



# Crisis Communication Plan

## February 2018

### Introduction

The manner in which the University of Mount Union responds in times of crisis – whether it be an emergency, controversy, rumor or weather-related issue – can have a lasting impact on the University’s status. We live in day and age in which higher education can quickly become national news. The decisions made by colleges and universities, as well as their responses to adversity and challenge, are subject to robust media coverage and public scrutiny. Transparency, honesty and quick response are expected. Thus a detailed and well-thought-out plan of action is necessary to successfully navigate a crisis situation.

### Purpose

This crisis communication plan provides policies and procedures for the coordination of communication events with all constituents in the event of an emergency, controversial issue, rumor situation or weather-related event. This plan outlines the roles, responsibilities and protocols that will be implemented to ensure the timely release of information; how those efforts align with other existing plans, policies and procedures of the University; and the foundational philosophies that will inform these approaches.

### Scope

The intent of this plan is to address the communication needs of all constituents during times of crisis. The plan is designed to complement the University of Mount Union’s Emergency Management Plan, which is intended to facilitate timely and effective response to crisis or emergency situations that impact normal operations of the campus community at the University. The protocols of the Crisis Communication Plan supplement the preparedness, response and recovery of the Emergency Management Plan and further specify the communication steps that coincide with these protocols.

### Objectives

- To factually assess the situation and determine whether a communications response is warranted.
- To implement the response strategy most appropriate for the situation at hand and/or assemble the Crisis Communication Team to recommend an appropriate response.
- To apply a pre-emptive approach to crisis communication in an effort to avoid the “breaking news” interest in the situation and the generation of suspicion and mistrust.
- To be willing to self-disclose any negative or embarrassing information to avoid defending the University’s actions and public statements down the line.
- To communicate in a quick, honest and complete manner to avoid lasting damage to the institution and public speculation, applying the advice of renowned crisis communicator Bruce Hennes – “Tell the truth, tell it first and tell it all.”
- To speak with accuracy about what is known, avoiding speculation on details that have not been confirmed.
- To carefully consider legal matters, compliance requirements and issues of confidentiality before any statements are made.
- To work cooperatively and efficiently with other parties involved in the situation – police, fire or other outside parties – that may have their own communication protocols and strategies.

### Definition

For the purposes of this plan, the University has adopted the following definition of a crisis, as presented by Bernstein Crisis Communication.

“Any situation that is threatening or could threaten to harm people or property, seriously interrupt operations, damage reputation and/or negatively impact the bottom line.”

This plan will introduce strategies and protocols for five different categories of crises:

- **Emergencies**, including but not limited to fires, bomb threats, natural disasters, major crimes and acts of terrorism
- **Non-emergencies**, including but not limited to controversies, personnel and student conduct issues, protests and mass illness
- **Deaths**, including but not limited to the on-campus or off-campus death of a member of the faculty, staff, student body or Board of Trustees (including spouses)
- **Inclement weather**, including but not limited to closures, cold weather, tornado warnings and parking bans
- **Rumor**, including but not limited to wide-spread misperceptions and false information (with special consideration for what may be disseminated via social media)

## **Crisis Prevention**

Many times, public relations crises develop as a result of lack of communication among organizational parties and unwillingness to develop pre-emptive strategies to deal with potential problems head on. In an effort to prevent crises, the Office of Marketing will maintain regular contact with institutional leaders and provide counsel when internal issues or developments appear likely to lead to public relations problems. Likewise, campus leaders will notify the Office of Marketing of any campus issue with the potential of escalating to a crisis level.

In addition, the Office of Marketing will regularly monitor local, state and national news and will notify the appropriate campus leaders of issues and trends that may lead to negative news coverage for the University as a whole of any of its specific entities.

## **Privacy and Liability**

In times of crisis, whether emergencies or non-emergencies, it is necessary to balance the need to be cooperative with the media with a student's or employee's right to privacy.

- Pursuant to the Family Education and Records Privacy Act (FERPA), the University of Mount Union does not comment on matters regarding student educational records or activities.
- Pursuant to the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPPA), the University of Mount Union will maintain the confidentiality and security of individual student, faculty and staff healthcare information.
- In accordance with University policies, Mount Union does not provide information to the public related to personnel matters.

