DIVISION OF STUDENT AFFAIRS
MISSING STUDENT NOTIFICATION POLICY AND PROCEDURES

SECTION I: INTRODUCTION

Effective August 14, 2008, the Higher Education Opportunity Act of 2008 requires any institution participating in a Title IV federal student financial aid program that maintains on campus housing facilities to establish a missing student notification policy and related procedures (20 USC 1092 (j) Section 488 of the Higher Education Opportunity Act of 2008.)

As described in the Higher Education Opportunity Act of 2008, the Penn State policy related to a missing student is to do the following:

1. In accordance with general emergency institutional notification procedures, inform each student that he/she has the option to identify another individual to be contacted by Penn State not later than 24 hours after the time that Penn State staff determines the student to be missing;
2. Provide each student with the means and opportunity to register his/her confidential emergency contact information that is accessible to staff in the event the student is determined to be missing for a period of more than 24 hours;
3. Notify each student who is under 18 years of age, and not an emancipated individual, that Penn State is required to contact his/her listed emergency contact person or a parent or guardian no later than 24 hours after the time that the student is determined to be missing;
4. In accordance with Penn State procedures, inform each residential student that Penn State will notify the appropriate campus law enforcement agency or campus security department no later than 24 hours after the time that the student is determined missing, and;
5. If the campus law enforcement personnel or campus security department has been notified, and makes a determination that a student who is the subject of a missing person report has been missing for more than 24 hours, require Penn State staff to initiate the emergency contact procedures as outlined in Penn States protocol.

As described in the Higher Education Opportunity Act of 2008, Penn State’s investigative procedures related to our missing student policy do the following:

1. Includes communication procedures for official notification of appropriate individuals at Penn State that a student has been missing for more than 24 hours;
2. Requires any official missing person report relating to a Penn State student to be referred immediately to the campus police or campus security department and;
3. If through investigation of an official report, the Penn State police or campus security department determines a student has been missing for more than 24 hours, they will:
   a. Contact those individuals listed in the Penn State student’s confidential emergency contact information named by the student;
   b. If a student is under 18 years of age, and not an emancipated individual, Penn State will immediately contact the custodial parent(s) or legal guardian(s) of the student and;
   c. If (a) or (b) do not apply to a student determined to be a missing person, inform the appropriate law enforcement agency of findings.
SECTION II: POLICY ON A MISSING STUDENT REPORT

If a member of the Pennsylvania State University community has reason to believe that a student is missing, all possible resources and efforts will be made to immediately locate the student to determine his or her state of health and well-being.

The Higher Education Opportunity Act of 2008 (HEOA) requires institutions participating in a Title IV federal student financial aid program, and maintain on campus housing facilities, to establish effective missing student notification policy and procedures. Although HEOA requires this policy be established for residential campuses, within legal limitations, this protocol may also be applied to Penn State non-residential campuses within the boundaries of those campus communities. Although campus police or a security department does not have the primary responsibility to investigate a missing student incident involving a student living off campus, certain protocols within this policy may be applied to certain situations involving non-residential students. For example, we would expect that University staff and campus police would assist local authorities in their investigation of an off-campus Penn State student.

For purposes of this policy, a student is defined as missing once the campus police or security department is notified and initiate a formal missing person investigation. It is the policy of Penn State University to actively investigate any report submitted that describes a missing student incident. The University defines a student to be any person enrolled in any class or program of the University, full or part time. Depending upon a student's academic and residential status (e.g., living on or off campus, study abroad, world campus, full time or part time, etc.), University staff's role in the missing student investigation may vary.

Effort to locate the student will be directed through collaboration of the Division of Student Affairs, campus police or security department, local authorities, and friends and family members of the missing student. When information is received by the University regarding a missing student, there will be no waiting period before an investigation is initiated. All investigative procedures will be governed by Student Affairs policy and procedures and federal, state, and local law.

Formal police investigations and community notifications will typically take place after the initial staff investigation on the whereabouts of the student. Initial staff investigations, prior to any formal police investigation, will include a thorough review of the student’s recent activity on campus which may include, but not be limited to questioning the student’s roommates and friends, visiting the student's room or apartment and a review of the student's recent use of his/her ID card. If not located within 24 hours, the Assistant Vice President for Student Affairs or the senior Student Affairs administrator at the campus will be notified (if not before), and in collaboration with the police, will contact the person(s) listed on the student's Emergency Contact page or the student's parent or guardian to inquire about his/her whereabouts and/or alert that person that his/her child may be missing. Once this occurs, a University official, family member, or other appropriate person will make an official missing person report to the law enforcement agency within jurisdiction.

SECTION III: CAMPUS PROCEDURES; RESPONDING TO A MISSING STUDENT REPORT

Investigative Considerations

Recognizing that each circumstance will be different, there are general questions and considerations that may be helpful to answer and review as an investigation continues:
1. When and where was the student last seen and by whom? Have we interviewed that person(s). Is the student missing from campus, family residence, or another location, etc?
2. Do we have updated information related to parents, family members, roommates, friends and acquaintances?
3. Does the student live alone? If not, has anyone spoken to the roommates?
4. Have we initiated outreach communications with the student, family, and friends (i.e. phone calls, emails, etc.)?
5. What are the student’s class and work schedules and when was the last time he/she attended these commitments?
6. Have we visited the student’s classes and spoken to the faculty and classmates?
7. What are some of the places the student most frequents? Have we spoken to anyone at those locations?
8. Is there information that leads others to believe that this behavior is normal or out of the ordinary for the student? Has the student been reported missing before?
9. Is there information that might lead us to believe the student is despondent or struggling with mental health issues? Do we know if the student has been receiving personal counseling?
10. Does the student have a known substance abuse problem?
11. What is the student’s academic status? Is the student experiencing academic or financial problems?
12. Does the student have a criminal or conduct record? If so, do those records suggest any pattern of behavior that may be helpful?
13. Do we know if the student has received any threats? Is there a witness to or evidence of abduction or other foul play?
14. Have we examined the pattern of activity on the student’s access and credit cards? When was the last time he/she used the ID card and credit cards to enter a building or purchase goods?
15. Does the student have a cell phone and do we know who the provider is? Have we initiated the tracking device on the phone?
16. Have we contacted Security Operations and Services (SOS) to gather information related to the student’s University access account and network and on-line activity?

