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COMMUNICATION IN A SCANDAL: A CONTENT ANALYSIS OF CRISIS
COMMUNICATION AT PENN STATE

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ABSTRACT

Scandals and crises are not situations any organization wants to find itself in, yet it is imperative for those in charge to know how to effectively deal with controversy and steer the organization back to solid ground should they find themselves in the midst of one. This study examines the specific case of the Jerry Sandusky Child Abuse Sex Scandal that rocked the Penn State community and tarnished its once spotless reputation forever. The decisions made in the first month following the break of the scandal by top administrators and the Board of Trustees in regards to communication efforts to its faculty, students, and surrounding community are documented and then examined. Crisis communication management literature was consulted in the analysis of the administration's communications decisions, as well as community input. Decisions that were appropriate, timely, and effective are noted and discussed. Also, decisions that were ill-advised, counterproductive and, in some cases, detrimental are also highlighted and studied at length. Suggestions for future improvements are included.

Keywords: Jerry Sandusky, Penn State University, child sexual abuse, crisis management

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Chapter 1 - Introduction

Communication is a vital aspect to everyday life, from the social world to business. To have a successful, productive and effective organization, proper communication is required, not only through public relations and advertising, but also through interpersonal and organizational communication. Whether a business on Wall Street, a small corner store in a rural neighborhood, or even a large undergraduate university, the necessity for dynamic and efficient communication within the organization and amongst all parties involved in its immediate community is the same. Creating and maintaining communication lines to all employees, beneficiaries, and community members is important at all times, but especially when crises arise. Communication can either help or hurt a crisis situation, depending on how it is handled. Mass panic and chaos can be avoided if the right steps are taken to inform the people of what is happening, what sanctions are planned, and what they can do to help themselves. When this communication falters either because it is handled poorly or disintegrates altogether, negative consequences will soon follow.

In November 2011, Penn State University bore witness to the biggest scandal in college sports history. Former assistant football coach Jerry Sandusky was accused of multiple counts of child sexual abuse and the events thereafter sent the school and the entire community into uncharted chaos. This was arguably the largest crisis Penn State had ever had to deal with in the entirety of its 158 year history. The necessity for superior communication from the administration, not only to the media and the country, but to the faculty, students, and State College community members was not merely present, it was glaring. Decisions made at the top level of administration in the critical days following the break of the scandal would play a crucial role in whether the university would overcome the situation with little damage or if the entire community would end up spiraling into a catastrophic mess that could take decades to rebuild.

This study will examine the decisions made by top administrators and the Board of Trustees to communicate with the Penn State faculty, students, and downtown community during the first month following the break of the “Sandusky Scandal.” These findings will be analyzed alongside previous research on effective crisis management communication protocol, determining the effective choices as well as critiquing the ineffective decisions and providing suggestions for improvement. This study will first objectively document the events that took place in attempts to answer the question of what happened. Then the analysis section will serve to answer these questions:

RQ1: What did Penn State’s administration do that was effective in handling the scandal?

RQ2: What did Penn State’s administration do that was ineffective in handling the scandal?

RQ3: What should have Penn State’s administration done differently in handling the scandal?

Understanding what happened during this particular crisis, figuring out what worked and which efforts went awry, is important in order to increase crisis communication knowledge. General handbooks on crisis management can only be improved with the supplementation of actual case studies. When organizations learn from real events, it can help them to increase the likelihood that should future crises arise, they can better imitate what worked and avoid those decisions that did not.

Chapter 2 - Literature Review

Much research has been done on crisis management and corresponding effective communication decisions. According to Millar and Smith (2002),

Crises have been described in various ways in crisis communication and management articles and books. While the words describing the event may differ, some features remain relatively constant: appears suddenly, escalates in intensity, demands quick reaction, disrupts organization's routine and performance, creates uncertainty, anxiety and stress within and outside the organization, threatens the organization's reputation, challenges the organization's human, physical and financial resources, focuses the media and other outside audiences on the organization, increases government and regulatory interest in the organization, and alters the organization permanently. (p. 1)

Organizations must deal with issues and problems of varying degrees on a daily basis. When an organization does not control a problem in a timely manner, the problem transforms into a crisis.

There are many ways an organization can track, prepare for, and work to prevent crises. Having a working plan in place to prevent crises is vital to successful business because the best way to manage a crisis is to prevent it. However, sometimes crises are unpreventable for various reasons, thus a solid crisis communications management plan (CMP) must be put into place should such a situation arise. According to Ogrizek and Guillery (1999), "communication in times of crisis, or *crisis communication*, consists basically of a set of concepts, principles, analysis, and working methods that apply specifically to the very particular situation known as a crisis," (p xi). During a crisis, this type of communication helps "to avoid making crude errors of judgment and prevent worsening of the situation caused by stress-inducing delays, inappropriate reactions, or irresponsible comments," (p xii). Coombs (1999) explains that there are four basic

factors involved in crisis management. These factors are the segments of prevention, preparation, performance, and learning. Preparation involves the crisis management plan (CMP) which every company, big or small, should have in place. Preparation components should be tested regularly because performance during a real crisis is very public and under much scrutiny. Mistakes need to be minimized through practice. Learning is very important, not only from one's own crises, but from others' as well. Therefore crisis management is in essence an ongoing process.

“Crisis management is about being prepared to handle adversity and minimize impact most effectively and facilitating the management process during the chaos,” (Sapriel, 2003, p. 350). Too often in the midst of a crisis, organizations become defensive and lose control of the way the story will be told to not only the media but more importantly to its significant constituents. It is imperative that control must be kept in the hands of the organization in order to lessen the degree to which the situation causes destruction for both business and reputation (Millar & Smith, 2002).

Crisis communication is strategic. “Even in the frenzy of a crisis, what you say and do should seek to achieve specific objectives relevant to the overall goals of your organization,” (Millar & Smith, 2002, p. 51). Millar and Smith stress the importance of “telling your story first.” They state that this seldom happens because in the midst of the breaking of the story, people try to make sense of what is going on via the internet, and reporters get a hold of bits of news and sometimes prematurely run with it. Not only is “telling your story first” important, but how the organization chooses to tell its story is also a key factor in the success of the crisis management. Managing the media coverage through “providing the media with what they need to get their job done, but on your terms” and utilizing the media to “rapidly reach audiences important to your organization” are vital. “For the media to tell the story to their audiences, the media need you. So, to gain some control of the crisis story, prepare to use and be used by the media,” (Millar & Smith, 2002, p. 49).

According to Ogrizek and Guillery (1999), there are eight major principles to communicating in a crisis:

1. **Move Fast.** The questions raised are often distressing, but waiting too long to react is seen as a sign of weakness or confusion. However, speed should not be confused with haste. Avoid wanting to explain everything, say everything, and answer every question immediately. The very minimum required is to give basic information very quickly, together with the essential facts, while indicating what measures have been or are being put into place.
2. **Anticipate the Medium Term.** The initial incident will develop over time. It is necessary to consider all developments, which will considerably change the profile of the event.
3. **Be a Credible Source of Information.** Avoid inconsistencies across the flow of information coming from different members of the organization. The ideal is to be able to speak with one voice.
4. **Be in Step with Perceptions and the Nature of the Event.** Analyze and take into account the emotional and sometimes symbolic aspects of the risk raised.
5. **Put the Crisis in Perspective.** Send the public a clear message about the corporate position and their priorities.
6. **Respond Immediately to Accusations and Confusion from Guerrilla Communication.** Rapidly respond in a reasoned way, not just with simple denials, to rumors, arguments, doubts and accusations.
7. **Mobilize and Coordinate Internal and External Resources.**
8. **Instigate Actions That Can Influence the Course of the Crisis.** Actions capable of having a positive impact on the crisis itself, either because they are geared to responding to doubts or uncertainties, or because they have a strong symbolic value

in offering reassurance and in displaying the company's commitment, responsible attitude, or even its desire to be transparent. Be proactive. (p. 53)

In the initial response it is important to respond quickly, speak with one consistent voice, be open, express sympathy, and deliver instructing information. The reason that the initial response is so vital is due to the fact that the first impressions the public and the stakeholders make in regards to the crisis can often be hard to change should they start off wrong. These first impressions can have a major impact on the remainder of the crisis communication efforts (Coombs, 1999). "Damaged credibility undercuts all future efforts, no matter how well planned and executed they may be," (Millar & Smith, 2002, p. 54). "When issues reported by the media are not tempered by explanation of context from the organization, increasingly negative media frames result, therefore elevating the salience of the issues and the perceived severity of the crisis. When issues are not proactively managed, people outside the organization begin to identify with the side of the issue presented in the media," (White, 2009, p. 176).

Therefore, Millar and Smith (2002) suggest that an organization be well prepared with a straightforward statement to first address the situation and begin telling the story. In this statement only information which can be confirmed should be included, noting that as information becomes available the public will be updated. It is recommended to make the statement as soon as possible, but not before the information you can provide is verifiable. Millar and Smith (2002) also advise to quickly find out what is known and unknown. "Some information beats no information. At the very least, you can make the initial statement of confirmation with a promise of more details as they become available," (p. 53).

As Sapriel (2003) points out, "communicating with stakeholders is only half of the equation. Listening to them and their concerns is essential to ensure that the organization's internal operational view of the way the crisis is being managed is as close as possible to the external perceptual one of the stakeholders," (p. 353). Also, according to Coombs (1999) the

verbal aspects of communication are not the only important ones to focus on. Effective communication strategies involve both the verbal and nonverbal aspects. The actions an organization directs toward the crisis are of utmost importance. No action can oftentimes speak louder than any spoken words at all. Further, it cannot be stressed enough that communicating in a crisis requires teamwork. Open communication among all levels of those involved is essential to overcoming the crisis.

Today's technology, specifically social media, has become a huge part in how people get their news and in some cases how rumors are created and spread. Organizations must be up to date and connected to all relevant avenues of communication dissemination in order to effectively communicate with the public and to monitor activity and gauge response and public opinion. Millar and Smith (2002) stress the significant impact that these technological advances have had on the way people communicate, especially during crises. In order for an organization to utilize crisis communications to successfully overcome a scandal, these new technologies cannot be ignored. Instead, proper use can significantly help in gaining some control over the communication during a crisis.

As highlighted by Steve Adubato (2008), the Johnson & Johnson Tylenol Scare is the gold standard in crisis communication management. They acted in a proactive, honest, and timely manner, successfully saving the long-term viability of the company. "They were consistently out front and accessible. They identified the company's most important stakeholders and worked to communicate, share information, and respond to questions and concerns from these various publics...Johnson & Johnson's willingness to be open and honest—even when it came to mistakes and misstatements—was critical to gaining the trust of the news media and the general public," (p. 14).

Chapter 3 - The Events

Week One: Friday, November 4th – Saturday 12th

On Friday November 4th, 2011, former Penn State assistant football Coach Jerry Sandusky was indicted by a Grand Jury on forty counts of sexual abuse charges against young boys. It was reported that these incidents spanned fifteen years. It was also reported that Mr. Sandusky had been under investigation since January 2009 (Orso, 2011 a). News of the indictment was circulated through the Penn State student-run newspaper, *The Daily Collegian* (hereafter *The Collegian*); however, they reported that officials from the Office of Athletic Communications and University Relations both did not return their calls for comment.

The next day, November 5th, the 23-page explicit and graphic Grand Jury report was made public. Sandusky was taken into custody and released on \$100,000 unsecured bail with a preliminary hearing set for November 9th. Also that day, then current Athletic Director Tim Curley and Interim Senior Vice President for Finance and Business Gary Shultz were both charged with perjury and failure to report suspected abuse. These charges were in connection to the charges filed against Jerry Sandusky. No address to the faculty, students, and State College residents was made by the administration concerning the developing events other than a statement issued by then current President of the university, Graham Spanier. Spanier “called the allegations against Sandusky ‘troubling’ and expressed his ‘unconditional support’ for Curley and Shultz,” (Orso, 2011b). In the statement Spanier said:

I have known and worked daily with Tim and Gary for more than 16 years. I have complete confidence in how they have handled the allegations about a former University employee. Tim Curley and Gary Schultz operate at the highest levels of honesty, integrity and compassion. I am confident the record will show that these charges are groundless

and that they conducted themselves professionally and appropriately (Orso, 2011b, para. 20).

According to Steven Petrella (2011a) of *The Collegian*, both Coach Coquese Washington of the women's basketball team and men's basketball Coach Pat Chambers declined to comment on the situation Saturday. Also, Associate Athletic Director Joe Battista did not provide a comment when asked about naming a successor if Curley were to step down. However, Battista did state that he supported Curley as a friend.

With the release of the Grand Jury report, members of the Penn State community slowly began to understand what was unfolding. Students took to social media sites, such as Twitter and Facebook, to express their vast array of emotions regarding the allegations against a former Penn State employee, as well as current employees in high positions of power. The confusion and questions were endless, but the only sources of information remained the student-run newspaper, *The Collegian*, and Graham Spanier's lone statement. The Board had yet to make a public statement to the community about the Grand Jury report. The local newspaper, the *Centre Daily Times* (CDT), did not initially report on the matter until Monday the 7th.

Two days after the initial news break of the indictment, on November 6th, Scott Paterno released a statement made by his father, then head coach of the football team, Joe Paterno (nicknamed JoePa on campus). Joe said, "while he did all he could by reporting Sandusky's wrongdoings to Curley, he is still upset about the situation," (Petrella, 2011a, para. 2).

Sue and I have devoted our lives to helping young people reach their potential. The fact that someone we thought we knew might have harmed young people to this extent is deeply troubling. If this is true we were all fooled, along with scores of professionals trained in such things, and we grieve for the victims and their families. They are in our prayers. (Petrella, 2011a, para. 3)

He urged everyone to be fair and wait until the trial is complete to pass final judgments.

In the meantime I would ask all Penn Staters to continue to trust in what that name represents, continue to pursue their lives every day with high ideals and not let these events shake their beliefs nor who they are. (Petrella, 2011a, para. 5)

JoePa also spoke to the facts presented in the Grand Jury report. He said that “while an assistant coach made him aware of the situation in 2002, the details were not nearly as graphic as those contained in the Grand Jury report,” (Petrella, 2011a, para. 6).

It was obvious that the witness was distraught over what he saw. Regardless, it was clear that the witness saw something inappropriate involving Mr. Sandusky. As Coach Sandusky was retired from our coaching staff at that time, I referred the matter to university administrators. (para. 7)

Also on Sunday, the Board of Trustees at Penn State held an emergency executive meeting. Afterward, the Chairman of the Board issued a statement announcing a plan “to ensure that the university policy is effective in preserving the safety of children,” (Gallagher, 2011a, para. 16). The steps in the plan were said to include reviewing Penn State’s policies and procedures related to the protection of children, reviewing police reporting protocols with administrators, publicizing the findings of the reviews, and working to enhance educational programming around related topics. It was also stated that the plan would be separate from the Attorney General’s investigation. President Spanier himself also released another statement. He stated:

The protection of children is of paramount importance...The University will take a number of actions moving forward to increase the safety and security within our facilities and make everyone aware of the protocols in place for handling these issues. (Gallagher, 2011a, para. 14-15).

