers, and email addresses.
- Identifying experts or others who could be quoted.
- Identifying opportunities where visuals can help correct inaccuracies or misinformation.

Media Monitoring Coordinator

The media monitoring coordinator is responsible for monitoring and documenting media coverage (online, broadcast, print, etc.) related to the incident and providing news summaries to the CMT. This role could be handled by Georgia Tech’s public relations agency.

A key responsibility of the media monitoring coordinator is identifying important stories and bringing them to the attention of the PIO and crisis communications manager. In addition, this person monitors for misinformation in media coverage and elevates it to the PIO and crisis communications manager.

The media monitoring coordinator should be prepared to provide media coverage reports at regular intervals set by the PIO or crisis communications manager.

The media monitoring coordinator is responsible for the following:

- Setting up an effective search to locate media coverage; platforms might include Critical Mention, Meltwater, etc.
- Developing regular reports summarizing media coverage related to the crisis (e.g., number and breakdown of recent stories since previous update, key stories, and total reach since beginning of incident).
- Providing a short summary of broadcast clips in a coverage report.
- Elevating stories from top-tier media — or important local media — to the attention of the crisis communications manager and PIO.

Media Interview Coordinator

The media interview coordinator is responsible for preparing the PIO or crisis communications manager for media interviews and accompanying them to interviews. The media interview coordinator will also utilize content created by the writer to develop speaking points tailored to interviews.

Note: This role could be fulfilled by Georgia Tech’s public relations agency if one is retained, which can augment the CMT.

The media interview coordinator is responsible for the following:

- Developing key messages for spokespeople.
- Creating a list of anticipated questions that reporters may ask.
- Conducting prep sessions with the spokesperson prior to media interviews.
- Working with the media relations manager to coordinate interviews and manage logistics.
- Accompanying spokespeople to interviews — and/or coordinating phone interviews.

- Creating detailed notes during interviews and following up with reporters if additional information is promised during the conversation.
- Providing an assessment after the interview and offering areas of improvement, if needed.
- Updating key messages as new information is received; providing the messages and information to the PIO and the writer.

Internal Communications Manager

The internal communications manager, in coordination with the school/department leader, provides counsel to the PIO on the Institute's internal communications needs, helps the writer craft messaging, and distributes approved materials to internal audiences. This messaging might include words of comfort, condolences to members of the campus community, an explanation of what occurred, and/or how the Institute is responding.

The internal communications manager is responsible for the following:

- Determining the information needs of the campus community, including the individual colleges.
- Coordinating with the writer to develop messaging for internal audiences.
- Working with the inquiries coordinator to respond to campus community questions and concerns.
- Gathering and sharing facts and data about the campus (e.g., departments, buildings, faculty, campus services, and maps); sharing with the PIO and ECC as dictated by the situation.

Because the internal communications manager oversees the distribution of messaging to internal audiences, he or she must be aware of the various channels and how they are to be activated. For example:

- Institute website.
- Georgia Tech Emergency Notification System (GTENS). (Note: This channel is operated by GTPD, which may have already issued an alert if there is an imminent threat.)
- Individual college email lists, if appropriate (in coordination with the school/department leader).
- Other email lists (parents, students, faculty, staff, etc.).
- Emergency Call Center (ECC).
- Campus operator.
- Daily Digest.

Note: If an emergency response website is launched, this would be considered a public-facing channel, not an internal communications vehicle. As such, the media relations manager would handle posting on that site.

Community Outreach Manager

The community outreach manager is responsible for coordinating the information flow between the CMT and key community groups. In this capacity, the community outreach manager handles the dissemination of information that provides specific instructions or messages to community groups and local businesses (not university students, staff, and faculty, which is handled by the internal communications manager). The community outreach manager brings specific concerns and issues about the affected community to the PIO and/or the crisis communications manager, so they are aware of these circumstances while responding to an incident.

The community outreach manager is responsible for the following:

- Providing coordination between the crisis communications manager/PIO and the community.
- Assessing any special needs or circumstances of the community (not including Georgia Tech students, staff, and faculty).
- Providing information about evacuations, shelter-in-place guidance, and other specific instructions to local community groups.
- Reviewing public information materials to ensure they address the concerns/needs of the community, and then notifying the PIO and the writer if revisions are appropriate.

Note: Depending on the nature of the incident, the community outreach manager role may not be necessary or could be fulfilled by the Institute relations communications manager or the APIO.

Social Media Monitor

The social media monitor is responsible for monitoring social media (e.g., Twitter and Facebook) for content related to an incident. This individual ensures monitoring occurs throughout an incident and that content is being gathered, analyzed, and summarized for the benefit of the CMT. In addition, the individual in this role should stay informed about issues prompting the most comments/feedback on Georgia Tech's social media channels and include a summary of this information in reports.