Inquiries regarding criminal charges or pending legal matters will be considered with caution as to refrain from interfering with an ongoing investigation or legal proceeding. In the event of such an inquiry, legal counsel will be consulted before any response is issued.

## **Operations**

To ensure that the University's response to any crisis situation (as defined above) is consistent, appropriate, accurate, quick and sensitive, all mass communication from the University will be coordinated by the Office of Marketing in consultation with appropriate campus entities, which may include, but are not limited to, President's Council, the Emergency Management Team and Campus Safety Committee as well as off-campus support including the Board of Trustees, legal counsel and crisis communication consultants.

## **Crisis Communication Team**

Depending upon the type and severity of the crisis, a number of key individuals – both on and off campus – may be involved as members of the Crisis Communication Team.

### **President's Council**

The members of President's Council will serve as the oversight group for all crisis communication. The following members will play a lead role in the development and approval of strategies and messages with guidance from the vice president for marketing.

- President
- Vice President for Academic Affairs and Dean of the University

- Vice President for Advancement
- Vice President for Business Affairs and Treasurer
- Vice President for Enrollment Management
- Vice President for Marketing
- Vice President for Student Affairs and Dean of Students
- Associate Vice President for Planning and Program Implementation and Chief Planning Officer
- Executive Director of Information Technology
- Executive Faculty Advisory Board (EFAB) Representative

### **Emergency Management Team**

In times of emergency, the Crisis Communication Plan will be carried out in tandem with the Emergency Management Plan, under the leadership of the incident commanders (vice president for business affairs and treasurer and/or vice president for student affairs and dean of students). Thus, the Emergency Management Team, including the members of President's Council and other campus individuals selected based upon the type of crisis at hand, will play a lead role in the development and approval of strategies and messages with guidance from the vice president for marketing. Additional members could include:

- Director of Physical Plant
- Director of Human Resources
- Director of Residence Life
- University Chaplain
- Chemical Hygiene Officer
- Director of Campus Safety and Security
- Director of the Health Center
- University Counseling Staff
- Director of Diversity and Inclusion
- Director of Food Services

### **Office of Marketing**

The members of the Office of Marketing staff will serve as the primary facilitators of the strategies and protocols set forth in this Crisis Communication Plan and will fulfill the following specific roles in the communication process:

- **Vice President for Marketing**  
The vice president for marketing will serve as the chief crisis communication officer, initial University spokesperson and liaison to President's Council and the Emergency Management Team. This individual will develop key messages to be conveyed to constituents and will serve as the manager of the Blackboard Connect mass notification system.
- **Director of Academic Marketing**  
The director of academic marketing will maintain the alert website and facilitate email communication with off-campus constituents.
- **Associate Director of Brand Marketing**  
The director of brand marketing will serve as the liaison to the Emergency Command Center and will log all developments reported to the group and relay critical information and updates on the situation at hand.
- **Assistant Director of Brand Marketing** (*specializing in advancement and academic affairs communication*)  
The assistant director of brand marketing will assist the vice president of marketing with Blackboard Connect messages, keep a log of all messages to be shared in regular updates to audiences, and will communicate these messages to the director of academic marketing to share on the website and the assistant director of academic marketing (*specializing in SEO, email communication and media relations*) to communicate to the media.
- **Assistant Director of Brand Marketing** (*specializing in event planning, and business affairs and student affairs communication*)  
The event coordinator will maintain a detailed log of all activity related to the situation, including updates on the situation and communications sent.
- **Assistant Director of Academic Marketing** (*specializing in SEO, email communication and media relations*)  
The assistant director of academic marketing will serve as the main point of contact with the media, organize official press conferences, issue official press statements and secure responses to media inquiries.
- **Assistant Director of Academic Marketing** (*specializing in website, social media and video production*)  
The assistant director of academic marketing will monitor social media for posts related to the incident, log posts and work with the vice president for marketing on needed responses.
- **Executive Assistant**

The executive assistant will log all inquiries received via telephone, email, fax and text and will provide overall office support to the crisis communication effort.

