

# Student Death Notification Protocol

## Background Information

The Dean of Students Office coordinates the University's response when a student at Iowa Student University dies. This response is facilitated through joint efforts of the Emergency Dean On-Call who serves as the primary point of contact for the deceased student's family and the staff in Student Assistance and Outreach who supports the Emergency Dean and navigates the resulting administrative University response.

## Guiding Philosophy

While each student death is unique, this document offers general guidelines to assist staff responding to each incident. Care for the individuals involved, teamwork, communication, partnering with internal units and external agencies, and sensitivity to needs and wishes of those affected are cornerstones to our response.

Our initial campus response to the death of any student is differentiated based on the individual needs of each situation. This response is centered on providing the appropriate assistance for students, family members, staff and others in our community who may initially be in shock and need crisis response as the grieving process begins. Recognizing and responding to the individualized needs of each situation results in an ad hoc response that may differ slightly as the appropriate and caring response emerges from the expressed wishes of the deceased student's family and friends. **To contact the Emergency Dean directly call 515-231-6483; or call ISU Police at 515-294-4428.**

However, as we navigate the unique needs of the family and those most closely impacted by a student's death, the Dean of Students Office also initiates a formal, administrative death notification process to address the deceased student's University record. This process is more structured and consistent; as described below.

## Initial Crisis Response Summary

*(The following information is from the Student Affairs Crisis Response Manual)*

1. If a student death occurs/is discovered on campus, immediately call 911 or ISU Police: 515-294-4428. The Emergency Dean responds, following these procedures, as applicable:
  - a. Identify yourself as the Emergency Dean and as a member of the Dean of Students' staff. If emergency personnel are not on scene, confirm that 911 has been called.
  - b. Control of the scene is maintained by emergency personnel. The Emergency Dean assists as directed by emergency personnel.
  - c. Keep other persons from viewing the victim and disturbing the scene.
  - d. Do not allow access to the area to anyone other than emergency personnel.
  - e. Collect names (and contact information, if possible) of individuals who might provide information to University officials or law enforcement authorities.
  - f. Direct all inquiries about the incident to the appropriate office—ISU Police Department or Ames Police Department, and/or to the University Relations staff.
  - g. Identify (**but do not contact unless specifically directed to do so**) individuals who might be most affected by the death for immediate or future contact: family members, dating partners, faculty members, a work supervisor, close friends.

2. Once the scene is secured and emergency personnel are in control of the situation, additional university support will begin to arrive. The Emergency Dean will consult with university responders to assess the situation and determine next steps.
3. The Dean of Students Office staff may provide the following services:
  - a. The Emergency Dean will, in conjunction with university and other emergency personnel, assist with the initial communication and coordination of the crisis response and keep the Dean of Students apprised of the situation. Points to consider include:
  - b. Coordinate contact with the hospital and/or chaplain/religious organization (if appropriate)
  - c. Generally, law enforcement makes the official death notification. After official notification, in most cases, the Emergency Dean will then follow-up with family and self identify as the primary liaison (single point of contact) and will assist family as they navigate university processes. Provide personal condolences to the family as appropriate. Do not make contact with the family until clearance is given to do so.
  - d. If the student is an international student, notify the International Students and Scholars Emergency Phone (515-460-0746).
4. If any university official receives a call or letter from the parents or guardians of a deceased student, the official should contact the Dean of Students Office. The Emergency Dean who made initial contact with the parents or guardians will then coordinate all further communication between the university and the family.
5. As the single point of contact for the family, the Emergency Dean will also initiate the following steps.
  - a. Invite the family of the deceased to visit the campus (if they wish) and to meet with friends, faculty members, and advisers. Make arrangements to host the family (housing at the Memorial Union, if available, hospitality and food, etc).
  - b. Assign a staff member from the Dean of Students Office or coordinate with International Students and Scholars (if deceased was an international student) to meet with the family initially to accompany the family as they meet with others on campus.
  - c. Facilitate the scheduling of meetings with parents according to the family's wishes.
  - d. Talk with the faculty members, advisers and other staff members (before the visit) who would be involved. Alumni connection, leadership connections, and other relationships may be important for the visit, as well.
  - e. Gather information to be used in meeting with the family.

