
JOHN A. LOGAN COLLEGE CRISIS COMMUNICATIONS PLAN



Introduction

The John A. Logan College Crisis Communications Plan provides procedures for the coordination of communications both internally and externally in the event of a crisis. The plan outlines the roles, responsibilities, and protocols to guide the College in sharing information with all JALC stakeholders during an emergency or crisis.

The crisis communication plan is part of the College's Emergency Operations Plan to manage the College's affairs during situations that threaten operations, the safety of the community, and/or the reputation of JALC. This document focuses on the communications aspect of potential crises.

This plan is not intended to change how emergencies are initially reported. All emergencies on campus should be reported immediately to Campus Police.

Guiding Principles

In all communications during a crisis, the College strives to be accessible, prompt, compassionate, honest, and informative. One of the most important requirements for effective communication during an urgent situation is gathering and understanding the facts and implications of a given situation and then providing accurate and consistent information to all parties concerned. Communications from the College must be honest and forthright. **It is crucial in a crisis to Tell it all, Tell it fast and Tell the truth.** Since a crisis may be sudden and without warning, this plan is designed to be flexible to accommodate contingencies of various types and magnitudes.

Operational Definition of Crisis

For this plan, the word **crisis** refers to:

A significant emergency, dangerous situation, or disturbance in the College's activities has the potential to have a significant impact on the College's operations and public image and which results in extensive news coverage and public scrutiny.

A crisis may fall into one of two categories for crisis communications at JALC.

Imminent Danger/Major Disruptions

Examples: natural disaster, active shooter/power outages, tornados, Winter Storm, Fire, Lockdown

Public Relations Crisis

Examples: the accusation of sexual assault, harassment, or other accusations, cheating, funding, enrollment, RIF, or layoffs.

A crisis includes serious threats to life, limb, and property, significant threats to the College's reputation, or severe threats of interruption to the college business.

A crisis may include but is not limited to: active shooter or hostage situations, weather, disease or other health threat, fire, natural disaster, violent crime, civil disturbance, sexual or physical assault, homicide, and the threat of danger. (The federal Clery Act provides the following examples of significant emergencies or dangerous situations: fire, an outbreak of a serious illness, earthquake, gas leak, terrorist incident, armed intruder, bomb threat, civil unrest or rioting, explosion, nearby chemical or hazardous waste spill.)

Initial Response

Many crises occur quickly, without notice, and may require an immediate communication, particularly to students, employees, and others on campus who are threatened or impacted by the crisis. The College utilizes text (JALC Text), email, website, Alertus, and social media. In an emergency, Campus Police, the President, or their designee will inform the Office of Marketing, Public Relations, and Communications.

Communications will be sent in the following order:

1. JALC Text (If the event disrupts campus activities and requires lockdown or shelter in place, the campus intercom system will be utilized).
2. Alertus
3. Website banner
4. Email to campus staff and student volmail

5. Social media update
6. Press Release to the media distribution list.

Responses will be based on whether the crisis involves a closer, suspension of operations, or lockdown. For example, a notification of an active shooter near campus will result in a message informing the campus community that College has been placed on lockdown. The report of an active shooter on campus will result in a message advising of an immediate threat to campus.

*****For training purposes, the College will have training exercises from time to time. Any message sent during a training exercise will clearly state that the message is ONLY TEST. Any communication that does not indicate that it is part of a test or training should be taken seriously.*****

Crisis Communications Team

In the event of a crisis, a core group of people will constitute the College's Crisis Communications Team:

Assistant Vice President for Marketing, Public Relations, and Communications – The AVP will be the liaison between the Crisis Communications Team and the President or their designee.

Assistant Provost for Student Affairs - The Assistant Provost for student affairs will be the liaison between Student Services and the Crisis Communications Team.

Assistant Provost for Academic Affairs – The Assistant Provost of Academic Affairs will be the liaison between Instruction and the Crisis Communications Team

Manager of Digital Communications – The Manager for Digital Communications will be responsible for online and digital media posts and be the backup for the Assistant VP for Marketing, Public Relations, and Communications.

Police Chief or Designee – Will provide the Crisis Communication Team with situational updates.

The team will develop a plan of action and oversee communications issues throughout the crisis. The team will assess the facts of the situation to determine the appropriate response/action and a plan of action for internal and external communications. Depending on the nature of the crisis, others can and should be drawn into the crisis communications process as appropriate to address the issues and threats that need to be managed.