**Initial Response**

The first step in the process will be for staff to seek information related to the circumstances around the missing person allegation and then inform the campus police or security department. Typically, the initial response will be coordinated by staff in Residence Life, other Student Affairs staff, and the campus police or security department. At this early stage in the investigation the designated Assistant Vice President for Student Affairs at University Park or the senior Student Affairs administrator at the campus may or may not be alerted.

Staff should document the situation and create a factual written report while obtaining as many details as possible from persons reporting the incident. Once the student is declared missing (as previously defined in Section II) staff will alert the designated Assistant Vice President for Student Affairs at University Park or the senior Student Affairs administrator at the campus.

While speaking with persons who reported the disappearance, staff should verify the accuracy of information previously provided. Once facts are documented, the written report and all other information available will be made directly to the police and eventually, to the designated Assistant Vice President for Student Affairs at University Park or the senior Student Affairs administrator at the campus.
Understanding that in these types of incidents time is critical, the creation of a written report by Student Affairs staff should not deter them from verbally sharing important information with the campus police or security department.

The designated Assistant Vice President for Student Affairs at University Park or the senior Student Affairs administrator at the campus will be responsible for alerting the appropriate University officials of the missing student situation.

Investigations

As stated above, although the formal investigation of a missing student is the responsibility of the police, University staff will have a role in supporting the police investigation by providing valuable report information to them. While creating a written report University staff should only record pertinent facts and not include speculative information.

The campus police, who are the investigative body, will decide when to dispatch officers to conduct a formal investigation.

The responding officers will be apprised by staff of all information and the police will obtain a photograph of the student. Unless special circumstances apply, the student’s photograph will be obtained from the campus ID office. Securing the student’s photo ID will require the designated Assistant Vice President for Student Affairs at University Park or the senior Student Affairs administrator at the campus to request in writing (through Email) a copy of the photo ID from the Manager of the ID Office and Director of Information Systems for Auxiliary and Business Services. The Director of Information Systems for Auxiliary and Business Services or the Manager of the ID Office will send an electronic copy of the photo ID to the Assistant Vice President for Student Affairs at University Park or the senior Student Affairs administrator at the campus, who will forward a copy of the photo ID to the campus police.

Staff will work with the police to obtain from friends or acquaintances, any notes, records, recordings of telephone communications, etc., pertaining to the student. As University protocol would require the campus police or security department will be present with the Student Affairs staff when they search the missing student’s room. The search will be initiated to obtain academic, housing, foods service, and general student record information that will help support the police in their efforts to locate the missing student. At different points in the investigation, the police may invite other individuals or authorities into the student search process (i.e. canine-aided search teams, air patrols, etc.)

As required, the Assistant Vice President for Student Affairs and the Director of Student Affairs at the campus will act as the Student Affairs liaison with the police, University offices, and the Colleges, concerning missing student incidents. The designated Assistant Vice President for Student Affairs at University Park or the senior Student Affairs administrator at the campus may also aid the police in the coordination of meetings or certain communications to be established during the missing student search process.

Communication

The campus police or a security department will keep the designated Assistant Vice President for Student Affairs at University Park or the senior Student Affairs administrator at the campus apprised of the investigation as it continues. As the investigation progresses, the designated Assistant Vice President for Student Affairs at University Park or the senior Student Affairs administrator at the campus will ensure that pertinent details are appropriately relayed to staff
and will make notifications to supervisors and the University administration in accordance with established policies and procedures.

In accordance with Policy SY03, the designated Assistant Vice President for Student Affairs at University Park or the senior Student Affairs administrator at the campus will also act as a liaison to the family. Through this role, the designated Assistant Vice President for Student Affairs at University Park or the senior Student Affairs administrator at the campus will coordinate on-going communication with the family and friends of the missing student and help to provide additional support services that may be needed.

In the case of a missing student, multiple offices and academic units may be notified by the designated Assistant Vice President for Student Affairs at University Park or the senior Student Affairs administrator at the campus. Notification of a missing student may include, but not be limited to the following:

- Chancellors; Campuses
- Deans; Academic Colleges
- Directors of Academic Affairs; Campuses
- Directors of Student Affairs; Campuses
- Graduate School; Senior Vice President for Research and Dean of the Graduate School
- Housing and Food Services; Associate Vice President for Business and Auxiliary Services and Senior Director for Housing and Food Services for the Commonwealth Campuses
- International Programs Office; Director
- Office of the Bursar
- Office of the President; Vice President for Administration
- Office of the Registrar
- Office of Student Aid
- Office of Vice President for Student Affairs; Vice President, Associate Vice President, Assistant Vice President, Senior Directors and Directors
- University Relations; Vice President for University Relations, Director of Public Information, News Bureau Manager and News Bureau Manager for Public Information

The designated Assistant Vice President for Student Affairs at University Park or the senior Student Affairs administrator at the campus work with the campus police or security department and the Public Information Office to coordinate messages to the campus community ensuring that pertinent details are accurately prepared, updated, and disseminated through informational bulletins and notices.