Procedures for Handling the Death of a Faculty Member or Administrator

Notification:

- Assist the authorities in the identification and notification of family members
  - In consultation with the university senior administration and the Office of the Provost (Academic Units), the appropriate Dean, Director or Department Head should establish a university point of contact.
  - The police or coroner’s office should take the lead and work with the university point of contact on notification issues.
  - If information is needed to notify the next of kin, the university point of contact may contact Human Resources (during university business hours) or the Department of Public Safety & Security at (334) 750-9795 (outside of university business hours). Don’t assume you know the designated emergency contact. Check the records.
  - If no designated emergency contact is found through Human Resources, the university point of contact should contact the Auburn University Department of Public Safety & Security at (334) 750-9795. Their office may have other means available to locate emergency contact information.

- Notify family, peers and direct reports before news releases if at all possible
  - E-mail notification should be considered as the first means of communication to peers and direct reports.
  - Departments are encouraged to establish contact lists for family, peers and direct reports in advance. If possible the list should include office, home, cell and any other means of contact that are available.

- Prepare internal notifications (e.g. Auburn Daily)
  - Notify the Auburn University Department of Public Safety & Security/Emergency Management so that the deceased’s information can be removed from AU ALERT and other emergency notification lists.
  - If the death is work related, contact the Auburn University Department of Risk Management & Safety to ensure proper documentation of the incident.
  - The Auburn University Office of Communications & Marketing, in cooperation with the university point of contact (who is aware of the circumstances and is representing the University), should work together to create a notification that may be sent utilizing the different means of campus communications available to the Auburn University Office of Communications & Marketing.

- Prepare external notifications as appropriate
  - The Auburn University Office of Communications & Marketing, in cooperation with the university point of contact (who is aware of the circumstances and is representing the University), should work together to create a notification that may be sent utilizing the different means of external communications available to OCM.

- Notify Student Counseling Services (844-5123) if students are affected
Communications:

- **Phone and voice mail**
  - Consider designating an appropriate person to receive calls that are placed to the deceased’s university telephone number(s).
  - Replace the deceased’s voice mail message on university telephones. For example: “You have reached John Smith’s office. Dr. Smith will not be able to take your call please call xxxx for additional information or assistance.”

- **Computer**
  - Designate an appropriate person to create an out of office reply on the computer. For example: “Dr. Smith is not available. If you need assistance or would like additional information please contact (user name)@auburn.edu.”
  - Consider having OIT set up a forwarding rule on the deceased’s e-mail account so that e-mail messages can be monitored in a more timely manner. The Dean, Director or Department Head should determine who receives the forwarded e-mail messages.
  - Do not terminate the deceased’s e-mail account until approved to do so by the Dean, Director or Department Head. Unless there is a reason to vary from this procedure, do not terminate the e-mail account for a minimum of one month to allow the out of office reply feature to identify any issues and people who have not been notified.
  - Unless the deceased’s e-mails are already being forwarded to a designated person, the Dean, Director or Department Head should designate an appropriate person to review the e-mail queue and send personal messages to a designated family member, redirect administrative matters, and store work related information for archiving or further investigation within one week.

- **Internet issues**
  - Either remove the deceased’s photo and contact information from the departmental directory/website or consider placing a memoriam for a period of time designated by the Dean, Director or Department Head.
  - Evaluate the deceased’s web presence as it relates to Auburn University (personal Auburn University webpage, class page, research page, etc.). Develop a plan to transfer content to another designated person or consider removing all content from the internet.

- **Consistent message for the public/media releases**
  - In the case of a death that may have legal implications, the Office of Communications & Marketing under advisement from the Auburn University Office of the General Counsel should prepare a standard approved statement which should be utilized by personnel designated by the university administration.

- **Assist the family in the creation of an obituary for the deceased and encourage them to contact the Payroll and Employee Benefits Office**
  - The Auburn University Office of Communications & Marketing can provide assistance with creating the obituary.
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- If warranted, the obituary information should be communicated to the professional media and other professional organizations.
- Encourage the family to contact the Payroll and Employee Benefits Office (844-4183) to learn about benefits that may be available. Note: Payroll and Employee Benefits needs a death certificate before formally handling insurance proceeds, retirement contributions, etc.

Office/Research Space:

- Manage materials in the deceased’s office and establish ownership
  - An appropriate person should be designated by the Dean, Director or Department Head to check the deceased’s office for anything that should be secured or removed (valuables, food, etc.). This designated person should perform a preliminary check of the deceased’s office for personal property that may need to be turned over to the deceased’s family.
  - Contact the University Archivist and request assistance with the proper disposition of university records.
  - Work with the family for the removal of personal items. It is not a good practice to actually ask the family to “clean out the office.” Assist the family as needed.
- Manage materials in the deceased’s research space and establish ownership (if applicable)
  - An appropriate person should be designated by the Dean, Director or Department Head to check the deceased’s research space for anything that should be secured or removed (chemicals, valuables, etc.). This designated person should perform a preliminary check of the deceased’s research space for personal property that may need to be turned over to the deceased’s family.
  - Contact the University Archivist and request assistance with the proper disposition of university records.
  - Work with the family for the removal of personal items. It is not a good practice to actually ask the family to “clean out the office.” Assist the family as needed.
  - Contact the Auburn University Department of Risk Management & Safety for assistance with the proper disposition (transfer or disposal) of any chemical, biological and radiological materials.
- Sort and dispose of materials which are believed to be of no value or use to the university or family.

University owned items and equipment

- In advance, departments should establish an employee assigned equipment list for each employee to aid in the recovery of university assets upon separation from the university.
- Immediately cancel all of the deceased’s card access to university buildings.
- Immediately cancel the deceased’s purchasing card (if applicable).
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- Recover university owned items (cell phones, computers, keys, ID card, purchasing card, research equipment, etc) with respect for the family.

Memorial service

- Offer the university’s assistance to the family with the memorial service.
- Distribute information to campus as needed.
- Assist the Office of Communications & Marketing in communicating with the local and professional press and organizations.
- If outside professionals plan to attend the visitation and funeral, assign someone to assist with their arrangements (especially critical if non-U.S. visitors plan to attend).
- If the family doesn’t plan a local service or if otherwise appropriate, the Dean, Director or Department Head should assign a designated person to plan a local memorial service.
  - Establish a budget.
  - Determine a location.
  - Plan and implement the service(s) as needed.
  - Communicate the service(s) details to the campus as a whole as appropriate.