Also on the agenda for the meeting were the requests from Tim Curley and Gary Shultz to step down from their respective positions, although temporarily in Curley’s case. He requested to be

placed on administrative leave to devote time needed in defending himself against the recent allegations against him (Gallagher, 2011a). The Board and Spanier granted the requests. The status of Spanier's position and also of Head Coach Joe Paterno were not discussed. *The Collegian* reported the official removal of the two administrators late Sunday night.

University spokesman Bill Mahon gave reporters a written statement and answered a few questions outside Old Main, just after midnight. About a dozen trustees left the building around 9:30 p.m., declining comment, and President Graham Spanier left at about midnight, only saying Mahon and spokeswoman Lisa Powers would release the statement. (VanderKolk, 2011a, p. 1)

According to Mahon, half the board was present at the meeting and the other half had conferenced in via phone. Board Chairman Steve Garban made the statement:

The board, along with the entire Penn State family, is shocked and saddened by the allegations involving former assistant coach Jerry Sandusky. Under no circumstances does the university tolerate behavior that would put children at risk, and we are deeply troubled. (p. 1)

The statement also included information regarding the steps the university plans to take in order to increase safety and security in its facilities.

“The meeting capped a day during which students, alumni and others took to the Internet to discuss the case and call for Spanier's firing...University alumni and others had plenty to say about the charges,” (VanderKolk, 2011a, p. 1). Students and alumni used letters to the editor of *The Collegian*, and also the *Centre Daily Times*, as one outlet to express their feelings regarding the unfolding scandal and the way in which the administration was handling it.

Spokeswoman Lisa Powers made a statement that the university intended to pay for the legal counsel for both Curley and Shultz, citing the reason to be because the matter concerned how they acted as employees of the university (Orso, 2011b). This news was correspondingly

posted on Penn State's official Facebook page. Also on the page, many members of the Penn State community left comments "condemning Sandusky, Curley, Schultz and football head coach Joe Paterno. Others said the incident doesn't represent the 'spirit' of Penn State and said people shouldn't criticize the entire university," (VanderKolk, 2011 a, p. 1). Elsewhere online, at *www.change.org*, more than 100 people, including alumni and others from all across the country, had at the time already signed a petition directed at the trustees calling for the firing of Graham Spanier. One part of the petition stated: "Unacceptable doesn't even begin to describe Spanier's actions here. This is beyond criminal conduct, but a question of right and wrong. Spanier must be fired," (VanderKolk, 2011 a, p. 1).

Meanwhile, a handful of students peacefully protested on the steps of Old Main, the building which houses the President's office as well as many other administrative offices and various Board of Trustees meetings. "The students held signs with messages such as 'Protecting molesters? This PSU leadership does not represent me' and 'Tonight I am ashamed of PSU,'" (Tully, 2011, para. 1). They felt betrayed by the administration, and called for the administrators and university as a whole to turn their priorities back to the students, stating that to be the only way for the university to get past this. "There are more important things than keeping the school's reputation clean, such as the well-being of a child," one student, Ricky Morales, stated (Tully, 2011, para. 5).

On Monday, November 7th, both Curley and Shultz turned themselves over to authorities in Harrisburg. They were arraigned and released on \$75,000 unsecured bail. Following the arraignment, Schultz's attorney, Tom Farrell, named Mike McQuerey as the "unnamed graduate assistant" mentioned in the grand jury report. *Collegian* staff writers Joe McIntyre and Anna Orso (2011) reported from Harrisburg.

As this was the first day of classes following the indictments, campus and the entire community was buzzing. With limited information, but new things unfolding by the hour,

students and alumni experienced many emotional reactions. According to an article published in *The Collegian*, Alumni Association Executive Director Roger Williams was receiving numerous calls from alumni expressing their thoughts and concerns. “They’re concerned and many of us are shocked and saddened about this,” he stated (Dennerlein, 2011a, para. 2). An underlying theme in the responses were the worry that a single individual, Sandusky, would be what the entire university would be judged upon; however, if Shultz and Curley were to be found guilty, that would change everything.

Many students and alumni stated they did not agree with Spanier’s “unconditional” support for the two men, his loyalty should be to what was best for the school and the students, not two employees under current investigation. As reported by *The Collegian*, one student, Ben Frazer, claimed that Spanier’s support contradicted the views of the students, the people Spanier was supposed to be representing (Szkardnik, 2011a). Many were upset and disagreed with the way he handled the situation and called for him to take some responsibility. Further, in letters to the editor of *The Collegian*, numerous people suggested that instead of announcing support of two men charged with perjury, “Let the kids know that PSU will do everything they can to make sure this doesn’t happen again,” (Hudash, 2011). In an article published by *The Collegian*, an account of the events was outlined, concerning the various actions, or inactions, of the administrators throughout the history of the alleged case. For those who had not yet, or did not intend to read the grand jury report, this served as a source to find the basic “facts” of the case. With the trials pending and little information to go on, many community members felt unsure of what was to come. The grand jury report, a few statements from the Board, and JoePa’s statement were not enough. Monday was the first time any mention of the scandal was made in the local newspaper, the *Centre Daily Times*.

Speculation of what Paterno and Spanier did or did not do continued to mount. Some students began calling for the administration to take some action and “clean house” of anyone and

everyone involved in the scandal, to start rebuilding Penn State's destroyed image (Wendel, 2011). Online petitions and Facebook groups began to pop up. Varying reactions to Paterno's involvement spattered the social media universe. Some called for blood, while others remained loyal, and others still claimed they would wait for due process before they made up their mind.

On Tuesday, November 8th, Graham Spanier's office made the decision to cancel Head Coach Joe Paterno's weekly Tuesday morning press conference. As reported by *Collegian* staff writer, Christina Gallagher, Paterno was expected to comment on the Sandusky sex abuse case. Sports Information Director Jeff Nelson read a statement at 11:45am to the group of about 100 media members gathered there, despite the fact that the media were supposed to be let into the stadium's press room at 11am. The press conference was scheduled to be held at 12:20pm. Scott Paterno told The Associated Press that his father was "disappointed by the cancellation and was prepared to answer questions about both Sandusky and Saturday's Nebraska game," (Gallagher, 2011b, para. 3). The statement read: "Due to the ongoing legal circumstances centered around the recent allegations and charges, we have determined that today's press conferences cannot be held and will not be rescheduled." (para. 5)

The Penn State Berkey Creamery flavor "Sandusky Blitz" was taken off both the menu and the website. The staff of the Creamery did not have any comments concerning the matter, nor could they "confirm the removal of the flavor or the reasons behind the discontinuation," (Hornby, 2011a, para. 5). All questions and queries were to be referred to University Relations. Many students approved the decision to remove the flavor, as they would not buy it anymore even if it was still for sale. Many alumni expressed similar feelings. Other students and alumni took to social media, and letters to *The Collegian*, to express their continued support in the student-athletes on the football team and urged the rest of the community to attend Saturday's game despite recent happenings in order to support their fellow classmates, who arguably were a different sort of victim to fall in the scandal.

As reported by *Collegian* staff writer Anna Orso on November 8th, 2011, governor-appointed trustee Paul Silvis made the following statement:

It's not about football. We're trying to make sure this never happens at the university. No one in a trusted position at the university or an adult can take advantage of a kid again. It's really about the process and procedures and what we have in place. Our alma mater says let us not bring an act of shame. (para. 10)

It was also reported that a ninth person had come forward accusing Sandusky of sexually abusing them (Orso, 2011d).

Scott Paterno continued to speak to the media and public. A group of reporters and fans gathered around his father's house and he told them that there had been no contact with the university regarding Joe stepping down as head coach. Reporters asked why the press conference had been canceled. Scott told them they would have to ask the administration that question, and held that his father "did, in fact, want to do the press conference today," (McIntyre, 2011a, para. 9).

He's getting ready for a football game...I can't say anything more than that, guys...because [if I] do so, you're trying to put context on something that we all know has to be dealt with directly and will be in due course. (McIntyre, 2011a, para. 11)

Scott Paterno had also been quite active on Twitter, releasing information regarding his father's situation, including commenting on the premature reporting by the *New York Times* about JoePa's retirement. Elsewhere on campus, on the steps of Old Main, a Penn State alumnus burned his diploma, surrounded by a handful of onlookers, as reported by *The Collegian* (Hornby, 2011b).

On Tuesday evening, at around 6pm, a crowd of around 300 students assembled outside of Paterno's house. Scott Paterno first addressed the students. "Say a prayer and then please, feel free to cheer, feel free to show your support, but let's remember ... to show support for the victims first" (Cirilli & Mahon, 2011, para. 22). Then JoePa's van arrived and the crowd, both students

and journalists, swarmed the vehicle. Some students yelled “Hold them back,” while others pushed camera-wielding journalists away from the coach. Some students formed a human wall to block the reporters. The crowd chanted "We Love You" and "Beat Nebraska," in addition to a few "Go home media" chants. After heading inside, Paterno spoke to students through a window. He told a few students, "We're always going to be Penn State. I'm proud of you. I've always been proud of you. Beat Nebraska," (Cirilli & Mahon, 2011, para. 16). Eventually Joe came back outside to address the crowd stating, “It's hard for me to tell you how much this means to me. You guys live for the place, and I've lived for people like you guys and girls," (Cirilli & Mahon, 2011, para. 27). He also “asked the crowd to keep in mind the young victims involved in the allegations involving former Penn State assistant coach Jerry Sandusky,” (Still, 2011a, para. 5). "As you know, the kids that were the victims, I think we ought to say a prayer for them," Paterno said (Cirilli & Mahon, 2011, para. 28). "It's a tough life when people do certain things to you," (Still, 2011a, para. 6). When asked if he was still the coach, JoePa “didn't answer but a young woman who stood with her arm around him replied: ‘Now is not the time,’” (Cirilli & Mahon, 2011, para. 29). The demonstration lasted an hour and a half.

Later that evening over a thousand students began assembling on Beaver Avenue in support of Joe Paterno. The idea for the gathering originated on Facebook. The crowd moved from downtown to Old Main, and then up further up to the JoePa statue near Beaver Stadium. The students evaded the police by moving locations. They yelled out chants such as “We Are, Penn State” and “Hell no, Joe won't go,” (Horn, 2011a). The alma mater was also amongst the crowds chants. Some students held signs that read "Remember Joe for 409" and "JoePa is not guilty." The students stood to guard the statue and to voice their opinions and show their support for the coach. A moment of silence was also dedicated to the victims. “The demonstration appeared raucous but peaceful. Police from State College, Ferguson Township and Penn State were stationed at intersections downtown to monitor the situation. The scene capped a day of pro-

Paterno demonstrations by students,” (Cirilli & Mahon, 2011, para. 3). According to the *Centre Daily Times*, some students like Corey Stubbs weren’t quite sure what the rally was about. “I know I was here earlier and there was a mix of some people Pro-Paterno and against Paterno. I think it's more about coming together regardless of what you think,” (Cirilli & Mahon, 2011, para. 9).

On Facebook that night students created a group entitled “SPANIER NEEDS TO GO! Board of Trustee Meeting Protest!” The purpose of the group was to rally students to protest the BOT meeting at the Nittany Lion Inn that upcoming Friday (Gallagher & Orso, 2011a).

On Wednesday, November 9th the Faculty Senate Council at the commonwealth campus in Abington sent a request to the Board of Trustees demanding “that no money be utilized for fees of administrators charged with perjury and failure to report child sexual abuse in the case of former defensive coordinator Jerry Sandusky, according to a news release,” (Hricik, 2011a, para. 2).

“According to a statement by the Board of Trustees on *Penn State Live*, the board is outraged by the details contained in the grand jury report,” (Gallagher & Orso, 2011a, para. 5).

The statement comes from a press release posted late Tuesday night. The statement read:

We cannot begin to express the combination of sorrow and anger that we feel about the allegations surrounding Jerry Sandusky. We hear those of you who feel betrayed and we want to assure all of you that the Board will take swift, decisive action...Penn State has always strived for honesty, integrity and the highest moral standards in all of its programs. We will not tolerate any violation of these principles. We educate over 95,000 students every year and we take this responsibility very seriously. We are dedicated to protecting those who are placed in our care. We promise you that we are committed to restoring public trust in the University. (Gallagher & Orso, 2011a, para. 6)

As reported by Gallagher and Orso (2011b) in *The Daily Collegian*, the Board had plans to create a special committee to undertake a full investigation and release a report to the public. The members of the committee would be determined at a later date.

Joe Paterno announced in a statement Wednesday morning, at around 10am, that he would resign from his position at the end of the 2011 season. He also said that he was "absolutely devastated" by the abuse case (Armas, 2011). "This is a tragedy. It is one of the great sorrows of my life. With the benefit of hindsight, I wish I had done more," (para. 17). *The Daily Collegian* reported that Paterno also stated:

I have come to work every day for the last 61 years with one clear goal in mind: To serve the best interests of this university and the young men who have been entrusted to my care. I have the same goal today. That's why I have decided to announce my retirement effective at the end of this season (November 10, 2011, para. 13).

Downtown that afternoon Michael Pilato, the local muralist credited for the "Inspiration" wall on Heister Street, painted over Jerry Sandusky. He added a single blue ribbon, in honor of child abuse awareness, to the spot that Sandusky's figure once appeared. A crowd of students, community members and media gathered to watch (Szkaradnik, 2011b). Pilato stated that he planned to eventually paint someone else in the chair. "I grew up right down the street from this mural," said Pilato, speaking with some emotion. He stated that knew he wanted to make the change when he first heard about the charges. "It's awful. It's one of the worst days of my life," (VanderKolk, 2011b, p. 1). The mural features dozens of local figures.

Students began to organize an event on Facebook called "Candle Light Vigil for Abused Victims" set to take place on Old Main lawn that upcoming Friday. Facebook and Twitter continued to play a big role in the way students and other community members voiced their opinions, conversed with one another and organized events (O'Malley, 2011). Students also held fast in their commitment to the "student-run Paternoville, an encampment in tents outside of the

stadium that springs up before home games, occupied by those waiting to get the best seats for home games. Despite the controversy, [Troy] Weller, [Paternoville's secretary and treasurer] said that more than 650 people and 82 tents [were] part of this week's Paternoville, now in its sixth year. The attendance [was] the second highest of the season, behind only the Alabama game,” (Cirilli, 2011, p. 3). Students claimed they were there to support the team, their fellow classmates.

Late Wednesday night the BOT held a meeting behind closed doors at the Penn Stater Conference Center Hotel. “Meanwhile, about 15 students gathered with signs at Old Main to await trustees' arrival Wednesday night, hoping to send a message to them, the public and the media that the story should focus on the young, alleged victims. ‘We feel the attention has been swayed to JoePa and football,’ said geography graduate student Jamie Shinn, asking for attention on the children. ‘We just want to make sure the light shines on them and continues to shine on them when the national media goes home,’” (Danahy & VanderKolk, 2011, p. 1).