This role falls to the Georgia Tech assistant director of social media or a member of that team; it could be assigned to Georgia Tech's public relations agency if one is retained.

The social media monitor is responsible for the following:

- Setting up an effective, incident-specific social media search to locate relevant content.
- Providing regular reports summarizing social media activity (e.g., conversation volume, spikes in activity, and comment trends).
- Maintaining awareness of issues prompting the most comments on social media.
- Quickly elevating social media comments from top influencers and stakeholder groups to the PIO and crisis communications manager.
- Working as needed with college, unit or school communicators to determine the most appropriate properties to deploy communications (e.g., the Georgia Tech Twitter account, a college or dean’s Twitter account, etc.)

Social Media Disseminator & Rumor Control

The social media disseminator is responsible for posting approved content on Georgia Tech’s social media channels — or providing approved content to the individuals who manage the channels. This individual works closely with the PIO and the writer to ensure messaging on Georgia Tech’s social media channels is consistent with the overall response effort and addresses rumors or misinformation.

The social media disseminator reviews each report from the social media monitor to stay informed about issues prompting the most comments on social media and identifies developing trends that need to be addressed.

The social media disseminator is responsible for the following:

- Posting approved content on Georgia Tech’s social media channels (e.g., Facebook and Twitter).
- Coordinating with the PIO and writer to draft social media posts as needed, including but not limited to the following topics:
 - Latest incident update on response website.
 - Misinformation on social media channels and in mass media.
- Monitoring Georgia Tech’s social media channels to identify concerns among the public. (This person will need to pay special attention to incoming messages or comments on Georgia Tech’s owned channels.)
- Reviewing and analyzing reports from social media monitoring to recognize trends that should be addressed.

Emergency Call Center (ECC) Coordinator

The Emergency Call Center coordinator — or ECC coordinator — is responsible for launching the ECC when warranted and at the direction of the crisis communications manager.

Instructions on how to launch the ECC are included in the Call Center Manual. **Note: This manual can be found in the Emergency Operations Plan under Appendix. Annex S4 Page 104.**

In circumstances where a significant influx of calls is expected, the Emergency Call Center coordinator may work with the Georgia Tech Police Department to engage an outside company to stand up an ECC. However, Georgia Tech currently has the structure in place for its own ECC, which would be managed by the ECC coordinator.

ECC coordinator responsibilities include:

- Launching ECC at the direction of the crisis communications manager.
- Identifying volunteers to staff the ECC.
- Working with the crisis communications manager, PIO, and writer to develop scripts for call center personnel.
- Facilitating the flow of information between the ECC and the CMT.
- Ensuring that the ECC phone number is shared with the public (e.g., posted in the response website and shared via Facebook and Twitter).
- Gathering incoming questions/concerns and brief the PIO and/or crisis communications manager.

Inquiries Coordinator

The inquiries coordinator is responsible for documenting incoming inquiries — whether calls, emails, etc. — and routing them to the correct person (e.g., the PIO, APIO, or media relations manager) so he/she can respond. This individual should also stay up to date on issues prompting the most questions from media and the public, and then inform the PIO and/or crisis communications manager to help them draft appropriate messaging and media responses.

Incoming communication channels that the inquiries coordinator should monitor include:

- The Emergency Call Center (ECC) in coordination with the ECC Coordinator.
- Carnegie's main number.
- The email address where members of the school, community, or media are sending questions.
- Social media channels — including direct messages and comments — in coordination with the social media monitor.

The inquiries coordinator is responsible for the following:

- Routing incoming inquiries to the appropriate person.
- Documenting incoming inquiries and ensure timely responses are sent.
- Elevating queries from the media to the attention of the PIO — or direct media to the response website, if appropriate.

Writer

The writer is responsible for developing content on behalf of the crisis communications manager and PIO for the media, community, and other audiences as needed. The writer works closely with the PIO to ensure information is accurate and available for delivery to relevant parties in a timely manner.

The writer is responsible for the following:

- Coordinating with the PIO and crisis communications manager to write media updates and other content as needed/appropriate, including but not limited to:
 - Holding statements.
 - Talking points.
 - Fact sheets/FAQs.
 - Digital content (website, Facebook, Twitter).
 - Phone scripts.
- Forwarding media materials to the media relations manager and social media disseminator for distribution to media and the public.
- Coordinating with the social media disseminator to ensure consistent messaging.
- Updating materials as the crisis evolves.