## **Death Notification Process Summary**

During the initial crisis response, an informal notification of the death of a student is communicated to appropriate university stakeholders, such as the college dean, student organizations, Department of Residence, etc. Later, when an official public record of the death has been received, the Dean of Students Office initiates a formal notification of the students' death to the University Community; including the deceased student's Academic Advisor, Academic Dean, Accounts Receivable, Admissions, Alumni Association, Department of Residence, Financial Aid, Human Resources, Information Technology Services, ISU Foundation, Office of Judicial Affairs, Parks Library, Public Safety, Registrar, Student Counseling Services, Thielen Student Health Center, University Bookstore, University Relations, and the Vice President of Student Affairs.

The following information summarizes the actions initiated by each unit and identifies collaborative partnerships to facilitate the process for the deceased student's family.

**Dean of Students Office**

**Contact: Keith Robinder**

[robinder@iastate.edu](mailto:robinder@iastate.edu)

**515-294-1020**

- The Dean of Students Office provides leadership for coordinating the initial crisis response. This is typically the Emergency on-call Dean, who also serves as the single point of contact for coordinating communication and any arrangements with the deceased student's family.
- Student Assistance staff coordinate with the Emergency Dean to facilitate the interface between the expressed needs of deceased student's friends and family in the trauma/grieving process and the University's formal administrative processes. For example:
  - Collaborate with Student Counseling Services and/or Department of Residence to provide incident debriefing for students or staff impacted, as needed.
  - Provide guidance to the Department Chair, Academic Advisor or other College personnel to determine student's eligibility for a Posthumous Degree/Certificate of Attendance. Collaborate with Academic Dean to make this request to the Provost's Office and Registrar on behalf of the family.
  - Facilitate communication regarding media requests or news releases.
  - Coordinate any guest parking needs for visitors to campus.
- Facilitate communication and planning when family and friends initiate plans for campus memorial event.
  - Students and family may be referred to the ISU Religious Leaders Association for additional support or guidance in planning and implementing memorial activities. Members of the RLA will provide assistance to plan and implement a memorial that appropriately reflects the faith tradition (if any) for each student.
  - Planting a tree or placing a bench on campus (or similar memorial) must be coordinated with Cathy Brown in FP&M who approves all campus landscape changes.
- Convene meeting of university officials involved to debrief and recommend appropriate changes to procedures or additional follow-up.
- Send "Notification of Student Death" memo to all contacts listed in this document upon receipt of public record of death (obituary). Include link to this document for reference.
- Send "Notification of Student Death" memo to all instructors for currently enrolled students.
- Send a condolence letter indicating the completion of all administrative processes and providing contact information for any further questions or concerns.

**Department of Public Safety**

**Contact: Jerry Stewart**

[jdstewa@iastate.edu](mailto:jdstewa@iastate.edu)

**515-294-6762**

- Manage crisis response.
- Coordinate with other law enforcement agencies, if necessary to investigate and notify family.
- **Parking Division**

**Contact: Mishelle Michel**

[mrmichel@iastate.edu](mailto:mrmichel@iastate.edu)

**515-294-3318**

- **Citations:** Verify all current citations have been posted; work with Accounts Receivable and communicate with Accounts Receivable if charges need to be reversed.
- **Permit:** If student has paid for a permit: Expire permit and note in deceased student record to prevent any further correspondence. Post a credit to Accounts Receivable for balance of parking permit (prorated by month).

- **Smart Card:** If student has a prepaid Smart Card, post a credit to Accounts Receivable for any un-used balance.
- **Guest Parking:** Coordinate with family/Dean or Students Office to arrange for visitor parking for family (e.g. bagged meters near campus meetings, u-haul storage, etc.).