Afterward, in a press conference, BOT Vice Chairman John Surma read the announcement of the decision to immediately dismiss both Graham Spanier and Joe Paterno. He then fielded questions for twenty minutes. Joe had been told the news over the phone.

John Surma, vice chairman of the trustees, said:

The past few days have been absolutely terrible for the entire Penn State community...The outrage that we feel is nothing compared to the physical and psychological suffering that allegedly took place...It is in the best interest of the university that a change of leadership to deal with the difficult issues we are facing take place. (Danahy & VanderKolk, 2011, p. 1)

“The trustees had come to an agreement that Spanier would no longer be president, and that, effective immediately, Paterno would no longer be head coach. The latter announcement drew gasps at the press conference,” (Danahy & VanderKolk, 2011, p. 1). Surma said the trustees wanted to act "swiftly and decisively but also to be thorough and fair." "I can't characterize

individual behavior. It would be totally unfair of me," Surma said when asked what Paterno had done wrong, later adding: "We thought that because of the difficulties that have engulfed our universities, and they are great, that it was necessary for us to make a change in the leadership and set a course for a new direction," (p. 1). He did not address the specific charges against Sandusky. He defended the board's decision, saying it was necessary for the long-term interest of the university and that trustees did the best job they could. Surma said he hopes that students, alumni, and everyone who cares about Penn State would agree that what trustees are doing "is in the best long-term interest of the university, which is much larger than the athletic programs," (p.1). When asked why Curley is being allowed to remain on administrative leave when Paterno and Spanier are ousted, Surma said that, while not talking about that specifically, "There are a number of matters that over time will get resolved," (p.1). On the question of student reaction to the decision, Surma said trustees' job is to make the determination and they did the best they could. One member of the media at the press conference commented that "campus is going to burn." Spanier was not at the press conference but in his place a staff member delivered a statement from him.

Our great university has been rocked by serious charges against a former coach. The presentment by the Attorney General describes acts that should never be tolerated or ignored. I was stunned and outraged to learn that any predatory act might have occurred in a university facility or by someone associated with the university. (p. 1)

Almost immediately following the announcement, at 10:30pm, thousands of students gathered on the lawn of Old Main. Chants could be heard of "F--- the Trustees" and "We want Joe." Obscenities shouted against Sandusky were also common. About a half an hour later the crowds migrated down to "Beaver Canyon." As the mob grew, some fireworks were set off, two light posts were ripped down, a WTAJ news van was tipped over and various other damage was inflicted including dented car roofs and shattered car windows. "Students also were seen on

balconies, atop parking garages and in yards, some drinking and some shooting fireworks,” (Danahy & VanderKolk, 2011, p. 1). Police attempted to direct traffic through the crowds, but eventually resorted to pepper spraying the crowds to gain control as well as closing off traffic to College Avenue. A small fire was set on Old Main’s lawn but was immediately put out. “Penn State text alert called for an official dispersal order for Old Main and downtown State College. Everyone was required to vacate both areas immediately, according to the text,” (*The Daily Collegian*, November 9, 2011, para. 18). At around 1am the masses dispersed. “Dozens of police officers remained in the street, controlling the few who remained on the sidewalks,” (*The Daily Collegian*, November 9, 2011, para. 19).

At 11 pm Wednesday night the Board of Trustees sent a mass, official email to all members of the university:

Board of Trustees announces leadership changes at Penn State

The Pennsylvania State University Board of Trustees and Graham Spanier have decided that, effective immediately, Dr. Spanier is no longer president of the University.

Additionally, the board determined that it is in the best interest of the University for Joe Paterno to no longer serve as head football coach, effective immediately.

The board has named Dr. Rodney A. Erickson, executive vice president and provost, as the interim president of the University. Tom Bradley, assistant coach, has been named interim head football coach. (personal communication, November 9, 2011)

“The evening’s announcement followed several days of uncertainty in the community and silence from Old Main,” (Danahy & VanderKolk, 2011, p. 1).

The day following his firing, on Thursday, November 10th, JoePa spoke out to media outside his house. “Right now, I’m not the football coach. And I’ve got to get used to that. After 61 years, I’ve got to get used to it. Let me think it through,” (Armas, 2011, para.4). Board of

Trustees vice chair, John Surma, also made a statement at a packed news conference, regarding why Paterno had to be fired immediately, as reported by *Twincities.com*:

I'm not sure I can tell you specifically. In our view, we thought change now was necessary...The decisions to oust Paterno and Spanier were unanimous...The Penn State board of trustees tonight decided it is in the best interest of the university to have a change in leadership to deal with the difficult issues that we are facing...The past several days have been absolutely terrible for the entire Penn State community. But the outrage that we feel is nothing compared to the physical and psychological suffering that allegedly took place. (paras. 7, 10, 20, 22)

In response to a question regarding why Paterno was fired over the phone, Surma cited being unable to find a way to deliver the news in person without causing further distraction. The trustees claimed the decision was made in the best long-term interest for students. "The board felt it made the right decision under the circumstances. We hope in the long run, students will agree the direction the trustees have taken is in the best interests of the students," Surma said (*The Daily Collegian*, November 10, 2011, para. 7). Surma declined to comment on Paterno's reaction when informed of the trustees' decision during the phone call. "[Paterno] has made a great contribution to the university, we all agree on that," Surma said (*The Daily Collegian*, November 10, 2011, para. 11).

Shortly after Surma's announcement, Paterno released a statement, expressing his disappointment at the decision, but urged the Penn State community to remain loyal to the university and what it stands for.

I am disappointed with the Board of Trustees' decision, but I have to accept it. A tragedy occurred, and we all have to have patience to let the legal process proceed. I appreciate the outpouring of support but want to emphasize that everyone should remain calm and please respect the university, its property and all that we value. I have been incredibly

blessed to spend my entire career working with people I love. I am grateful beyond words to all of the coaches, players and staff who have been a part of this program. And to all of our fans and supporters, my family and I will be forever in your debt. (Horn, 2011b, paras. 2-4)

Also, it was announced that defensive coordinator Tom Bradley would take over the position of interim head coach. He would address the press in a news conference scheduled for Thursday morning. In addition, it was announced that Provost Rodney Erickson would become the interim school president. The BOT also stated that the special investigation committee would be appointed at the board's regular weekly meeting the next day. "Since their arraignments on Monday, neither Curley nor Schultz has been located or has appeared to issue a statement," (Orso, 2011e, para. 7). "Board of Trustees member Barron Hetherington said the status of Curley's employment is not the board's decision, it's up to Erickson," (Szkardnik, 2011c, para. 2). Spanier too released a statement following the announcement.

He felt it was best for him to step aside so that his successor could move forward without distractions. It has been a 'privilege and an honor' to work at Penn State, he said in the statement. 'This University is a large and complex institution, and although I have always acted honorably and in the best interests of the University, the buck stops here,' Spanier said in the statement. (*The Daily Collegian*, November 10, 2011, paras. 17-19)

Thursday afternoon Interim President Rodney Erickson, who was appointed the previous night, released his first statement Thursday afternoon. The full statement, which was posted on *Penn State Live* read:

This is one of the saddest weeks in the history of Penn State. It has been difficult to comprehend the horrific nature of the allegations that were revealed in the Attorney General's presentment last week. As a member of the Penn State community for 34 years,

as a parent, and as a grandfather, I find the charges as they have been described to be devastating, and my heart goes out to those who have been victimized and their families. This is a terrible tragedy for everyone involved, and it will take some time to bring a measure of understanding and resolution to the community. In addition to the legal process under way, Penn State's Board of Trustees has authorized a full investigation '...to determine what failures occurred, who is responsible, and what measures are necessary to insure that this never happens at our University again and that those responsible are held fully accountable.' As those involved pursue their cases, I also urge you, as Penn Staters, to be patient, to avoid speculation, and to refrain from passing judgment until the facts are known. As you are now aware, the Board of Trustees has asked me to serve as the president of Penn State effective immediately. I undertake these duties with a firm sense of resolve, and I ask for your support as we move forward. And move forward, we must and we will. Penn State has a long and storied tradition that has endured for more than 150 years. Our roots are deep, our constitution is resilient, and the importance of our work is as vital today as it was last week - perhaps even more so in the face of such adversity. We are 96,000 students, 46,000 employees, and more than a half a million alumni. We are 24 campuses across the Commonwealth and a World Campus. We are a university that is committed to its core values of honesty, integrity, and community. We are a university that will rebuild the trust and confidence that so many people have had in us for so many years. Through your conduct every day, you can play a role in restoring the integrity, honor, and pride that have always characterized Penn State. I share your anger and sadness in this time, but always remember that your actions reflect on the entire Penn State community. Please set an example that will make us all proud. Moving forward is the only responsible course to take in the coming months. I ask for the full support of our faculty, students, staff, and alumni, and in return I will do my best to

lead this institution through the challenges ahead. Thank you for being a part of Penn State (*Penn State Live*, November 10, 2011).

Erickson also shared a video message with the Penn State community on YouTube. Both the statement and the link to *Penn State Live* were distributed through the Penn State Newswire listserv at around noon Thursday.

Members of the Penn State community looked for ways to respond and express their emotions toward the situation. According to the *Centre Daily Times*, student Laura March began organizing a “blue-out” for the Nebraska game, as blue is the color of the ribbon for child awareness. At the time of press over 8,600 people had already clicked attending on the Facebook event.

March and her group contacted Prevent Child Abuse Pennsylvania, which will receive 100 percent of the proceeds from blue-out shirts McLanahan's will sell for \$9.99 each. The navy blue shirt will have a small logo on the left chest, featuring a ribbon outline and “Stop Child Abuse” and “Blue-Out Nebraska.” “It makes me very proud to be a Penn Stater in a time of great turmoil,” she said. Emily Wilkins, a State College resident, called for a ‘black-out’ by posting on Penn State's Facebook wall. The black-out, she wrote, is to show “sadness that the PSU football institution was more important than the children's lives that were affected.” (VanderKolk, 2011b, p. 1)

Governor Tom Corbett held a press conference at the Penn Stater Hotel and Conference Center and spoke to the BOT decisions. Corbett supported the BOT and urged students to proceed with integrity. Corbett did not provide any information on the status of former Athletic Director Tim Curley (Orso, 2011f). Erickson spoke with *The Collegian* late on Thursday night. He stated that:

No decision has been made yet about former Athletic Director Tim Curley's future at Penn State University. I can't make any comment about that, we're not in a position yet.

After some days here, we'll sit down to look at this. [I] did not know about or anticipate anything that has happened this week. I was shocked last week with information about the attorney general report. I do not think the Board of Trustees will discuss the termination of former head football coach Joe Paterno or former president Graham Spanier at Friday's meeting. The board addressed the issue enough at Wednesday night's press conference. I can't address the status of assistant football coach Mike McQueary's employment... That will fall to acting athletic director Mark Sherburne. Once Sherburne makes a decision, he'll consult with Erickson. There will be a press conference after Friday's 9:45 a.m. Board of Trustees meeting. The meeting is open to the public. (Szkardnik, 2011c, paras. 1-9)

The Pennsylvania Coalition Against Rape held a press conference in the State College municipal building on Thursday. According to the *Centre Daily Times*, the hope was to “swing focus back to alleged victims after the firing Wednesday of head coach Joe Paterno and Penn State President Graham Spanier,” (VanderKolk, 2011c, p. 1).

On Friday, November 11th, it was announced that assistant coach Mike McQueary was to be placed on “indefinite” paid administrative leave. During the press conference Erickson stated, “It became clear that coach McQueary could not function in his role under these circumstances.” Erickson did not answer directly when asked if firing McQueary had been considered. “There are complexities to that issue that I'm not prepared to go into at this point,” (Sanserino, 2011, paras. 3-5). “The employment status of former Athletic Director Tim Curley will be addressed next week...As of now, his status as an employee of the university remains the same,” (Horn & Orso, 2011a, paras. 2-4). As for Spanier, Erickson stated that he still remained a professor in the College of Health and Human Development and the College of the Liberal Arts, but did not know if Spanier would stay with the university. Earlier that Friday, “university spokeswoman Lisa

Powers said the Penn State Board of Trustees was working on Spanier's contract," (Rogers, 2011a, paras. 2-3). Erickson also stated:

As far as Saturday's football game versus Nebraska, Erickson said former head coach Joe Paterno is welcome to attend the game as "any member of the public would be." No arrangements to honor Paterno have been made...the university may eventually recognize the accomplishments of the winningest coach in Division I history. (paras. 6-7)

Erickson also outlined five promises to the Penn State community that he would fulfill during his time as president:

1. He will restore morals and revisit standards and policies by appointing an Ethics Officer that will report directly to him. Erickson said this officer will be appointed soon.
2. He will "lead by example" and "expect no less of others."
3. He will stress the transparency of findings as the investigation of university conduct continues.
4. He will be sensitive to the "victims" and their families.
5. He will provide whatever resources are needed for the Special Committee to fully investigate and act immediately based on the findings.

(Horn & Orso, 2011a, para. 5-12)

The full statement, which was circulated through a mass email to the Penn State community from Erickson, can be viewed in Appendix A.

At the BOT weekly meeting, the first since Sandusky's indictment, which was kept open to the public, typical agenda items were discussed. The trustees did not address the unanimous decision to fire Paterno and Spanier. This was the first BOT meeting since the breaking news of the scandal that was opened to the public. All executive meetings held throughout the week had since then been kept private. At Friday's meeting, Erickson was first introduced. He addressed the room stating:

He is turning his focus to the future – reiterating that it's still “bright.” He hopes to have conversations with leaders in the community and at the state level to listen and find out where the process went wrong...[and] to work with a Special Committee, set to be voted on later on in the meeting. The board plans to appoint the committee to investigate the allegations at a university-level. “Healing cannot occur until we understand how responsibilities to these children failed,” Erickson said. (*The Daily Collegian*, November 11, 2011)

Erickson said he has full confidence in the committee.

Once all previously planned administrative business was taken care of, the board turned its attention to the creation of a special committee to investigate the Jerry Sandusky sexual abuse case. Chairman of the board, Steve Garban, announced the chair of the committee to be Kenneth Frazier, CEO of Merck. The rest of the committee’s members would be determined in the upcoming days and would consist mainly of trustees, and also faculty and students.

The committee will not have restrictions on resources during its investigation. [Garban] said information will be made public once the investigation is over...Everything the committee investigates will be complimentary to the Attorney General’s ongoing investigation... the board will look to change policy and procedure to protect children in the future, Frazier said. (Gallagher & Orso, 2011b, paras. 7-8, 10)

Facebook attendance for the planned “Blue-Out” had now reached over 10,500. Student groups began handing out small blue ribbons for people to pin on their shirts and bags (VanderKolk, 2011c).

