DEALING WITH EXTERNAL HARASSMENT: USC FACULTY GUIDANCE & SUPPORT

UNIVERSITY OF
South Carolina

Office of the Provost

USC FACULTY, GUIDANCE & SUPPORT
TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction....3

Roles, Actions & Resources – Overview....4

Individual Faculty Member....5

Department Chair....8

College/School Administration....10

Communication Coordinators....11

Central Administration....12

Faculty Support Checklist for Chairs....13

Resources & Referral....14

Relevant USC Policies & Resources....16

Campus Resources....17

INTRODUCTION

This guide is designed to assist the campus community in responding to situations in which faculty members are targeted by individuals or groups outside of the university based on the content of the faculty member's scholarship, teaching, and/or service. It addresses potential concerns in such situations and informs the campus about resources available to assist individual faculty members, departments chairs, and other administrators.

The foundation for this guide is the University of South Carolina's unwavering support for academic freedom and freedom of expression. The faculty's right to academic freedom in teaching and research and service is protected as essential to the university's educational mission, even with regard to controversial issues or ideas that may provoke disagreement in the public. Likewise, as citizens, faculty members enjoy strong protection for freedom of expression. Freedom of expression is not only mandated by our Constitution and other laws but is also necessary for robust intellectual exchange on which the university's teaching and research missions depend. Thus, the targeting of scholars for their ideas or views with persistent and pervasive harassment or threats of violence not only harms those individuals, but also strikes at the university's academic core. Through this guide and other means, the university seeks to assist faculty to address intimidation or violence that the expression of unpopular ideas sometimes generates.

This guide is content neutral meaning that is designed to offer support for faculty members across a wide spectrum of views presented in teaching and in areas of research. For example, it may be useful for faculty harassed for their conclusions related to social issues, as well as for faculty whose scientific methods are deemed controversial, such as the use of animals in research.

This guide focuses on threats or harassment directed at faculty members from outside the university. For information about policies and procedures governing harassment committed by USC employees, students, and/or faculty, please see USC's Employee Standards of Conduct, Student Code of Conduct (STAF 6.26), Policy Against Discrimination, Harassment and Sexual Misconduct (CR 1.00), Faculty Workplace Incivility (ACAF 1.80) and other USC policies.

With the approval of officials at the University of Iowa, this document is a reproduction in key areas of the "Faculty Guidance and Support" document developed by the University of Iowa, a best practice resource, that has been modified for use at the University of South Carolina by the Office of the Vice Provost for Faculty Affairs.

ROLES, ACTIONS & RESOURCES - OVERVIEW

In matters of safety and security, individual faculty members are encouraged to make use of campus resources to assist them in responding to an immediate situation, as well as to address any concerns that arise in the longer term. Numerous campus resources are also available to support department chairs and college administrators in responding to external attacks on USC faculty members. Knowing about relevant resources and guidance in advance of a crisis will help our campus respond more effectively when a situation arises.

The following chart offers suggestions for individuals at various levels in the university, including:

- Individual Faculty Member
- Department Chair
- College/Departmental Communication Staff
- College/School Administration
- Central Administration

