



WINTHROP
UNIVERSITY

Crisis Communication Plan: Campus Fire

1. Situation Analysis

As we arrive at the scene a fire truck and 3 police cars are parked around the perimeter of Thomson cafeteria. Students have been evacuated and are standing outside surrounding the building. Police are speaking with students to find out what went on before during and after the incident. Police are speaking to students in the crowd gathering evidence to find out who else was involved in the altercation. The smell of smoke is coming from the building, firefighters dressed in uniforms are assessing the area to make sure there aren't other hazards. The dean of students, and RLC of Thomson are on the scene to manage students and make sure that everything is going smoothly. The night is clear and many students are talking to each other loudly about the incident and what they perceive happened.

2. Facts

- a. A fight ensued in Thompson cafeteria involving 5 males, one of which was not a Winthrop student
- b. A student was injured and taken to Piedmont Hospital to be treated
- c. Police have some of the students in custody who were involved in the altercation
- d. There was a fire in a trash can in Thompson cafeteria
- e. A 911 call was placed to report the fire

3. Speculation

- a. The fight was racially motivated or involved animosity regarding Greek life
- b. There were weapons involved in the fight (a knife)
- c. A star basketball player was seriously injured during the incident.
- d. The fire started before the fight
- e. The fire was started by fraternity pledges

4. Audiences

- a. Primary
 - i. Students: Students are impacted by the situation, as it happened on campus. They may be concerned that it may happen again. They may fear for their safety as a student was injured. If they feel like the university is not handling the situation, they could rebel by boycotting classes or vandalizing campus property, creating an even worse situation.
- b. Secondary:
 - i. Parents: parents fear for their child safety. We need to reassure them and show them the situation is under control so they don't do a bad publicity of the

University. If they are not reassured right away, there is also a chance that they call us. If every parents call at the same time, the call center will be overwhelmed. Plus, the call center is not an expert on this kind of situation and could have different speeches so it is better that the PR department handle the issue fast.

- ii. Community: community is concerned as well because they live around campus. They can be afraid of running into the persons involved in the fight and could share their concern to local media. Also, parents who have children in age close to go to the University need to be reassured so they won't be afraid to send their child at Winthrop.

5. Key messages

- Safety: Our first and primary focus is accountability. We are making sure that every student and staff has been accounted for and are in a stable condition. We have contacted parents of students to notify them that the situation has been contained. The surrounding community of Rock Hill has police on watch for the perpetrators.
- University Morals: The claim that the fight was racially motivated is complete speculation - Winthrop has a zero tolerance for issues regarding racism and other prejudice behavior very seriously. Respect for all campus members regardless of racial, sexual, religious, or ethnic orientation is policy.
- Prevention: The Winthrop University Campus Police Department is fully functional and capable of handling any criminal investigation. Before going on patrol, our officers are sent to the South Carolina Criminal Justice Academy for an intense ten weeks of Basic Law Enforcement Training. After completing Basic Training, our officers are then put through several weeks of field training on campus. All of our officers are appointed by the Governor of South Carolina as State Constables giving them state-wide powers of arrest. Our department is open 24 hours a day, seven days a week to provide law enforcement services to the campus community. We utilize a range of support staff that includes telecommunicators, administrative specialists, a victim witness advocate, parking enforcement officers, as well as student employees. An investigation is currently in place to determine all the facts which lead to both the fire and the fight. The University is implementing a thorough campus police patrol system of all common areas until this matter is resolved.

6. Events such as this are never pleasant, but they must be handled accordingly. The officials of Winthrop University and Rock Hill have taken control of the situation, and the primary focus remains the safety on our campus. Winthrop University would like to reiterate their policy on violence in the moving forward from this event: "All students and employees must abide by local, state, and federal laws and with all published University policies and regulations. Violations of laws and regulations will subject the charged student to disciplinary action by the University and/or the appropriate civil or criminal court." We will assure that all parties involved are held responsible for their infractions.

Our next focus will be making sure that we are doing everything in our power to prevent this from happening again. We hope that students understand the importance of abiding by the rules and regulations of our campus, and in result, limits or prevents this type of event from occurring again.

Winthrop University is a place of higher education where our purposes are to live, learn, and lead, which cannot be done without a respectful environment. We do our best at all times to keep such policies at the forefront of our existence. Lastly, our university morals must be emphasized and it must be understood that this type of action has zero tolerance.

Questions:

1. Cynthia Cassens, director of resident life
 - a. If there was a knife involved why were there no security measures taken?
 - b. How is one of the persons involved not a winthrop student? How safe is it that anyone can enter into the cafeteria without being accounted for as a student?
2. Frank Zebedis, director of campus police
 - a. How will you and your staff monitor this from happening again?
 - b. Are things like this common at the university?
3. Thomas Hickman, director of athletics
 - a. It is reported that one of the student involved was one of your star players, have you confirmed this?
 - b. How will you make an example of this to the rest of your team?
4. Dr. Daniel F. Mahoney, president of office
 - a. What would you say on behalf of the university?