

Missing Student Policy and Procedures

I. PURPOSE

The purpose of the 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.

II. SCOPE

The policy applies to students who reside in campus housing, including those living in off-campus apartment units leased by the College for student residents. The policy also applies to any students, faculty, and staff who may have information about a potential missing student. It also applies to college staff responsible for following the procedures set forth below, including Campus Safety staff and the Vice President and Dean of Students.

III. DEFINITION

For purposes of the policy, a student is considered missing if the student's absence is contrary to their usual pattern of behavior and unusual circumstances may have caused the absence. Such circumstances could include, but are not limited to, a report or suspicion that the missing person may be the victim of foul play, evidence that the student may be drug dependent, concern that the student may be in a life-threatening situation (including expression of suicidal thoughts), or reports that the student has been with a person or people who may endanger the student's welfare.

IV. PROCEDURES

A. Designation of confidential emergency contact information

Students are given the opportunity during each semester registration process to designate an individual or individuals whom the College will contact no more than twenty-four (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 Campus Safety and the Vice President and Dean of Students (or their designee) and may not be disclosed except to law enforcement personnel in furtherance of a missing person investigation.

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

B. Official notification for missing students

1. Any individual on campus who has information that a residential student may be missing must notify the Office of Campus Safety as soon as possible, and no later than twenty-four (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 Campus Safety will assist external authorities with these investigations as requested.

2. The Office of Campus Safety will gather all essential information about the residential student from the reporting person, 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.), and from use of the student's OneCard for entering buildings or purchasing meals. Appropriate campus staff will be notified to aid in the search for the student.
3. 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), as soon as possible, and no later than 24 hours after the Office of Campus Safety determines that a residential student is missing:
 - the Office of Campus 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
 - the Vice President and Dean of Students (or designee) 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.

C. 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 Campus 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 Campus Safety and with local law enforcement authorities to ensure that communications do not hinder the investigation.

V. RESPONSIBLE OFFICIAL

The College's Director of Campus Safety is responsible for the administration of the Missing Student Policy.

Questions about this policy should be addressed to the [Office of Campus Safety](#).

4. **HISTORY**

Updated: January 2020; June 2023.