## Additional Support

If the severity of the crisis reaches a level that exceeds the Office of Marketing's ability to actively manage the communication demand, the following groups of individuals may be called upon to assist in the process.

### On-Campus Support

- Communication Subcommittee of the Campus Safety Committee
- Office of Sports Information
- Faculty in related disciplines including communication, marketing and English/writing
- Staff with an education and/or previous experience in related disciplines including communication, marketing and English/writing

### Off-Campus Support

- Communication professionals serving on the Board of Trustees
- Crisis communication consultants

## University Spokesperson

During times of crisis, it is critical to deliver consistent messaging to the media through identified and approved spokespersons. In such situations, the initial spokesperson for the University will be the vice president for marketing. It is critical that this individual be kept apprised of all facts and developments of the situation so that he/she can provide accurate and credible information to the media.

If the vice president for marketing is unavailable to serve as the initial spokesperson for the University to the media, other authorized spokespersons are:

- Director of Academic Marketing
- Assistant Director of Academic Marketing (*specializing in SEO, email communication and media relations*)

In a campus emergency situation, it may become necessary to relay messages directly to parents of current students. In such a situation, authorized spokespersons are:

- Associate Dean of Students
- Other student affairs staff members identified by the vice president for student affairs and dean of students

In the aftermath of a crisis, it may become necessary and appropriate to provide the media access to other individuals on campus for comment and interviews. All responses to the media, whether written or verbal, will be coordinated by the Office of Marketing. Unless an individual on campus is authorized to speak on behalf of the University or entertain questions from the media, they should refrain from doing so. All media inquiries should be forwarded to the Office of Marketing at (330) 823-6063 or [information@mountunion.edu](mailto:information@mountunion.edu).

## Communication Centers

If the magnitude of the crisis necessitates the establishment of a Media Center and/or Family Communication Center, the centers should be located away from the scene of the incident, Emergency Operations Center and one another. The University of Mount Union's Emergency Management Plan provides the following locations for the Emergency Operations Center, which will be chosen first based upon the location of the scene of the incident. The following details potential locations for a Media Center and Family Communication Center based upon the potential Emergency Operations Centers.

Emergency Operations Center	Crisis Communications Center	Media Center	Family Communication Center
Kresge Board Room	Office of Marketing	Gartner Welcome Center	Bracy Hall
Osborne Conference Room	Deuble Conference Room	Campus Grounds	Dewald Chapel
Physical Plant	Physical Plant	Physical Plant	Haupt House
MAAC Recruiting Room	MAAC Classroom	Gulling Training Center	Peterson Field House

## Audiences

In times of crisis, the following constituents should be considered for communication:

- Students (both undergraduate and graduate)
- Faculty

- Staff
- Trustees
- Alumni
- Parents
- Media (local, regional and national)
- Neighbors
- Greater Alliance and Stark County Communities

## **Channels of Communication**

A variety of communication channels may be used to reach out to constituents during a crisis or emergency situation. Appropriate channels will be selected based upon the audiences to be reached, the type and/or severity of the situation and the message to be communicated.

### **Blackboard Connect**

In a crisis situation, the primary means of communication to the campus community – faculty, staff and students – will come via the Blackboard Connect emergency communication system.

Blackboard Connect is Mount Union’s mass communication system that allows University officials to reach all members of the campus community with information during unforeseen events or emergencies within minutes. The system utilizes a variety of communication channels to reach recipients, including:

- E-mail
- Telephone (cell phones, campus residential and office phones, home phones)
- Text messaging
- Social media (Facebook and Twitter)
- RSS feeds (appear on mountunion.edu and campus internal digital signage)

To ensure that the system continues to work properly and to give members of the campus community the opportunity to update information on a regular basis, Mount Union issues a test of Blackboard Connect each semester. Members of the campus community will be notified of upcoming test dates via e-mail and will be given the opportunity to update cell phone information prior to all testing dates.

Cell phone information can be updated at any time during the year by following these instructions provided at <https://portal.mountunion.edu/campusoffice/marketing/Pages/Cell-Phone-Update-Instructions.aspx>. In addition, information in iRaider provides additional details regarding the text-messaging component, including instructions on how to opt in to the system if you opted out at any point. This information may be accessed at <https://portal.mountunion.edu/campusoffice/marketing/Pages/Text-Messaging.aspx>.

