

**HR INTERNAL POLICY AND PROCEDURES MANUAL  
PROCEDURES AND GUIDELINES**

**Title/Subject:** Guidelines for Announcing the Death of an Active or Retired Employee

**Applies to:**  faculty  staff  students  student employees  visitors  contractors

**Effective Date of This Document:** April 24, 2020

**Contact for More Information:** Executive Director of Human Resources

Board Policy  Administrative Policy  Procedure  Guideline

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**INTRODUCTION:**

The following is provided as guidance for those in leadership and/or supervisory roles. In the unfortunate event that you are tasked with announcing the death of an employee, please follow these steps.

**GUIDELINES:**

**I. Contact With the Family**

1. If someone other than a family member advises you of the death, please contact Human Resources (HR). HR will reach out to the family to confirm the information and advise the supervisor accordingly. Please be prepared to share the contact information for the individual who reached out to you so that follow-up can occur.
2. If a family member advises you of the death, make sure to direct them to contact Human Resources as soon as feasible, in order to have questions answered related to benefit and pay matters. Any subsequent inquiries related to pay or benefits should be immediately directed to Human Resources.
3. Ask for as much information as the family is comfortable giving, including any funeral services and whether individuals beyond the family will be able to attend.
4. Ask for permission for us to announce the death and when we can do so. Keep in mind that not all close family and friends may have been informed of the death. Employees may prematurely post sympathy messages on social media. The announcement should be informed by the family's timeline.
5. Be considerate of what information you share with others and do not share medical information if shared with you by the family. Do not share any information the family expressly prohibits.

**II. Informing Co-Workers Within the Department**

Where possible and practical, the announcement of an employee's death should be made in person and by the direct supervisor. An impromptu meeting should be held as soon as possible, ensuring that everyone is present. The tone should be direct and sympathetic, again, sharing only the information authorized by the family (no medical information should be shared). Information about funeral services can be provided, and space created to share remembrances about the employee. Employees can also be

made aware of counseling services available through the Employee Assistance Program. Unless it is essential, conversation about coverage of the employee's work responsibilities should be avoided during the meeting. If possible, allow employees the time to process the news before resuming the workday. Call employees who were not present at the meeting to advise them. If you cannot reach them by phone, it is best to send an email advising them to contact you.

### **III. Informing the College Community**

Within 24 hours of the departmental notification, prepare a formal statement regarding the employee including their length of tenure with the college, university, department, job title, and a summary of their duties and contributions. This can also include some favorite memories or impact the employee had on the college community. The **draft** statement must be sent to the Communications and College Relations Manager and to the Executive Director of Human Resources for review. HR will review to ensure that employee privacy considerations are addressed. Communications will finalize the announcement, ensuring its compliance with college communication guidelines. The final version is then forwarded to the Vice President, Institutional Advancement and Communications for approval and subsequent distribution to members of the campus community and to appropriate university officials where applicable.

### **IV. Operational Tasks (Active Employees)**

1. When appropriate, begin discussing reassignment of work responsibilities with staff. Arrangements can be made to gather the employee's personal belongings. Consider alerting the staff as to when this will take place, so that staff are aware. Contact HR as liaison for making arrangements with the family, as to how and when personal belongings will be retrieved.
2. The following separation tasks should be completed by the department with assistance from the Office of Information Technology
  - a. Manage employee voicemail and remaining phone calls, including re-recording the personal greeting.
  - b. In accordance with university policy, arrange to have email forwarded or to gain access to email to address outstanding items.
  - c. Where practicable, ensure that computer access to all applicable systems has been disabled.