I. Crisis Media Relations

A. Key Media Contacts

1. The following media outlets consistently cover the institution and represent a core media group that generally will be contacted in a crisis. The list is subject to revision.:

(insert list of local news media)

B. Dissemination of Public Alert Notice Information

1. Institutions may establish and publish alert notices to update the campus community about the status of an emergency situation. The alert notice may include a brief message regarding the nature of the emergency.

2. If such an alert notice is disseminated, then a procedure must be established to provide timely and accurate updates as the situation progresses.

3. Examples of such alert system include cellular telephone text messaging systems, electronic mail messages, and landline telephone emergency hotlines.

4. It is advisable for the institution to establish a process to ensure that all alert notices are approved by the Public Relations/Media Office or designated administrator(s) prior to distribution.

C. Types of Information Available

1. Student Information

a. Student-related information and records are generally protected from public release by federal law. The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) limits an institution’s unilateral release of student information to “directory information,” (e.g., name, address, telephone number, date and place of birth, honors and awards, and dates of attendance) as that term is defined in the Act’s regulations and by the institution.

b. Therefore, the release of student-related information and records to third parties is limited to instances in which the student provides written authorization of the release; the information is “directory information,” and the student did not elect to opt-out of release such information; or when a FERPA exception, such as the release of information to protect the safety and health of the student or others, is applicable.

c. In Tennessee, the incident or offense report for a crime that is created and maintained by a law enforcement unit (institutional police department or local law enforcement) is available for unilateral release by the institution to third parties, including media.

(1) This report does not have to be released to media outside of the state (e.g., to persons not citizens of Tennessee).

(2) Information about an investigation cannot be released until the investigation is completed.

(3) Every effort will be made to cooperate with law enforcement officials and members of the news media. When appropriate, members of the news media will be directed to the investigating law enforcement agency for additional information.

d. All requests for students’ education records/information must be directed to the Office of the Registrar or Office of Student Affairs. Individual departments and employees are not authorized to release education records.

2. Employee Information

a. Limited information regarding employees is available through the Office of Human Resources.

b. Any Tennessee citizen may obtain certain personnel information and records by presenting a valid Tennessee driver's license.

c. All requests for personnel records must be directed to the Office of Human Resources. Individual departments and employees are not authorized to release personnel records.