Digital Media and Graphic Support Director

The digital media director is responsible for providing video and/or audio clips the CMT may need to provide to the media and/or public over the course of an incident. The graphic support director also oversees the creation of any graphics or signage needed.

The digital media and graphic support director is responsible for the following:

- Counseling the crisis communications manager and PIO on whether digital/video content should be created to help tell a story, maintain calm, tamp down rumors, or otherwise assist in managing the issue.
- Working with the documentation manager to ensure all videos and audio clips are archived for future reference.
- Developing or engaging third party vendors to create signage, posters, flyers, and other materials needed to support communication efforts.
- Delivering audio and/or video clips to the CMT in formats that are acceptable to the media.
- Engaging photographers and/or videographers as warranted by the situation.

Note: Depending on the nature of the incident, the PIO could combine the Digital Media and Graphic Support Director with another role.

Documentation Manager

The documentation manager is responsible for managing (e.g., keeping, organizing, accessing) any documents that any member of the CMT may need during an incident response. In addition, the documentation manager may serve as a meeting recorder. Because an incident may require reporting to the Board of Regents or other state officials, the role of the documentation manager is critical in ensuring that information is accurate and up to date.

The documentation manager is responsible for the following:

- Gathering and/or provide necessary documents to the PIO and/or the crisis communications manager.
- Compiling and maintaining a file of communications issued as part of the response (e.g., holding statements, news releases, website and social media content, internal messages).
- Compiling/documenting other information as directed by the PIO or the crisis communications manager.
- Taking minutes, notes, or other records of CMT activities as appropriate or required.
- This individual might also be a representative of Georgia Tech's Office of the General Counsel.

Logistics and Technical Support Director

The logistics and technical support director is responsible for identifying a central location from which the CMT can operate, if warranted, for a sustained incident, and requisitioning the necessary equipment and technology to ensure the team operates smoothly. The logistics and technical support director is also responsible for working with Capital Planning and Space Management to identify locations for press conferences and setting up the briefing room. Depending on whether classes are cancelled/in session, the campus is open/closed, or whether there are active construction projects underway, the following options may be considered:

- On-campus: Wardlaw Center, Student Center, GTPD Beringause Room, Renewable Bioproducts Institute
- Off-campus: Georgia Tech Conference Center, University System of Georgia offices, Historic Academy of Medicine

Note: In most cases, a press conference is only needed in the event of bodily harm. In these situations, the CMT would likely participate in the Georgia Tech Police Department's press conference rather than calling its own. If a press conference needs to be coordinated by the

CMT, however, the logistics and technical support director is responsible for planning and managing the event.

The logistics and technical support director responsibilities include:

- Determining the central location from which the CMT can operate.
- Ensuring that the room(s) have the appropriate technology to support the CMT's efforts.
- Identifying/reserving press conference locations (in consultation with the PIO and crisis communications manager).
- Setting up room (e.g., podium, easels, and chairs for media).
- Assisting the videographer filming the press conference on behalf of Georgia Tech.

Crisis Assessment

Assessment and Activation Goals:

- Once the crisis communications manager is alerted to a potential crisis, he/she should move quickly to alert the CMT and campus leadership that a crisis assessment is underway:
 - The first alert is made to the president and chief of staff, followed as needed to the Office of Legal Affairs and vice president of Institute Relations.
 - Leadership also includes the Executive Leadership Team and the president's Cabinet, and could also include deans of the various schools and colleges and their top staff.
 - Follow up with results of the assessment: whether to activate the CMT or stand down.
- If activated: The team moves into incident/crisis and communications management mode.
- If the incident involves harm/potential harm to human health, consult the Institute's Emergency Action Plan managed by the EP team.

It is the responsibility of the crisis communications manager and the CMT to proactively investigate whether a crisis exists using every possible resource. Ignition of social listening commences immediately. All inquiries related to the event are considered valuable, as they are potentially informative, and should be relayed to the CMT.

Validation of crisis events of bodily harm are self-evident; other types of events that could cause reputational harm are not so easily, nor immediately, identifiable. Regardless, a holding statement acknowledging awareness and a willingness to communicate is necessary with any potential event if it garners even the slightest attention on social or traditional media. The statement would be pushed out far and wide for some events and simply posted for others.

These are strategic decisions that need to be made by the crisis communications manager in conjunction with other members of the CMT.

Assessment is usually more efficient if members of the CMT stay positioned in their respective offices with access to landlines and mobile phones and, most importantly, to colleagues who can investigate and corroborate information. If the situation warrants, because of the event's magnitude, the CMT can gather in a central location if the process of relocation is not disruptive to the event management process.

