



Communication Plan

I. General Communication Philosophy:

The ECU Foundation is committed to the highest level of transparency and accountability in all of its governance, operations, and communications. It continually seeks way to improve open communication about foundation matters with board leaders, university leaders, donors, the public, university advancement staff, and the ECU campus community.

II. Communications with the University (Operating Agreement with ECU):

The operating agreement between the ECU Foundation and East Carolina University specifies that the foundation will agree to these specific points of communication with university leaders:

4.1 The foundation will communicate with the university prior to accepting any gift that will impose an obligation on ECU or the State of North Carolina

4.3 The foundation will coordinate with the Division of University Advancement regarding funding goals, programs, and campaigns.

5.7 The foundation may not acquire debt in excess of five hundred thousand dollars before consulting with the Chancellor and Vice Chancellor for Administration and Finance, who will consult with the Vice President of Finance of the University of North Carolina.

7.2 The foundation will annually provide to the Chancellor and University Internal Auditor its annual audit report, management letters and responses, its IRS forms 990 and 990T, its annual operating budget, the names of all board members and officers, and the same information for any of its affiliated entities

7.3 The foundation agrees to provide any other reports or information on its financial status and to allow all of its books and records to be inspected and audited (for a legitimate reason), at the request of the Chancellor or the Chair of the ECU Board of Trustees.

9.0 The foundation will provide ECU with a copy of its Bylaws and will provide any propose amendments 15 days prior to the meeting at which they are to be considered.

III. Communications with Donors and the Public

The ECU Foundation is committed to the highest level of transparency and accountability in all of its actions and operations and communications. It openly communicates with donors and the public in a way that fulfills the objectives of its Donor Bill of Rights and its Public Information Policy. The foundation further demonstrates its commitment to transparency and accountability by providing on its website information about every aspect of its governance and operations and activities.

IV. Communications in a Critical Situation

A. The Definition of a Critical Situation

A critical situation is defined as any event or activity in the foundation that may have an adverse impact on the reputation of the foundation and/or the university.

Examples of a critical situation include but are not limited to:

- financial issues such as embezzlement or fraud
- misconduct from a staff member, director or major donor
- allegations that a donor's gift may have been misused
- violations of the foundation's conflict of interest policy

B. Communication Rules in a Critical Situation

The Cardinal Rule of communication in a critical situation is "TELL IT ALL, TELL IT FAST, and TELL THE TRUTH"

This means:

- Inform all internal partners
- Speak externally through one chief spokesperson (university's chief communication officer, foundation president, or their designee)
- Don't hold anything back, make everything possible public
- Focus on truthful disclosure and empathetic communication
- Stay on-the-record at all times
- Cooperate with the media
- Don't try to play down what happened
- Above all else, tell the truth

C. Internal Communication Plan, in a Critical Situation:

1. Communications with the Foundation Board of Directors:

In a critical situation, the Chair of the Foundation's Board of Directors and/or the Foundation President will communicate through conference calls with the foundation's executive committee and then with the full board of directors. Directors will be instructed that they are not to respond to questions or requests for information from the media or other outside parties.

2. Communications with University Leadership:

In a critical situation, the Chair of the Foundation's Board of Directors and/or the Foundation President will communicate with the Vice Chancellor for University Advancement and the Vice Chancellor for Administration and Finance, who will in turn communicate with the Chancellor of the university, the Chair of the ECU Board of Trustees, and the Chief Communications Officer and Director of University Communications.

3. Communications with University Advancement Staff

In a critical situation, the Vice Chancellor of University Advancement will communicate with all employees who are University Advancement staff. Staff will be instructed that they are not to respond to questions or requests from the media or other outside parties and to direct all questions to the Chief Communications Officer and Director of University Communications or their designee.

D. External Communication Plan, in a Critical Situation:

1. Communication Team:

In a critical situation all external communications will be coordinated by a team comprised of the Chair of the ECU Foundation Board of Directors, the Foundation President, the Vice Chancellor for University Advancement, the Vice Chancellor for Administration and Finance, the Chancellor, the Chair of the ECU Board of Trustees, the Chief Communications Officer and Director of University Communications, and the Strategic Initiative and Campaign Manager for University Advancement.

2. Key Audiences for External Communications:

There are a number of different publics served by the foundation and the university and they must all be considered in a communication plan during a critical situation. They include alumni and donors, university leaders and employees, leaders of the UNC System, the local community, and the general public.

3. Public Spokesperson:

In a critical situation, the only public spokesperson for the ECU Foundation will be the Chief Communications Officer and Director of University Communications. This person will represent the foundation and the university, make official statements, and answer media questions during the crisis.

All media questions, all requests for information, and all responses should be

“funneled” through and coordinated by the public spokesperson or their designee.

Prepared by a Subcommittee of the Governance Committee.

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Approved by:

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Chancellor’s Executive Council, February 14, 2011