Convening the Team

In the event of a crisis that falls under the category of **Imminent Danger/Major Disruptions**, the Crisis Communications Team will convene immediately upon notification of the situation on Microsoft Teams.

If a **Public Relations Crisis** should occur, the President is primarily responsible for convening the Crisis Communications Team. If the President is not available to make the convening decision, then the Provost, Vice President for Business Services/CFO, and Legal Counsel are. Any member of the Crisis Communications Team or the Cabinet may also, upon discovering a situation that they believe constitutes a crisis (as defined above), recommend to the President that they convene the Team.

Team Communications

All members of the Crisis Communications Team should have cell phones in their possession at all times.

Upon activation of the CCT, the Assistant Vice President for Marketing, Public Relations, and Communications will notify the Crisis Communications Team by text.

If it is feasible to do so (depending on the time of day or night and any physical limitations of the situation), the team should meet on Microsoft Teams. If it is not feasible to meet physically, the Team may be convened initially by telephone.

In the event of a major campus crisis or disaster, an Emergency Operations Center will be set up in the Mees Centre. In such a situation, this location will become the center of all information for the crisis; therefore, the Crisis Communications team should convene at the Mees Centre.

In a public relations crisis, the President will call the Assistant Vice President for Marketing, Public Relations, and Communications. Other individuals will be notified as needed. The Team will convene in the Administrative Conference Room.

Responding to the crisis

Among the duties of the Crisis Communications Team:

- Assess the facts of the crisis.
- Create a plan of action for both internal and external communications.
- Determine what and how messages will be communicated.
- Determine to whom messages will be communicated, both internally and externally.
Among the key constituencies:
 - Students
 - Faculty
 - Staff

- Parents of students
 - News media
 - Trustees
 - Public officials—Gov., Mayors, etc.
 - Community
 - General Public
- Determine how to react as the crisis evolves.
 - Keep the appropriate spokespeople informed of the latest developments and messages to be conveyed.

The Team will develop several key messages to be included in all communications. The messages will evolve as the crisis and circumstances change, and the statements must be communicated as quickly as possible and regularly updated.

College Spokespeople

The chief spokesperson in the event of a crisis will be a senior leader of the College, most likely the President, as well as the Assistant Vice President for Marketing, Public Relations, and Communications.

- In most situations, the Assistant Vice President for Marketing, Public Relations, and Communications will act as the chief spokesperson and the point person for news media communications during a crisis. They will organize and run press briefings and handle general media questions. Depending on the nature of the problem, the person possessing direct knowledge of the crisis (for example, The chief of police in the event of a campus crime) can also be designated as a spokesperson.
- In a time of a significant crisis, it is critical for a high-ranking leader of the College, such as the President, to take the lead in communicating key messages. Only a high-ranking leader such as the President can convey that a situation is under control, provide a sense of calm, and set an example for the entire campus.
- The release of information and comments to the news media and the public should be limited to the designated spokespeople. All other staff should be professional and helpful to the news media by connecting them with the spokespeople but should refrain from speaking to and providing any information, including posting updates to social media. Only official JALC social media accounts should be used to share information. As the crisis evolves, secondary spokespeople will likely need to be appointed.

Media Relations

Often the only information the public receives about an emergency is through the news media; therefore, media relations are essential to any crisis plan. Timing is critical, and responses *to a crisis must be issued as soon as possible and along as many communications channels as possible*. Remember that the news media is borderless and operates 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

The Crisis Communications Team will develop appropriate statements and other communications for the news media. The Team will also arrange and lead news conferences and media briefings. Keeping the news media informed gives the College a certain amount of control over the message. The media's job is to report the latest information available. If reporters don't get that information directly from the organization in crisis, they will look elsewhere and be more likely to report inaccurate facts and rumors. The location of news conferences and briefings may largely depend on the location and nature of the crisis. One location could be the Board of Trustees Meeting Room in the Administration Building. Ideally, however, the location should be away from the situation. The Mees Centre or Logan Fitness could be used, and the Conference Center rooms F188 and F119.

Communications Tools

Effective university crisis communications programs employ multiple and layered methods of communication with its constituencies, including students, employees, parents, alumni, trustees, and community members. In the event of a crisis, the Crisis Communications Team can deploy one or all these communications vehicles:

- **JALC Text Alert** allows the College to notify students and employees via text message and email.
- **Alertus** broadcasts emergency voice notifications on computer and TV screens and the campus intercom system.
- www.jalc.edu
- **Phone System** will include updated information and prerecorded messages.
- **Digital Signage** updates will be posted to digital signage on Greenbriar and campus display screens (TVs).
- **Social media.** Regular updates will be posted on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter, and other social media venues.