*Please note that telephone information is automatically pulled from Self-Service and e-mails are sent to everyone with a University of Mount Union account. The University does not have the ability to choose different levels of delivery for individual people. Text messaging is the only option that community members can choose individually.*

### **Mount Union Website**

The Campus Safety and Alerts website at [mountunion.edu/campus-safety-and-alerts](http://mountunion.edu/campus-safety-and-alerts) provides critical information including campus safety, campus emergencies, health resources and weather.

Whenever an alert related to any of these areas is issued on campus, updates will be provided on the alert section of this site at [mountunion.edu/alert](http://mountunion.edu/alert). In times of emergencies, enduring public crises and weather-related occurrences, this site will be a vital piece of the institution’s communication efforts and the home base for all updates.

### **Alert Message Line**

Upon the issuance of a campus alert, the automated message on the University’s Alert Message Line – (330) 829-8899 – will be updated to reflect the situation and direct callers to [mountunion.edu/alert](http://mountunion.edu/alert) for updates.

### **Additional Means of Communication**

In the event that communication needs to be sent to individuals off campus or the severity of the situation does not require use of the mass notification system, the following communication tools can be utilized.

- Social media
- Mount Union website
- Mass e-mail

- Media alerts/news conferences
- Alert message line
- Existing electronic or print publications
- Traditional mail

### **Loss of Power, Telephone or Email Systems**

If traditional communication systems are disrupted, the following protocols should be followed:

- Cell phones should be used if landlines are down. A list of cellular phone numbers for key University officials and law enforcements agencies is included as an appendix to this document.
- If DSL or wireless internet is disrupted, cell phone hot spots may be used to access online resources and Blackboard Connect. In addition, Blackboard Connect's mobile app and phone update procedures may be used to distribute critical information.
- If the Mount Union website goes down, social media (Facebook and Twitter) will become the primary source of updated information for individuals on and off campus.

## **Emergency Communication Procedures**

The following procedures should be implemented when communicating during emergency situations, which may include, but are not limited to, fires, bomb threats, natural disasters, major crimes, on-campus deaths and acts of terrorism.

### **Immediate Response**

*See responsibility chart in Appendix 2.*

1. The vice president for marketing is notified of an emergency by the Emergency Management Team incident commander. (If the vice president for marketing is unavailable, then the director of brand marketing steps into this role.)

The vice president for marketing calls the director of brand marketing to enact Office of Marketing phone tree. *(Please consult the phone tree in Appendix 4.)*

2. The immediate response to the primary audience (students, faculty and staff) is pulled from a library of pre-approved messages or developed by the chief crisis communication officer on hand and approved by appropriate parties, which may include members of President's Council and/or Emergency Management Team.
3. An immediate response is sent through some, if not all, communication channels including:
  - Blackboard Connect (should direct constituents to mountunion.edu/alert for updates)
    - Through this system, you have the ability to send:
      - E-mail
      - Telephone (both cell phones, campus residential and office phones and home phones)
      - Text messaging
      - Social media (Facebook and Twitter)
      - RSS feeds (appear on mountunion.edu and campus internal digital signage)
  - Alert message line (should direct constituents to mountunion.edu/alert for updates)
  - mountunion.edu/alert
  - Script to the information desk, admission, athletics and alumni (should direct constituents to mountunion.edu/alert for updates)

### **Secondary Response**

*See responsibility chart in Appendix 2.*

1. Log details of the emergency (in chronological order – including time stamp).
2. Identify a spokesperson for the emergency.
3. Once an immediate response has been sent, begin developing additional messages to be provided every 15-30 minutes (with the exception of critical information that would need to occur off schedule).
  - Continue to distribute messages via Blackboard Connect if appropriate (specifically if critical information needs to be delivered off schedule).
  - Provide updates via mountunion.edu/alert (in chronological order – including time stamp).
  - Provide media with the update schedule and script updates to be delivered.
4. Communicate with secondary audiences (those who are important to notify and communicate with, but are not the immediate priority), which could potentially include:

- Trustees
  - Parents
  - Media (local, regional and national)
  - Alumni
  - Neighbors
  - Greater Alliance and Stark County communities
  - Contractors/vendors
5. Monitor social media and respond as necessary.
  6. Log and/or respond to media inquiries.
  7. Consider if photographs and videos are needed to help complement official communication.
  8. If needed, open a media center.
  9. Send a media alert and include media center information if applicable.
  10. Develop a short-term plan for communication and follow up.

