

## **Policy 1315**

### **Notification Regarding Death**

**Date of Current Revision:** May 2025

**Responsible Officer:** Vice President and Chief of Staff

#### **1. PURPOSE**

This policy provides for the proper notification to the university community regarding the death of a member of the university community. It will facilitate an appropriate response and record the information in university databases.

#### **2. AUTHORITY**

The Board of Visitors has been authorized by the Commonwealth of Virginia to govern James Madison University. See Code of Virginia § 23.1-1600; § 23.1-1301. The Board has delegated the authority to manage the university to the president.

#### **3. DEFINITIONS**

##### **Division Head**

The president, vice president and/or director of athletics.

##### **Student**

Any person who enrolls or takes courses at the university, either full-time, part-time, dual-enrolled, and/or non-degree seeking. Student status begins at the payment or waiver of the deposit for admission or at the payment of the application fee for admission to classes or programs through the School of Professional and Continuing Education (SPCE). Student status continues through the verification of the completion of all academic requirements for a declared degree program(s) or the completion of classes or programs through SPCE, and continues through the completion of any pending conduct process. For purposes of this policy, student status includes a student who has withdrawn from the university but is within the two-year window to be able to return without needing to re-apply.

##### **Employee**

Any person currently employed by James Madison University in any capacity.

#### **4. APPLICABILITY**

This policy applies to students and employees.

#### **5. POLICY**

The university wishes to respond appropriately when notified of the death of a member of the university community. When a division head or the chief of staff to the president is notified that a member of the James Madison University community has died, the university will follow a specific set of procedures for the appropriate response.

## **6. PROCEDURES**

### **6.1 Initial Notification**

A member of the university community who learns of the death of a member of the university community should notify the following offices according to the connection between the university and the decedent:

- Current employee: VP/chief of staff, chief of police and Human Resources
- Current student: JMU Police and vice president of Student Affairs

### **6.2 Information Verification and Next-of-Kin Condolences and Preference**

The administrator notified pursuant to section 6.1 or their designee shall seek to obtain confirmation of the reported death from a reliable source through appropriate measures. This verification may be obtained from an appropriate law enforcement officer, known next-of-kin, obituary or other appropriate reliable source. The administrator or designee should take all reasonable precautions to not be the first contact to the next-of-kin, lest the person not be aware of the reported death.

If the death occurs on campus or in the immediate area, the chief of police or designee will provide the university's formal condolences to the next-of-kin and learn their preference for communications by the university regarding the decedent. Preferences include future communications with next-of-kin; breadth of the university's communication of news of the decedent's death to the university community; what information they would prefer to be included and excluded from the notification.

### **6.3 Administrative Notification**

As soon as the information and identity has been confirmed or verified, the administrator notified pursuant to section 6.1 or their designee notifies:

- the most appropriate division head
- the President's Office
- Chief of Staff
- University Communications
- all other division heads.

Each division head or designee shall be responsible for notifying the areas within their division listed in the chart below in order to maintain the accuracy of the university's internal records.

If the deceased is a:	Division head or designee notifies:
Student	University Registrar Dean of Students academic unit head academic advisor current instructors Advancement Information Services
Current employee or affiliate	Human Resources Advancement Information Services
International student or employee	Center for Global Engagement ISSS (in addition to appropriate list above)

#### **6.4 University Community Notification**

The spokesperson (or designee) will coordinate, in partnership with the appropriate office, a notice to be sent to faculty, staff and students. Depending upon the circumstances of the death, the spokesperson will be the primary point of contact for additional statements or press releases to external audiences. These messages will be distributed after receiving agreement from the decedent's family or next of kin.

If there is a law enforcement investigation surrounding the death, and the identity has not been confirmed by law enforcement, University Communications coordinates with that agency before a university message is sent.

#### **6.5 University Presence at Memorial Services**

To facilitate the university's response to the death, the president's office will communicate with units and departments, as appropriate, for attendance at the funeral or memorial service, correspondence with the family and other appropriate responses. The respective division head and chief of staff to the president may also be involved in the coordination of a campus memorial service. Individual divisions, departments and offices will coordinate their individual responses and participation as appropriate and will follow university policies.

### **7. RESPONSIBILITIES**

All departments, offices and employees that generate, receive or maintain public records under the terms of this policy are also responsible for compliance with [Policy 1109](#) - Records Management.

### **8. SANCTIONS**

Sanctions will be commensurate with the severity and/or frequency of the offense and may include termination of employment for employees, expulsion from the university for students, removal of affiliate status for affiliates and loss of privileges and/or no trespass orders for any individual.

## **9. EXCLUSIONS**

None.

## **10. INTERPRETATION**

The authority to interpret this policy rests with the president and is generally delegated to the chief of staff.

**Previous version:** May 2024

**Approved by the president:** August 2003