

The purpose of effective crisis communication is to mitigate the identified emergency, crisis, or controversial incident and protect the safety of the faculty, staff, students, and community by providing accurate information to all constituencies.

Activation of Crisis Communication Team

During an emergency or crisis – which may include international conflict, pandemic, threats of violence, accidents, etc. – the Executive Team will assemble to assess the crisis and determine whether the Crisis Communication Team should be activated. The President of the American University of Armenia is responsible for a final decision to activate the Crisis Communication Team. In the absence of the President, the members of the Executive Team may make the final decision upon consensus among the members.

Media Inquiries

All media inquiries should be forwarded to the Director of Communications and Alumni Relations (narek.ghazaryan@aua.am; +374 60 612 513). It is extremely important during emergencies, crises, and controversial issues that only factual information be distributed, speculation and rumors prevented, and security and privacy issues considered. These issues are made more complex at the American University of Armenia since inquires and communications are often conducted in both Armenian and English.

Crisis Communication Team Members

- President
- Vice President for Academic Affairs and Provost
- Vice President for Operations and COO
- Vice President for Finance and CFO
- Director of Communications and Alumni Relations

- Director of Information & Communication Technologies Services
- Director of Facilities and Services

- Manager of AUA Services
- Additional members of the AUA faculty and/or staff will be drafted into the team if particular expertise is needed to respond to a crisis.

AUA CARES (auacares@aua.am)

AUA CARES (Communicating Action Response for Students) is a response team comprised of members from Student Council, Counseling Services, Student Affairs, Registrar's Office, and faculty representatives from each college/school. The Director of the Office of Student Affairs is the chair of the AUA CARES response team. The function of AUA CARES is to help AUA keep track of students that face adversity, and to reach out to those students with a helping hand. These activities include hospital visitations, home visitations, or any humane connection may offer comfort to students in need.

As with all crisis communication, AUA CARES messaging must be approved by the Director of Communications and Alumni Relations before it is sent to the AUA community.

TASKS - RESPONSE

Assess the situation: A fact sheet of the emergency, crisis, or controversial issue should be developed by the Office of Communications and Alumni Relations. The fact sheet contains a summary statement of the situation including all known details to be released to the media, and other constituencies. This information is made available to (and approved by) the President, Provost, or appropriate Vice President. This fact sheet is analyzed with respect to the public's right to know and concerns for privacy and security – in consultation with the university attorney when appropriate.

Designate a spokesperson: In most cases, the designated spokesperson is the Director of Communications and Alumni Relations. The director may appoint a person with direct knowledge of the situation to assist her/him in this task.

In case of a significant crisis, the President or the highest-ranking university official must take the lead in conveying the administration's response to the crisis, showing that the university has control of the situation, calming public concern, and setting an example for the entire campus.

Determine if photography/videography is required for documentation or media releases.

Contact appropriate constituencies: Depending on the nature of the situation, appropriate constituencies will be contacted. Constituencies may include:

- Board of Trustees
- Full and part-time teaching faculty, on and off campus
- Full and part-time staff, on and off campus
- Students, on and off campus
- Faculty Senate
- Student Government
- Staff Assembly
- Parents
- Alumni
- Business community/opinion leaders
- Vendors, college partners, granting entities
- Mass Media

- General Public

Determine appropriate communication vehicles: The Crisis Communication Team will determine the appropriate vehicle(s) to communicate information and their priority order, which may include:

- Campus listserves e.g. faculty@aua.am
- Key campus individuals
- Web Site
- Media releases and/or interviews for Broadcast and Print Media
- Press Conference
- Faculty assembly/staff assembly

TASKS – POST INCIDENT

Factual information should be available through several communication vehicles for a period of time after the incident, as determined by the Director of Communications and Alumni Relations.

Follow-up and appreciation letters to external agencies or organizations who assisted will be sent.

The Crisis Communication Team will meet within 10 days of each incident to ascertain its effectiveness and to seek improvement strategies.

Other Responsibilities

- Recommend appropriate communication systems for utilization during a crisis or emergency to the Crisis Management Team.
- Ensure systems and equipment are in appropriate working order.
- Coordinate media training for a cadre of probable spokespersons, and on-going crisis communication training for team members.
- Designate communication center with required technology and resources.
- Establish and maintain relationships with media and others.
- Designate appropriate spaces for press conferences.
- Participate in simulations, drills, and tabletop exercises for readiness.
- Maintain list of volunteer communication specialists who may be called upon if needed.
- Create and regularly update a Crisis Communications Handbook that includes contact lists, members' duties, checklists, fact sheet forms, sample press releases, etc.

Related Documents

AUA Crisis Communication Plan ARMENG

AUA Crisis Communication Plan Decree N 04-L.20