Late Friday evening thousands gathered for a candlelight vigil at Old Main “to honor the children and families who were involved in the Jerry Sandusky child abuse sex scandal that has shaken Penn State to its core. Students, graduates, families and community members came

together to demonstrate the power of uniting under the flames held high above their heads,” (Blasso, 2011a, paras. 2-3). Rodney Erickson was in attendance.

On Saturday, November 12th, “[t]he university received an anonymous bomb threat Friday night for Beaver Stadium but nothing was recovered as of 10 a.m. Saturday, according to a release from the Penn State. Police used bomb-sniffing dogs in addition to other security measures and additional personnel. Police and Penn State’s office of public relations could not be reached for more information but, according to the release, police and the FBI are investigating the stadium,” (Orso, 2011g, para. 1-2). Also, the Westboro Baptist Church picketed the football game against Nebraska “because Penn State ‘has the wrath of God raining down on them,’ according to the group’s website,” (Orso, 2011h, para. 2). Students organized a peaceful counter-protest.

After the game, Erikson made himself available to reporters as he participated in a press conference. “Erickson said he was impressed with the ‘character’ displayed by students and athletes during the game, despite the loss. [Also,] he was proud to have been part of the candlelight vigil that took place Friday night — another example of the ‘character’ of students,” (Horn & Orso, 2011b, paras. 12-13). After the conclusion of the football game, a group of community members gathered outside of Joe Paterno’s house, waiting to greet him (Dennerlein, 2011b).

Chapter 4 - The Events

Week Two: Sunday, November 13th – Saturday 19th

On Monday, November 14th, *The Collegian* reported that Rodney Erickson had released his second statement as president to the Penn State community. The statement expressed Erickson's continued pride in the way Penn Staters were responding in the time of adversity. He recapped his five promises that he previously had made. Erickson stated:

Today, we are back to class and the business of running this University. I urge you to refocus on your educational goals and remain mindful of the five promises I have made to the Penn State community as we move forward. Collectively, we need to show the nation and world that Penn State cares, and that Penn State is a community of individuals committed to moving forward with a shared sense of purpose. (Rogers, 2011b, para. 3)

The full message, which was circulated at approximately 8:45am through a mass email to the Penn State community from Erickson himself, can be viewed in Appendix B.

For many students, social media serves as not only a place to express themselves and their emotions regarding everything happening with the scandal, but also somewhere to get their news. As reported by *The Collegian*, one student, Rebecca Alt, commented on the use of Twitter.

Everything is right in front of you. I've been glued to it...Retweeting enables the speechless users to share their thoughts and explain their feelings by relaying what others said on Twitter. The social media platform is very real and very representative in capturing student emotions and feelings. It provides an outlet for the world to see a reflective and non-violent student reaction regarding the scandal — an aspect not always represented in the national media. (Lee, 2011a, paras. 2-4)

Students Alex Gilliland also commented on the importance of Twitter, stating its use as an outlet for students to react and voice their opinions. He noted that this is important due to the fact that students don't always have the strongest voice in traditional media. Social media gives them that opportunity. Student Maddy Pryor told *The Collegian* that social media had served as an extremely effective way to track the news and updates on the whole situation. She too stressed the importance of the ability for Twitter to serve as a platform for students to voice their opinions "whether people are paying attention to them or not," (Lee, 2011a). As John Zang, University Park Undergraduate Association (UPUA) academic affairs committee chairman pointed out, Facebook is also a popular and effective tool, especially because of its capacity to create events and groups. "Twitter is nice and word of mouth is helpful, but Facebook is crucial in getting turnout," Zang said (Lee, 2011a, para. 14). Unfortunately, Penn State's administration did not utilize its social media in the same way as the students.

While the administration was moving slowly to address its constituents and update them on important matters, Penn State Career Services used an online letter to help ease the minds of the students. The letter addressed and aimed at relieving the fears and concerns students might be having in regards to potential internship and job opportunities (Horn, 2011c).

Tuesday, November 15th saw Mike McQueary finally breaking his silence, briefly, on CBS with Armen Keteyian. In the short interview McQueary stated, "This process has to play out. I just don't have anything else to say," (Petrella, 2011b, para. 6). Through the Penn State Newswire listserv, subscribers received an email highlighting the resources being provided for those affected by the recent events tied to the scandal. These resources included an open forum held by the Center for Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) and the Center for Women Students at University Park. Students were also urged to reach out to trusted community members such as RAs, advisers, instructors and counselors (Penn State, personal communication, November 15, 2011). On Tuesday night, Student Affairs also released a mass email to the Penn

State community addressing many facets of what was going on in and surrounding the university, and attempted to re-instill hope that life at Penn State would get back to normal and the future of the school was still bright, so long as the community come together to rebuild it (personal communication, November 15, 2011). The full email can be viewed in Appendix C.

On Wednesday, November 16th, Professor Sam Richards and his Wife Laurie Mulvey held a lecture for Richard's Sociology 119 class, of about 700 students in 100 Thomas, about "The Sociology of Victimization and the Crisis at Penn State." Beforehand, new President Rodney Erickson made an appearance (Rogers, 2011d). The student body government, UPUA created a video that was uploaded on YouTube, entitled 'weSTILLare.' The video gave students the chance to tell the world what they think Penn State is, who they think "We Are," and why they love their school (Szkardnik, 2011d). Also that day, it was announced that David Joyner, a Penn State Distinguished Alumnus and member of the Board of Trustees since 2000, was named Penn State's acting athletic director (Still, 2011b).

On November 17th, *The Collegian* reported that a new student organization was created on campus called One Heart. The mission of the club was for students to work together in making sure child sex abuse never happens again in the Penn State and State College community (Lee, 2011b). In addition, on this Thursday, the BOT hired a large Pittsburgh-based law firm, Reed Smith, to represent them and work on the issues related to the arrests of Sandusky, Curley and Shultz. Reed Smith spokeswoman, Jamie Moss, declined to say whether the firm would be focusing on criminal or civil matters (Armas, Scolforo & Dale, 2011). Also, it was reported that the Board of Trustees was considering canceling the rest of the football season; however the idea did not gain much approval and subsequently did not go through (Wolverton, 2011b).

On Friday, November 18th, the University Faculty Senate met in a special session "to adopt a statement addressing recent allegations of child sexual abuse on the Penn State campus after faculty senators petitioned to hold a meeting The Senate was not scheduled to meet until

Dec. 6,” (Rogers, 2011c, para. 1-2). It is unusual for the Senate to hold a special session. The decision was made after several faculty members started an online petition on *www.change.org*. In the petition it was stated that the faculty felt it important that they come out of the silence and speak in regards to the current state of the university. "The sole agenda item for this meeting is to adopt a statement to express the Senate's sympathy for the victims of child abuse; endorse the independent inquiry commissioned by the Board of Trustees; and express our commitment to working with the President to restore public trust in our University," Faculty Senate Chairman Daniel Hagen said (Rogers, 2011c, para. 9). As reported by *The Collegian*, "Courtney Lennartz, UPUA vice president, Senator and Student Caucus Leader, said she thinks it is time for the faculty to take a stance on recent events. [She] said administrators and students have spoken about the recent events and it is time to hear from the faculty," (Rogers, 2011c, para. 13). The meeting was held at 11am in the Lewis Katz Building, and seats were open for any visitors who wanted to attend.

At the meeting, the topic of the recently proposed investigative special committee was discussed. The BOT had named Kenneth Frazier, Merck CEO, as the Chairman of the special committee, but the list of the rest of the members was yet to be released. In its meeting, the Faculty Senate came to the agreement that it did not want the committee to be "dominated by people affiliated with Penn State. Instead, at [Friday's] emergency Faculty Senate meeting, the senate took a stance in favor of asking that a majority of the special committee members come from outside the university," (Blasso, 2011b, para. 1-2). Faculty Senate Chairman Daniel Hagen said:

Some faculty [members] have expressed concern that if there isn't a lot of outside representation on the trustees' committee, the investigation might not be as thorough as it could be. It's simply a concern. I wouldn't consider it necessarily a feeling of distrust, but

wanting to make sure that every stone is ... overturned as they move through this process.

(Danahy, 2011a, p. 1)

“Faculty Senate member Al Luloff said having an independent committee of people not tied to Penn State is key. ‘By bringing in people who have no vested interest in this place, who aren't tied by degree or by parental ties or who are not part of the Penn State culture, we're much more likely to get a more open and responsive statement about who we are and how we move forward,’ Luloff said,” (Danahy, 2011a, p. 1).

Also on November 18th, it was announced that Rodney Erickson would serve no longer as the interim President but as the university's official 17th President.

Board of Trustees member Paul Silvis confirmed that there will be no national search committee to find a replacement for former Penn State President Graham Spanier, leaving Erickson to lead the university. “He's the president for good,” Silvis said. “We think it's the right time.” He declined comment on why the decision was made. (Hricik, 2011b, paras. 2-4).

It was reported that multiple members of the Board of Trustees members did not answer repeated calls and emails for comment from *The Collegian* as of press time Thursday (Hricik, 2011b). In the time Erickson had so far spent in office, he had “promised to appoint an ethics officer who will report directly to him, in addition to increasing the university's transparency and cooperating with a Board of Trustees special investigation into the circumstances surrounding Sandusky's charges,” (Hricik, 2011b, para. 12).

That day it was publicly announced by Scott Paterno that his father, Joe Paterno, was recently diagnosed with a treatable form of cancer. Scott made few comments about the diagnosis, but in a statement to the Associated Press he asked for his father's privacy to be respected as he endured treatment, also commentating that "his doctors are optimistic he will

make a full recovery." Scott deferred all other comments to his lawyer and stated that he had nothing else to add himself (Gallagher, 2011d).

The Penn State administration received a letter Friday from Mark Emmert, President of NCAA, informing the university that its athletic programs were to be investigated by the NCAA in the coming future (Loy, 2011). University officials were warned to be ready to answer questions.

Chapter 5 - The Events

Week Three: Sunday, November 20th – Saturday 26th

The Board of Trustees held a press conference on Sunday, November 20th, announcing that the recently created investigative special committee would hold a press conference the following day in Philadelphia. Bill Mahon, Penn State Vice President for University Relations, stated that he did not know the content to be addressed at the press conference, due to the fact that the special committee had planned the event independently (Orso, 2011i).

In Philadelphia the next day, November 21st, Former Director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, Louis Freeh, was announced to have been selected to lead the special committee in its “independent investigation of the university's actions surrounding the Jerry Sandusky sex abuse case,” (Gallagher, 2011e). Frazier stated that Freeh had been chosen specifically due to his “unimpeachable and unparalleled experience in law and criminal justice,” and that Freeh had no previous connection to Penn State or the state of Pennsylvania (Gallagher, 2011e). As reported by *The Collegian*, Freeh will lead the committee in investigating “the facts that have arisen after the grand jury presentment of Jerry Sandusky was released Nov. 5, and the investigation as a whole will include a review of events dating back as early as 1975,” (Gallagher, 2011e, para.3). Freeh stated:

I am committed to ensuring that our independent investigation be conducted in a thorough, fair, comprehensive manner, leaving no stone unturned, and without any fear or favor. We will examine all the relevant records, evidence, information, facts circumstances. We will attempt to interview all necessary and appropriate witnesses... There won't be scrutiny as to who is investigated and questioned. Every trustee and university employee is fair game. (Gallagher, 2011e, paras. 5, 12)

In the press conference Freeh requested the assistance of the public in the investigation and provided a telephone hotline, as well as an email address, that anyone wishing to provide the committee with information could use to contact them (Gallagher, 2011e). Questions regarding the duration of the investigation and also financial matters were dismissed without direct comment from either Freeh or Frazier. Information on the nine members selected to man the committee was provided during the press conference however. The list included only one faculty member and one graduate student, the rest comprised of trustees. "The decision was made to choose one student," Frazier said. "We didn't at the outset decide whether that would be a graduate student or an undergraduate student. We wanted to have one representative of the student body and that's what we've done," (Gallagher, 2011e, para. 18)

Also on Monday President Rodney Erickson released another mass email to the Penn State community. The email reiterated that Erickson fully understood how much the scandal had shaken every member of Penn State, and restated his commitment to move the university forward in a positive direction. He noted the inspiring nature of the responses students had shown thus far in attempts to help rebuild the school and community, and to help the victims. He also urged them to continue working hard and listening to each other and continue to stick together (personal communication, November 21, 2011). The full email can be viewed in Appendix D.

On Tuesday, November 22nd, after rumors had been swirling online that the Berkey Creamery ice cream flavor named after ex-head coach, Peachy Paterno, Penn State's official Twitter account tweeting, "To clarify: Signature flavors like Peachy Paterno are only made in half-gallon size. Creamery has no plans to discontinue it." The following day, as reported by *The Collegian*, assistant manager of Penn State's Berkey Creamery, James Brown further laid the rumors to rest. He stated that there were no plans to change the ice cream menu (Moyer, 2011b).

Also on November 23rd, *The Collegian* published an article pertaining to Penn State merchandise sales. The first week following the breaking of the scandal, Penn State embellished

clothing and accessories sales plummeted 40 percent compared to the same week the previous year. As of the current week, sales had risen slightly yet were still stuck at a rate 36 percent lower than the same week the previous year. According to Matt Powell, an analyst with sports industry research organization SportsOneSource, a drop like this is almost unprecedented. He explained that often when a school is harboring an “issue,” sales actually increase, arguably because the fans rally together around the team. Despite the numbers, many downtown vendors reported seeing little to no change in their sales. “It hasn’t been significant, but there has been a slight decline,” Jonathan Estable, floor supervisor for Old State Clothing Company, 101 E. Beaver Ave., said. “There’s still very much a high interest and loyalty within the community, but we do see more of a decline with outsiders and visitors,” (Riden, 2011a, para.11).

Saturday, November 26th saw the announcement on *Penn State Live* that Penn State was preparing to endure a federal investigation beginning the upcoming Monday. President Rodney Erickson made the statement that Penn State plans to “fully cooperate with the federal investigation and is already compiling information to make the process smoother,” (Orso, 2011j). According to a survey reported by the *Centre Daily Times*:

While about half of Pennsylvanians have a positive view of Joe Paterno, 45 percent agree with the university board of trustees' decision to fire him, according to a recent poll. The telephone survey from Public Policy Polling found that 61 percent still have a favorable opinion of Penn State as a whole. When it comes to Paterno, 51 percent have a favorable opinion. But only 38 percent disagree with the decision to fire the former head football coach. When it comes to Jerry Sandusky, 88 percent of those surveyed have an unfavorable opinion and another 9 percent aren't sure. That former football coach is facing charges of sexually assaulting boys he met through a nonprofit organization he founded. The automated telephone poll was of 500 Pennsylvania voters between Nov. 17

and 20 and has a margin of error of 4.4 percent,” (*Centre Daily Times*, November 26, 2011, p. 3).