### Accounts Receivable

**Contact: Jaye Anderson**

[jjander@iastate.edu](mailto:jjander@iastate.edu)

**515-294-9455**

- Tuition and Fees for the current semester are always refunded at 100% through the Registrar's office.
- Financial Aid is reviewed with the Financial Aid personnel. Funds are returned to the source.
  - Federal Title IV Funds (grants and loans) are returned.
  - Perkins Loans are processed in Accounts Receivable.
  - Private gifts are also returned to donor/foundation
  - Assistantship funds are returned to the department.
- Residence Hall and Dining charges (if applicable) are refunded/prorated and the maximum allowable amount is credited to the account.
- Other charges to the student account are reviewed on a case-by-case basis
  - This includes Cy Cash, Parking Permits, Athletic tickets, etc. (Jaye contacts each office individually to request the charges be reversed.)
- If the student/family has paid the U-bill in cash, a refund is processed.
  - Typically, a refund check is issued to "The Estate of..."
  - If a check is issued, it is included with Dr. Hill's condolence letter. (If this letter has already been sent, the Accounts Receivable office sends the check directly with a separate letter of condolence.)
  - If the student has a bank account on file, funds may be transferred electronically.
- The guiding principle is to eliminate all charges and to maximize the refund (if any) that can be made to the family/estate.
- Information on enrollment status is updated to the Federal Loan Clearinghouse four times per semester; this initiates notification to any student loan providers.

### Admissions

**Contact: Phil Caffrey**

[pbcaffr@iastate.edu](mailto:pbcaffr@iastate.edu)

**515-294-5836**

- Verify student has an Admissions Record (Admissions records are maintained separately prior to matriculation at which time the Registrar maintains the official student record).
- Any deceased student with an active Admission Record is coded as Deceased, preventing any further correspondence or communication from Admissions.
- Remove any Admissions/Transcript Holds on Admissions Record.
- Refund the Admissions Acceptance Fee (if a new entering student); process credit to Accounts Receivable.

### **Alumni Association**

**Contact: Shellie Andersen**  
[shelliea@iastate.edu](mailto:shelliea@iastate.edu)  
**515-294-9310**

- Review Student Alumni Association records. Refund membership fee and remove deceased student's record (if applicable).
- Review Alumni Association membership to determine if family members are alumni. Collaborate with Dean of Students Office if family/alumni will be visiting campus.

### **Department of Residence**

**Contact: Pete Englin**  
[penglin@iastate.edu](mailto:penglin@iastate.edu)  
**515-294-5636**

- Determine if deceased student lived on campus; assess community impact.
- Immediately provide community support for roommates, friends, and other students/staff.
  - Facilitate communication amongst Hall Director, SCS, DSO or others as needed.
- Work with family/Dean of Students Office to determine plans for packing deceased student's belongings and cleaning room.
  - Room may initially be sealed by law enforcement.
  - Room may be cleaned/prepared prior to release to family.
  - Determine in collaboration with Dean of Students Office and family how best to pack deceased student's belongings.
- Coordinate any campus memorial activities that may be requested or initiated by the house community or family. (This generally occurs in collaboration with academic college and/or other student organizations.)
  - Planting a tree or placing a bench on campus must be coordinated by Cathy Brown in FP&M who approves all campus landscape changes.

### **Department of Residence/ISU Dining**

**Contact: Lisa Ludovico**  
[ludovico@iastate.edu](mailto:ludovico@iastate.edu)  
**515-294-2900**

- Notate deceased student contract so no additional billing/correspondence is issued.
- Refunds: room is refunded at 100% for term; dining is pro-rated base on meal usage.

### **Financial Aid**

**Contact: Craig Sanderson**  
[sander@iastate.edu](mailto:sander@iastate.edu)  
**515-294-2602**

- Review deceased student's financial aid package.
- Notate/code all records with a non-award code; ceasing all communication from Financial Aid.
- Calculate return of Title IV Funds for current term and collaborate with Accounts Receivable to process funds accordingly.
  - Student Loans are returned to reduce loan debt. Student Loans (and Parent PLUS Loans) can be discharged or forgiven when a student dies while enrolled. Loan providers require a Death Certificate on file to discharge outstanding student loans.
  - There is no correspondence with the family/estate from financial aid.