Role	Actions
Individual Faculty Member:	• **Ensure your safety.** Identify your primary concerns and seek out assistance. The following suggestions may be of use in your personal safety planning. • Notify your department chair, dean and college director of human resources about the harassment. You do not need to manage this experience on your own. • If your safety has been threatened, consult directly USC Threat Management and Victim Service in the Division of Law Enforcement and Safety. The division is dedicated to the early identification, assessment, and management of incidents and behaviors that threaten the safety and well-being of the university community. Staff members are trained to assess these situations and assist with coordinated responses, as needed. For example, they provide tips about collecting evidence, classroom safety and other on-campus safety resources, etc. The USC Threat Management and Victim Service Unit can assist with the notifications and engagements available on the Gamecock Rave app: The Rave Guardian app is available on the Apple App Store for iPhone and Google Play for Android devices. • Consult your community law enforcement agency regarding off-campus safety. • If you believe the harassers know where you live and you are concerned about safety in your home, create a safety plan for home and work. USC Division of Law Enforcement and Safety can assist you in assessing risk and planning accordingly. • If you are experiencing gender-based harassment and/or harassment that is directed to your sexual identity or race, consult the Office of Civil Rights and Title IX to ensure you are fully aware of your rights and resources. • Do not delete any messages, but you may want to disengage from reading all social media posts, including comments posted in response to news articles about your work. You may also want to stop listening to all voice messages, etc. Preserved messages may be of use in identifying the harassers and pressing any relevant charges and aid in a criminal investigation. Seek out assistance to review and sort your incoming messages (e.g., find someone to read your messages and forward harassing ones to the Threat Management and Victim Service Unit contact and work-related ones to you). • Create a log and retain a screenshot to document and archive all threatening emails, tweets, Facebook posts, and phone messages. Consider asking a friend to monitor social and other media on your behalf and to keep you apprised of any developments or threats. • Remember that all email communication you send and receive may be subject to a public records request under South Carolina's Freedom of Information Act. • Be cautious about responding to threatening emails, tweets, blog comments, etc. Although responding may seem like the right thing to do, it may only provide harassers with additional material and serve to prolong social media harassment. If you choose not to respond, you may also want to encourage your friends and colleagues to do the same.

Role	Actions
Individual Faculty Member:	• Protect your cyber-identity (e.g., cell phone, network access, social media). • Consult with your college communication specialists or the Office of Communications and Marketing. These professionals can be an assistance in responding to the situation. For example, you may want to consider preparing a concise message to articulate your position in your own words and distribute it to colleagues as a form of reputation management. Communications staff can also be of assistance in deciding whether/how to respond to media requests that may arise. • Reach out to friends and develop a support system. The USC Employee Assistance Program offers free confidential, short-term counseling to USC faculty and staff and their families. • Know that you are not alone as an academic who has experienced this type of harassment. Several scholars have written about the coordinated and systemic patterns of attack against scholars and faculty members. Connect with others who have gone through similar situations to decrease your isolation and learn from their experience. For more information, contact the Dean of the Faculty and VP for Faculty Affairs in the Office of the Provost. • Consult with your department chair if you feel this attack has affected your progress toward tenure, promotion, or reappointment.

Facing Harassment of Social Media: Know your Options*

According to a 2021 Pew Research Study on ***The State of Online Harassment*****, 41 percent of adults report being the subject of harassing behavior online, and 66 percent have witnessed harassing behavior directed at others. Responding to online harassment can be challenging, even scary if the harassment becomes threatening. We recommend the following options:

1. Ignore them. The goal of social media agitators (commonly referred to as trolls) is to elicit a response. The good news is that even the most persistent trolls typically move on if you ignore them long enough.

2. Mute them. If you are tired of seeing what someone is saying about you on twitter, mute them. This can be a good first step. The harassing party is not notified that you muted them, and you can blissfully ignore their hateful comments. If you are worried their comments may become threatening, ask a friend or colleague to check your feed on your behalf.

3. Block them. Several social media platforms allow you to selectively prevent others from following you, seeing your posts, or commenting on your content. Please note that when you block someone, they are typically notified of the block and may choose to criticize you on their own channels.

4. Respond. If someone is sharing misinformation about your work, consider sharing a brief response to correct the falsehoods. This act will likely result in additional posts from the harassing party, but it does give you a platform to set the record straight. If you choose to respond, make sure to follow these steps: (a). Stick to undisputable facts that are not open to interpretation. Trolls are not interested in having rational or open-minded conversations. Keep responses short, concise, and above all, factual. Correct inaccuracies and move on. (b). Maintain your dignity. Be polite, professional, and unemotional. Resist becoming defensive or fighting fire with fire. You will only appear combative.

5. Record and report. If you feel there is a potential threat to your safety, contact the USC Division of Law Enforcement and Safety, and keep a record of the hostile or threatening posts. Take and save screenshots in case you need to file a police report or take legal action.