Chapter 6 - The Events

Week Four: Sunday, November 27th – Monday, December 5th

On Monday, November 28th, Penn State acting athletic director Dave Joyner announced the members that would be acting under him on the search committee for Joe Paterno's replacement (McIntyre, 2011c). The committee was scheduled to meet the upcoming week. On the afternoon of Tuesday, November 29th, President Rodney Erickson released a mass email to the Penn State community. The email detailed the newly created channel for those needing support: the Penn State Sexual Assault and Relationship Violence Hotline run by ProtoCall. It also addressed other issues regarding available support. Erickson also outlined all the good students and alumni had done so far in response and thanked them for all their hard work. Last he announced the upcoming Town Hall meeting that the student government leaders had organized (personal communication, November 29, 2011). The full email can be viewed in Appendix E.

The Collegian reported that on Wednesday, November 30th, UPUA President TJ Bard stated he and many of his peers felt Penn State wasn't doing enough to communicate with its students. "We were just frustrated because students never really had time to get their questions answered or express their concerns," (Szkardnik, 2011e, para. 2). In response to this, and many similarly voiced student concerns, a Penn State Town Hall Forum was set up to take place Wednesday night at 6pm in Heritage Hall in the HUB-Robeson Center, hosted by the presidents of UPUA, Council of Commonwealth Student Governments, and Graduate Student Association. The forum would mark the first time in Penn State's history that attending students would have the chance to speak directly with and ask questions to administrators concerning "the university's values, recent actions and its path forward," (Pruitt, 2011). The forum would be student-only in the audience and no topic was to be off-limits. The administrators to be in attendance included:

President Rodney Erickson, Executive Vice President and Provost Robert Pangborn, Vice Provost for Educational Equity Terrell Jones, Vice President for Student Affairs Damon Sims, Vice President for Commonwealth Campuses Madlyn Hanes, Vice President for Research and Dean of the Graduate School Hank Foley, Vice President for Outreach Craig Weideman and Vice President for Development and Alumni Relations Rod Kirsch.

The event would kick off with a speech from TJ Bard. Sociology lecturers Sam Richards and Laurie Mulvey would moderate questions. GSA President Jon Lozano would wrap up the event.

Tickets to the event were made available at the HUB Information Desk with a valid student ID. The event would also be streamed live in Alumni Hall should tickets run out, in addition to Ustream and the Pennsylvania Cable Network. However, those students would be unable to actively participate in the discussion. Commonwealth Campus students were given the opportunity to participate in the forum via on-campus viewing parties. "Student leaders are hoping the event can also provide answers to students' questions about Erickson's plans for Penn State in the coming months," Lozano said (Szkardnik, 2011e, para. 11).

During the Town Hall Forum, Erickson opened by reiterating his commitment of his five promises to the Penn State community. He also addressed the speculation of decreasing undergraduate applications, stating that the number was actually in fact four percent higher (Dennerlein, 2011c). Administrations insisted that the outlook for the university is strong even as it struggles with how to handle the charges and their aftermath.

There's a tremendous mix of emotion, a tremendous sense of what a big job we have ahead of us right now, but also a tremendous buoying of spirit that there are so many individuals ... who are saying, 'We know this isn't Penn State. We know that you're going to emerge from this better than ever. We're with you. Keep up the good work,'" Erickson said (Danahy, 2011b, p. 1).

“Many administrators’ responses to questions were that they want to hear from the student body. They suggested that [they] go through [their] student leaders, or even reach out to them personally, because they want to hear [them],” (*The Daily Collegian*, December 1, 2011, para. 17). “Transparency, integrity and more opportunities for student input in university actions were major themes in the night’s questions. Issues raised also included questions of how to deal with the flood of emotions surrounding recent events, how to re-brand Penn State and how to bring more diversity into the campus, specifically in the athletic department,” (Pruitt, 2011, para. 8).

One audience member asked whether Penn State should revoke its exemptions under the Right to Know Act as a state-related school — and abide by the same rules as Pennsylvania’s state universities — to which Erickson replied very vaguely that he would comply with whatever legislators decided. Robert Pangborn stressed the importance for students to voice what they want to learn more about. In that way, the administration would have a better understanding of where student interest was at and could respond more efficiently to meet those interests. Overall the forum was provided an open conversation between students and administrators. Although, some questions were carefully sidestepped, for example no direct answer was given regarding why Joe Paterno was fired, while Tim Curley continued to receive university pay and benefits. Also, a question aimed at the issue of national media pressure influencing the Board’s rushed decision in firing Paterno was met with a simple “No” from Rodney Erickson (Pruitt, 2011).

The Town Hall forum drew more than 400 students out to the HUB. It lasted for two hours and gave the students the chance to ask their administrators some tough questions. Some questions involved how the university handled the Sandusky scandal, whether the board of trustees has been acting in students' best interest and how trust in Penn State can be regained. In response to a question regarding how to deal with feelings of shame, Vice President for Commonwealth Campuses Madlyn Hanes reassured the students that the allegations and events surrounding them don't define them. "I would submit to you that we should emerge from this

more compassionate and with resolve. I think going forward the communities that you will join will benefit from that compassion that you will learn." In response to another question, Vice President for Student Affairs Damon Sims expressed his thoughts on this as an opportunity to find ways to show the world how great Penn State is in every other aspect outside of football (Danahy, 2011b).

Vice President for Development and Alumni Relations Rod Kirsch spoke to the subject of donor support. He attempted to reassure the students that this is definitely a bump in the road, but Penn State would make it through because "there are a lot of Penn Staters who believe in this place and they believe in you and they're going to support you," (Danahy, 2011b). The *Centre Daily Times* also reported that student reaction after the Town Hall was mainly positive. Rumbi Kapfumvuti told reporter Anne Danahy (2011b) that she thought holding the forum was a good idea and the administrators successfully broke a barrier by communicating with students. "For the administration to step up, and come out there and answer students and actually talk to students and hear their concerns -- I think that deserved a good round of applause," (p. 1).

After the event, Erickson made comments expressing his satisfaction with how the night had gone. He stated that, "I'm not here to answer for decisions made by the board. I'm here to get us moving forward," (Pruitt, 2011, para. 22). Students commented that they hoped there would be more events like this one planned for the future, perhaps with the Board present and open for questioning. Others expressed a desire for more student inclusion in administrative decisions and not simply being notified of them via email (Pruitt, 2011).

Also on Wednesday, The Center for Counseling and Psychological Services announced it had plans to host three additional forums for students. *The Collegian* reported on Wednesday that Tim Curley, who remained on administrative leave, currently was still receiving both pay and benefits. In an email Penn State Spokeswoman Lisa Powers wrote, she stated, "He is currently on administrative leave, a decision of then-President Graham Spanier...Currently President Erickson

is focusing on allowing the university to continue educating students and conducting research, while at the same time healing the community and sharing our deep concern for the victims.”

Director of employee relations, Bob Maney, added that “While on administrative leave, Curley is still considered an employee of Penn State and his pay and benefits continue as usual,” (Riden, 2011b, paras. 2, 7, 11). Since Erickson’s initial decline for comment on November 10th pertaining to Curley’s status, no new discussions have been initiated.

The Daily Collegian reported on Thursday, December 1st that Penn State has committed to donating \$1.5 million to fight sexual abuse and violence. This money would come from Penn State’s share of Big Ten bowl game revenue funds (Orso, 2011). On Friday, December 2nd, the BOT met in the Nittany Lion Inn. According to an email from University Spokesman Geoff Rushton, the agenda of the meeting included:

“reaffirm[ing] and ratify[ing]” personnel decisions regarding the removal of former head football coach Joe Paterno and former University President Graham Spanier. Due to extraordinary circumstances, the Board of Trustees needed to act swiftly and decisively on the personnel matters announced Nov. 9 and reported at the public meeting on Nov. 11. While the board believes immediate action was necessary, it is holding a special public meeting of its executive committee today to reaffirm and ratify those personnel decisions announced on Nov. 9. (Dennerlein & Ondrusek, 2011, paras. 1-3)

Board of Trustees Chairman, Steve Garban, declined to comment. The meeting came, more than three weeks after the initial announcement of leadership changes. Student Emily Rankin attended Friday’s meeting. She told the *The Collegian* that “she felt the trustees should have done more to notify the public that the Nov. 9 meeting was taking place. ‘I don’t think the [Board of Trustees] gives the public much of an opportunity to get to [their meetings]. I didn’t even know [the public] was welcome at the original Board of Trustees meeting,’” (Dennerlein, 2011d, paras. 10-11).

As reported by *The Collegian* on December 2nd, the university announced it has “teamed up with the Pennsylvania Coalition Against Rape and the National Sexual Violence Resource Center to work toward the prevention and treatment of child sexual abuse in the wake of the Jerry Sandusky sexual abuse case,” (Orso, 2011k).

On Monday, December 5th, in response to a letter from State Senator, Michael Stack, Erickson released a statement. He said, “no Pennsylvania taxpayer funds will be used by Penn State University to pay for any lawsuit settlements or jury awards that may arise from potential litigation related to the recent events,” (Hart, 2011, para. 1). The university’s liability insurance that is in place would cover any obligation that arises from the case. Erickson requested a meeting to be set up with Senator Stack. In addition, Penn State Spokeswoman Annemarie Mountz made the statement: “No tuition or taxpayer dollars would be spent on the legal fees of the lawsuit.”

The Risk Management Department website for Penn State states that the liability insurance coverage ‘extends to accidents or incidents occurring on University property or in connection with university business conducted elsewhere.’ The coverage extends to employees of the university, but excludes students and graduates. The liability insurance is typical for not only colleges and universities, but for corporations and large businesses. (Hart, 2011, paras. 4-6)

Chapter 7 - Analysis

INITIAL RESPONSE

According to Millar and Smith (2002), in a crisis situation, telling your story first is of utmost importance. If media sources and rumors start to tell the story before the organization itself, their credibility can be damaged or lost. In the case of the breaking news regarding Jerry Sandusky's indictment, Penn State was extremely slow to react. With the release of the grand jury report, members of the Penn State community slowly began to understand what was starting to unfold. Without any official, easy-to-access statements from the administration, students took to social media sites, such as Twitter and Facebook, to find out what was going on. The confusion and questions were endless, but the only sources of information at the beginning were *The Daily Collegian* and Spanier's lone statement concerning his "unconditional support" for Curley and Shultz. The Board was yet to make a public statement to the community about the grand jury report. An editorial published on November 16th in *The Collegian* stated:

The community has been sickened by allegations and scandal — and worse, the university's 'leaders' handling of the situation was an exact lesson in what not to do in crisis management. When the grand jury report came out, the first thing the university should have done was send a message to its 90,000-plus students and 500,000-plus alumni. Penn State should have said two things: The university is saddened by the allegations and sends its thoughts out to those who've allegedly been abused and their families and the university will do everything it can to ensure something like this can never happen again. Instead, former President Graham Spanier sent out a statement in

which he pledged ‘unconditional’ support to two of his employees, who allegedly covered up the scandal. (*The Daily Collegian*, November 16, 2011, paras. 1-3)

In an article by Brad Wolverton (2011c) published in *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, Graham Spanier’s sharing of information with the Board of Trustees, or lack thereof, was brought under scrutiny. Wolverton highlighted the gray area surrounding the subject. There is no definite answer to the question of how much information college presidents should share with their governing boards when handling complicated and sensitive issues. He argued however that in this particular case, the decisions made were not the right ones.

A communication breakdown between senior officials and trustees at Pennsylvania State University in reacting to the case against a former football coach, Jerry Sandusky, contributed to what some crisis-communications experts say was a weak initial response by the institution. (para. 2)

The lack of transparency led to the entire administration being ill-prepared to proactively and efficiently deal with the breaking of the scandal.

LACK OF LEADERSHIP: GRAHAM SPANIER

“No one person or one office can carry the load of communicating throughout the duration of a sudden crisis...However senior management can reaffirm your communication policy, he is ‘the appropriate person to express sorrow and sympathy of the organization to victims and the families of victims,’ make personal phone calls to influential people impacted by the crisis,” (Millar & Smith, 2002, p. 60). Although Graham Spanier was by no means the single most important leader at Penn State, he was by far the most recognizable by students and the community at large. Spanier was seen as the voice of the administration. His actions and words were watched and listened to carefully by the many searching for answers in those early days of

the scandal break. Unfortunately, Spanier's choices were subpar. A student letter to *The Collegian* commented on the actions taken by President Spanier:

Penn State is in full damage control mode at the moment, yet where is Penn State President Graham Spanier? Is he out making public statements or speeches during the universities darkest and most shameful hour? No, he appears to have dropped off the face of the earth, thus putting all the media heat and attention on Joe Paterno. This is simply a desperate move by Spanier to shift the blame and try to save his job.

President Spanier I speak to you now sir: Have some dignity and take some responsibility for your lack of action, have the dignity to resign sir before you damage this university's reputation any more than you, Mr. Curly and Mr. Schultz already have! (Frazer, 2011)

OPEN COMMUNICATION & CONSISTENCY

According to Ogrizek and Guillery (1999), there are eight major principles to communicating in a crisis. The first of these principles is to be a credible source of information. This means that the organization should avoid inconsistencies and be able to speak with a unified voice. Also highly important and directly related to consistency is teamwork and open communication between all relevant administrative parties. "Weakness in the organization's communication system [will] undermine efforts to manage and control the inevitable crisis," (Millar & Smith, 2002, p. 35). The Board of Trustees, Spanier and the rest of the administration desperately needed to be on the same page in order to gain control over the crisis. The administration needed to present a united front and address the public with one voice. Unfortunately, that is not what occurred.

As previously mentioned, Brad Wolverton (2011c) commented on the lack of transparency prior to the breaking of the scandal, which led to the poor initial response shown by

the university administration. His article, published in *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, refers to the situation as “a communication breakdown between senior officials and trustees.” It is unclear how much knowledge certain members of the Board of Trustees had and “whether Mr. Spanier notified board leaders about the grand-jury investigation. Neither he nor the board’s chairman, Steve A. Garban, would comment about any conversations they may have had about the Sandusky matter,” (Wolverton, 2011c, para. 4). It was reported that some trustees stated they had not been aware of the grand-jury investigation until the rest of the public found out, when the attorney general announced the charges being filed against Sandusky, on November 4th. Wolverton reported that the trustees he spoke with also commented that the full Board of Trustees had not discussed the case before that date. This obvious lack of open communication therefore left the Board blind sighted and unable to properly prepare for the crisis and the communications decisions that would need to be made thereafter.

Without the full board's notice, Mr. Spanier released a statement describing his "unconditional support" for Timothy M. Curley, the athletic director, and Gary C. Schultz, interim senior vice president for business and finance, but showing little sympathy for the victims...Mr. Spanier's statement struck some on the board as precisely the wrong message to send. Crisis-communications experts the university brought in that weekend agreed (Wolverton, 2011c, para. 18).

Not only was prior knowledge withheld from the full Board, but Spanier made a hasty decision to address the public without the full administration’s consent, which hurt the university in its quest to alleviate and overcome the crisis.