### **Human Resources**

**Contact: Kristi Darr**  
[kdarr@iastate.edu](mailto:kdarr@iastate.edu)  
515-294-3753

- Verify if deceased student was employed by University and HR Rep will reach out to department or college liaison.
- Graduate student/Post-Doc employee records coordinated with both the Graduate College and the appropriate departmental Human Resources Liaison.
- HR will contact the employing department to ensure the undergraduate student hourly employee records are processed.
- Human Resources verifies/approves departmental employment transactions and collaborates with Dean of Students Office if/when a final paycheck will be issued to the deceased student.
- Deceased student's human resource records coded as "Deceased" to prevent further communication.
- Human Resources staff will contact the Employee Assistance Program provider as needed for employees who have been impacted by the death of a student.

### **Information Technology Services**

**Contact: Julie Kirts**  
[jkirts@iastate.edu](mailto:jkirts@iastate.edu)  
515-294-1921  
and **Frank Poduska**  
[scmanage@iastate.edu](mailto:scmanage@iastate.edu)  
515-294-7309

- Deactivate deceased student's telephone service and authorization code.
- Suspend deceased student's NetID to prevent any additional log in or other activity.
- Deceased student's NetID can be reset and temporary access authorized when necessary. This request is made by the Dean of Students office on behalf of the family to Maury Hope, Associate Chief Information Officer.

### **International Students and Scholars Office**

**Contact: James Dorsett**  
[jdorsett@iastate.edu](mailto:jdorsett@iastate.edu)  
515-294-1120

- Notify Department of Homeland Security through SEVIS and close student's SEVIS record.

### **ISU Dining**

**Contact: Nancy Levandowski**  
[nancyl@iastate.edu](mailto:nancyl@iastate.edu)  
515-294-7578

- Provide food and dining passes for family members who may visit campus.
- Provide refreshments for any memorial gatherings.

### **ISU Foundation**

**Contact: Amanda Welder**  
[arecords@iastate.edu](mailto:arecords@iastate.edu)  
515-294-9458

- Review Foundation database and remove deceased student's record (if applicable).

### **Office of Judicial Affairs**

**Contact: Michelle Boettcher**  
[mboettch@iastate.edu](mailto:mboettch@iastate.edu)  
515-294-1020

- Verify deceased student does not have an active case file. If so, close case.
- Archive deceased student's prior judicial record (if any).

### **Office of the Registrar**

**Contact: Jean Brett**  
[jbrett@iastate.edu](mailto:jbrett@iastate.edu)  
515-294-0758

- Determine if deceased student has multiple records (undergraduate, graduate, Vet. Medicine).
- Notate/code student is deceased on all records.
- Contact college to initiate withdrawal from classes for current term.
  - All tuition and mandatory fees for current semester are refunded at 100%.
  - Fees for student insurance (if applicable) are not refunded; as this cancels the death benefit that is included in the policy.
- Cancel any classes for future terms (if necessary).
- Update Degree Audit.
- Verify with College Dean and/or Dean of Students Office if student will be receiving grades for current term or graduating posthumously.
  - If yes: keep deceased student's record active until all activity is posted. Contact family and communicate with the appropriate college staff regarding graduation ceremony.
  - If no: move record to the Inactive File.
- Monitor end of term processing to determine if any records that may have already be initiated need to be resolved.

### **Student Counseling Service**

**Contact: Joyce Davidson**  
[jad@iastate.edu](mailto:jad@iastate.edu)  
515-294-0170

- Through the Counselor On-Call, provide emotional support needed during initial shock and crisis response.
- Provide individual and group sessions as needed for students as the community impacted moves through the trauma response into the grieving process.
- Support the campus community as needed; coordinate response with the Dean of Students Office, Department of Residence, academic colleges, or other units.
- Assess needs for on-going care and refer individuals to appropriate services.