**Managing Harassment(http://osc.uiowa.edu/managing-harassment), retrieved from the University of Iowa (October 22nd, 2023) and modified for use by the Office of the Vice Provost for Faculty Affairs, USC.*

***(https://www.pewresearch.org/internet/2021/01/13/personal-experiences-with-online-harassment/)*

Role	Actions
Department Chair:	• Contact the faculty member as soon as you become aware of the situation. Meet with them to offer support in the initial days of the attack to ensure the faculty member is aware of campus resources. • Before all else, work with the faculty members to ensure that their on-campus and off-campus safety and security concerns are addressed. Be aware that the identity of the faculty member may influence their individualized needs (e.g., parental status, faculty rank, identity). With the faculty member's consent, reach out to appropriate campus resources to address whatever issues the faculty member identifies. • It is possible that social media and phone harassment will be received by multiple offices. Inform the department administrative staff on a need-to-know basis. Ensure that department staff members whose responsibilities may include answering harassing phone calls are supported and informed about strategies for being on the front line (e.g., a script or template response, instructions for preserving phone messages to aid future investigations). • Stay in communication with the dean's office to ensure a coordinated response. Share details of the situation on a need-to-know basis and be mindful that all email communication may be subject to the South Carolina Freedom of Information Act. • Consider the well-being of the rest of the departmental faculty, staff, and students (e.g., co-authors, graduate assistants, front-line staff). Consult with the threatened faculty member about what and how to share information with the department. If possible, bring people together to discuss the situation, the department's actions, and available support resources. • Facilitate the physical movement of assigned classrooms and/or workspace if feasible and if the affected faculty member requests it. • Facilitate the removal of the faculty member's direct contact information from department or college webpages and the USC directory, in collaboration with human resources and if the affected faculty member requests it. • If the attacks are identity-based (e.g., harassment based on gender, race, sexual identity), consult with the Office of Civil Rights and Title IX to counsel the faculty member about their rights and with the Office of Access and Opportunity to explore additional support options for the faculty member and others in the department who share their identity (e.g., students, colleagues, staff).

Role	Actions
Department Chair:	• After addressing the faculty member's safety and security concerns, keep in mind the potential effect of this event on their academic career. For example, if their scholarship was attacked, discuss how/whether it will affect their future research trajectory. Connecting the faculty member with other scholars who have experienced similar attacks may be useful to contextualize the events within their broader career goals and experiences. • Discuss issues of academic freedom in regular forums (e.g., faculty meetings, student seminars), including attention to ways that external forces may attempt to silence scholars through social media attacks and the resources available to respond when/if attacks occur. • If you become the target of the harassment, consult with the dean's office, and refer to the strategies recommended for faculty members (above) to ensure your own safety.

Role	Actions
College Administration: Dean, Associate Dean, College HR Director	• If a crisis emerges, consult with the targeted faculty member to share how you would like to handle the crisis and discuss any concerns they might have. Involve the faculty member's department chair in crisis management conversations to ensure that efforts are coordinated. • Support the department chair in working with the targeted faculty member by offering assistance and resources. Be familiar with the Faculty Support Checklist to ensure that the targeted faculty member's immediate and longer-term needs are cared for. • Inform the dean's office staff on a need-to-know basis. It is likely that social media and phone harassment will be directed at multiple offices. Informing all relevant individuals in the dean's office will strengthen the college's ability to engage in a coordinated response. Ensure that dean's office staff members whose responsibilities may include answering harassing phone calls are supported and informed about strategies for being on the front line. (e.g., a script or template response, instructions for preserving phone messages to aid future investigations). • Engage college HR director in the coordination of the college-wide response, including support for staff who may be experiencing stress due to being on the front line of answering harassing phone calls and/or may be concerned about their own safety. • Depending on the nature of the attacks, be aware that students, staff, and faculty who share the identity and/or research area under attack (e.g., LGBTQ students, if the faculty member's sexual identity is under attack; students of color, if the faculty member's racial/ethnic identity is the focus) may also be experiencing trauma because of this incident. Consult with the Office of Access and Opportunity, Student On-Campus Mental Health Services, and/or the USC Employee Assistance Program to arrange for support services for students and staff in the college.

