13.02.99.W1.00 Bereavement

Approved August 28, 2020
Revised November 19, 2026
Next Scheduled Review November 19, 2029

Procedure Summary

The purpose of the bereavement procedure is to communicate the official University protocol, explaining the processes of different units on campus as it relates to bereavement and what steps need to be completed in order to fulfill bereavement requests. The loss of a WT Buffalo is a trying time as the University must ensure matters are handled promptly and appropriately. This requires attention to detail, but above all, compassion and care. This document should act as a guide while remaining adaptable to circumstances and providing thorough information to complete actions.

Bereavement Email: bereavement@wtamu.edu

Bereavement Notification Form

Memorial Gift Request Form

Procedure

1. DEATH OF STUDENTS

    1.1 Departmental Responsibilities with Student Death

    The Office of the Vice President for Student Affairs (OVPSA or VPSA) oversees the bereavement process for students. Any person receiving knowledge of the death of a student should immediately notify the OVPSEES by emailing

bereavement@wtamu.edu or submitting a Bereavement Notification Form, after which each of the following areas will complete the responsibilities as specified below, when appropriate.

1.1.1 University Police Department (806-651-2300)

1.1.1.1 Once a death has been reported, the Chief of Police or designee will determine the immediate actions to follow. UPD will oversee their response to the death. Any other agency having jurisdiction where the death occurred will be responsible for notifying the next of kin. Often, this will be UPD. If out of town, UPD will send a Law Enforcement (LE) Teletype to the agency where the next of kin lives, and the agency there will notify, in person, on behalf of UPD.

1.1.1.2 In the event of an on-campus death, UPD will respond immediately to protect lives and secure the scene, as well as coordinate with local law enforcement and emergency personnel. UPD will be the agency of first facts in order to assess the situation appropriately. Residence hall deaths specify that staff will immediately notify UPD and follow their internal notification procedures until the Residential Living Director and the VPSA offices have been contacted.

1.1.1.3 It is crucial to acknowledge the connectedness of students and realize that information travels quickly through social media and texting. Please be prudent so that the next of kin does not learn of a death via these avenues.

1.1.1.4 UPD will assist with determining the circumstances of a death and issue an immediate notification or timely warning notice. City, county, and pertinent law enforcement agencies will be notified.

1.1.1.5 UPD will notify the student's family and determine a contact for further communication and facilitate closure of the student's personal affairs at the University.

1.1.1.6 UPD will notify the OVPSA, Lock Shop, and Parking Services as to the student's death, as well as any other pertinent departments, with relevant contact information for the deceased and contact information of the next of kin responsible for the deceased's estate.

1.1.2 Office of the Vice President for Student Affairs (806-651-2050)

1.1.2.1 Notify UPD if OVPSA is the first to be informed by emailing bereavement@wtamu.edu or submitting a Bereavement Notification Form.

1.1.2.2 Facilitate communication with the family to express condolences on behalf of the University and to determine a family contact in order to close the student's personal affairs at the University and the student's estate.

1.1.2.3 Attend funeral and/or memorial services, if possible.

1.1.2.4 Notify the appropriate campus representative for the student's faith.

1.1.2.5 Act as the liaison between the student's family and the University.

1.1.2.6 Notify all applicable offices/departments to include Residential Living, Communication and Marketing, Human Resources, Student Government, the Academic Dean, Registrar, Business Office, Post Office, Gold Card Office, Office of the President, and the Office of the Vice President for Philanthropy and External Relations. Contact information for next of kin will be provided for each department.

1.1.3 Residential Living (806-651-3003)

1.1.3.1 Pro-rate housing and meal plan charges based on withdrawal date determined by the Registrar, and process refund, if necessary. Facilitate the return of the student's property to the family. If the family is unable to claim the property, the personal possessions

should be inventoried, packed by two staff members, and safely stored.

1.1.4 Communication and Marketing (806-651-2125)

1.1.4.1 Primary in responding to media inquiries about the death, in accordance with the University plan for disseminating information and updates.

