

University Communications Principles and Protocols

Communicating on Social or Political Matters
and Local, National and Global Tragedies

OSU Board of Trustees



Oregon State
University

Objective - deliverables

1. Create a guide to aid university leaders in making principle-based decisions on communicating about social and political issues, and following tragedies.
1. Create resources and a strategy to engage the OSU community on principles that guide the university's decision to communicate about social and political issues, and following tragedies.
2. Create an accessible reference for all leaders to educate and engage members of the OSU community on why the university communicates or does not communicate. Example:
<https://studentlife.oregonstate.edu/freedom-expression>

University Communications Guidance

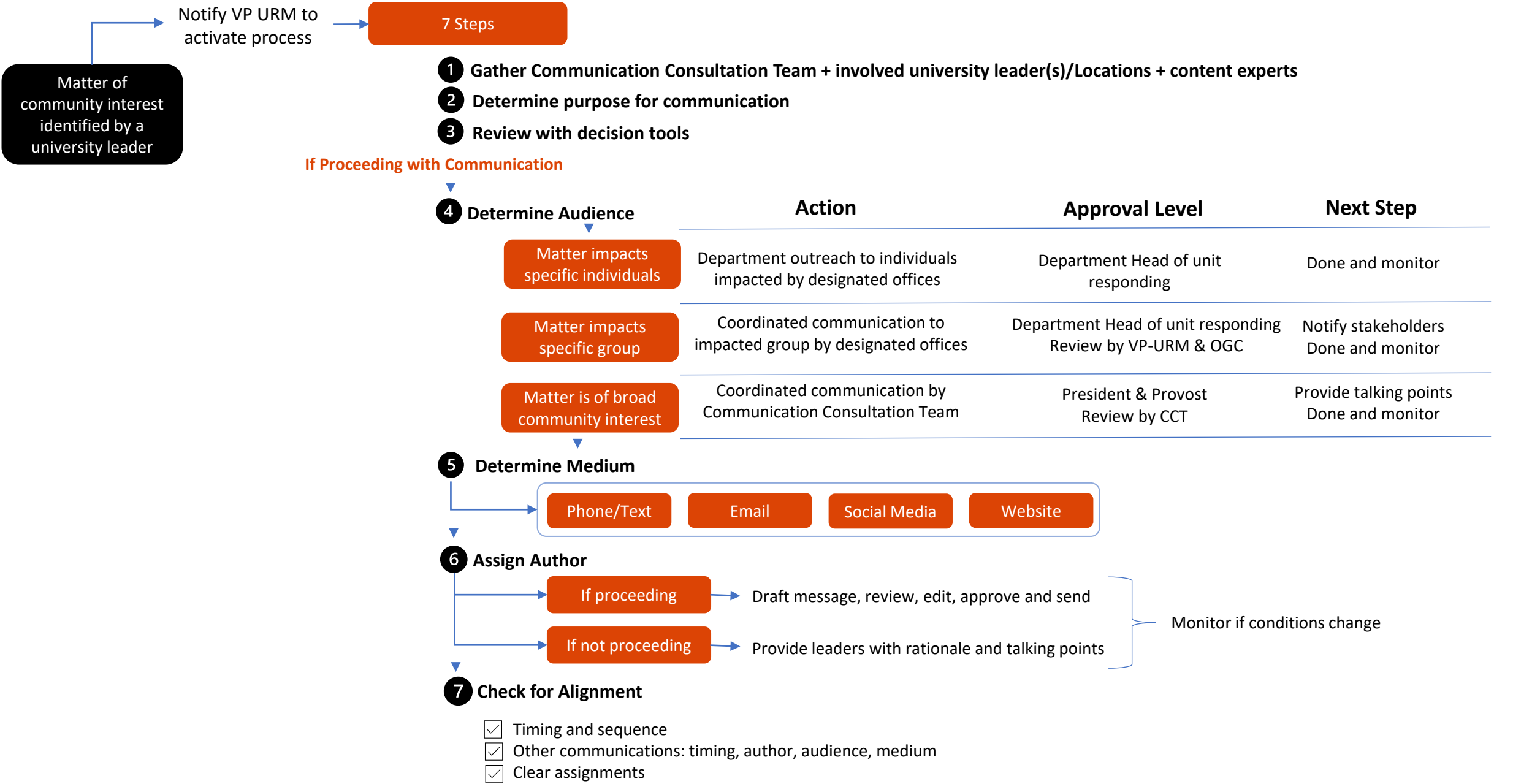
Within an interconnected community, the university is often called to consider whether to communicate regarding social or political matters and on tragedies occurring locally, nationally and globally.