### **Thielen Student Health Center**

**Contact: Pat Dobelis/Penni McKinley**  
[pdobelis@iastate.edu](mailto:pdobelis@iastate.edu)  
515-294-5802

- Review deceased students chart to assess risk of any medical care in cause of death.
  - If potential risk is identified, notify appropriate University personnel.
- Notify deceased student's primary care provider.
- Notate/code medical records indicating student is deceased.
  - Research outstanding billing information and cancel pending charges.
  - Clear any health center holds on deceased student's accounts.
- Update/Archive deceased student's medical chart.

### University Bookstore

Contact: Carl Arbuckle  
[carabuc@iastate.edu](mailto:carabuc@iastate.edu)  
515-294-0236  
and John Wierson  
[jwwiers@iastate.edu](mailto:jwwiers@iastate.edu)  
515-294-3501

- Review records to determine if deceased student participated in Textbook Rental program. (Deceased student's account will not be charged back for non-return of rented textbooks.)
- Coordinate with Dean of Students Office and family if textbooks are returned
  - Return of rented textbooks
  - Refund or Buyback of purchased textbooks
- Funds (if any) from the return of text books issued by check directly to family; or can be donated (e.g. to a memorial or scholarship fund) per the wishes of the family.

### University Library

Contact: Hilary Deike  
[hdeike@iastate.edu](mailto:hdeike@iastate.edu)  
515-294-0443

- **Circulation:** check records to determine if the deceased student had library items checked out.
  - If yes: make note of the death and do not bill for the items, if not returned.  
Note: If the family/Dean of Students Office contacts the library, a list of books to be returned can be provided.
  - If no: purge the account from the library records system.
- **Interlibrary Loan:** check data base to determine if the deceased student had received any loaned items, cancel any outstanding requests.
- **Library Accounts Receivable:** check to see if deceased had outstanding invoices with the Library and coordinate reversal of charges with Accounts Receivable.

### University Relations/News Service

Contact: Jackie King/Annette Hacker  
[Jking71@iastate.edu](mailto:Jking71@iastate.edu)  
515-294-4777

- Assist with media inquiries during initial crisis response.
- Monitor media releases (e.g. dean's lists, graduation announcements) and coordinate any potential releases with family through the Dean of Students Office.

### Vice President of Student Affairs Office

Contact: Martha Tanner  
[tannerma@iastate.edu](mailto:tannerma@iastate.edu)  
515-294-4420

- Draft official letter of condolence on behalf of University for Dr. Hill.
  - Send letter to Parents/Spouse as listed in the obituary.
  - Include refund check from accounts receivable (if appropriate).

## Academic Colleges

### College of Agriculture and Life Sciences

Contacts: Wendy Wintersteen  
[wwinters@iastate.edu](mailto:wwinters@iastate.edu)  
515-294-2518

Tom Polito  
[tpolito@iastate.edu](mailto:tpolito@iastate.edu)  
515-294-2766

### College of Business

Contacts: Labh Hira  
[lhira@iastate.edu](mailto:lhira@iastate.edu)  
515-294-2422

Danny Johnson  
[danjohns@iastate.edu](mailto:danjohns@iastate.edu)  
515-294-0629

Ann Coppernoll  
[ajcopper@iastate.edu](mailto:ajcopper@iastate.edu)  
515-294-8431

### College of Design

Contacts: Luis Rico-Gutierrez  
[lrico@iastate.edu](mailto:lrico@iastate.edu)  
515-294-7427

Michelle Rasmussen  
[mrasmuss@iastate.edu](mailto:mrasmuss@iastate.edu)  
515-294-0732

Bobbi Kruckenberg  
[bobbik@iastate.edu](mailto:bobbik@iastate.edu)  
515-294-7428

### College of Engineering

Contacts: Jonathan Wickert  
[wickert@iastate.edu](mailto:wickert@iastate.edu)  
515-294-5933