## **Long-Term Communication**

*See responsibility chart in Appendix 2.*

1. Develop a long-term plan for communication, which could potentially include the following actions:
  - Host a press conference
  - Develop a web presence
  - Provide follow-up communication to various constituents
  - Expand the spokesperson list to include others on campus who could be interviewed
2. A strategy for ongoing procedures should also be developed, which may include the:
  - Scanning of media for stories related to the situation
  - Filing of information related to the situation, including clippings, statements, letters, memos and any other documents
  - Monitoring of the situation daily with frequent updates being provided to appropriate audiences
  - Note taking during the situation to be reviewed and used to improve future crisis responses
2. Debrief with members of the crisis communication team.

## **Non-Emergency Communication Procedures**

The following procedures should be implemented when communicating during non-emergency situations, which may include, but are not limited to, controversies, off-campus deaths, personnel and student conduct issues, protests and mass illness.

1. The individual who encounters the potential non-emergency situation should gather accurate information from the appropriate source and determine whether an immediate response or preparation for a future response should be considered.
2. This individual should then consult with the president, vice president for marketing and other appropriate vice presidents to determine whether or not the Crisis Communication Team should be convened.
3. If the decision is made to convene the Crisis Communication Team, the members of that team will be selected based upon the type of non-emergency crisis being handled.
4. After assessing the nature and scope of the situation, the Crisis Communication Team will develop a plan of action that may include either an immediate response or a planned strategy for a future response. Steps to consider include the:
  - Drafting of key messages
  - Designation of a spokesperson
  - Determination and prioritization of audiences, which may include:
    - External bodies as appropriate, including legal counsel, law enforcement, accreditation bodies, athletic conferences, etc.
    - Internal audiences including trustees, faculty, staff and students
    - External audiences including alumni and parents
    - The media and general public
  - Determination of channels to be used, which may include:
    - Email
    - Website
    - Social media
    - Letter

- Fact sheet
  - News release
  - News conference
  - Information sessions
  - Development of messaging for use by campus representatives including those working for the Information Desk, Office of Admission, Office of Athletics and Office of Alumni Engagement
5. Members of the Crisis Communication Team should also establish procedures for gauging audience response and monitoring rumor, especially as it relates to social media.
  6. A strategy for ongoing procedures should also be developed, which may include the:
    - Scanning of media for stories related to the situation
    - Filing of information related to the situation, including clippings, statements, letters, memos and any other documents
    - Monitoring of the situation daily with frequent updates being provided to appropriate audiences
    - Note taking during the situation to be reviewed and used to improve future crisis responses

## Deaths

The following procedures should be implemented when communicating about the passing of a campus community member, which may include, but is not limited to, the on-campus or off-campus death of a member of the faculty, staff, student body or Board of Trustees (including spouses).

In the unfortunate event of the injury or death of a student, faculty member or staff member, release of information to the campus community and/or public will be delayed until the family or next of kin has been contacted and they have provided consent to release information. Upon contact and consent, information will only be shared if prior authorization to release directory information is on file, in accordance with FERPA guidelines.

### On-Campus Death

Upon the confirmation of an on-campus passing of a member of the faculty, staff or student body and approval by the family to communicate the information, the following procedures will be enacted.