Role	Actions
College Administration: Dean, Associate Dean, College HR Director Possible Proactive Steps to Consider	• Proactively develop a leadership message that defends academic freedom, the importance of faculty safety, and the development of learning environments in which difficult issues are discussed and dissected to use as a template should these types of crises emerge. Work with the Office of Communications and Marketing to develop a message that emphasizes university values, draws upon best practice examples from other campuses, and addresses potential concerns of multiple constituents (e.g., faculty, alumni, legislators, donors, students). • Statements should emphasize the institution's mission and values rather than comment on the faculty member's scholarship. • Consider inviting the USC Threat Management and Victim Service Unit to present their role and resources before or during a crisis.

Role	Actions
Communication Coordinators:	• Inform the dean if you become aware that a faculty member's name has shown up in a harassing social media post (e.g., via a Google alert notification). Keep the dean informed of ongoing mentions throughout the crisis management process. • Provide support for the faculty member being targeted, including tips on working with the media, managing one's professional and personal reputation, and handling social media. • Work with the dean's office and the Office of Communications and Marketing to coordinate information sharing on a need-to-know basis and to coordinate a consistent message (e.g., phone scripts for front-line staff answering aggressive callers). • Consult with college faculty, staff, and administrators about the potential impact of speaking with the media about faculty harassment and offer media training and guidance. Also, remind them about South Carolina's Freedom of Information Act and its impact on email communication. • Provide assistance to the college in crafting a leadership message that defends academic freedom, emphasizes university values, and addresses potential concerns of multiple constituents (e.g., faculty, alumni, legislators, donors, students).
Central Administration:	**Office of the Executive Vice President and Provost** • Establish open communication with the affected faculty member's dean and request updates, as needed, on the situation. • Reach out to the targeted faculty member, reiterating the university's commitment to academic freedom as appropriate, and encouraging the faculty member to consult with their department chair for support and assistance. • Provide tools and training for faculty administrators to use when developing immediate- and longer-term response plans. • In consultation with the Office of the President and Office of Communications and Marketing, issue a statement (as appropriate) asserting the importance of academic freedom, freedom of expression, and commitment to the safety of the faculty. The statement should emphasize the institution's mission and values rather than comment on the faculty member's scholarship.

Role	Actions
Central Administration:	**Office of Civil Rights and Title IX** • Provide resources and support to the individual faculty member and department when there are personalized attacks on the faculty member's identity and/or diversity-related scholarship or teaching. **Office of Access and Opportunity** • Provide student support, especially for students whose identities and/or interests are like the targeted faculty member. • Establish consistent communication with the Office of the Provost and consult on issuing a statement of support, as appropriate. **Communications and Marketing** • Provide communication counsel to unit communicator, administration, and faculty members. • Advise on media responses, if applicable. **Division of Student Affairs and Academic Support** • Provide interpretation of relevant student policies. • Provide student support. **Division of Human Resources** • Provide support and assistance to the individual faculty members, as well as departmental and college administration. **Division of Law Enforcement and Safety** • Offer threat and violence risk assessment including evaluations for violations of law. • Coordinate with other universities and law enforcement agencies. • Provide victim assistance (orders of protection and restraining orders development of safety plans). • Document violations of criminal law. • Respond immediately to disruptions. **General Counsel** • Provide legal counsel, representation, interpretation, and analysis on a broad array of substantive issues related to carrying out official duties as an employee or representative of the university. • Provide/coordinate effective legal services on issues facing all sectors of the University of South Carolina. • Assist in developing policies, practices, and procedures that reduce legal risk. **Office of the President** • Maintain consistent communication with the Office of the Provost and work together, as appropriate, to issue a statement asserting the importance of free speech, academic freedom, and the safety of USC faculty.

FACULTY SUPPORT CHECKLIST FOR CHAIRS

The foundation for this guide is the University of South Carolina's unwavering support for academic freedom and freedom of expression. The faculty's right to academic freedom in teaching and research is protected as essential to the university's educational mission, even with regard to controversial issues or ideas that may provoke disagreement in the public. Likewise, as citizens, faculty members enjoy strong protection for freedom of expression. Freedom of expression is not only mandated by our Constitution and other laws but is also necessary for the robust intellectual exchange on which the university's teaching and research missions depend. Thus, the targeting of scholars for their ideas or views not only harms those individuals, but also strikes at the university's academic core. Through this guide and other means, the university seeks to protect faculty against the intimidation or violence that the expression of unpopular ideas sometimes generates.