1.1.4.2 Notify the Office of the Vice President for Philanthropy and External Relations.

1.1.4.3 Initiate and coordinate a crisis communication plan, if necessary.

1.1.4.4 Provide news releases and fact sheets, if necessary.

1.1.4.5 Post condolences and memorial service information via social media after any and all family notifications.

1.1.5 Academic Deans of Colleges

1.1.5.1 Notify the deceased student's advisor.

1.1.5.2 Attend the funeral or memorial service, if possible.

1.1.6 Registrar (806-651-4911)

1.1.6.1 Withdraw the student from any current or upcoming courses. The date will be determined case by case to maximize a full refund. The Executive Vice President and Provost will determine any potential refund after the final date for automatic refunds.

1.1.6.2 Mark student as deceased and address as 'former' in Colleague.

1.1.6.3 Complete the official withdrawal form stating the student is deceased and send a copy of the form to the Business Office and Residential Living.

1.1.7 Business Office (806-651-2080)

1.1.7.1 Check the student's account receivable account. If there is a balance, the University writes it off and releases the hold; if there is a credit, a check is issued to the student's estate.

1.1.8 Human Resources (806-651-2114)

1.1.8.1 Check the employment status of the student. If employed, change the legal name to the estate of the student's first name and last name.

1.1.8.2 Notify the student's on-campus supervisor.

1.1.8.3 Terminate the student's account in job systems and move employment files to inactive status, stating the date and reason on the checklist.

1.1.8.4 Payroll terminates the student employee in Workday as involuntary/death.

1.1.8.5 In Colleague, change XPFM screen for GA's only to term reason "E" with death date. Student workers are not on this screen.

1.1.8.6 Employee benefits representative will check to see if the deceased was enrolled in benefit options and notify The Texas A&M University System (TAMUS) so the provider can issue any benefits to a beneficiary.

1.1.9 Post Office (806-651-2666)

1.1.9.1 Close the mailbox and forward mail to the student's estate address.

1.1.10 Buffalo Gold Card Office (806-651-4653)

1.1.10.1 Freeze student's Gold Card, so it is not usable.

1.1.10.2 Check the student's account balance for sending a refund to the student's estate address.

1.1.11 Student Government Association (806-651-2053)

1.1.11.1 Include the student in the Student Memorial ceremony held each spring semester.

1.1.12 Office of the President (806-651-2100)

1.1.12.1 Arrange for bereavement steps to be completed on behalf of the President by contacting the Office of the Vice President for Philanthropy and External Relations (OVPPER):

1.1.12.1.1 OVPPER will process and deliver a sympathy card, a printout of the obituary, a framed photograph of the lowered flags, and a flag-lowering notification letter to the Office of the President for the President's signature. The Office of the President will distribute the sympathy card, flag-lowering notification letter, and framed photograph from the President to the family of the deceased.

1.1.12.1.2 OVPPER will create an all-campus notification to communicate the death with the University and request the TAMUS flag and the WTAMU flag to be lowered on the day of the funeral service, if possible; otherwise, at an appropriate time by emailing ITSC Support (itsc2@wtamu.edu) and cc'ing the following on the email:

1.1.12.1.2.1 SSC: Unit Director; Executive Secretary—for lowering flags on a specified date.

1.1.12.1.2.2 Office of the President: Chief of Staff and Assistant Vice President ; Executive Assistant—for part of the process on behalf of the President.

1.1.12.1.2.3 Office of the Vice President for Philanthropy and External Relations: Assistant Vice President of Advancement and External Services; Director of Development—for part of the process on behalf of the President.

1.1.12.1.2.4 Office of Communication and Marketing: DIrector of University Communication and Media Relations—for part of the process on behalf of the President.

Additional offices to be informed include Financial Aid, Student Success Center, the Cornette Library, Medical Services, and Instructors and/or Professors. All pertinent departments will need to communicate in reply to the Executive Assistant in OVPSEES to ensure all matters have been completed and resolved for student deaths. Determine the need to convene Student Counseling Services counselors to comfort the University community and arrange counseling sessions. Follow up as needed to make sure processes have been completed.

