2-6-2015

The Daily Gamecock, Thursday, February 5, 2015

University of South Carolina, Office of Student Media

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“Indeed, this is a tragic day in our history.”

USC President Harris Pastides
Thursday, Feb. 5, 2015
You won’t find the names of the individuals involved in Thursday’s murder-suicide in this edition of The Daily Gamecock, nor will you find the details of what happened inside the Arnold School of Public Health at 12:56 p.m. when USCPD got the call.

If you’re reading this, it isn’t Thursday night anymore. By the time you read this, you may know all the details — you may know the names and the situation and why it happened.

And you didn’t get that information from this edition of The Daily Gamecock.

But for me, it’s Thursday night, we’re putting the paper together and no information pertaining to the identities of the individuals or the circumstances of the situation has been confirmed. The State Law Enforcement Department’s investigation is ongoing, and Richland County Coroner Gary Watts has not released the names of the deceased. At this point, the names you’ve read and the rumors you’ve heard are unconfirmed reports from witnesses and anonymous sources because it’s still Thursday night.

At The Daily Gamecock, we pride ourselves on integrity, accuracy and truth. We do not believe in going off of hearsay or rumors, and our staff works to ensure that the information we bring to readers is ironclad. That’s why in this edition, you’ll only find what we know to be true, and that’s the information confirmed by officials.

As Editor-in-Chief, I made a lot of calls Thursday. I made the call to scrap everything we had worked on this week to solely report what you’ll read here. I made the call to send college students running into an area others were running away from. I made the call to my mom and told her we were safe, even though we were yards away from where witnesses heard gunshots.

But the most important decision Thursday was made by our entire staff: we will only report what we know for certain.

The Daily Gamecock will not risk credibility in the hopes of being first because tragedy isn’t a time to be wrong. In fact, errors in reporting tragedy can result in confusion and devastation.

And in the end, tragedy is hard enough on its own.

Hannah Jeffrey
Editor-in-Chief
What we know:

• Initial call was made to USCPD at 12:56 p.m. Thursday, reporting gunshots in Arnold School of Public Health.

• Building was evacuated and several campus buildings were locked down.

• Incident appears to be an isolated murder-suicide involving two individuals who are now deceased.

• State Law Enforcement Department leading investigation.

• School of Public Health closed until investigation ends.

• Public health classes, all classes held in public health building cancelled for Friday, Feb. 6.

12:56 p.m.
Initial call made to USCPD reporting gunshots in Arnold School of Public Health.

1:26 p.m.
Students report classrooms locked down around campus.

1:39 p.m.
Police order students inside the School of Music building and begin blocking of streets. Police grab students off of sidewalks to get them inside.

1:51 p.m.
Park, College and Assembly streets blocked off.

2:15 p.m.
Carolina Alert: “There is no longer an existing threat on campus. New School of Public Health and streets remained closed. Please avoid area.”

2:28 p.m.
SLED spokesman Thom Berry says the shooting appears to have been an isolated murder-suicide and says there was never an active shooter situation. Berry confirms two people involved, and they are both deceased. Says it was a “very isolated situation” that occurred “inside a room inside the building.”

2:43 p.m.
All classes in the Public Health Research Center and Discovery Building are canceled for the day. All other classes continue as normal for the day, streets remain closed.

3:57 p.m.
School of Public Health Dean Tom Chandler: “I am ... extremely thankful that the incident was isolated and did not lead to more injuries given that a firearm was involved.”

5 p.m.
Berry tells media that bodies are still in the building, which will be closed for an indeterminate amount of time and will be removed when investigation is finished but has no other information regarding the individuals.

6:26 p.m.
USC President Harris Pastides: “Indeed this is a tragic day in our history.”

7 p.m.
USC counselors hold session for grieving students in the Rutledge Chapel.
This is not the first time this year that this campus was gripped by fear.

Two people died on our campus, and after initial shock and uncertainty, USC emerged on the other side, and we stood firm in the face of a tragedy.

The administration kept people in the know and distributed necessary safety information quickly and usefully. These open channels of communication were a strong source of comfort for the students, parents and staff in a very trying time. They gave us something tangible to hang onto when all we had was hearsay. The actions taken by CPD, USCPD and SWAT personnel were as swift and effective as could be asked.

The fact that we knew immediately we were safe from the threat kept us feeling safe, despite the rumors that can spread like wildfire on days like these. If nothing else, Thursday reassured us that the people entrusted to protect student safety understand the gravity of their position.

Professors who were teaching Thursday afternoon locked doors, barred entrances with tables and chairs and, in some cases, continued to teach. They balanced the desire to maintain normalcy with the necessity of ensuring the safety of their students.

In a moment where panic could have easily gripped the students and thrown the campus into a dangerous frenzy, our leaders set an example of composure that allowed the situation to remain contained.

