

## **Death in the Campus Community**

One of the important touchstones for creating community involves establishing guidelines for use on the occasion of the death of a student or a member of the faculty or staff. The university needs to provide caring leadership when a member of the community dies.

When the office of campus life learns of the death of a member of the AU community, the dean of students or vice president of campus life will immediately notify the university chaplain. The university chaplain will initiate steps to assist the larger community in coping with the loss.

### **Community Notification**

#### **Student Death**

In the event of a student death, the dean of students will notify the student's family and will inform the university chaplain.

#### **Faculty/Staff Death**

The university chaplain will convey news of faculty and staff deaths to the dean of academic affairs and the executive director of human resources, respectively. The chaplain's staff will then inform the campus community of the death through the following contacts:

- Media relations (x5950), in case there is media interest in the death.
- All contributing faith chaplains.
- Marquee at the entrance to Kay Spiritual Center to notify the campus of the death.
- If the deceased is an international student, the international student services office (x3350) will be consulted about providing assistance to the deceased student's family and the international student campus community.
- Provide AU Publications department (x5970) and *The Eagle* (x1400) with an advance copy of the printed announcement to the community.
- The development office (x5900) and a staff contact designated in the event that family and friends of the deceased wish to make gifts to the university in the person's memory.

Public safety will be asked to adjust the AU flag to half-mast for 48 hours following notification of a death.

### **Memorial Service**

The university chaplain or an appropriate contributing faith chaplain will consult with the family of the deceased to ascertain whether it is all right to proceed with a campus memorial service, and if so, what role the family may wish to have in planning and participating in the service. If the family has no objection to the campus service, but chooses not to participate or attend, the chaplain will organize a memorial service consistent with the needs of individuals and campus groups affected by the loss.

#### **Student/Staff Death**

As soon as information has been gathered on a deceased student or staff member and plans for a memorial service are firm, the chaplain will draft a formal announcement to the university community to be signed by the president (or other appropriate university official). The president's staff will fax advanced copies of the announcement to the telecommunications billboard (FAX x2016), University Publications (FAX x5949) and *The Eagle* (FAX x1428).

## **Counseling Service**

### Psychological Support

The chaplain will work with the counseling center to insure that all affected parties and groups know about the availability of counseling services provided by the university. Counseling may be provided to individuals or groups. The counseling staff suggests placing the following notice in Kay memorial service programs, in the Kay newsletter and other descriptive material, in the *Student Handbook*, and in policy manuals or other guides on AU's response to the deaths of community members:

*American University offers counseling and support to members of the community experiencing bereavement and grief. If you wish to talk to a counselor, please call 885-3500 to arrange for an appointment. A support group, "Living with Death," is also offered each semester. Please contact the counseling center, Mary Graydon Center 214.*

### Spiritual Counseling

The chaplain's staff will use internal communication means to remind the campus community that contributing faith community chaplains are available for spiritual counseling.

## **Death of an AU Executive**

In the event of the death of an AU executive, the university will need to inform internal and external audiences of this matter ensuring them that other executives and capable, experienced staff will provide stable interim management. This will be accomplished in the following manner:

- As soon as possible, informing AU staff/students about the death and circumstances.
- Presenting information to staff/students about who will assume duties on an interim basis.
- Informing AU staff/students about funeral/memorial services.
- Informing the media about the death and AU plans to move forward.
- Providing opportunities for AU staff and students to grieve and share.

### Communication Steps

The president, appropriate vice president or provost will notify the immediate family of the death and circumstances, and will provide appropriate assistance. He or she will then notify the campus community of the death as quickly as possible through voice mail, memo, e-mail and the AU website providing as much information as possible.

The chief-of-staff and the media relations office will work together to notify *The Eagle*, University Publications, local, national and international media.

The president, appropriate vice president or provost will ask public safety to adjust the flags to half-mast for 48 hours following notification of the death.

The chief-of-staff will notify the development office and a staff contact will be designated in the event that family and friends wish to make gifts to the university in memory of the deceased.