This checklist helps department chairs and other administrators to address possible concerns and provide resources in the immediate and longer-term aftermath of a crisis in which faculty are targeted for their ideas or views. The department chair and/or their designee may use this checklist when meeting with the faculty member to gather information and create a safety plan. It may be useful to capture as much information as possible during these interactions in order to limit the number of times the faculty member has to retell the story. If it is not possible for the department chair or designee to engage in this type of meeting, please refer the faculty member to the dean's office for follow-up.

In what environment(s) is the harassment occurring (check all that apply)?

☐ Email
☐ In the office
☐ On-campus stalking
☐ social media
☐ Other
☐ Voice messages left on campus phones
☐ At home
☐ Via media requests
☐ In the classroom
☐ Harassment of family members/children

What is the nature of harassment? When did it begin? How has it changed since it began?

Is there a threat of violence (stop-call police)?

Is the harasser known to the complainant?

Is harasser affiliated with the university?

What is the faculty member's greatest concern(s)?

Resources & Referral

Depending on the type and location of the threat, and the identity of the faculty member, offer departmental support to implement the following, as directed by the faculty member:

Actions	Resource/s
Engage with the USC Threat Management and Victim Service Unit about on-campus safety resources, including assessing level of danger and threat, arranging for escorts to a parking lot, as needed, and rerouting/reviewing incoming email messages. The USC Threat Management and Victim Service Unit is available to do an initial assessment over the phone or in-person with the chair or individual faculty member. The USC Threat Management and Victim Service Unit can be contacted directly to arrange for safety planning and/or to investigate violent threats.	USC Threat Management and Victim Service Unit. Division of Law Enforcement and Safety.
The unit can provide instruction for activating the guardian feature of the Gamecock Rave Guardian Safety App as well as how to preserve incoming messages to aid in their potential use as evidence, in the case that some type of charges are filed.	USC Threat Management and Victim Service Unit. Division of Law Enforcement and Safety.
If needed and if feasible, arrange for relocation of the faculty member's classroom(s) and office, including technology (e.g., computer, printer, internet). Remove the new room numbers from public listings (e.g., directory).	Departmental and College Administration.
If the threats are identity-based (e.g., harassment based on gender, race, sexual identity, national origin, or other protected class), consult the Office of Civil Rights and Title IX within two business days for guidance regarding any relevant issues and procedures.	Office of Civil Rights and Title IX.
Arrange for a process to have someone other than the faculty member sort incoming emails, voice messages, etc. Seek out professional assistance regarding how to preserve the messages appropriately for potential use as evidence.	USC Threat Management and Victim Service Unit. Division of Law Enforcement and Safety. Departmental and College Administration.

Actions	Resource/s
Refer to the Office of Communications and Marketing for media training. Reporters may call for a comment or interview; deciding whether to talk with the press is a personal decision. Consulting with media experts can assist in the decision- making process and skill development. The office can also consult on social media best practices when encountering harassment.	Office of Communications and Marketing.
Provide information about relevant academic policies that address specific concerns expressed by the faculty member. See the relevant USC Policies and Resources section of this guide for examples.	Office of the Dean of the Faculty and VP for Faculty Affairs.
Support faculty members who feel their social identity is a component of the attack (e.g., faculty of color, LGBTQ faculty). Provide resources and support for others in the department (e.g., students, staff, faculty) who share the faculty member's identity and who may also feel threatened.	Office of Access and Opportunity.
Provide information about available campus resources to address stress management and counseling services.	USC Employee Assistance Program.