After the all clear, a sigh of relief passed over the campus, and students moved forward in their own ways. In the absence of a threat, the university chose to allow a normal school day to finish without punishing those who felt solitude was the best way of coping. In the wake of tragedy, some need to grieve and some need to press on, and the university gave us the chance to do both.

For the most part, the university continued the rest of the day fulfilling its public function: education. We feel that facilitated a needed sense of normalcy among the student body.

It was something none of us were prepared for: a murder-suicide in a public building in broad daylight. From faculty to staff to students, we rose to an occasion that shocked us all. The coming days won’t be easy, but Thursday showed us that we can bear the burden.

After the panic, after the rumors, after the texts and calls from anxious friends and relatives, we are standing strong because we are standing together.
“Well, I had class at the public health building earlier this morning, and so I was just really nervous. You know, I was thinking it might be my professor or my TA or other people in my class.”

— Laura Godenick, experimental psychology student

“Everyone was freaking out a little bit. We had one girl start crying.”

— Miranda Brophy, first-year criminal justice student

“When everyone got the Carolina Alert, everyone looked up and kinda — you feel this shuffle ... you could feel this kind of vibe change.”

— Sophia Wright, fourth-year exercise science student

“People stepped out of the room to take phone calls, to make phone calls to see what was going on, to see if their friends and family were safe.”

— Cory Morrell, third-year criminal justice student

“We didn’t really know what to do. We knew we were far enough away (in Russell House) that we didn’t need to worry about anything, we were just like, where are we supposed to go, what are we supposed to do?”

— Justin Wills, experimental psychology student

“My friend tried to get in Patterson, and usually you don’t need your CarolinaCard during the day, but everything was on lockdown, so she had to rush and find her CarolinaCard. Everyone was just very overwhelmed.”

— Thea Tollison, first-year nursing student

“Everyone was freaking out a little bit. We had

— Miranda Brophy, first-year criminal justice student
Today, the USC family experienced a great tragedy. Sadly, a shooting in one of our buildings has left two dead in what appears to be a murder-suicide. The thoughts and prayers of our entire community are with the families of the deceased tonight.

The University of South Carolina Police Department responded to the shots immediately and, within moments, our community was alerted. I want to thank USCPD for their professionalism and quick response. The building was quickly secured and we were able to give an all clear for the campus.

Thank you also to our students, faculty and staff for their cooperation and fast action. We know the grieving period will be long and our counseling center is available to anyone who may need assistance.

Thank you to our community and law enforcement partners in the ongoing investigation. The South Carolina Law Enforcement Division is the lead investigative agency along with the Richland County coroner.

Indeed this is a tragic day in our history. Patricia and I, along with the Board of Trustees, offer our condolences to the families and friends of the deceased.

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Statement from
USC President
Harris Pastides

I have no details beyond the SLED reports already released. I can’t comment before seeing the coroner report and notification of next of kin ... [I am] extremely grateful for the rapid USC police response, and the orderly and rapid evacuation of the PHRC. I am also extremely thankful that the incident was isolated and did not lead to more injuries given that a firearm was involved. Again, our public safety officials performed with courage and effectiveness.

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Statement from
Tom Chandler,
Dean of Public Health
Hours after gunshots were reported to USCPD, people placed flowers on the steps of the Arnold School of Public Health building Thursday night.

Photos by Kamila Melko
No matter your level of experience, you still second-guess yourself on occasion. You want your work to look good but serve a purpose. You have to be confident and discerning while maintaining the ability to switch from one track to another. What you create is a visual representation of Student Media.

It can be difficult, but my experience with Student Media has only solidified my love for design.

- Kody Kratzer, Student Designer, Creative Services
Counseling Center temporarily extends hours

The Counseling and Human Development Center has extended its hours in order to accommodate students’ needs in the wake of the murder-suicide in the Arnold School of Public Health Thursday. The extended hours are as listed below:

- 8 a.m. to 7 p.m. Fri, Feb. 6
- 2 p.m. to 8 p.m. Sun, Feb. 8

“If anyone needs assistance outside of our extended hours,” said Marjorie Duffy, spokeswoman for Student Health Services, “we encourage them to call and we will get them the help that they need.”

The Counseling and Human Development Center is located on the 7th floor of the Byrnes Building at the foot of the Horseshoe on Sumter Street.

— Compiled by Lois Carlisle, Features Editor
This is the first time in 31 years The Daily Gamecock has had to report a shooting tragedy on campus.

In 1979, during a fraternity party at Bates West, two students were killed and five were wounded after an 18-year-old student opened fire.

Then, five years later, Philip Zeltner, a jilted former professor, shot himself after holding former USC President Jim Holderman’s staff hostage on the Horseshoe.

Tragedy, unfortunately, is not new on the Columbia campus. We have reprinted the corresponding front pages of The Gamecock from 1979 and 1984, to give students a look into the university’s history and to give Thursday’s events new context as we move forward.
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