As facts are confirmed, and a clearer understanding of the magnitude of the unfolding crisis comes into focus, communications will begin. After publication of the holding statement, preparation of internal, external, and social media messaging begins. All messaging is geared toward factual representation of what has happened and demonstrating the leadership's plan to move past the crisis. The CMT will use social media to correct misinformation.

An initial decision of the CMT is whether to activate the emergency webpage.

Communications Targets

The school has many audiences including, but not limited to:

- Media
- Students, faculty, and staff
- Parents
- Alumni
- University System of Georgia
- Donors
- Legislators and elected officials
- General public

During a crisis, it is important to keep the process nimble, forgoing the tendency to overdraft documents that require lengthy legal review. If necessary, statements can be as simple as a series of bullets. Providing frequent updates through statements or media interviews that are documented via owned assets are effective and demonstrate leadership.

Speed of communications is important because a void may be filled with mistrust, rumors, and someone else's leadership. A swift approval process with the crisis communications manager, the Office of the President, Institute Relations, the Office of the General Counsel, the USG, and the PIO forms the core group needed to approve messaging. For larger communications events, the ELT should consult on the messaging as well.

If the crisis communications manager and PIO believe a lack of outgoing information during an event is creating ill-will or reputational harm, they should forgo the statement drafting process and use brief talking points to give interviews. While this is not necessarily a bad strategy to prevent further reputational harm, it is better to publish the facts frequently and give interviews to enhance the process.

In tabletop exercises, the crisis communications managers, Institute Communications participants, legal team, and USG representatives should discuss types of statements that would easily meet legal approval so they are on the same page and can use pre-drafted statements with minor, incident-specific edits for real-life occurrences.

In a severe situation involving bodily harm, it is important that the university president is personally involved in statements and, at times, interviews.

Statements are easily placed on owned assets such as the website or emergency webpage. Twitter is an effective tool for the distribution of facts/rumor control and to drive audiences to the website where up-to-date, accurate information resides, and misinformation can be more fully corrected.

Email and a call center are additional top tier assets.

GTENS should be activated by the Georgia Tech Police Department (GTPD) without prior notice to the CMT if there is an imminent threat to public safety. (Usually, notice is provided to the Office of the President). In the event GTPD has not activated GTENS and a crisis is unfolding that could impact public safety, the crisis communications manager, PIO, or internal communications manager could proactively request a GTENS message by contacting the director of Georgia Tech Emergency Preparedness (currently Will Smith). (Besides imminent threats to public safety, GTENS is also activated when there is a campus closure announcement.)

Press conferences are generally the least preferred vehicle for relaying information and are discouraged. If press conferences are warranted, it's likely the event involved injuries and/or fatalities and would be under the purview of the police and/or at a hospital. Institute leadership would join any press conference at the police department's location and communications will be supported with talking points.

On the off-chance press conferences are necessary, the recommended on-campus and off-campus locations are:

- On-campus: Wardlaw Center, Student Center, GTPD Beringause Room, Renewable Bioproducts Institute
- Off-campus: Georgia Tech Conference Center, University System of Georgia offices, Historic Academy of Medicine

For efficient rumor control in real time, members of the CMT (crisis communications manager, PIO, APIO, media relations manager, social media manager, social media monitor, legal representative, and police PIO) should organize group texts and conference calls so they can quickly discuss inquiries/social chatter and determine messaging.

Note: It is likely that many more “facts” will fly on social media than can be quickly investigated. When this occurs, it is ideal to continuously reinforce recent statements on social media — which can be enumerated so it is very clear such posts are being vetted for accuracy. This ongoing engagement tends to wear down would-be dramatists who use social media channels during crisis events for their own perverse entertainment.

CMT Activation Protocol

- **Group 1 text and call list:** CMT members, the Office of the General Counsel, and Institute Relations (excludes support staff).
- **Group 2 email and text list:** CMT support staff members and the ELT. (See roles listed above.)
- **Group 3 email and text list:** The president’s Cabinet and a broad set of campus leaders who need to be made aware of a situation. The crisis communications manager, in consultation with other members of the crisis team, determines whether this group should be made aware that an assessment has been initiated.
 - **Group 3 list might include:** president’s Cabinet, deans and assistant deans of each of the schools/colleges; Marketing and Communications directors for the individual schools; etc.

Activation Procedures

- Any administrator (dean, assistant dean, marketing director, etc.) may escalate a situation to the CMT. The on-call crisis communications manager commences an assessment and notifies Group 1 (the CMT and related leaders). Also, social media listening begins. (Georgia Tech’s public relations agency may be asked to provide this support.)
- The crisis communications manager may notify Group 2 and Group 3 that an assessment is underway, which is advisable when dealing with any situation that is sensitive to rumors. If

Group 2 or Group 3 is not told when an assessment commences, then they should be notified as soon as there is an indication there could be a crisis.

