

Missing Student Policy

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

This policy applies to students who reside in campus housing, including off-campus apartment units leased by the college for student residents.

For purposes of this policy, a student may be considered to be a "*missing student*" if the student'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.

I. Procedures for designation of confidential emergency contact information

Students will be given the opportunity during each semester registration process to designate an individual or individuals to be contacted by the college no more than 24 hours after the time that the student is determined to be missing in accordance with the procedures set forth below. A designation will remain in effect until changed or revoked by the student. This information will be maintained confidentially and will be available only to the Office of Public Safety and the Vice President and Dean of Students, or her designee.

In the event a student who is under the age of 18 and is not emancipated is determined to be missing pursuant to the procedures set forth below, the college is required to notify a custodial parent or guardian, in addition to the student's designated contact, no more than 24 hours after the student is determined to be missing in accordance with the procedures set forth below.

II. Official notification procedures for missing students

- a. Any individual on campus who has information that a residential student may be a missing student must notify the Office of Public Safety as soon as possible and in no event, later than 24 hours after determining that the student is missing

Note: In order to avoid jurisdictional conflicts when an off-campus and/or commuter student is believed to be missing, the reporting person should immediately notify local law enforcement authorities. The Office of Public Safety will assist external authorities with these investigations as requested.

- b. The Office of Public Safety will gather all essential information about the residential student from the reporting person and from the student's acquaintances

(description, clothes last worn, where student might be, who student might be with, vehicle description, information about the physical and mental well being of the student, an up-to-date photograph, class schedule, etc.). Appropriate campus staff will be notified to aid in the search for the student.

If the above actions are unsuccessful in locating the student or it is apparent immediately that the student is a missing person (e.g., witnessed abduction), no later than 24 hours after the Office of Public Safety determines that a residential student is missing:

- i. the Office of Public Safety will contact the appropriate local law enforcement agency to report the student as a missing person and the local law enforcement agency will take charge of the investigation; and
- ii. the Dean of Students will notify the emergency contact (for students 18 and over) or the emergency contact and the parent/guardian (for students under the age of 18) that the student is believed to be missing.

III. Campus communications about missing students

In cases involving missing students, law enforcement personnel are best situated to provide information to the media that is designed to elicit public assistance in the search for a missing student. Therefore, all communications regarding missing students will be handled by outside law enforcement authorities, who may consult with the college's Office of Communications. All inquiries to the college regarding missing students, or information provided to any individual at the college about a missing student, shall be referred to the Office of Public Safety, who shall refer such inquiries and information to law enforcement authorities.

Prior to providing the Goucher community with any information about a missing student, the Office of Communications shall consult with the Office of Public Safety and with local law enforcement authorities to ensure that communications do not hinder the investigation.

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