#### Immediate Communication

1. The vice president for marketing is notified of an on-campus death by the Emergency Management Team incident commander. (If the vice president for marketing is unavailable, then the director of brand marketing steps into this role.)
2. The vice president for marketing calls the director of brand marketing to enact Office of Marketing phone tree. (*Please consult the phone tree in Appendix 4.*)
3. The immediate response to the primary audience (students, faculty and staff) is pulled from a library of pre-approved messages or developed by the vice president for marketing and approved by appropriate parties, which may include members of President's Council and/or Emergency Management Team.
4. The vice president for marketing sends notification to all faculty, staff and students through:
  - Blackboard Connect
    - E-mail

#### Secondary Communication

1. If a decision is made to cancel classes, send notification to all faculty, staff and students through:
  - Blackboard Connect
    - E-mail
    - Text messaging
    - Social media (Facebook and Twitter)
    - RSS feeds (appear on mountunion.edu and campus internal digital signage)
2. Notify the campus community of the availability of resources including grief counseling, mental health services, support groups or other methods of support (either in the notice of the cancellation of classes or in a separate email).
3. Send an email to parents of current students from the [alert@mountunion.edu](mailto:alert@mountunion.edu) account including information about the availability of resources including grief counseling, mental health services, support groups or other methods of support.
4. Develop a media statement to be used as a response to media inquiries, which is approved by appropriate parties including members of President's Council and/or Emergency Management Team.



5. Post a story for the Mount Union website, which is approved by appropriate parties including members of President's Council and/or Emergency Management Team.
6. Monitor social media and respond as necessary.
7. Log and/or respond to media inquiries.
8. Consider if photographs and videos are needed to help complement official communication.
9. If needed, open a media center.
10. Develop a short-term plan for communication and follow up.

### **Long-Term Communication**

1. Add follow-up communication related to the cancellation of campus events to the story on the Mount Union website and announce via social media.
2. Develop a long-term plan for communication, which could potentially include the following actions:
  - Host a press conference
  - Provide follow-up communication to various constituents
3. A strategy for ongoing procedures should also be developed, which may include the:
  - Scanning of media for stories related to the situation
  - Filing of information related to the situation, including clippings, statements, letters, memos and any other documents
  - Monitoring of the situation daily with frequent updates being provided to appropriate audiences
  - Note taking during the situation to be reviewed and used to improve future crisis responses
3. A follow-up communication including details of funeral arrangements and/or a campus memorial service from the [alert@mountunion.edu](mailto:alert@mountunion.edu) account via Constant Contact to all faculty and staff members, students and trustees.
4. Debrief with members of the crisis communication team.

### **Off-Campus Death**

Upon the confirmation of an off-campus passing of a member of the faculty, staff, student body or Board of Trustees or the spouse of a member of the Board of Trustees and approval by the family to communicate the information, the following procedures will be enacted.

#### **Off-Campus Death of a Member of the Faculty, Staff or Student Body**

1. A notification will be sent from the [information@mountunion.edu](mailto:information@mountunion.edu) account via Constant Contact to all faculty and staff members, students and trustees.
2. If details on arrangements were not available at the time of the initial notification or if a campus memorial service will be held, a follow-up communication will be sent from the [information@mountunion.edu](mailto:information@mountunion.edu) account via Constant Contact to all faculty and staff members, students and trustees.
- 3.

#### **Off-Campus Death of a Member of the Board of Trustees or Spouse**

1. A notification will be sent from the [information@mountunion.edu](mailto:information@mountunion.edu) account via Constant Contact to all trustees.
2. If details on arrangements were not available at the time of the initial notification or if a campus memorial service will be held, a follow-up communication will be sent from the [information@mountunion.edu](mailto:information@mountunion.edu) account via Constant Contact to all trustees.

If the trustee or spouse of the trustee was well-known on campus, consideration may be given to notifying members of the faculty, staff and student body as well. In such a case, the same delivery methods will be applied.

## **Inclement Weather Communication Procedures**

The following procedures should be implemented when communicating during inclement weather, which may include, but is not limited to, closures, cold weather, tornado warnings and parking bans.

### **Closures and Cancellations**

If weather conditions warrant limiting activities, the following communication procedures will be enacted.

1. A decision will be made by the president, vice president for academic affairs and dean of the University and/or vice president for student affairs and dean of students to cancel classes, close offices or both.
2. The details of the limiting of activities are communicated to the vice president for marketing.
3. The vice president for marketing calls the director of brand marketing to enact the Office of Marketing phone tree. *(Please consult the phone tree in Appendix 4.)*
4. The vice president for marketing sends notification to all faculty, staff and students through:

- Blackboard Connect
    - E-mail
    - Text messaging
    - Social media (Facebook and Twitter)
    - RSS feeds (appear on mountunion.edu and campus internal digital signage)
 (*Please note that the phone calling option is not utilized to communicate closures or cancellations due to weather.*)
  - Alert Message Line
  - Mountunion.edu/alert
5. The assistant director of brand marketing sends notification to local television and radio stations by 7 a.m. on the day of the closing.