The university's voice carries significant weight and therefore the university seeks to balance **advocacy and empowerment** when considering whether to communicate.

Advocacy involves the university acting on behalf of a community, including by communicating. **Empowerment** involves the university supporting a community to act on its own behalf.

OSU seeks first to empower community members to educate, advocate and communicate on their own behalf and in coalition with others. In more limited cases, and to advance its mission, values and goals, the university may choose to communicate.

The following guidance provides a process to assist university decision makers in the deliberating whether and how to communicate judiciously and effectively.



1 Gather team + Involved University Leaders + content experts

Communication Consultation Team*

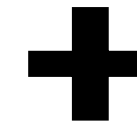
Vice President, URM	Chief Assistant to President	Chief Assistant to the Provost/EVP
Vice Provost, Student Affairs	Vice Provost, Faculty Affairs	Vice President/CDO
General Counsel	Associate Vice Provost/Dean of Students	+ Content Experts as needed



Involved University
Leaders/Locations

College Deans
Board of Trustees Office
Extension
OSU Cascades
Portland Center
Hatfield MSC

Involvement is
context specific



Content Experts/
Consultants

Public Safety
Human Resources
Counseling & Psychological Services
Office of International Services
Equal Opportunity and Access
Government Relations
Deans/Unit Heads

*Team can be convened by any member, or by the President or Provost/Executive Vice President

2 Determine purpose of communication

What and why are we communicating?

1. Notify and direct for matters of public safety
2. Respond to questions, allegations, matters of public interest, or provide rationale for a university decision
3. Reduce confusion or misinformation by providing factual information
4. Express condolence or support
5. Direct OSU community members (directly and indirectly impacted) to appropriate resources
6. Communicate solidarity or alignment
7. Encourage reflection, deliberation or dialogue
8. Provide a call to action to advance with OSU's mission and values

Note: Guidance and tools are not intended to take place of leadership judgment. Each matter has nuances that must be considered in its specific context, along with the responses to these prompts. There may be instances where a communication is needed, even when these prompts suggest not to communicate.

Assess Connection and Impact. Then, consider the rationale.

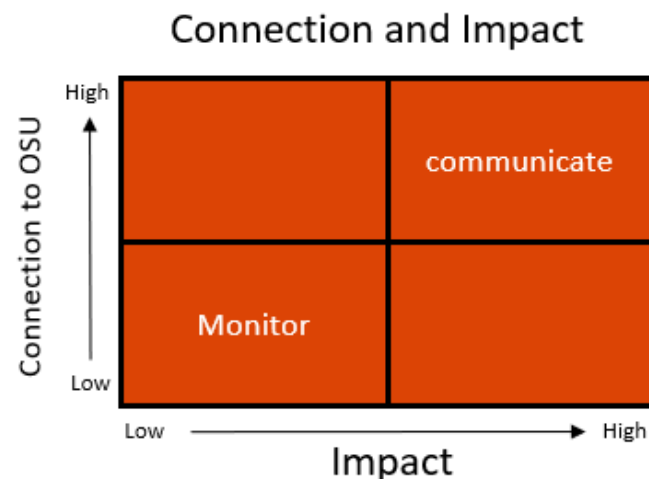
1

Connection and Impact

When matters have a direct connection to OSU, and where impact is significant, communicating more widely on behalf of the university may be more appropriate.

Connection to OSU: The degree of OSU's relationship to the matter, including physical proximity, membership in community, and mission.

Impact: Significance of impact to OSU, including scope, scale and severity.