1.2 Special Student Death Situations

Special student death situations include the death of an international student, study abroad student death, death as part of an experiential education experience, death of a minor involved in a University-sponsored program, or a student death during holiday or semester break. In special death situations, immediately involve UPD and OVPSA and follow the steps indicated. It is critical to leave contact information where you can be reached over the next 24 to 48 hours. UPD will verify the information by teletype through the investigating law enforcement agency. UPD must receive the Law Enforcement Teletype from the agency reporting/investigating the death to make a death notification. As much information as possible must be gathered about the circumstances surrounding

the student's death. Begin a written log of communications and actions as the crisis progresses. Include as many details as possible about the location, timing of events, and witnesses, as well as the names and contact information of all parties involved. Itemize all steps taken before, during, and after the death. Access the impact of the event once it has ended, and document all actions taken in a written report. It is very important to verify representatives of the victim's national, ethnic, or cultural group. Be sensitive to the victim's ethnicity, and identify and ensure observance of any culturally sensitive issues, rituals, and traditions related to the victim. If applicable, communicate with the International Student Office.

1.2.1 International Student Death, International Student Office (806-651-2073)

1.2.1.1 Recognize that some University protocols may not be sufficient for the unique needs of an international student or scholar. Be prepared to offer support to various offices as needed.

1.2.1.2 Follow FERPA laws regarding the dissemination of information to family and others.

1.2.1.3 Create a case file and include printouts of the student's or scholar's records from the University. This will include contact information, immigration information, advising notes, class schedule, and emergency contact information. Use a contact page form/template to quickly note every individual you contact regarding the case and notes regarding conversations.

1.2.1.4 Contact the highest level of campus administration to appropriately handle communication with the family, embassy, university relations, and media. If necessary, find a translator to assist with any of these communications or next of kin.

1.2.1.5 Do not provide information about the student or scholar's status unless it is to pertinent departments who are assisting with the handling of the death. Disclosing information to friends and/or classmates without consent is a violation of FERPA.

1.2.1.6 Refer student friends of the deceased who are in distress to Counseling Services. University employees in distress should be encouraged to seek help from their medical providers.

1.2.1.7 Contact the student or scholar's faith community to arrange a service, if applicable.

1.2.1.8 Offer condolences in a culturally appropriate manner and advise the family of the documentation needed to process/close the deceased's record. Inform the family that the University will take care of all administrative details related to the student or scholar.

1.2.1.9 Contact the University's sponsoring health insurance company regarding repatriation procedures, if applicable.

1.2.1.10 The visiting scholar's death should be reported to the sponsoring agency. It could be that the scholar has a different health insurance plan from the University. If so, the International Office Executive Director should coordinate notification of death and procedures for repatriation with the sponsoring agency.

1.2.1.11 Update the SEVIS record as required by the Department of Homeland Security.

1.2.1.12 Assist with arrangements for the student's belongings, including academic work, to be returned to the family.

1.2.1.13 Arrange for the distribution of funds if applicable.

1.3.1 Study Abroad Student Death, Study Abroad Office (806-651-5309)

1.3.1.1 If approved to do so, the supervising faculty should collect the property of the student and return it to the appropriate authorities.

1.3.1.2 Confirm details of the incident directly with the sponsoring site if a study abroad program.

1.3.1.3 Briefly identify issues relating to the health and safety of any remaining students, academic concerns, financial assistance needed, public relations, and legal liability.

1.3.1.4 Collect the personal property of the student from the sponsor and return it to the family. Determine from the sponsor if the student possessed any of their property and try to collect it and return it to the sponsor.

1.3.1.5 If requested by the family, facilitate a phone conversation between the family and the sponsor.

1.4.1 Death of Student with Career and Professional Development Office (806-651-2345)

1.4.1.1 Update the Career Connections program software.

1.5.1 Death of a Minor On Campus with University Sponsored Programs, Extended Studies Office (806-651-2037)

1.5.1.1 The program director should immediately notify UPD, OVPSA, Risk Management, Communication and Marketing, and Extended Studies.