Joel Johnson  
[joelj@iastate.edu](mailto:joelj@iastate.edu)  
515-294-1570

Deb Dewall  
[ddewall@iastate.edu](mailto:ddewall@iastate.edu)  
515-294-2706

### College of Human Sciences

Contacts: Pam White  
[pjwhite@iastate.edu](mailto:pjwhite@iastate.edu)  
515-294-5380

Linda Hagedorn  
[lindah@iastate.edu](mailto:lindah@iastate.edu)  
515-294-5746

Dayle Nickerson  
[dmnick@iastate.edu](mailto:dmnick@iastate.edu)  
515-294-8238

Tara Fisher  
[tfisher@iastate.edu](mailto:tfisher@iastate.edu)  
515-294-7002

### College of Liberal Arts and Sciences

Contacts: David Oliver  
[doliver@iastate.edu](mailto:doliver@iastate.edu)  
515-294-3220

Jane Jacobson  
[jriacob@iastate.edu](mailto:jriacob@iastate.edu)  
515-294-4831

### College of Veterinary Medicine

Contacts: Lisa Nolan  
[lknolan@iastate.edu](mailto:lknolan@iastate.edu)  
515-294-9860

Claire Andreasen  
[candreas@iastate.edu](mailto:candreas@iastate.edu)  
515-294-5337

### Graduate College

Contacts: William Graves  
[graves@iastate.edu](mailto:graves@iastate.edu)  
515-294-4531

Judy Strand  
[jstrand@iastate.edu](mailto:jstrand@iastate.edu)  
515-294-5285

Shelley Lott  
[sllott@iastate.edu](mailto:sllott@iastate.edu)  
515-294-1277

The Dean of Students Office will send a "Notification of Student Death" memo to the contacts listed above, along with the student's academic advisor based on the deceased student's academic major(s)

**as listed in Access Plus. Additionally, instructors will also be notified by the Dean of Students for all currently enrolled students.**

Upon receipt of the official “Notification of Student Death” notice from the Dean of Students Office the following actions will be the responsibility of the appropriate academic personnel.

- Identify additional departmental faculty and staff who need to be notified. Forward confidential or private information only as needed.
- The Academic Advisor/Student Services Office will coordinate with Registrar to initiate withdrawal from classes.
- Identify decentralized student records (for example, 10<sup>th</sup> day download rosters) that may be used to generate additional correspondence to the deceased student. Notate and remove student contact information as needed. Potential examples include:
  - Study Abroad Office
  - College/Department Development Officer
  - Scholarship Nominations
  - Career Services
  - Student Profiles
  - Departmental Student Organizations, Clubs or Teams.
- If faculty and staff are contacted by the deceased student’s family, collaborate with the Dean of Students Office regarding questions or concerns about the various administrative processes.
- Recommendations for the awarding of a posthumous degree or a certificate of attendance are made by Dean of the College and forwarded to the Provost. Students who are within one semester (18 credits of graduation) may be eligible for a posthumous degree; otherwise all deceased students may be awarded a Certificate of Attendance. If degree or certificate is awarded, coordinate with the Office of the Registrar and the Dean of Students Office on the presentation details. *Additional information on the “Posthumous Degree Policy” can be found on the Office of the Registrar’s website: <http://www.registrar.iastate.edu/index/>.* Occasionally, the deceased student’s family may inquire about the potential for the awarding of a posthumous degree or certificate of attendance. These requests are resolved collaboratively between the College Dean and the Dean of Students Office.
- Confirm any media requests with University Relations and the Dean of Students Office.
- Support faculty and staff who may be grieving and refer any who may need assistance to the Employee Assistance Program (EAP).

## Conclusion

In assessing the University’s Death Notification process, most administrative units perceive that the process works well and the assessment has improved internal processes and collaboration. Feedback from family members indicates the University process is caring, comprehensive, and exceeds expectations.

Some issues remain unresolved. The University needs to determine if student deaths should be recognized or memorialized in a more consistent response.

- For example; can students be included in the Memorial Day remembrance that currently includes only faculty and staff?
- The current ad hoc nature of a decentralized protocol for making this determination results in an inconsistent response across the University; which can be a challenge for families and members of the university community to understand.