If the CMT is not activated

- If the CMT is not activated, the crisis communications manager will send Group 1 an email notifying them that the team will not be activated. The crisis communications manager may also choose to notify Group 2 and Group 3 of the same.

If the CMT is activated

- If the crisis communications manager and Office of the President activate the CMT, a text and email will be sent notifying Group 1 and Group 2. This should also indicate a time for the CMT's first conference call to discuss the incident, roles, and expectations.
- The crisis communications manager will send a separate email and/or text message to Group 3 letting them know the CMT has been activated.
- The PIO ensures that staff is fully deployed to cover affected areas or appropriate roles. The PIO and crisis communications manager should confer on logistics (e.g., Should people go to their offices? Can they operate from home, if that is where they are when the CMT is activated? Will there be a central office for the CMT?).
- The crisis communications manager and PIO should decide whether to activate the emergency response website and post a holding statement. *Note: The media relations manager should be able to activate the emergency response website from his or her office, home computer/laptop, or mobile device. This individual should likely not travel to campus initially, if he or she is at home, but instead focus on activating the response website remotely.*
- The crisis communications manager and designated PIO should be working with the writer as soon as possible to develop a holding statement that will be sent to the media relations manager for posting/distribution. Once final and approved, the holding statement is posted and sent. Where it is distributed depends on the nature of the incident, but potential channels include:
 - *Georgia Tech website.*
 - *Emergency response website.*
 - *Link distributed on Twitter, Facebook, and other social media channels.*
 - *Email to local media.*
 - *Employees (via email).*
- The PIO should notify Georgia Tech's public relations agency (if one is retained) to stand by for support across a range of potential activities (e.g., strategy, media relations, messaging, and media monitoring). If social and traditional media monitoring have not been initiated, the PIO should ask the agency to begin monitoring — at least until the CMT is in place.

- Within 30 minutes of the Group 1 and Group 2 notifications, the crisis communications manager should hold a call to discuss roles and expectations.

CRISIS ASSESSMENT & ACTIVATION PROTOCOL



INQUIRY OR ALERT TO CMT

- Directed to on-call Crisis Communications Manager
- Shared with CMT (Group 1)
- Social monitoring begins
- Decision: Alert CMT support staff and larger leadership team (Groups 2 and 3) crisis assessment is underway



INVESTIGATION

STAND DOWN
Notify all groups of non-event as applicable



ACTIVATE

- Group 1 (CMT): Activate for assessment
- Group 2: Prepare for assignments
- Group 3: At Crisis Communications Manager's discretion



ACTIONS CONSIDERED

- Police involvement/police lead
- Activate emergency response website
- Crisis Communications Manager + PIO + APIO ensure roles activated
- Simple holding statement readied



CMT begins fact finding



CMT LAUNCH CONFERENCE CALL

ACTIONS CONSIDERED

- Is crisis worthy of president's early visibility?
- What proactive steps can be taken with information?
- Crisis Communications Manager and team evaluate 2nd communication
- Learnings from initial investigation organized into statement or for interviews (Media Relations Manager, Writer, Social Media Disseminator)
- Communications readied for all important audiences



CRISIS IN FULL

Maintain rhythm of communications

CRISIS DECISION-MAKING AND BEST PRACTICES

Holding Statement and Beyond

Determining whether to release a holding statement is usually an easy decision since it's often in response to social media activity and/or an inquiry from the media.

The follow-up to the holding statement is more complicated. Typically, the issuance of the holding statement is a signal to the media that it may have a story for the day, so their interest tends to ramp up quickly. Meanwhile, you may know more than you can confirm or release, so the balancing act begins.

Typical holding statement:

Georgia Tech has received inquiries that numerous people fell ill after a fraternity house party over the weekend and some received medical care. Currently, we don't have any details on the severity of the illnesses, but we are investigating and will report our findings as we learn more.

The second communication to the media needs to be made soon after the initial statement. We would call the second statement a holding statement also; however, it is likely to include the direction of the investigation referenced in the first holding statement.

Typical follow-up to the initial holding statement:

Georgia Tech can confirm that two non-students who attended a fraternity party on Saturday evening were taken to a hospital and were released this morning. Up to 10 more people who attended the party, some of whom were students, have complained of feeling ill and are being evaluated by medical staff. At this time, we are still trying to determine other pertinent information such as the cause of the illnesses.

Reputation Management Strategies

Too often, crisis management becomes overly complicated with self-imposed thinking on logistics and structure, which causes the team to lose sight of a critical consideration: reputation management.