INACTION

After the initial response, follow-up communication with important constituents, the media and the public at large are also key for successful crisis management. Communication is comprised of two parts, the verbal and the nonverbal. Not only are the things an organization says important, but the decision or speak or not to speak is a vital decision in and of itself. Unfortunately, the Penn State administration chose on many occasions not to speak up when it desperately should have. The students, faculty and greater Penn State community needed answers to what was going on with their school, and the media was in essence the only one doing the talking. Having the public gather their information solely from the media is not what the administration should have let happen. “When issues reported by the media are not tempered by explanation of context from the organization, increasingly negative media frames result, therefore elevating the salience of the issues and the perceived severity of the crisis. When issues are not proactively managed, people outside the organization begin to identify with the side of the issue presented in the media,” (White, 2009, p. 176). The administration needed to speak up, and speak often, in order to combat the biased views being reported all across the media and to get the situation under control.

Three days after the breaking news, on Monday, November 7th, speculation of what Paterno and Spanier did or did not do continued to mount. Some students began calling for the administration to take some action and “clean house” of anyone and everyone involved in the scandal, to start rebuilding Penn State’s destroyed image (Wendel, 2011). According to *Collegian* staff reporter Mindy Szkaradnik (2011 a) Spanier could not be reached for comment.

Canceling of the Press Conference

On Tuesday, November 8th, Graham Spanier's office made the decision to cancel Head Coach Joe Paterno's weekly Tuesday morning press conference. As reported by *The Collegian* staff writer Joe McIntyre (2011b), Penn State senior lecturer and public relations professor Steve Manual commented on the canceling of JoePa's press conference:

The university's reluctance to "face the music" was unprecedented...I've never seen this happen before...So this is uncharted territory for these folks who are handling this as far as the press. It's just uncharted territory...Considering a situation such as the one Penn State finds itself, the best way to approach it would have been with the age-old public relations axiom –"Tell the truth and tell it quickly." The university should have dealt with the allegations the same way Penn State graduate Larry Foster handled the cyanide-in-Tylenol mishap at Johnson & Johnson back in 1982. It hurt for a while, but it will go away much quicker. Had they done that nine years ago, or whenever it happened, then the only case today would be Jerry Sandusky...In the United States, the press is a very big part of the culture and society. Sooner or later, parties have to get in front of the camera and microphone and answer some questions...This is just bad news. Even Ronald Reagan, who was known for accentuating the positives, can't get a positive out of this one. They're going to have to face the music and answer the questions. Somebody's going to have to. (paras. 4-12)

McIntyre also reported analysis from Sports Illustrated writer Joe Posnanski. Posnanski said that with all he's seen in the nearly 20 years he's been covering sports, and also throughout the time he has currently spent writing his book on Joe Paterno, the news that the press conference had been canceled, especially in the way it had been handled, was not something he had seen before, and for good reason, because it was definitely a big mistake. Posnanski stated, "I think they

probably had a pretty good feeling last night that they weren't going to have this press conference. And to allow it to go to the last minute made them look like they just don't know what they're doing. It's a huge blunder, I think," (McIntyre, 2011b, para. 15).

An article written by Cliff White of the *Centre Daily Times* also commented on the canceled press conference. White interviewed Steve Manuel as well, who called the decision "the latest public relations gaffe committed by the university that has helped to fan the flames of the media firestorm...I was surprised they were even going to hold the press conference in the first place. Nobody's going to ask Joe what he thinks about Nebraska -- there wasn't a soul in the media who cares about that now," (White, 2011, p. 3).

Penn State had thus far failed to control the story through every aspect. Media vans and reporters swarmed the campus and downtown area, interrupting students and community members' daily lives. Some reporters were from as far away as Los Angeles and even London. The story was taking on a life of its own, and canceling the press conference without any hint to a replacement press conference, held by *anyone* not simply Joe Paterno, was a bad move. The public needed to hear from the university, not simply speculations from the scandal-hungry media. Steve Manuel told *Centre Daily Times* reporter Cliff White (2011):

Penn State should be trying to get in front of the media's inquiries. You're asked a question and you can say, "No comment," which you shouldn't say because "No comment" is a comment. But if you're not talking and you have a dog in the fight -- and certainly Penn State has a large dog in this fight -- you need to be saying something.

Silence is not golden in this case. (p. 3)

White also reported on comments from Pat Forde, a columnist for Yahoo Sports. He said Penn State would get "ripped for shutting down and hiding." "I don't think don't think shutting this down right now is the right answer," he said. "People need answers. People have got to have

some answers from the responsible parties and the people who have been involved in this thing and to continue to have nothing, I think, speaks pretty poorly,” (p. 3).

Among the top officials under scrutiny, Joe Paterno was the only one to speak out. "This is a tragedy," Paterno said. "It is one of the great sorrows of my life. With the benefit of hindsight, I wish I had done more," (Armas, 2011, para. 17). Unfortunately his words would later be twisted and used against him, yet while forgetting that the others, including Spanier, Curly and Shultz, remained silent.

Lack of CMP

The initial response, lack of consistency and subsequent inaction in the days following the break of the scandal point toward a serious lack in two of the four basic factors involved in crisis management, as according to Coombs (1999): prevention, preparation. Coombs explains that prevention is the most important step, as many crises can be detected and stopped before they even start. Penn State obviously was extremely lacking in its prevention tactics. Preparation involves the crisis management plan (CMP) which every company, big or small, should have in place and which should be practiced often. "Based upon board incompetence, it appeared to people on the outside, looking in, that there wasn't even a crisis management plan in place when Sandusky was arrested Nov. 5, and Tim Curley, former athletic director and Gary Schultz, former interim senior vice president for finance and business, were charged with perjury and failure to report a crime to police," alumni Paul Landis, class of 1966, wrote in a letter to *The Collegian* (Landis, 2011, para. 3).

NEW LEADERSHIP & TRANSPARENCY: RODNEY ERICKSON

With the Board of Trustee's decision to replace Graham Spanier with interim, and eventually full-time, President Rodney Erickson, the opportunity to start anew was blatant. This was the administrations chance to grab ahold of the situation, do some major damage control and show the public its dedication to changing the way Penn State does things for the better. Not only did the administration need to gain control of the crisis, but it needed to regain the trust of its most important constituents, the students, alumni and greater Penn State community. Parties at all levels called for a need for transparency. Marc Rodgers, 1968 alumni, challenged the president to be more transparent in a letter to *The Daily Collegian*. He also called for making information more available to the public, to stop trying to cover things up and to simply try and make the university look better without owning up to information that may look unfavorable, but which the public deserves to know and the university must face head on in order to move forward, and to stop firing people and making other rash decisions without all the facts present and properly analyzed (Rodgers, 2011).

An editorial published in the *Centre Daily Times* (November 27, 2011) also stressed the importance of transparency as it addressed the problems at Penn State which have contributed to this mess. Among the ones highlighted is the issue of secrecy, the use of private institution standards despite the school being a public university, the exemption from open records law, which is supposedly in place to protect donors but has made access essential information about case difficult to come by, and also the lack of accountability. Despite continued unrest amongst many onlookers, an editorial published in *The Collegian* on November 16th reflected on the positive direction Erickson was working swiftly to take Penn State in and said that Erickson's emails and updates were a step in the right direction.

Overall thus far, Erickson was proving to handling the situation much better than Spanier. He was quickly proving that he was “committed to rebuilding the university through transparency and open communication,” (*The Daily Collegian*, November 16, 2007, para. 3). The evidence was in the decisions he had already made in his first week as President regarding the administrations communication with its constituents, its most important audience. He had sent two emails addressed to the students, he was present at the candlelit vigil the students had organized, he spoke in Sam Richards’ Soc119 class, and he also made himself available to reporters after the last football game that Saturday against Nebraska. He promised the students that he would be sending them emails periodically and was committed to his promise in providing them meaningful and timely updates. The lack of transparency and accountability that had thus far sent Penn State deep into the hole it currently was finding itself was something that Erickson stressed again and again that he was committed to changing. The editorial mentioned that in order for Penn State to move forward and overcome this scandal, Erickson must continue to uphold these promises and serve as the strong leader the university so desperately needed.

Erickson needs to be someone who is honest and someone who can listen; someone who has a plan and will not be afraid of the months to come. When all of the news trucks leave and the national reporters fly home, we will still be here. And we hope Erickson continues to keep doing the things he’s been doing, even when the spotlights turn off.

(*The Daily Collegian*, November 16, 2011, para. 8)

Another editorial published in *The Collegian* on December 6th reflected on the changes made over the course of the month following the break of the scandal. Consistent with the many comments prior to its publishing, this editorial focused heavily on the need for transparency and stronger, more honest leadership, commenting on the unfortunate events that needed to happen for these changes to be made. Things were slowly getting better and the students were slowly being able to heal and regain trust in their administrators, but the battle was far from won. However, these

standards and level of transparency should have been in place all along and perhaps the severity of the situation could have long been mitigated or even prevented all together.

BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Paterno and Spanier: Haste or Right Move?

Much scrutiny and commentary has been made on many levels and from many parties involving the Board of Trustees' decision to remove both Joe Paterno and Graham Spanier from their respected positions. The timing, the manner in which the announcement was made, and many other facets of the decision all seemed to have both positive and negative connotations, depending on who was doing the talking.

According to the experts, a problem becomes a crisis when control leaves the hands of those in charge. The status of both Paterno and Spanier were arguably problems within the larger problem. In order to prevent these problems from escalating into yet another crisis like situation, as the overarching problem already had, swift decisions and communication must be made. Therefore, by not wasting any time and coming to a decision quickly and immediately briefing the public with a statement, the Board had acted accordingly to prevent another potential crisis (Millar & Smith, 2002). However, as Caroline Sapriel (2003) explains, "Crisis management is about being prepared to handle adversity and minimize impact most effectively and facilitating the management process during the chaos," (p. 350). The quickness of the Board's meeting, decision, and announcement could arguably be blamed for the intensity of the community's response and the destruction and chaos that ensued downtown that night. This would point to a lack of minimization of impact and ineffective handling of the chaotic situation.

Many members of the Penn State community agreed that the way the Board handled the situation was wrong in numerous ways. Student Ryan Lee told *Collegian* reporter Liz Dennerlein that he thought Paterno's dismissal was in the best interest of the university and that he understands that it was what the Board of Trustees had to do. However, he does not agree with the way they went about removing Paterno, over the phone (Dennerlein, 2011b).

In his letter to *The Collegian* on November 11th, alumnus from the class of 1987, Mark Bachner, pointed out that during the press conference, the Board admitted that they had acted without all the facts. Unlike Curley, Shultz and Sandusky, both Paterno and Spanier had been cleared by the grand jury of any wrong doing. Yet Paterno and Spanier lost their jobs in a hasty decision, while Shultz was allowed to respectfully retire and Curley were permitted to take leave with pay. Also, making the announcement at 10pm instead of waiting until the following morning when tensions could have had the time to subdue and students would be busy in classes, was a poor choice that arguably incited the "riot."

According to the *Centre Daily Times*, Police Chief Tom King called the timing of Penn State Board of Trustees' news conference on Wednesday 9 "difficult," stating that his department received notification of the event only mere hour beforehand. His department did not have enough time to adequately prepare for the student reaction. With 4,000 to 5,000 people flooding the streets downtown almost immediately after the announcement, much destruction and chaos could have been prevented with a morning press conference the next day. "We would have a lot of daylight, we would have sober people, and we would have more resources," he said. "Whether it was preventable, I don't know," (VanderKolk, 2011d, p. 1).

Mark Bachner noted the use of Paterno as a scapegoat and stated, "I am disgusted with the entire situation. None of this is helping those kids now; it's just making us look bad across the world," (Bachner, 2011, para. 11). Another important point was brought up by attorney Ben Andreozzi. As the representation for a few of the boys who Jerry Sandusky allegedly abused

sexually, Andreozzi commented on the lack of consideration the Board of Trustees had on the potential impact the decision may have on the victims (Gallagher, 2011 c).

In a letter to *The Collegian* on November 14th, alumnus from the class of 1978, William Levinson pointed out the administration's lack of fact gathering. He stated:

The headline of today's local paper says in fact, "Trustees vow to seek out truth." The trustees, therefore by their own admission, fired and humiliated Joe Paterno (and Graham Spanier) before they sought out the truth. This is apparently what passes as "careful consideration" among our university's trustees. (paras. 3-5)

He continued on in stating his speculation concerning the possibility that the quick decision was made to satisfy the blood-hungry media.

Barbara Zelle, class of 1970, expressed her distaste for the Board using the decision as a power move. Firing Paterno does not irradiate their immense lacking in leadership, instead it "just underscores their lack of judgment and moral courage. Their actions were spineless and politically driven," (Zelle, 2011, para. 2). The media were calling for blood, and the Board gave it to them. Someone needed to pay, and instead of accepting responsibility itself, the Board redirected the heaviest of the blame on Coach Paterno. Another alumnus, John Cohrac, class of 1990, echoed that same sentiment. The pressure from the media was daunting and the Board needed to act quickly to relieve it. Cohrac expressed his disappointment in the way the Board succumbed to the media and allowed the pressure and biased media opinions to taint their judgment. "Compile all the facts, make appropriate decisions that impact those affected based on those facts, and put adequate controls in place to insure that whatever went wrong cannot happen again," (Cohrac, 2011, para. 7).

An article published in the *Centre Daily Times* also focused on the use of Joe Paterno as an alleged "scapegoat." The Board needed to send a message, and with most of America not previously familiar with Sandusky, Curley, Shultz or even Spanier, Paterno was the obvious

choice to show that the university meant business and was taking control of the situation. “Firing Spanier sends that message. Firing Paterno shouts that message from the rooftops at a time when everyone with a television set or a computer was watching and listening,” (Rice, 2011, p.

1). Fairness no longer was a part of the equation. Decisions made now had to be about restoration, no matter who ended up on the short end of the stick.

Conversely, many members of the Penn State community spoke out in support of the Board’s decisions. A recent alumnus, Pat Gehrke, class of 2003, expressed his approval of the Board’s foresight. “No good would have come from letting their continued presence draw out and deepen the wound that Jerry Sandusky’s horror has brought to one of our nation’s best institutions of higher education. It was the right decision and the right time,” (Gehrke, 2011, para. 2). Brad Wolverton (2011a) of *The Chronicle of Higher Education* agreed. He reported:

For its part, the board acted swiftly to take back its university. It announced the formation of an investigative committee to get to the bottom of the abuse allegations. At the news conference announcing Mr. Spanier's and Mr. Paterno's dismissals, the board's vice chairman, John P. Surma, was asked what cultural changes the university might need to make to set it on the right path. "The culture on the whole is exemplary," said Mr. Surma, flanked by 23 fellow trustees with stern faces. "We have a good culture, but to the extent we could improve it in some areas, we will put our full energy into it." (paras. 46-47)

An editorial from the *Centre Daily Times* also agreed that the Board had made the right decision. The points made were that finally the leaders of Penn State were speaking out and in a proper timeframe, in addition to the citing of Joe Paterno’s moral obligation as the face of Penn State to do more than the minimum legal requirement. “The Penn State trustees are moving quickly. They're working to bring back trust... The trustees did their job Wednesday night. Only a clean sweep of anyone involved in this scandal will begin a healing process and restore confidence in a great university,” (*Centre Daily Times*, 2011, p. A8).