1.5.1.2 If the minor is participating in a camp, call the director of the camp and dean of the respective college/unit.

1.5.1.3 Contact the family to express condolences on behalf of the University.

1.5.1.4 Complete an accident report, if applicable.

1.5.1.5 If the death occurred within a month following a camp and was due to a program for minors' activity, follow the same protocol as 1.5.1.1 through 1.5.1.4.

1.6.1 Student Death During Holiday or Semester Breaks

1.6.1.1 If the student was enrolled in the previous semester and/or registered for the next semester, follow the same protocol as 1.1.

2. DEATH OF FACULTY, STAFF, OR RETIREES

2.1 Departmental Responsibilities with Faculty, Staff, or Retiree Deaths

The Office of the Vice President for Philanthropy and External Relations (OVPPER) oversees the bereavement process for faculty, staff, or retirees. Any person receiving knowledge of the death of a faculty member, staff member, or retiree should immediately notify the OVPPER by emailing bereavement@wtamu.edu or submitting a Bereavement Notification Form, after which each of the following areas will complete the responsibilities as specified below, as appropriate.

The lowering of the TAMUS flag and the WTAMU flag is reserved for persons directly connected to the University (faculty, staff, students, retirees, alumni, donors).

The death of immediate family members of current employees [employee's spouse, employee's or spouse's child, stepchild, parent, stepparent, brother, stepbrother, sister, stepsister, grandparent, step-grandparent, great-grandparent, step-great-grandparent, grandchild, step-grandchild, great-grandchild or step-great-grandchild] may be recognized by the University, as appropriate. For example, receiving a sympathy card from the President of the University.

2.1.1 The Office of the Vice President for Philanthropy and External Relations (on behalf of the Office of the President) (806-651-2070)

LOWERING TAMUS and WTAMU FLAGS:

2.1.1.1 OVPPER will process and deliver a sympathy card and a flag lowering packet (a printout of the obituary, a flag-lowering notification letter to the family of the deceased, and a framed photograph of the lowered flags) to the Office of the President for the President's signature. The Office of the President will distribute the sympathy card, flag-lowering notification letter, and framed photograph from the President to the family of the deceased.

2.1.1.2 OVPPER will create an all-campus e-mail notification to communicate the death with the University and request the TAMUS flag and the WTAMU flag to be lowered on the day of the funeral service, if possible; otherwise, at an appropriate time by emailing ITSC Support (itsc2@wtamu.edu) and cc'ing the following on the email:

2.1.1.2.1 SSC: Unit Director; Executive Secretary—for lowering flags on a specified date.

2.1.1.2.2 Office of the President: Chief of Staff and Assistant Vice President ; Executive Assistant—for part of the process on behalf of the President.

2.1.1.2.3 Office of the Vice President for Philanthropy and External Relations: Assistant Vice President for Philanthropy Services—for part of the process on behalf of the President.

2.1.1.2.4 Office of Communication and Marketing: Director of University Communication and Media Relations—for part of the process on behalf of the President.

2.1.1.3 Attend the funeral or memorial service, if possible.

2.1.1.4 Work with family members and/or representatives regarding memorial gifts and/or setting up appropriate scholarships to honor the deceased.

2.2.1 Human Resources (806-651-2114)

2.2.1.1 Death of an Active Employee, Faculty, or Staff

2.2.1.1.1 Make necessary updates in Workday, which include creating a benefit event due to the death of an employee.

2.2.1.1.2 Send notification of death to System Benefits Administration, Texas A&M University System Benefits, in College Station.

2.2.1.1.3 Send a request to Human Resources Advisor II to have Colleague updated with the death of the employee.

2.2.1.1.4 Send death packet to any surviving dependents

2.2.1.2 Death of a Dependent of Faculty or Staff

2.2.1.2.1 Make necessary updates in Workday, which include creating benefit event due to death.

2.2.1.2.2 Send notification of death to System Benefits Administrator, Texas A&M University System Benefits, in College Station, if employee carried dependent life insurance on a dependent.

2.2.1.3 Death of Retiree

2.2.1.3.1 Make necessary updates in Workday, which includes adding the date of death, stopping active benefits, and removing retiree status.