At the beginning and end of each day, it is the responsibility of the CMT to manage every aspect of the Institute's reputation during an event. After the crisis has subsided, a postmortem determines the effectiveness of those efforts.

In an optimal situation, the CMT functions smoothly and much of what is written on these pages is helpful in the execution of duties in times of stress and never-ending deadlines.

The fact is, the best laid plans are often irrelevant to the situation of the day. Consider the numerous crises that arise when leaders are traveling, or when an adverse weather situation hampers coordination. It could be that an active shooter stops all movement on campus and nearby.

The point is, with a mobile phone and the ability to reach members of the CMT, an issue can still be very well managed.

The following points are applicable whether there is an opportunity for procedural setup, or the event must be managed via mobile phones.

Perception management via the media:

In any crisis, of paramount importance to the media is:

What did you know? When did you know it?

After the holding statement is released, these questions become fair game. Of course, in most situations, the question goes to the heart of transparency. So, the media is naturally inclined to ask questions along these lines to determine culpability.

A more pressing question that typically follows “origin of issue” type questions is:

What are you going to do about it?

This is the leadership question and it’s the most important one of all. It’s crucial because how you handle questions of this nature form the reporter’s opinion of whether the Institute can manage and overcome the issue. That reporter is informing politicians, regulators, and your many publics, so ensuring that firm leadership is in place makes all the difference.

Best practices to create a positive perception on all three questions include:

- While the president needs to be an active part of the spokesperson team early in any event where there is significant bodily harm, consider more fluid uses of the president and others in the Office of the President. For example, let’s assume a whistleblower alleges that research fraud is systemic at the Institute and that it has profited immensely. As part of the CMT’s role, it should estimate potential reputational harm. In this example, let’s assume the CMT places this threat at an

8 for a variety of reasons on a scale of 1 to 10, with 10 being a worst-case scenario.

- A strong tactic to show transparency and demonstrate leadership would be to have the president and the PIO together call important reporters and provide a verbal holding statement. Something as simple as, “Leslie (reporter), I wanted to initiate this call because we are taking this very seriously and are putting every resource into getting to the bottom of it. I have no answers today, nor do I think it can be fully vetted quickly, but we will be tenacious. We’ll update you regularly, and once we know the whole truth, I’ll be able to meet with you.”
- Whenever media is called proactively to share information, the reporting is typically better. The effort demonstrates confidence and shows leadership — especially if the information is detrimental to reputation. On social media, the Institute can mention that it proactively released information to the media and online to resolve suspicion and find the truth.

Perception management via internal communications:

In coordination with the CMT, augmenting campuswide messaging with school-specific messaging is recommended, especially if the controversy centers on a particular school or college.

Consider a change in tone and substance when communicating to internal audiences, knowing full well that the media — and thus the public at large — will also see these communications. The three questions above that drive the public’s concern about an issue are also very pertinent to all internal audiences. A more effective way to answer the three questions to assuage concerns and hold morale is to write the messages as one would speak.

- For internal: “Earlier today, we issued a statement about the alleged research fraud that has made considerable news. Today is the first I have heard this allegation. In response, we’ve put an investigative team in place headed by Dr. Robert Smith with the goal of getting to the bottom of it quickly but thoroughly. (Or, I first heard this allegation via rumors two weeks ago, and our preliminary review has not confirmed it is factual. So, we are digging much deeper. I’ve tapped Robert Smith to head the effort.) Certainly, allegations can be very damaging to our work and morale, but I would hope that this uncertainty will make us all more mindful to double down on our pursuit of excellence every single day.”
- Example of a dean’s message: “Earlier today President _____ shared he and the Board of Regents appointed Dr. Robert Smith to lead an independent

investigation into allegations of research fraud within our school. This is a very good appointment, and I am hopeful the process will move as quickly as possible. I have asked all faculty and staff to respond to any inquiries from this team promptly and thoroughly. We absolutely must make this our top priority. Additionally, I am asking for full participation from the faculty on additional best practices we can incorporate to eliminate any doubt about the veracity of our work. I will report back to you on the findings of the investigation.”

The PIO and/or crisis communications manager should look for opportunities to enhance communications with content from the affected school’s leadership. Another effort that should not be overlooked, is for the crisis communications manager and representatives of the crisis team to meet with the affected school’s faculty and staff.

Note: Should a prolonged and gripping situation occur, it’s incumbent on the CMT to help change day-to-day dynamics for both security and optics. For example: Any given police department may be excellent at responding to worst-case scenarios; however, they are not likely to be as sensitive to the need to show very visible changes — such as an enhanced campuswide presence — to help assuage fears. Tangible efforts are exactly what the media and faculty/staff/students need to see in order to believe an organization is implementing every measure to keep people safe.

