

Case Study #2- Mid-Major State University

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MSM 510

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Press Release

It has come to the attention of staff at Mid-Major State University that a former head coach John Smith of the tennis program is under investigation for NCAA rule violations, including providing impermissible benefits to student-athletes, during his time at the university. Smith is also being investigated by university officials for the embezzlement of over \$250,000 from the program.

Smith graduated from Mid-Major State University and was part of the tennis team when he was a student. He has led the program to multiple championships both as a student-athlete and a coach and was inducted into the university athletic hall of fame because of his achievements and contributions to the program.

As these investigations are ongoing, more information will be released as it becomes available.

Any media inquiries can be directed to Jane Doe at jdoe@midmajorstate.edu.

Crisis Communication Plan

1. The crisis assessment committee chair will contact other personnel serving on the committee, including the Athletics director, Senior Associate AD, Associate AD for strategic communications, Assistant AD for compliance and student services, University general counsel, and University director of news and media relations.
2. The Athletics director will inform university president of that a former coach and hall-of famer has been found to have embezzled over \$250,000 from the program and violated NCAA recruiting regulations.
3. The Athletic director's office will apprise the faculty athletics representative.
4. The assistant athletic director for compliance will gather as much information as possible regarding who is involved, what has happened, and how it happened.
5. If appropriate at this stage, the assistant athletic director for compliance will contact the NCAA.
6. The associate athletic director for strategic communication, in conjunction with the athletics director and general counsel, will prepare a media statement.
7. The associate athletic director for strategic communication will make an initial statement available to media officials who are making inquiries. The associate athletic director for strategic communications will inform media members that subsequent inquiries should be directed to, and additional information will be released from, the athletics department's communications office. The associate AD for strategic communications will also maintain a record of all media inquiries, responses, and follow-up actions.
8. Depending on the situation, the initial statement may be shared on the department's social media channels.

9. The athletic director's office will apprise other university key officials. Depending on the situation, these may include human resources (HR), the dean of students, or the Title IX officer, or some combination of these.
10. The associate athletic director for strategic communications will inform appropriate staff members (e.g., athletics department communications officers assigned to the program involved).
11. Committee will meet to plan subsequent actions. Key issues to address include the following:
 - a. Who will serve as primary spokesperson?
 - b. What will be the department's response regarding the accused (e.g., no action until trial, suspension, dismissal)?
 - c. How quickly can the department make additional public comments regarding the situation?
 - d. What will be the department's response to the accusations?
 - e. How may the department best communicate that information to the mass media?
 - f. Who else needs to be contacted regarding the situation and who should make those contacts?
 - g. What additional steps need to be taken to facilitate the internal investigation of what has been reported?
12. As quickly as possible, take all actions discussed in committee meeting.
13. As quickly as possible, release additional information regarding the department's response to members of the mass media (Stoldt et al, 2021).

References

Stoldt, G. C., Dittmore, S. W., Ross, M., & Branvold, S. E. (2021). *Sport Public relations* (3rd ed.). Human Kinetics.