Case studies and examples

1. **Scenario Name: Unexpected student death**
   Brief description:
   A senior veterinary student was murdered in her home by her roommate. Off-campus. Campus and City of Davis police both involved. Incident happened during the night before a university holiday. Student well known, lived in a residential area where many other UCD and vet students lived.

   Communication impact and response:
   School communications team initially instructed by campus communications leader to let central campus handle all communications. The central campus team, working with police and

campus leaders didn't provide a statement until very late in the day and then it wasn't very detailed or informative. This delayed the distribution of a simple message from the Dean to the school community informing them of the sad news, condolences, counseling support services/contact info.

This also delayed assisting students who were already getting media inquiries, for we were told to stand down from any media contact. However, media was already contacting students who needed help. Students involved were inexperienced dealing with media, and were in an overly emotional state and media was taking advantage of that. Due to lack of help from campus communications, SVM Communication staff living in the area began helping students and running interference for them with local media looking for student comments. This "on the scene" assistance was very important. No campus communications staff came to the scene. Ultimately, the Dean's message went out 7 hours later after student social media had already informed students and local news had alerted many of the school's faculty and staff. The fact that the incident occurred off campus seemed to impact the campus communications process/protocol. Media was on the scene several times during the weekend, including live segments on the 10pm and 11pm news. SVM Communications team remained with the students throughout the night running media interference.

Additional assistance to locate the victim's missing dog during the first 48-hours was a way to help the students and faculty assist their slain colleague. Because the incident happened on a university holiday right before a weekend, communications was hampered trying to reach key individuals.

Over the course of the next week, the School's communication team worked with school leaders, family and close friends of the victim to write a tribute for the web site, assist with event message points for leaders, social media posts, and provide basic information and updates in response to media inquiries. We helped the school's counseling team get the word out about counseling services and how to make appointments. Also promoting several events or townhall sessions including a noontime – nationwide - moment of silence event and a 1 ½ hour Celebration of Life event held at the school and attended by about 200 guests including the family. Four TV crews and several print publications attended the service. A few members of the media in attendance were disrespectful of the situation, being loud in the background and even interrupting the ceremony by walking up to the podium and placing a mic on it right in the middle of the proceedings. To protect the family the team arranged for an interview with the Associate Dean for Student Programs after the service if the reporters would respect the families wishes to not be interviewed. The school's communication team tactfully shielded the family, at their request, from several persistent reporters during the reception after the service. There was very little communications support provided by the central communications team which was confusing and frustrating for the school's communications and leadership teams.

Development impact and response:

Earlier that week development had interacted with the student both at a private dinner hosted by a donor and then at the Evening of Gratitude, the scholarship dinner, which was the night before she died.

Four days after the student's death, the donor who hosted the earlier dinner contacted development to say that they wanted to create an endowed scholarship in the student's memory. Development worked with the donor to frame the fund and then with the family and the SVM so they had the preliminary information necessary to donate. This included traditional donations and a special site on the SVM website.

Development also worked with the family when they were ready for the memorial service and recommended donations. Development continues to work with the family as they make and implement philanthropic ways to remember their daughter.

Lessons Learned:
- Make a clear crisis communication plan with the campus communications group that includes timeline for school communication needs as well as the official university statements. Campus and school communicator point people should be identified quickly.
- Have a list with phone and cell phone numbers of school and campus leaders, counselors and other key contacts in both a printed and electronic form. Also, an indication of the number(s) approved to provide to media contacts if appropriate to the situation.
- Make clear assignments for different communication needs, coordinate messaging and identify approval process for developing and distribution of statements, messages.
- Ensure that the school community needs are addressed early.
- Identify school leader to communicate with the family
- Identify school leader(s) to respond to media inquiries and help prepare their remarks.
- Realize the media will not respect the boundaries this situation calls for. They will not respect the feelings of anyone involved in the situation and will push to get their story, especially in a murder. A news story doesn't get any bigger than a murder.
- Even if incident occurs off-campus, student was a school and university student demanding campus communication support.
- Work with students to help them promote memorial activities.
- No matter how transparent the university wants to be, keep memorial services private. Offer instead to provide the media with photos and a wrap-up of the ceremony.
- Work with the Chancellor's Office to ensure the Chancellor reaches out with a message to SVM student, faculty and staff community.
- Philanthropy can be an effective way for friends and families to grieve
- Keep plans simple and don't rush to finalize the details until all the appropriate parties have had a chance to provide feedback (primary donor, family, SVM program people)
- Work closely with communication team

2. **Scenario Name: Campus Offensive Graffiti (Swastikas)**
   Brief description: several incidents occurred on the campus over multiple days involving bigoted statements and the painting of swastikas on facilities and on a fraternity house. Although not

related to the school at all, we began getting calls from alumni, friends and donors very upset with the implied anti-semitic message.