Sunshine Act

Walter Brasch, president of the Keystone chapter of the Professional Society of Journalists and Pennsylvania Press Club, said he has concerns about the board's adherence to Pennsylvania's Sunshine Act during its decision making processes in the wake of sex abuse charges filed against former assistant football coach Jerry Sandusky. According to Pennsylvania's Sunshine Act, the firing of public figures may take place in an emergency meeting, but the person in question has the right to have a public meeting, instead of an emergency closed meeting. The Sunshine Act states that the person in question has the right to request a public meeting for the terms of his or her employment. Brasch said that the trustees acted as Paterno's immediate boss when they fired him on Nov. 9. The Sunshine Act requires that the public is aware when the meeting takes place and be able to attend and speak at the meeting, Brasch said. The meeting may be held in private, but the board must indicate what the reasons are and announce those at a public meeting, Brasch said "There is no good reason why a public body should hold meetings in secret, take unofficial votes and then revote in public," Brasch said. "It is blatant violation of the public trust," (Dennerlein & Ondrusek, 2011, para. 12).

Special Committee Creation

Among the many decisions the Board of Trustees had made in the aftermath of the breaking news of Sandusky's indictment, the creation of a special investigative committee was approved. The purpose of the committee was to independently investigate the Jerry Sandusky sexual abuse case, to uncover exactly what happened, where things went wrong, and move forward with policy and procedure changes. Before the selection of members on the committee, it

was announced that trustees would make up most of the committee, in addition to some faculty and students.

Members of the Penn State community expressed mixed emotions at the announcement. An editorial in *The Daily Collegian* highlighted a strong disagreement with the planned member selection.

This small group of insiders will not enact the change our school needs. We need to bring in outsiders. There needs to be a national search for committee members who will bring different perspectives viewpoints to this case. For people related to Penn State, we need to have more than one student on this committee. There needs to be representation from undergraduate students, graduate students and alumni. (*The Daily Collegian*, November 18, 2011, paras. 3-6)

After the announcement that Former Director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation Louis Freeh was to lead the investigation, along with six Penn State trustees, University Faculty Senate Chairman Dan Hagen and former student trustee Rodney Hughes, community members continued voicing their hesitations. “It’s very difficult to have an entity examine itself and come up with an objective opinion,” Faculty Senator James Strauss said. “It’d be like asking you to critique your own family and how it operates.” Student leader and UPUA academic affairs chairman, John Zang, commented that although he was happy at least one graduate student was selected, there should have been more student representation. “Citing concerns about objectivity and transparency, Zang, also a Faculty Senate Liberal Arts representative, said he was disappointed to see so many people affiliated with the university on the committee — especially in light of the Faculty Senate’s recommendations,” (Rogers, 2011e, paras. 6, 12).

TECHNOLOGICAL USE

When the grand jury report was released, members of the Penn State community took to social media sites, such as Twitter and Facebook, to gather news about what was going on, and also to express their shock and mix of emotions regarding the allegations against a former Penn State employee, as well as current employees. “The news is out. In this age of instant communication, people are taking to Facebook, the Internet and Twitter. I am sure YouTube will follow,” said Robert States, Class of 1968 in his letter to *The Collegian* on November 8th (para. 1). “Technological advances...have fundamentally altered the way people communicated in crisis situations,” (Millar & Smith, 2002, p. 69)

Almost immediately after the breaking of the scandal, students took to online media outlets, creating online petitions and Facebook groups. According to an article by Mindy Szkaradnik (2011a) published in *The Collegian*:

As of press time Sunday, 177 people had signed a petition titled ‘Pennsylvania State University Board of Trustees: Fire Penn State President Graham Spanier’ on *change.org*, 108 people had liked the Facebook page ‘Fire Graham Spanier’ and 31 people had joined a Facebook group with the same name. A Facebook page called ‘Students, Alumni and Residents for the Eradication of Corruption at PSU’ garnered 54 likes and a Facebook group called "Shame on You PSU" attracted 46 members as of press time Sunday. (para. 3)

Varying reactions to Paterno’s involvement spattered the social media universe. Some called for blood, while others stayed loyal, and others still claimed they would wait for due process before they made up their mind.

Periodically Penn State utilized its Facebook and Twitter accounts, but more often than not it was the students and outside sources that dominated the social media scene. After Penn

State posted news on its Facebook page of the university intending to pay for the legal counsel for both Curley and Shultz, many students and community members alike left comments “condemning Sandusky, Curley, Schultz and football head coach Joe Paterno,” (VanderKolk, 2011a, p. 1). On *www.change.org*, alumni and others from all across the country were signing a petition directed at the trustees calling for the firing of Graham Spanier. One part of the petition stated: "Unacceptable doesn't even begin to describe Spanier's actions here. This is beyond criminal conduct, but a question of right and wrong. Spanier must be fired," (VanderKolk, 2011a, p. 1).

Students utilized social media daily, and some also wrote letters to *The Daily Collegian*, (which can be accessed easily on *The Collegian's* website) calling and demanding for transparency and integrity by the administration. “We are a strong university community, and I believe we will emerge stronger, but only once the allegations have been fully vetted, appropriate actions are taken and any lingering evil is rooted out of our institution,” Chris Caswell stated in his letter to *The Collegian* (Caswell, 2011, para. 2). “[Spanier], if you really cared about this school, you would resign,” student Joseph Domino stated in his letter (Domino, 2011, para. 5).

Leading up to the Nebraska game, students and alumni took to social media, and letters to *The Collegian*, to express their continued support in the student-athletes on the football team and urged the rest of the community to attend Saturday’s game despite recent happenings in order to support their fellow classmates.

Twitter was a popular outlet that many students utilized to express their reactions. Penn State's student body President T.J. Bard tweeted: "... I have the utmost trust in the BOT. They know far more than I ever will. They have and always will have PSU best interest in mind” (Danahy & VanderKolk, 2011, p. 1).

On Thursday, November 10th, students urged each other via social media, to confront the board. A group was created on Facebook called, “Bring PSU Students to the Board of Trustees.”

The purpose was to get students to attend the BOT meeting the next day. “It is important for students to have a presence at this meeting because we should have a voice in expressing how poorly the administration has handled [this scandal,]” student Alyssia Motah said, as reported by *The Collegian*. “By holding this protest, Motah explained they are trying to hold the board to a higher moral standard...They will attempt to conduct a civilized discussion with the board regarding their unhappiness with the present scandal and all included aspects,” (Saumell, 2011, paras. 8-9, 19).

In summary, social media is a huge part of society and news today. Organizations and institutions like Penn State are present on many of these sites, but they must keep up. With a strong presence in the social media realm, Penn State will be able to more closely monitor potential rumors, the consensus of its constituents, public opinion, etc. Social media also provides a platform for more direct communication with the community. Getting direct feedback from students on certain issues could immensely help Penn State in its decision making. Millar and Smith (2002) state, “Ultimately, your success in managing the crisis will be determined by how well you manage the media coverage of the crisis—how the story is told,” (p. 49). In today’s society, many stories start and thrive on social media. If an organization wants to achieve success, they must be able to tell their story via Facebook and twitter.

STUDENT REACTIONS

Student Andrew Wetmore, as reported by *The Collegian*, commented on the “riots.” “We should all wait until Paterno makes his statements, and then create an educated opinion. But, I am all for condemning President Spanier for his lack of leadership and unwillingness to speak on behalf of Penn State as the head of this institution; this is what the ‘rioting’ should be unconditionally about,” (Wetmore, 2011, para. 5). With regard to Erikson becoming interim

president, some students and community members spoke out to *The Collegian*. Some thought it was the right move for the time being, but felt a neutral outsider should eventually step in. Some were still looking for someone to answer their questions after Spanier's limited statement releases in the days following the grand jury report release (Moyer, 2011a).

- Courtney Cardini: Because Erickson was already close to the top of Penn State's chain of command, I believe this is the most reasonable solution to fill Spanier's vacancy. Just like in politics, when the U.S. president steps down, the vice president takes over.
- Kirk Zuercher: Appointing someone internal, like Erickson, is a "necessity."
- Julie Montano: Right now, we all just feel ignored.
- Lauren Scandone: I think all of Penn State deserves a new statement from Spanier, but I doubt this will ever happen. He didn't say anything regarding the situation while being president of the school. I really don't expect him to release a statement anytime soon. Students probably couldn't care less anyway.
- Tyler Haas: I have faith that Erickson will help to improve Penn State's image. Having been here for so long, he probably has a good idea of what is going on.
- Connor Ward: Erickson should just be president temporarily until a more-detailed selection will be made and a real fresh start can take place.

The *Centre Daily Times* reported reactions from students, with quite a few expressing hope that people would react with caution and not rush to judgment (Cirilli & Mahon, 2011).

- Kimberly Neal: I think they should stop making him a scapegoat. He's the face of our university, and I don't think he's done anything but make a good name for our university.
- Sasha Matthews: I think everyone should back off. It's not our place to judge.

- Sean McCrea: We should wait 'til the investigation's done before we jump to any conclusions.
- Eliza Crawford: Obviously, JoePa should have done more. But that shouldn't be a reason for him to be fired.
- Student Corey Stubbs wasn't quite sure what the rally was about: I know I was here earlier and there was a mix of some people Pro-Paterno and against Paterno. I think it's more about coming together regardless of what you think.

More than 250 students watched the press conference on TV in the HUB, the student center on campus. Some students were moved to tears upon hearing the announcement. As reported by Danahy and Vanderkolk (2011) in the *Centre Daily Times*, some reactions included:

- Ryan Matthews: I was studying at the HUB when I noticed the crowd growing. It's not fair. They even said they didn't have all the information. Paterno shouldn't go. Spanier getting fired is in Penn State's best interest.
- Natalie Yoder: Penn Staters must stick together...I'm appalled. This is a terrible and corrupt situation. It was an all-or-nothing problem, but Joe's leaving is the biggest heartbreak to PSU.
- Maddie Stein: Paterno should at least be able to finish out the season. Spanier should be ashamed. Graham was in a higher authority (than Paterno).

One student, Arielle Brown, expressed concern about the student representation in the situation through a letter to *The Collegian* on November 11th:

Wednesday night, as I stood, watching the protest, I realized that the students of Penn State are a part of a body literally without a head and a voice. Everyone moved, unsure of what was going on and what was going to happen next; that's what it feels like right now post-protest. So I pose the question: Where was the University Park Undergraduate Association in all of this? There were no articles written with the members' opinions or a

report about their stance on Monday, Tuesday or Wednesday morning. If UPUA is the student voice, why are the members standing and watching in the wings (or in the crowds at the riot) rather than taking advantage of the calm before the storm and telling us how we should conduct ourselves in this moment of great shame? UPUA, where are you now? In this moment of great discontent and weakness, the members should've been that one voice that rose up above the others. (paras. 1-6)

On Wednesday, November 16th, Professor Sam Richards and his Wife Laurie Mulvey held a lecture for Richard's Sociology 119 class, of about 700 students in 100 Thomas, about "The Sociology of Victimization and the Crisis at Penn State." Society does not have the tools to talk about child sexual assault, sociology Professor Sam Richards said to his 700-student class Tuesday — one of the reasons students are struggling to come to grips with recent events. Despite reassurance of the bright future of Penn State from Erickson, right now, many in the Penn State community do not know how to move forward. Mulvey told students that when she's in groups where someone reveals they have been involved in a sexual assault, each group has a similar reaction: first there is silence and then there's shock. In the midst of feeling stunned, people question what they should do and say, she said. That's where Penn State is at, she said "The fact that we don't know how to go forward is part of being human," she said. In a clicker poll taken early in the class period, 56 percent of students agreed that they felt "exhausted" talking about recent events. But it's only been nine days since the grand jury report was released, Richards said. A student said he and his peers were tired of having to defend themselves and their moral character (Rogers, 2011d).

In regards to the removal of the Sandusky named ice cream flavor, many students approved the decision to remove the flavor, as they would not buy it anymore even if it was still for sale. Many alumni expressed similar feelings.

On November 16th, staff writer for *The Collegian*, Sam Kramer, expressed his emotions toward the scandal, but also his hope that the students could help to overcome it. The article read:

There is an uneasy mood here at Penn State that, unless you are a student right now, you would never be able to relate to. Anger. Sadness. Doubt. Shame. We all feel a combination of these, perhaps in different levels. But the feeling overtaking me right now is fear. Despite my strong beliefs that the university will bounce back; that students here have so much pride and spirit and love for their school that they will find a way to rise from the ashes — I also know that the rest of the world may not... I must admit, social media networks have recently become a space for full-out online brawls for me. I dared anyone to Tweet or write statuses condemning my school because they had wrong information. I've deleted a few friends because of the overwhelming pride I have for this school... there's no room for obnoxious, uninformed people in my book... Though we were not a part of this scandal, we can become the solution that ends it. (paras. 1-3, 14, 22)

LISTENING TO STUDENTS

“Communicating with stakeholders is only half of the equation. Listening to them and their concerns is essential to ensure that the organization’s internal operational view of the way the crisis is being managed is as close as possible to the external perceptual one of the stakeholders,” (Sapriel, 2003, p. 353).

An editorial published in *The Collegian* on December 5th that was titled “Trustees, it's time to listen up” commented on the desperate need for the leaders of Penn State to stop shutting

the students out, listen to what they have to say, and include them in the conversation. There is a desperate need for open, two-way communication between the students and the Board, with both sides needing to hear from the other. Also, the Board needs to be open in discussion and reflection on decisions previously made. As Coombs (1999) points out, the final aspect of crisis management is learning. Not allowing for the scrutiny and questioning of its decisions prevents from true growth and moving the university forward. The editorial points out that many of these decisions were made behind closed doors, which is in stark contrast to the promises made for increasing transparency. However, it is also noted that it is not merely the Board's job to reach out to the students, but the students are responsible for knowing who the Board members are, educating themselves and reaching out to directly contact the Board themselves.

ALUMNI REACTION

With over a half million Penn State alumni, it is among one of the largest and most influential in the world. During the scandal, Penn State's administration should have paid much more attention to their reactions, for they are a very important part of the Penn State community and the administration has a responsibility to communicate with them in addition to the students and faculty. With many alumni living far from campus, much of the information they were receiving was in the same form as the rest of the public at large, via the media, which oftentimes was biased and did not do the situation or the school justice. Many alumni voiced their concerns through letters to *The Daily Collegian*.

Brad Scioli, who played defensive end for Sandusky in the late 1990s, expressed his disbelief. "Over the last couple days it's all I've been thinking about. It's hard to believe, disturbing, disgusting, shameful." Scioli expressed his concern in not being sure if the school would be able to recover from the scandal.