2

Rationale

The university is more likely to communicate if:

- The issue is directly connected to an area in which OSU leads and is of strategic importance
- Communicating would provide university leadership an opportunity to articulate a direct connection to university's mission, goals and values
- Communicating would provide an opportunity to articulate a clear call to action that advances the university's mission, goals and values; or support resources about which the OSU community may not generally be aware
- Topics might include matters related to OSU mission, values and strategic plan.
- When a communication is necessary to provide urgent awareness for the OSU community to act.

The university is less likely to communicate if:

- Communicating would directly or indirectly discourage inquiry, dialogue or debate on topics of significant public interest on which there is good-faith disagreement
- Communicating could be perceived as taking a position against foreign nations or governments, or if communicating could negatively impact students or scholars from other countries
- Personal communication by a university leader could be misinterpreted as the university's position
- Communicating could jeopardize university partnerships, collaborations and agreements needed to fulfill the university's mission

4 Determine Audience

When communication is appropriate, consistent with the university’s communication principles and processes, OSU will determine whether and how a statement or message would serve to support members of the OSU community and the university’s mission, goals and values.

Audience	Action	Approval Level	Next Step
Matter impacts specific individuals	Department outreach to individuals impacted by designated offices	Department Head of unit responding	Done and monitor
Matter impacts specific group	Coordinated communication to impacted group by designated offices	Department Head of unit responding Review by VP-URM & OGC	Notify stakeholders Done and monitor
Matter is of broad community interest	Coordinated communication by Communication Consultation Team	President & Provost Review by CCT	Provide talking points Done and monitor

Multiple channels of communications, such as social media, email, or press release, may be utilized based on the university's assessment of greatest impact. For example, certain circumstances may call for a campus-wide email, while others call for more a more intimate one to one communication, or a statement on a social media platform where OSU can link to an associated post, or both a post and an email.

Step 1: Return to purpose of communication

Step 2: Match communications channel to needs of audience

Step 3: Consider content and impact of communication

- Highly sensitive information
- Urgency
- Size of group
- Reference other statements/information
- Consistency of message
- Official statement of institution

Step 4: Choose medium(s)

Phone/Text

Email

Social Media

Website

If the University determines it is appropriate to send a broad communication expressing support, solidarity, or resources, it will generally be sent by the leader(s) whose roles are most connected to incident and message being communicated. The communication should be in the voice of the authors.

In rare instances, the President or Provost and Executive Vice President may author a message, for example when there is not otherwise an appropriate university leader to communicate, or they are otherwise best situated to speak for the University on the matter.

Matters of public safety:

- Chief of Police
- Dean of Students
- VP Finance & Administration

Matters of broad employee impact:

- Chief Human Resource Officer
- Vice President Finance & Administration
- Vice Provost Faculty Affairs

Matters of specific or broad student impact

- Dean of Students
- Office of International Services
- Vice Provost for Student Affairs

Matters of diversity & inclusion, responding to acts of bias

- Vice President and Chief Diversity Officer
- Vice Provost for Student Affairs
- Executive Director - EOA

Matters of institutional reputation and public relations

- Vice President for University Marketing and Relations
- Leader of area in question

Matters of Presidential or Provost interest/mission related

- OSU President
- OSU Provost and Executive Vice President

**Some communications may come
from multiple authors.**

Check for Alignment

Clear assignments

Stakeholder engagement

Other communications: Timing, author, audience, medium

Oregon State University

University Communication – Public Statements

Process Checklist

Process checklist is not exhaustive. Each situation may call for actions unique to its circumstances.

Confirm planned communications	Confirmation/Action
Outcomes	
Author(s)	
Audience(s)	
Medium(s)	
Timing	
Pre-communication consultation or informing	
Stakeholder groups	
Presidential commissions	
Cultural center leaders	
Community groups	
Pre-communication notice to university offices/leaders	
International partners	
Government relations	
OSU Athletics	
Research Office	
Finance and Administration	
College leaders	
University Human Resources	
Equal Opportunity and Access	
Extension and Engagement	
Other?	
Forecasting future needs	
Potential follow up communications	
Next <u>check-point</u>	