Communication impact and response: the campus communication team worked with the Chancellor's office to develop a statement from the Dean that captured the Chancellor's messages, repurposing the Chancellor's campus-wide messages in school communications. A second statement was sent out several days later from the campus with additional information and actions being taken to find those responsible and assure the community these were isolated incidents not to be tolerated and not the position of the university. The campus communications team provided several templates for us to use or build off of when responding to inquiries. From the communication standpoint, the activities of the campus were helpful and coordinated.

Development impact and response

The development office fielded a number of calls from donors, particularly those of Jewish descent, expressing their feelings. Several threatened withdrawing their support.   The office also heard indirectly from inside sources that a several major donors were upset, though they did not contact us directly.

The relationship manager communicated with the donor whenever possible, listening and providing them with the key messages issued by the university at that time.

Lessons Learned: Communications and Development
• Central messages and themes very helpful when crafting community or group responses.
• Coordinated messaging from campus leadership helped us to demonstrate our action, outrage and separation of our students from campus undergrads.
• Calls or e-mail contact one-on-one was more successful when communicating with alumni, friends or donors who were really upset.

3. **Scenario Name: Natural Disaster- California Summer Wildfires**
Brief description: Two major fires broke out at about the same time causing massive damage and displacing people, pets and livestock. The school responded to offer up information about the fires, evacuation preparedness tips and evacuation areas that accepted animals both large and small. Emergency response teams from the school, county animal services and local and state veterinary associations all responded working through county incident command protocol. Working collaboratively they sought to find and rescue animals left behind due to the extremely fast moving fire storm, treat animals for burns, provide basic food and water, relocate animals to shelters, and extreme cases were referred into the teaching hospital for treatment. The teams supported the local vet whose animal hospital became a triage treatment area.

Communication impact and response

We identified our clinical communications officer to be the point person for all out going public communications. Initially that entailed providing CalFire information and evacuation locations, web pages with disaster response tips and information and fielding media inquiries.
He was in touch with faculty and emergency response teams in the field to obtain updates so that we could put out information through our web site and social media channels of our team's activities and community outreach. These updates led to three feature articles released by the school, all of which were covered by the media resulting in dozens of local, state, and national media opportunities.

As animals were referred into the hospital the ER/ICU service was heavily impacted and communications utilized that team for media response as well as for updated information on the web site and through social media. During a two-week span at the height of the crisis, hospital officials conducted 18 media interviews spanning the spectrum of media. While the on-site communications point person facilitated most of the interviews, campus communicators were also onsite and helpful as backup.

Working with the Development team a donation fund was set up and advertised as part of the social media campaign. 56 animals were referred into the veterinary hospital, most without an owner identified. Social media efforts began to include pictures and posts to help reunite owners with their animals. Communications took advantage of the "tug at the heartstrings" opportunities the photos of the injured animals and reunions with the owners provided. Daily postings throughout the ordeal helped foster a sense of community created with our loyal followers who were more engaged than ever before.

Development impact and response
With such detailed media coverage of the wide area affected by the fires- the Veterinary Teaching Hospital was immediately contacted by people who wanted to donate. Working quickly, we created a fire victim fund to direct contributions, including a special location on the website that was easy to access and use.

In addition, development submitted a proposal to a funder who also wanted to donate in addition to a number of groups that wanted to make in kind donations for food and supplies. We also worked with a donor who launched a massive grassroots fundraising effort with the local veterinary hospital in the affected area. Following the fires, one of our donors hosted an event to honor everyone involved with the fire and created a 2016 calendar to raise money and remember the fires.

Lessons Learned:
- Establishing a communication point person was very helpful, other members of the team could support or backfill other activities as needed.
- Getting out information internally regarding team leaders and contact information in different areas of the hospital or emergency response teams helped focus efforts.
- Getting emergency responders to take pictures and video, and provide e-mail summaries of their experiences was very helpful for communications and key to gaining public interest.

- Promoting the school's community outreach effort was a positive media approach at a time of tremendous loss.
- Ultimately the good will generated for the school was huge, more than $100,000 was raised to cover the emergency expenses of the animal patients in the hospital, and 20+ patients were reunited with their owners.
- The first week saw almost 1 million views of the school's Facebook page
- Telling the successful reuniting stories was also a major part of the story.
- As the weeks worn on involving additional communications staff would have helped balance the workload on one individual.
- Be nimble in your ability to create a donation mechanism and fund to help in an emergency that will be usable for future/similar situations.
- Be creative and receptive to various ideas on how to accomplish your goal.
- Engage donors where they are and report the impact of their support through stories and photos.

Crisis Communications best practices and/or tips/resources (for example)

A. http://www.bernsteincrisismanagement.com/the-10-steps-of-crisis-communications/
   a. Anticipate the crisis
   b. Identify crisis communication team
   c. Identify crisis spokespersons
   d. Train spokespersons
   e. Establish notification and monitoring system
   f. Identify and know your stakeholders
   g. Develop holding statements
   h. Assess crisis situation
   i. Finalize and adapt key messages
   j. Post crisis analysis

B. https://www.case.org/Samples_Research_and_Tools/Samples/Crisis_Communications_Samples.html Case sample crisis communication plans