In summary, the CMT is accountable for the institution’s reputation during a crisis. Therefore, it is incumbent on it to be more than a purveyor of information. In fact, during an event, it becomes a very proactive operations unit.

Message Analysis

While the response effort is still underway, the Institute should assess how its communications strategy is influencing media coverage.

If traditional media coverage is extensive, the media monitoring coordinator or public relations agency should utilize a monitoring service to assist with monitoring, analysis, and reporting. The report should address the following questions:

- What percentage of coverage is positive, negative, or neutral? (All monitoring tools have a sentiment widget.)
- What excerpts pulled from media stories best illustrate the tone and direction of coverage?
- By adjusting the time period analyzed, is coverage trending toward positive, negative, or neutral?

- How many stories have appeared and what is the combined reach (number of readers/viewers/listeners)?
- Where, geographically, is coverage appearing?

If coverage is limited, individual analysis of the stories could be the best assessment method.

Monitoring social media closely will provide real-time feedback on the Institute’s messaging. The social media monitor should use a monitoring service to deliver reports that answer the following questions:

- How many mentions of Georgia Tech (or specific points, such as a deceased student’s name) have appeared on social media since the crisis began?
- According to the monitoring tool, what is the sentiment breakdown — positive, negative, and neutral — of the social media conversations?
- Are one or more influencers helping drive the story online?
- What is the total reach of the social conversations mentioning the crisis? (i.e., total number of people who could have seen the posts).
- What is the breakdown of where coverage is appearing? (e.g., Facebook and Twitter)

In addition to relying on the monitoring service, the social media monitor should also review actual social media conversations and include takeaways in the report.

Following the incident, the CMT should conduct a final evaluation of how effectively it performed. Using the above measurement tools and metrics, the report should address the following:

- Did sentiment shift across traditional or social media channels after the CMT began executing its messaging strategy?
- Did any statements or interviews by the Institute precipitate a spike in media coverage or social conversations? If yes, why and could that have been avoided?
- Did any statements or interviews cause a downward trend in media coverage or social conversations? If yes, what is the takeaway?

Following the final evaluation, the CMT should consider how to mitigate the long-term reputational impact, especially if there is controversy around how it was handled or if there was an especially sensitive situation, such as police brutality. Various strategies should be considered on a case-by-case basis including:

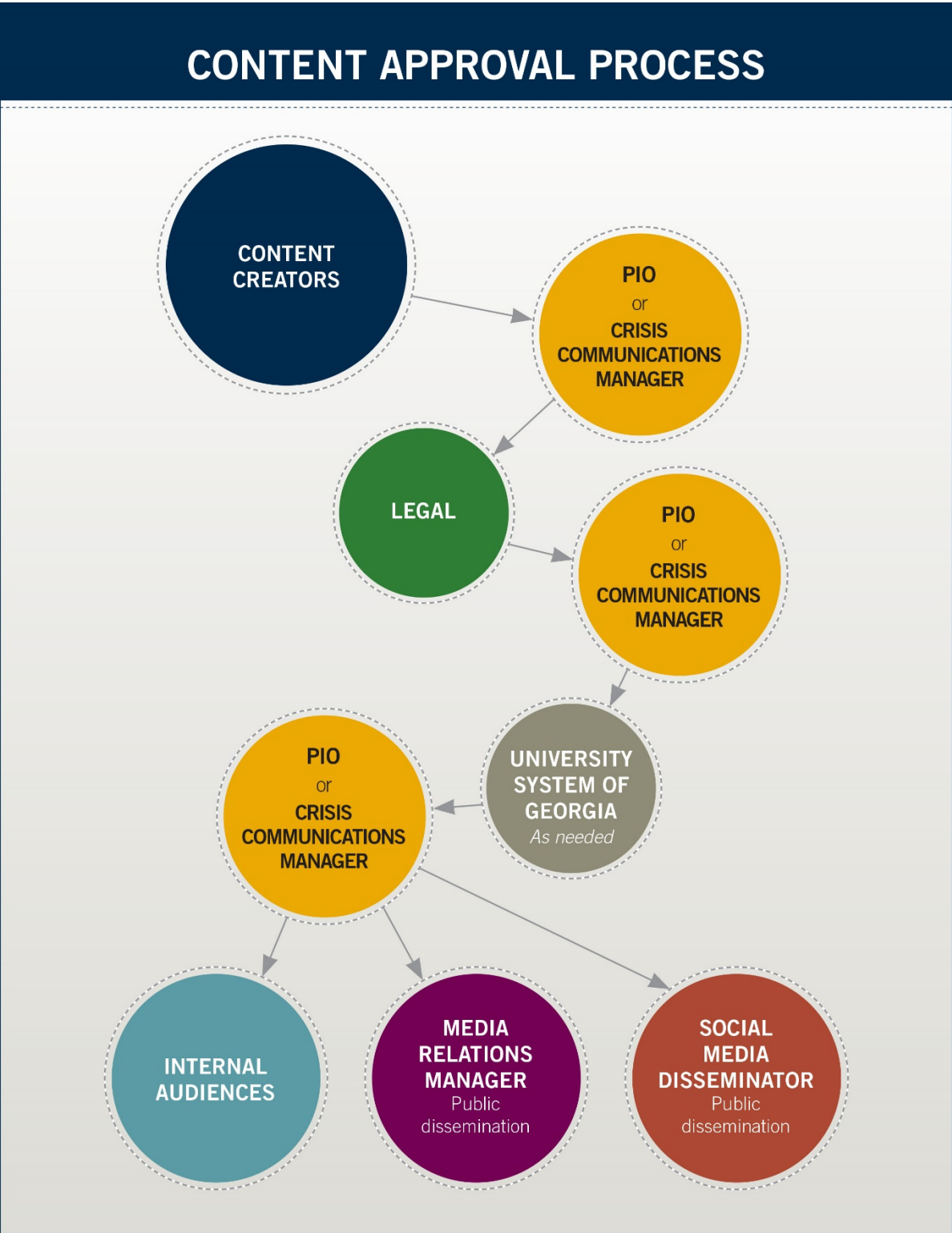
- Post various facts about the incident on an Institute-owned website.
- Publish the results of investigations on owned channels (if favorable or strategically beneficial).