## Cold Weather

The University of Mount Union rarely closes as a result of low temperatures alone. The safety of our entire community – students, faculty and staff – is and will remain our primary concern when determining if classes should be canceled and/or the campus should close. If and when weather forecasts indicate that conditions are likely to pose a significant threat to the safety of the members of our community, we will act appropriately.

At the same time, our community differs from that of an elementary or secondary school setting. As adults, our students, faculty and staff are capable of taking the necessary steps to protect themselves from extreme weather conditions.

In addition, our students and their families make a substantial investment in and commitment to their educations at Mount Union. Thus, the cancellation of classes or closing of campus is not a decision that is taken lightly. Unless weather forecasts predict an excessive threat to the safety of our campus community, we are compelled to refrain from interrupting the education of our students and hindering the investment they have made in their futures.

If the decision is made to cancel classes or close campus as the result of cold weather, the steps for announcing a closure as outlined above will be followed.

## Tornado Warnings and Other Emergency Weather Situations

Upon the issuance of a tornado warning by the National Weather Service and the sounding of the tornado warning siren in the city of Alliance, the following communication procedures will be enacted. (This sequence of communication may also be used for other weather-related emergencies that may involve the health or safety of students, faculty and staff as identified by the Emergency Management Team.)

1. The vice president for marketing sends notification with appropriate instructions to all faculty, staff and students through:
  - Blackboard Connect
    - E-mail
    - Text messaging
    - Social media (Facebook and Twitter)
 (*Please note that the phone calling and RSS feed options are not utilized to communicate tornado warnings.*)
  - Alert Message Line
2. The vice president for marketing sends a follow-up message via Blackboard Connect, using the same channels identified above, to all faculty, staff and students when the city of Alliance sounds the all-clear siren or the National Weather Service warning is canceled or expired.

## Parking Bans

Upon the issuance of a city-wide parking ban due to inclement weather and Mount Union's receipt of the notification (via alert messages or social media), the following communication procedures will be enacted.

1. The vice president for marketing will notify students, faculty and staff via email through the [alert@mountunion.edu](mailto:alert@mountunion.edu) account.
2. The assistant director of academic marketing (*specializing in website, social media and video production*) will share the notification via social media.

## Rumor Management

The following procedures should be implemented when managing rumors, which may include, but are not limited to, widespread misperceptions and false information (with special consideration for what may be disseminated via social media).

1. Rumors affecting Mount Union and its constituents should be directed to Mount Union's Office of Marketing.
2. The assistant director of academic marketing (*specializing in website, social media and video production*) will log all rumors, including the date, source, rumor or channel.
3. The Office of Marketing staff will discuss the rumor, how it could have been started, its possible effects on the institution and potential ways to combat the rumor.
4. The vice president for marketing will provide an update to President's Council on the rumor and the proposed communication strategy.
5. If appropriate, internal notification will be sent or discussions will be had with the offices and departments that may deal directly with the rumor in question.
6. If it is determined that an official comment is necessary, the following communication channels should be considered:
  - Social media
  - Email
  - Media alert
7. The assistant director of academic marketing (*specializing in website, social media and video production*) will monitor comments via social media upon the distribution of any official communications from the University.
8. A long-term communication strategy or follow-up plan will be developed if necessary.

## Closure/Debriefing

Within two weeks of the conclusion of the crisis, the crisis communication team will hold a post-crisis meeting to determine the effectiveness of the plan and make any updates to the plan for future crises.

### Evaluation Questions:

- Were all of the communication channels accessible during the crisis?
- Was the information communicated timely and accurately? Were updates given as quickly as possible? If not, what held up the process?
- Were we transparent in communicating during the crisis?
- Did any information shared during the crisis lead to confusion?
- What types of feedback did we receive from constituents during and after the crisis?
- What can be improved upon for the next crisis situation?