

Policy on Administrative Statements

Purpose

- To establish a proactive protocol for statements coming from the University of Pittsburgh School of Law's deans' office in response to current events that bear upon legal education and the law school environment; and
- To set expectations for the Pitt Law community for when and how the administration will lead the law school's response to such events.

Statements coming from the deans' office do not necessarily reflect the views of the faculty.

When will this protocol be followed?

The dean and/or vice dean are often called upon to address our community in a variety of instances. The dean and vice dean must communicate to our community about building operations, and provide updates to course information and operations. They often share changes in personnel and other news about Pitt Law community members. This protocol is not intended to govern communications that typically relate to the regular business of the law school.

This protocol is intended to address two specific circumstances:

- (1) When an instance of faculty, staff, or student conduct that is inconsistent with the values encompassed by Pitt Law's commitment to equity and inclusion causes a significant emotional and social disruption among Pitt Law's students, faculty, and staff;

OR

- (2) When breaking social or political news events intersect with both the study of law and the values encompassed by Pitt Law's commitment to equity and inclusion.
 - Equity: *Our vision of an equitable law school is realized when institutional barriers to fulfilling one's potential as a law student are removed or accommodated for*
 - Inclusion: *Our vision of an inclusive law school is realized when all learners feel welcome and supported within both the law school and the professional communities the school is integral to*

Given that each newsworthy event represents a unique situation and carries varying degrees of impact, the decision to respond to social or political news events will be informed by consideration of:

- The likely emotional and psychological impact upon Pitt Law's students, faculty, and staff
- The interests of Pitt Law's key stakeholders (e.g., alumni, University of Pittsburgh's Chancellors & Provost Office) with respect to the incident
- The intersectional nature of the incident
- The proximity of the incident to members of the Pitt Law community.

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What is the protocol for preparing and releasing an administrative statement?

- Should there be an event that, based upon the considerations above, leads to the conclusion that a response is warranted, Pitt Law’s dean and/or vice dean, in consultation with the Dean of Students, the Dean for OEIE, and any other relevant party will prepare a three-part **Truth – Space – Action**, or “TSA” response.¹ This means that:
 1. The administration will acknowledge the occurrence by releasing a statement to current Pitt Law faculty, students, and staff that speaks to the **truth** or veracity of the event using reliable sources to support the information provided.
 - Statements will relate the issue to Pitt Law’s mission, credo, and core values
 - Statements will contextualize the issue to relevant historical or legal milestones
 - Statements will consider the multiple perspectives of a situation, with close attention paid to those whose perspectives are historically underrepresented and marginalized
 - Clear explanations of policy, procedures, rules, and requirements that must be followed will be shared
 - Confidentiality will be respected when at issue
 - *Timeline: within 24 - 48 hours of the event or incident*
 2. The administration will acknowledge the array of emotional responses such incidents and events by identifying one or more **spaces** for current Pitt Law faculty, students, and staff to process their feelings. These spaces include, but are not limited to:
 - Pitt Law Community Dialogues
 - Increased opportunities to schedule one-on-one meetings with OEIE, the Dean of Students, the Vice Dean, or Dean
 - *Timeline: within 48 - 72 hours of the event or incident*
 3. The administration will acknowledge the importance of aligning Pitt Law’s values with its behaviors by identifying one or more **actions** that will be taken by the administration, or that can be taken by students, faculty, and staff in response to the event or incident. These actions may include:
 - Opportunities for training / workshops
 - Identifying related learning resources
 - Adopting new policy
 - *Timeline: The event planning process, policy review, or other action item will be initiated within one calendar week of the event or incident*

¹ See <https://www.teamdynamicsmn.com/blog/truth-space-action>.

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Who is responsible for catalyzing the Protocol?

- Pitt Law's dean and/or vice dean will be responsible for catalyzing the protocol.

How will the content of each step in the protocol be communicated?

- The TSA response will be communicated via email. Such emails may be supplemented by the use of the Pitt Law e-docket, Pitt Law social media, or other means of communication. The TSA response will, in every case, be communicated through means accessible to all current Pitt Law faculty, students, and staff

Where will this policy be shared with the Pitt Law Community?

- This policy will be shared on Pitt Law's website (under the Resources tab), and on Pitt Law's OEIE website. This policy will be shared at relevant trainings including, but not limited to: Faculty workshops; Adjunct Faculty Orientation; 1L Student Orientation, and Student Leadership retreats.