

Title: Missing Student Policy

Policy Owner: Associate Vice President of Student Affairs

Responsible Department: Student Affairs

### **I. Purpose**

This policy establishes guidelines and procedures to follow in the event St. Thomas University (“university”) receives reports of a missing student.

### **II. Policy Scope/Applicability**

This policy applies to all students St. Thomas University, whether residential or commuter. All university personnel must comply with this policy.

### **III. Definitions/Key Terms**

- a. *Missing student* – an individual who:
  - i. is enrolled in or registered in an academic program of the university;
  - ii. has completed the immediately preceding term and is eligible for re-enrollment; or
  - iii. is on an approved leave of absence, including under suspension, and who has not been seen for a reasonable amount of time by their roommate, classmate, faculty member, family member, or other campus individual.
- b. *Reasonable amount of time* – This may vary with the time of day and information available regarding the missing student’s daily schedule, and habits.

### **IV. Residential Student Procedures**

#### **a. Designation of Student’s Emergency Contact Information**

Students residing on-campus shall designate an at least one (1) individual to be their emergency contact. This information shall be provided to the Office of Residence Life, during the housing registration process. The student’s emergency contact will remain in effect unless changed by the student.

If a student is reported missing, university personnel will attempt to contact the missing student’s designated emergency contact, no more than twenty-four (24) hours after the student is reported to be missing.

Unless foul play is evident or strongly indicated, a student will be determined missing if he or she is unable to be located for twenty-four (24) hours or more. Once a missing student report is filed, the University will begin an immediate investigation to locate the student.

b. Official Notification and Initial Inquiry of Missing Student

**If any university personnel or student has information that a student may be missing, that person must notify university Public Safety as soon as possible.**

Public Safety will make the determination as to whether a student is missing after it has verified that the reported information is credible and the circumstances warrant declaring the individual missing. The Director of Residence Life in conjunction with Public Safety will undertake an initial inquiry upon reasonable belief that a student may be missing. The initial inquiry may include, but will not be limited to, checking the student's dorm room, class schedule, contacting friends and/or classmates, locating the student's vehicle, and calling the student's cell phone number.

Public Safety shall gather information about a potential missing student from the person who has made the report. This information should include:

- i. The last known time the individual was seen or communicated with;
- ii. A description of the clothes the individual was last seen wearing;
- iii. Where the missing student might be;
- iv. Who the missing student might be with or was last seen with;
- v. A vehicle description, if applicable;
- vi. Any concerns about the missing student's mental well-being;
- vii. A recent photograph of the missing student;
- viii. The missing student's class schedule, and any clubs, organizations, or athletic involvement.

Based on the facts and circumstances and information gathered above, Public Safety will report the matter to the Vice President of Student Affairs [and what other officials?] to inform them about the fact that a student may be missing and to coordinate response efforts.

Students under the age of 18: If a student under the age of 18 is determined to be missing, the university shall notify the student's custodial parent or guardian of the student's disappearance, within twenty-four (24) hours of receiving a missing student report.

Public Safety shall contact the Miami Gardens Police Department to report the student as a missing person when:

- i. An investigation of the missing student report is unsuccessful in locating the student within twenty-four (24) hours of the report being made; or
- ii. It is immediately apparent that the student is a missing person.

c. Campus Communications Regarding Missing Students

The University's Communications department will be responsible for disseminating information to local law enforcement and media designated to obtain public assistance in the search for any missing student.

Any media requests to the university shall be directed to the Vice President of Marketing and Communications.

**V. Commuter Student Procedures**

- a. Upon notice of a potentially missing commuter student. The AVPSA will notify both Public Safety and the Miami Gardens Police Department, if the student has been reported missing for more than 24 hours without any communication.
- b. University officials will assist MGPD with attempting to gather information to locate the student.
- c. The AVPSA will notify the student's emergency contact.

**VI. Reporting**

Any person wishing to report a missing student should contact Public Safety at 305-628-6500.

**VII. Related Policies**

- a. Confidentiality of Records Policy
- b. Student Death Policy
- c. Student Handbook

**VIII. Sunset Review**

- a. This policy will be placed on the university's three-year policy review cycle and will be edited as necessary prior to Summer 2024.