RELEVANT USC POLICIES & RESOURCES

Policies & Guidance:

- **Employee Standards of Ethical Conduct (Includes statement about academic freedom):** https://sc.edu/about/offices_and_divisions/provost/policiesandprocedures/universitypolicies/standards.php

- **Extension of Faculty Tenure-Track Probationary Period and Scheduled Post-Tenure Review (ACAF 1.31):** https://www.sc.edu/search/?cx=013416120310277204335%3Awk85hzl5qdq&q=acaf+1.31#gsc.tab=0&gsc.q=acaf%201.31&gsc.page=1

- **Faculty Manual (Approved by BOT June 2023):** https://www.sc.edu/about/offices_and_divisions/provost/docs/faculty_manual/facultymanual_columbia.pdf

- **Faculty Workplace Incivility (ACAF 1.80):** https://www.sc.edu/policies/ppm/acaf180.pdf

- **Freedom of Information Policy (UNIV 2.0):** https://www.sc.edu/policies/ppm/univ200.pdf

- **Freedom of Expression and Access to Campus (UNIV 6.00):** https://www.sc.edu/policies/ppm/univ600.pdf

- **Policy Against Discrimination, Harassment & Sexual Misconduct (CR 1.00):** https://www.sc.edu/policies/ppm/cr100.pdf

- **Protecting the Institution from External Influences (BTRU 1.19):** https://www.sc.edu/policies/ppm/brtu119.pdf

- **Public/Media Relations (COMM 3.00):** http://www.sc.edu/policies/ppm/comm300.pdf

- **Threat Assessment and Management (LESA 2.0):** https://www.sc.edu/policies/ppm/lesa200.pdf

- **Use of USC Name (BTRU 1.12):** https://www.sc.edu/policies/ppm/btru112.pdf

Campus Resources

The following offices are available to assist during crisis management and also to provide longer-term guidance and programs. Please be aware that email communication with these offices may be considered a "public record" and subject to the South Carolina Open Records Law.

- **Office of Access and Opportunity:**
  Associate Vice President for Access and Opportunity
  Michelle Bryan, Ph.D.
  E-mail: michelle.bryan@mailbox.sc.edu
  Phone: (803)576-6162
  Thornwell Administrative Annex, Suite 230
  Columbia, SC 29208

- **Office of Civil Rights and Title IX:**
  Associate Vice President for Civil Rights and Title IX
  Molly Peirano
  901 Sumter Street
  James F Byrnes Building
  Suite 401
  Columbia, SC 29201
  Phone: 803-777-3854
  Fax: 803-777-2296
  Email: **civilrights@mailbox.sc.edu**

- **Law Enforcement and Safety:**
  Associate Vice President and Chief of Police
  Chistopher L. Wuchenich
  E-mail: clw@mailbox.sc.edu
  Threat Management Unit: THREAT@mailbox.sc.edu
  Victim Service Unit: VICTSERV@mailbox.sc.edu
  Phone: (803)777-8400
  1415 Henderson Street
  1600 Hampton Annex
  Columbia, SC 29208

- **Employee Assistance Program(EAP):**
  Phone: (803)777-3821
  E-mail: uscer@mailbox.sc.edu

- **Employee Relations Office:**
  Phone: (803)777-3821
  E-mail: uscer@mailbox.sc.edu

- **University Counseling Service:**
  Log into mygroup.com
  Username: USC
  Password: guest
  Phones: (800)633-3335
  (704)529-1428

- **Faculty Ombudsman:**
  Robin DiPietro
  Phone: (803)777-2600
  E-mail: rdipietr@mailbox.sc.edu

- **General Counsel:**
  General Counsel and Executive Director of Compliance
  Terry Parham
  E-mail: terry@mailbox.sc.edu
  Phone: (803)777-7854
  109 Osborne Administration Building
  University of South Carolina
  Columbia, SC 29208

- **Office of Communications and Marketing:**
  Vice President for Communications
  Larry Thomas
  E-mail: larryt@mailbox.sc.edu
  Phone: (803) 777-7440

  Assistant Vice President of Institutional Relations & Public Affairs
  Jeff Stensland
  E-mail: stenslan@mailbox.sc.edu
  Phone: (803)777-3686
  107 Osborne Administration Building
  University of South Carolina
  Columbia, SC 29208

- **Office of the Provost**
  Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs
  and Provost
  Donna K. Arnett, Ph.D.
  E-mail: provost@sc.edu
  Phone: (803)777-2808

  In case you have any questions or concerns,
  please contact:

  Vice President for Faculty Affairs and Dean of Faculty
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  University of South Carolina
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