- Monitor social media for ongoing discussions; to correct misinformation.
- Identify fair journalists who reported on the incident; share results of favorable investigations.

Meet with student and/or faculty groups that are spreading misinformation or are critical of the incident's handling.

Appendices

1. Content Approval Process



2. Contacts List

Name	Department	Work Cell	Office
Denise Ward	Institute Communications	404.660.2926	404.385.2966
Joshua Stewart	Institute Communications	404.660.2927	404.894.6016
John Toon	Institute Communications	404.754.9359	404.894.6986
Michael Hagearty	Institute Communications	404.316.5372	404.385.8336
Steven Norris	Institute Communications	404.281.3343	404.385.0591
Kay Kinard	College of Engineering	*404.312.0432	404.385.7358
Stefany Sanders	Professional Education	404.385.6250	404.312.6620
Sara Warner	Student Life	770.241.7099	404.385.3920
Morgan Miller	Campus Services	*609.457.7813	404.894.3354
Olivia Watkins	Gov't. and Community Relations	404.444.1169	404.385.1239
Ayo Taylor-Dixon	Athletics	813.404.7750	n/a
Michelle Gowdy	GTRI	404.295.8946	404.407.8060
Teresa Daniel	Scheller College of Business		404.385.7592
Jimmy Lummis	OIT-Cyber Security	678.992.9125	404.385.0334
William Smith	Emergency Management	404.593.1030	404.385.2289
Chief Robert Connolly	Police	404.721.5395	**404.894.9968

3. Emergency Operations Plan (EOP)

Georgia Tech has the responsibility to respond to natural and manmade emergencies in a prompt and proactive way to minimize impacts on life and safety, as well as the impacts and consequences on the campus mission and reputation. In preparation for these emergencies, the campus has developed the attached EOP to enhance its capability to prepare for, respond to, and recover from all types of emergencies.

This EOP provides for the coordination of campus services and the use of available resources to minimize the effects of an emergency on life, property, and the environment. Departments having roles and responsibilities established by this EOP are expected to develop plans and procedures in support of this plan.

This EOP addresses emergency response activities at Georgia Tech – Atlanta campus. The EOP does NOT address the emergency response activities at the Georgia Tech campuses in Savannah, Georgia; Metz, France; and Shenzhen, China.

4. Georgia Tech Emergency Management Structure

(See attached.)

- These slides depict the relationships among the following:
 - Crisis Management Team (CMT),
 - Emergency Operations Center (EOC),
 - Incident Command
 - Joint Information Center (JIC), and
 - Department Operations Centers (DOC).
- The activation of one of these groups does not necessitate the activation of another.
- Certain incidents may only require the engagement of one, while others may require all groups to activate.

5. Campus Death Notification

(See attached.)

- It is important and necessary for the entire campus community to be informed of the death of an individual as soon as it is reasonably possible.