2.2.1.3.2 Send notification of death to System Benefits Administrator, Texas A&M University System Benefits, in College Station.

2.2.1.3.3 Send a request to Human Resources Advisor II to have Colleague updated with the death of the retiree.

2.2.1.3.4 Send a death packet to any surviving dependents.

2.2.1.3.5 Update personnel and benefits folder, and file appropriately.

2.2.1.4 Death of a Dependent on Retiree Insurance

2.2.1.4.1 Make necessary updates in Workday, which include creating a benefit event due to the death of a dependent.

2.2.1.4.2 Send upload to P&A Group.

2.2.1.4.3 Send notification of the death of dependent to System Benefits Administrator, Texas A&M University System Benefits, in College Station, if retiree carried life insurance on the dependent.

2.2.1.4.4 Benefits Protocol, Death of an Active Employee (Faculty or Staff), Retiree, or Dependent.

2.2.1.4.5 Check the employment status of the deceased. If employed, change the legal name to "The Estate of First Name, Last Name."

2.2.1.4.6 Payroll will terminate the employee in Workday as "Involuntary," and second reason "Death."

2.2.1.4.7 If there is a payment in process, Payroll will stop the payment and reissue to "The Estate of First Name Last Name" in the form of a paper check.

2.2.1.4.8 Payroll will then calculate any vacation, sick leave, or compensatory time the employee had accrued. These items will also be paid to "The Estate of First Name Last Name" in the form of a paper check.

2.2.1.4.9 Paper checks will be mailed to the next of kin. If next of kin is unknown, the check will be held until legal documents are received, and legal rights are proven.

3. DEATH OF ALUMNI AND DONORS

3.1 Departmental Responsibilities with Alumni and Donors

The Office of the Vice President for Philanthropy and External Relations (OVPPER) oversees the bereavement process for alumni and donors of the University. Any person receiving knowledge of the death of an alumni or donor of the University should immediately notify the OVPPER by emailing bereavement@wtamu.edu or submitting a Bereavement Notification Form, after which each of the following areas will complete the responsibilities as specified below, when appropriate.

3.1.1 Office of the Vice President for Philanthropy and External Relations (on behalf of the Office of the President) (806-651-2070)

LOWERING TAMUS and WTAMU FLAGS:

3.1.1.1 OVPPER will process and deliver a sympathy card and a flag lowering packet (a printout of the obituary, a flag-lowering notification letter to the family of the deceased, and a framed photograph of the lowered flags) to the Office of the President for the President's signature. The Office of the President will distribute the sympathy card, flag-lowering notification letter,

and framed photograph from the President to the family of the deceased.

3.1.1.2 OVPPER will create an all-campus notification to communicate the death with the University and request the TAMUS flag and the WTAMU flag to be lowered on the day of the funeral service, if possible; otherwise, at an appropriate time by emailing ITSC Support (itsc2@wtamu.edu) and cc'ing the following on the email:

3.1.1.2.1 SSC: Unit Director; Executive Secretary—for lowering flags on a specified date.

3.1.1.2.2 Office of the President: Chief of Staff and Assistant Vice President ; Executive Assistant—for part of the process on behalf of the President.

3.1.1.2.3 Office of the Vice President for Philanthropy and External Relations: Assistant Vice President for Philanthropy Services—for part of the process on behalf of the President.

3.1.1.2.4 Office of Communication and Marketing: Director of University Communication and Media Relations—for part of the process on behalf of the President.

3.1.1.3 Attend the funeral or memorial service, if possible.

3.1.1.4 Work with family members and/or representatives regarding memorial gifts and/or setting up appropriate scholarships to honor the deceased.

Appendix

Bereavement Email: bereavement@wtamu.edu

Bereavement Notification Form

Memorial Gift Request Form

Revision History

Revised November 19, 2026
Approved January 26, 2022

Contact Office(s)

Office of the Vice President for Philanthropy and External Relations
(806) 651-2070

Office of the Vice President for Student Affairs
(806) 651-2050

Approval Office

Office of the President
(806) 651-2100

Approval Signature

Interim President/CEO

November 19, 2026

Date