- **News media.** The Marketing, Public Relations, and Communications office has a detailed news media email list that would be utilized in the event of an emergency.

Awareness, Training, and Assessment

All members of the Crisis Communications Team and others on campus must be familiar with the details of this plan before a campus crisis. The team should also undergo regular training, including running simulations in the actual use of the plan's procedures and principles and training spokespeople in communicating with the media during crisis moments. Biannual simulation training should be provided.

Finally, the Crisis Communications Team should meet at least once after the emergency has subsided to assess the Colleges handling of the situation and to make future recommendations to streamline and improve its procedures and communications tools.

Procedures:

EMERGENCY NOTIFICATION

Notification to the JALC Community About an Immediate Threat

JALC will immediately notify the campus community upon confirmation of a significant emergency or dangerous situation involving an immediate threat to the health or safety of students or employees occurring on the campus. Examples of substantial emergencies or dangerous situations are active shooter, fire, an outbreak of a serious illness, approaching extreme weather condition (i.e., tornado), earthquake, gas leak, terrorist incident, armed intruder, bomb threat, civil unrest or rioting, explosion, nearby chemical or hazardous waste spill, nearby airplane crash, or nearby emergency that results in a lockdown of the campus.

Suppose a potential emergency or dangerous situation threatens the health or safety of some or all members of the JALC community. In that case, the Campus Police Department and the Office of Marketing Public Relations and Communications will notify the campus community immediately. These departments will, without delay and taking into account the safety of the community, determine the content of the notification and initiate the notification system unless issuing a statement will, in the judgment of the first responders (including, but not limited to, Campus Police, Illinois State Police, Williamson County Sheriffs Office, Carterville Police Department, or Carterville Fire Department), compromise the efforts to assist a victim or to contain, respond to, or otherwise mitigate the emergency.

JALC will use some or all of the systems described below to communicate the threat to the JALC community or the appropriate segment of the community if the threat is limited to a particular building or part of the population.

Some or all of the following notification methods will be used:

- **JALC Alert Text**- This will be the first method of communication. All updates will be sent through this platform first.
- **JALC homepage** – The center banner on the home page will be used to provide up-to-date information. In the event of a tragic event on campus, such as a shooting, or natural disaster that involves casualties, a secondary site will be used in place of the website to provide updates and contact information for other agencies and area hospitals.
- **Campus announcements on MYJALC and D2L.**
- **College social media**

Outside the campus, members of the larger community will receive information about a campus emergency via many of the methods listed above. In addition, the College will disseminate information via local news media (TV, radio, and newspaper).

Those responsible for carrying out the actions above include:

- Confirmation of an emergency: Campus Police, President's Office
- Content of message: Office of Marketing, Public Relations, and Communications.
- Initiation of the notification system: Alertus and intercom system will be initiated by the Campus Police Department. The Office of Marketing, Public Relations, and Communications will send texts and emails.

Best Practices for JALC Social Media

If you are aware of an emergency on campus, contact Campus Police), at 985-2828, Ext. 8218, or by email police@jalc.edu,

jalcpolice@jalc.edu and then the Marketing and Communications office 618-985-2828, Ext. 8569 or by email at steveokeefe@jalc.edu

Do not post about the situation on social media until official messaging is released from the College!

During an emergency on campus, official posts will be posted to:

1. Facebook (John A. Logan College)
2. Instagram (johnalogan)
3. Twitter (@JALCollege)

If you control a department or program social media page of the College, look for these posts and update your page(s) by directing your followers to any of these three accounts. ***Do not try to craft your message or retype the message on your own.***

In addition, during an emergency on campus, be sure to:

- Check to ensure that no content is scheduled to be posted on your JALC social media accounts until the end of the emergency. If the content is scheduled, delete it.
- Refrain from posting to your JALC social media sites after directing people to the official messaging/posts.
- **Refrain from engaging with followers during this time so that timelines do not get cluttered. This gives important updates more of a chance of being seen. Do not post about the situation in the comments section or on other pages. All responses should be made by the official sites only.**
- If you receive private messages on your JALC accounts, reply by referring the individual to the main College social media pages or the homepage.

Contact: Dr. Steve O’Keefe, Assistant Vice President for Marketing, Public Relations, and Communications, Ext. 8569 or steveokeefe@jalc.edu

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