

Purpose and Definition

The purpose of this policy is to establish procedures for the University's response to reports of missing students, as required by the Higher Education Opportunity Act of 2008.

This policy applies to all currently enrolled students.

For purposes of this policy, a student may be considered to be a "*missing person*" if the person's absence is contrary to his/her usual pattern of behavior and unusual circumstances may have caused the absence. Such circumstances could include, but not be limited to, a report or suspicion that the missing person may be the victim of foul play, has expressed suicidal thoughts, is drug dependent, is in a life-threatening situation, or has been with persons who may endanger the student's welfare.

Missing/Runaway Person(s)

If a member of the University has reason to believe that a student is missing, all possible efforts are made to locate the student to determine his or her state of health and well-being through the collaboration of the Dean. The receiving department will conduct a preliminary investigation in order to verify the complaint and to determine the circumstances which exist relating to the reported missing student. If the student's absence is verified, the incident will be reported and shared between departments. Both departments will continue the investigation to locate the missing student. The Office of Academic Affairs will also informally enlist the aid of the neighboring police agency having jurisdiction. Concurrently, University officials will endeavor to determine the student's whereabouts through contact with friends, associates, and/or employers of the student. Whether or not the student has been attending classes, labs, clinical/preceptorships, and scheduled organizational or academic meetings; or appearing for scheduled work shifts will be established.

If located, verification of the student's state of health and intention of returning to the campus is made. When and where appropriate a referral will be made to WellConnect student services.

If not located, notification of the family within 24 hours of receiving the initial report is made to determine if they know of the whereabouts of the student. Such notification will be made by the Dean or someone from the Office of Academic Affairs. In addition, appropriate family members or associates are encouraged to make an official missing person report to the law enforcement agency with jurisdiction. The Office of Academic Affairs will cooperate, aid, and assist the primary investigative agency in all ways prescribed by law. The Office Academic Affairs will open an official investigation and retain status as the primary investigative unit until relieved by a local police agency.

All pertinent law enforcement agencies, be they neighboring municipal, county, or stat; those located along suspected travel corridors; or place of original domicile, will be notified and requested to render assistance.

The gathering of information regarding the missing person will include, but may not be limited to: name, gender, race, date of birth, height, weight, eye color, hair color/length, date/time of last contact, photo availability, possible medicinal usage, address, phone number, S.S. #, full information of vehicle the individual may be operating, names/address/phone number(s)/description(s) of person(s) missing individual may be with.

The following criteria may warrant immediate notification to the local Police Department:

1. The person reported missing is under proven physical/mental disability; thereby subjecting him/herself, or others to personal and/or immediate danger.
2. The person reported missing is/was in the company of another person under circumstances indicating his/her physical safety is in danger.
3. The person reported missing is missing under circumstances indicating the disappearance was not voluntary.

"Suzanne's Law" requiring local police to notify the National Crime Information Center (NCIC) when someone between 18 and 21 is reported missing was signed into law by President George W. Bush in the Spring of 2003 as part of the national "Amber Alert" Bill. The federal law is named after Suzanne Lyall, a State University of New York at Albany student who has been missing since 1998.

Previously police were only required to report missing persons under the age of 18. This new law is intended to encourage police to begin investigating immediately when college-age people disappear, instead of waiting a day, which has been a common practice.

Upon closure of the missing person investigation, all parties previously contacted will be advised of the status of the case.

In accordance with the Higher Education Act of 2008, all students may register a confidential contact with the Office of the Registrar. The confidential contact does not have to be a parent of a student. This is the individual who will be contacted by police in the event the student is reported missing. This individual will be updated as to the progress of the investigation into the missing person. In the event a student is under 18 years of age, and has not been legally emancipated, the student's parents will also be contacted.

A student can be reported missing at any time. The Office of Academic Affairs will conduct a thorough investigation into all missing persons reports immediately. The University will also enlist the assistance of the local Police Department and other appropriate law enforcement agencies to locate the missing person.

The University all new students during the enrollment process to provide, on a voluntary basis, emergency contact information in the event of an emergency involving the student during his/her tenure at the University.

If a student is suspected missing from the campus, immediately contact the Office of Academic Affairs and the local authorities.

Office of the Dean

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All reports of missing persons made to the University are followed up with an on-going investigation. If it is determined by the University that a student for whom a missing person report has been filed has been missing for more than 24 hours, then within the next 24 hours the University will:

- Notify the individual identified by the student as the missing contact
- If the student is under 18 years old, the University will notify a parent or guardian
- In cases where the student is over 18 and has not identified a person to be contacted, the University will notify appropriate law enforcement officials