There's so much good that Penn State has done for so many people. That's why it hurts the most, because I know the kind of people that I went to school with. To think that one guy can ruin it for a lot of people, it's sad. I'm mad that this could happen, mad that people's lives are ruined... It's not forgivable. (Mahon, Rice & VanderKolk, 2011, p. 3)

Some alumni, like Adam Shellenbarger, a 2010 graduate stated that he believed it was too soon to jump to conclusions, as many others believed as well. Conversely, similar to the popular media verdict, many believed that there needed to be punishment at the top for not having done more in 2002. Paul Gallagher, a 1981 Penn State graduate and a 1984 Dickinson Law School graduate, wrote in an email to the trustees, "These men are the two most powerful persons at Penn State. Either of them could have taken the next step to help to prevent this terrible thing from happening again. They did not do so," (Mahon, Rice & VanderKolk, 2011, p. 3).

In a letter to the *Centre Daily Times* on November 12th, 2011, Gavin Kierans (a former executive board member of the Penn State Alumni Association and student body president) commented on the chance alumni and students now have to mold Penn State's Future. He urged his fellow Penn Staters to take hold of the opportunity, despite how difficult and daunting a task it may be. This was the time to learn, change and grow.

We have a challenge in front of us unlike any that our Happy Valley has seen and the world is watching to see how we will respond. The sight of a flipped media van and smashed glass cannot be the lasting memory of our response. We've always shouted aloud how we are Penn State. Now faced without a famous football coach and an ongoing major scandal, we will truly be forced to prove our identity. (p. 11)

Kierans highlighted the importance of both the student body and the thousands of alumni to come together and work hard to restore their university to its true potential. It is their responsibility and if they don't step up to the plate and make an impact now, no one else is going to do it for them.

"It is our job to be actively involved in order to mold the direction and focus. We need to ensure

long-term success for our new path forward. This is our university; the time is now to band together to restore its foundation,” (Kiernans, 2011, p. 11).

SUMMARY

From the lack of open communication amongst the administration prior to the breaking of the scandal, to the promises of future transparency and working together, the first month of the “Sandusky Scandal” saw Penn State move quickly through many facets of crisis management and damage control. The missteps seen in the lack of initial response, poor leadership in Graham Spanier and arguably the hasty timing of the Board of Trustees’ November 9th press conference are all things the university must own up to, understand, learn from and move forward with intentions of preventing future similar occurrences. The future of Penn State, as new President Rodney Erickson has repeatedly insisted, is still bright as long as everyone works together to rebuild the university and what it stands for. Whether those promises of transparency and events like the Student Town Hall Forum continue is yet to be seen. However, despite the many misguided actions by Penn State’s administration that month, all is not lost. Hopefully the administration learns from this and prepares itself to better handle another crisis should one happen to arise.

Chapter 8 - Conclusion

It's easy to look back at the events that took place in November 2011 and point fingers and claim the obvious. While in the midst of a crisis, with no hindsight for guidance, the crucial decisions that must be made can be impossibly difficult if running blindly. Having a solid, rehearsed crisis management plan (CMP) in place could mean a world of difference should a scandal arise. In the case of The Pennsylvania State University and the Sandusky Scandal that erupted on Friday, November 4th and consumed the entire community in a matter of days, a crisis communication management plan may have existed, but it definitely was not utilized properly. Top management, or in this case the Board of Trustees, must work to centralize the plan and get all parties on the same page. With the president's office making certain decisions and statements, and the BOT making others, a unified front is not presented. This is important of course to the media and the public at large, but it is especially important for those whom make up the university and keep it going.

The faculty, students, and community members of State College deserved much better communication in the days immediately following the break of the scandal. They reacted, sometimes violently, though some have argued, how could they not? Keeping these integral members of Penn State in the dark is counterproductive and as was witnessed, can only cause problems. Once Rodney Erickson took office, communication efforts began to improve, and communal outcry turned away from acts of anger and more toward productive acts of change and progress. In the single month following the break of the scandal it is impossible to tell the whole story of the Sandusky Scandal and how it affected the Penn State community, or how the Penn State administrators handled it, however, it provides a microcosm of the difference between effective and ineffective crisis communication management. The right decisions, at the right time

can create the opportunity for conversation, discussion, growth and improvement. The wrong decisions conversely can lead to just the opposite.

This study found that what Penn State's administration did that was effective in handling the scandal included the open communication started by Rodney Erickson through emails and town hall forums, in addition to the creation of the abuse hotline. What Penn State's administration did that was ineffective in handling the scandal included the lack of use of a CMP, which led to poor initial response, poor communication amongst administrators, and no unified voice and lack of open communication with its most important constituents, the students. What Penn State's administration should have done differently in handling the scandal would have been to act more quickly and proactively when the news first broke so as to get its story out before the media could take over. Also, the press conference announcing the firings of Paterno and Spanier could have easily been held the next morning and the chaos and destruction that followed could have been lessened or completely prevented.

Appendix A

Email to Students from Rodney Erickson, November 11

Dear Penn State community,

This note is the first of many that you will receive from me as Penn State's president. I will be sending emails periodically as part of my promise to you to provide meaningful and timely updates.

Today I am outlining my promise to the Penn State community, which includes the naming of an ethics officer and a commitment to transparency as the University moves forward. Right now, the nation's eyes are upon us, looking at where we will go from here. Many of you already are representing this University's high standards for honesty and integrity. It is imperative that every member of our community model the best that Penn State has to offer as we begin to rebuild the confidence and trust that has been shaken this past week.

Please join me in this effort to rebuild our community. Below, you will find my promise to all of you.

President Erickson's Promise to the Penn State Community

1. I will reinforce to the entire Penn State community the moral imperative of doing the right thing—the first time, every time.
 - We will revisit all standards, policies and programs to ensure they meet not only the law, but Penn State's standard. To oversee this effort, I will appoint an Ethics Officer that will report directly to me.

- I ask for the support of the entire Penn State community to work together to reorient our culture. Never again should anyone at Penn State feel scared to do the right thing. My door will always be open.
2. As I lead by example, I will expect no less of others.
 - I will ensure proper governance and oversight exists across the entire University, including Intercollegiate Athletics.
 3. Penn State is committed to transparency to the fullest extent possible given the ongoing investigations.
 - I commit to providing meaningful and timely updates as frequently as needed.
 - I encourage dialogue with students, faculty, alumni, and other members of the Penn State Community.
 4. We will be respectful and sensitive to the victims and their families. We will seek appropriate ways to foster healing and raise broader awareness of the issue of sexual abuse.
 5. My administration will provide whatever resources, access and information is needed to support the Special Committee's investigation. I pledge to take immediate action based on their findings.

Appendix B

Email to Students from Rodney Erickson, November 14

A Post-Weekend Message from President Rodney Erickson

This past week has tested the character and resilience of the Penn State community in ways we never could have imagined. Many of you shared my shock and surprise as the reports unfolded. Yet, after this past weekend, I just want to take a moment to tell all of you how proud I am. Our students and athletes, in particular, demonstrated the best of what it means to be a Penn Stater.

On Friday night, our students organized a candlelight vigil for the victims of abuse, and thousands came to express their concern and resolve. It was a meaningful and deeply moving way to show support.

At the Penn State-Nebraska football game on Saturday, tens of thousands of fans supported the Blue Out, a solemn moment of silence, as well as many other efforts to raise awareness and money for this very serious issue.

On the field, the football players demonstrated a level of maturity and determination that was an inspiration. The athletes from both teams came together at midfield in unity, respect and prayer for the victims. Then they played their hearts out. It was remarkable in so many ways.

Thank you for coming together as a community.

Today, we are back to class and the business of running this university. I urge you to refocus on your educational goals and remain mindful of the five promises I have made to the Penn State community as we move forward. Collectively, we need to show the nation and world

that Penn State cares, and that Penn State is a community of individuals committed to moving forward with a shared sense of purpose.

If you have not yet seen the five promises, I will share them below.

Again, thank you for your support and the kind words I have heard from so many people. It gives me the confidence to know that together we are moving in the right direction.

My Promise to the Penn State Community

1. I will reinforce to the entire Penn State community the moral imperative of doing the right thing – the first time, every time.

– We will revisit all standards, policies, and programs to ensure they meet not only the law, but Penn State’s standard. To oversee this effort, I will appoint an Ethics Officer who will report directly to me.

– I ask for the support of the entire Penn State community to work together to reorient our culture. Never again should anyone at Penn State feel scared to do the right thing. My door will always be open.

2. As I lead by example, I will expect no less of others.

– I will ensure proper governance and oversight exists across the entire University, including Intercollegiate Athletics.

3. Penn State is committed to transparency to the fullest extent possible given the ongoing investigations.

– I encourage dialogue with students, faculty, alumni, and other members of the Penn State community.

4. We will be respectful and sensitive to the victims and their families. We will seek appropriate ways to foster healing and raise broader awareness of the issue of sexual abuse.

5. My administration will provide whatever resources, access, and information are needed to support the Special Committee's investigation. I pledge to take immediate action based on its findings.

Appendix C

Email to Students from Student Affairs, November 15

Dear Students—

We all have been changed by events in the past week and a half. In distinct ways, each of us is different than we were before. Yet no one has been more profoundly affected by these events than the victims themselves. We can only imagine their pain and promise to do all we can to support them and prevent such acts from occurring again. The collective commitment of our University community to this cause can be nothing less.

Yet for all the change and pain that have surrounded us, our University remains true to its core values in pursuit of its fundamental purposes. At the very center of those values and purposes resides you—the students of Penn State. And the extraordinary student experience that you have known, both in the classroom and beyond, continues unabated.

We all are saddened and perplexed by the incongruity between our University's core values and purposes and the excruciating details of the alleged crimes. We are frustrated by others' misperceptions of us, which are based on the actions of a few. The actions of students who took to the streets and did damage in State College last Wednesday, for instance, contrast starkly with the spirit and character displayed by thousands of students on the Old Main lawn for the candlelight vigil last Friday.

Among the 96,000 lives that comprise Penn State's student body, there are great variations in age, circumstance, ambition, talent, and perspective. That diversity enriches our University. It is a source of our strength. But now it also includes diversity of opinion about who was right and who was wrong, who should go and who should stay, what should have been done and what should be done next.

Each of you will have your own opinions, and you should feel free to share them in appropriate and constructive ways. But all of us—students, faculty, staff, and alumni—must be unified in our determination to remain true to the guiding principles that bind our learning community. There can be no wavering from respect for individual dignity. There can be no shortcut around integrity. In all we do, we must demonstrate responsibility for ourselves and others. And we must honor society's expectations for us as expressed through laws or University policy. Never have these things been more true.

Investigations into these matters, both internal and external, will go on. The news media will hover, slip away, and return occasionally through the coming weeks and months. The deeply disturbing and sad details that comprise both fact and fiction in this instance will continue to emerge. They will slowly drip into the public realm. We cannot escape that outcome. Even so, we must return to the business at-hand. We must ensure that the University continues to teach, conduct research, and serve our communities. And you must invest yourselves in the wonderful process of learning and engaging in student life beyond the classroom.

Our University will find its new path toward even greater success than it has known one step at a time—one class, one lab, one concert, one service project, one day at a time. In the coming weeks, we promise to share useful insights with you related to these matters as they come to us. Until then, know that abundant support services exist to offer any help that you need. The links below provide access to those resources.

Together, we will pass through these difficult days and move forward as one University geographically distributed, but together in spirit and purpose. You are at the very center of that spirit and purpose, giving our University its fundamental resolve. We are very grateful that you are.

Rob Pangborn - Acting Executive Vice President & Provost

Damon Sims - Vice President for Student Affairs

Madlyn Hanes - Vice President for Commonwealth Campuses

Craig Weidemann - Vice President for Outreach

Appendix D

Email to Students from Rodney Erickson, November 21

A Message from President Rodney Erickson

In the last two painful weeks, Penn State has been shaken to our foundation. But we are moving forward, and with every decision we're committed to doing the right thing for the victims, their families, and the Penn State community. You have all played a role in helping us define a path for the future. You have inspired us with your resilience, generosity, and hope. You have given me your confidence and encouragement.

In the spirit of giving thanks, I wish to share a few observations about our community. We need to continue to listen to one another. I've been contacted by countless students, faculty, staff, alumni and friends, and I've tried to visit as many classrooms, organizations, and campus gatherings as possible. Everyone has openly shared their grief, anger, suggestions, and hopes for the future of Penn State. I've listened and I've learned.

Penn Staters care. I've been profoundly moved by the Penn Staters who have pulled together to offer support for the victims and each other. From the moving candlelight vigil to charitable efforts to awareness building programs for this very serious issue, Penn Staters have demonstrated a deep commitment to caring.

People are Penn State's greatest resource. Rob Pangborn has stepped up to serve as acting executive vice president and provost, and David Joyner as acting athletic director. I'm grateful for and confident in their leadership as they help guide us through the challenges ahead.

This morning the Penn State Board of Trustees announced the membership of a Special Committee, led by Kenneth Frazier as chair and Ronald Tomalis as vice chair. They also named

Judge Louis Freeh, former Director of the FBI, as special counsel in charge of conducting an independent investigation into all aspects of the university's actions in regard to the recent allegations of child abuse. As I stated in my Five Promises, my administration will provide whatever resources, access and information are needed to support the investigation.

Our work has just begun. It will be some time before we are able to bring a measure of understanding and resolution to the recent terrible events, even as we refocus our energies on our students, research and service activities. When we return from Thanksgiving break, we'll need to dedicate ourselves to bringing closure to this semester and celebrating the accomplishments of the Fall 2011 graduating class.

Thank you for your support. It gives me confidence that Penn State is moving in the right direction.

I hope you are able to spend some time with your families at Thanksgiving. Travel safely.

Appendix E

Email to Students from Rodney Erickson, November 29

A message from President Rodney Erickson: An Update

As we return from holiday break, I'd like to update you on some of the actions and events that move our University forward along the path of the Five Promises I made on November 11. All of us continue to feel the effects of the ongoing reports of horrific accounts of abuse. To address some of these effects, we've created a new channel for those who need support. We've established a dedicated hotline, the Penn State Sexual Assault and Relationship Violence Hotline run by ProtoCall, which is accessible 24 hours a day, seven days a week, for all Penn State campuses at 800-550-7575 to offer counseling and support for victims of sexual or physical abuse. Additional resources for coping during this time are available to students and faculty through Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS).

If you're a victim, or may know of one, you should immediately report any abuse to the police (9-1-1) or Children and Youth Services (CYS). Agencies in your area will work with the new hotline to assist those who are in need of help. Since on-campus support services for abuse victims are limited at some of the campuses, this arrangement will make appropriate referrals to services available in their local communities.

The healing process takes time and a healthy, open dialogue. We're listening and appreciate your input and concern. I am thankful that alumni and friends continue to raise awareness and resources to address child abuse. I'm also proud to acknowledge two student-organized events taking place this week.

Recently many of our campuses have held vigils and events to focus attention on the issue of sexual abuse. In that spirit our Penn State Shenango campus will hold a vigil for victims

of child abuse Tuesday, Nov. 29, at 6 p.m. at the campus' auditorium. A representative from AWARE, an organization committed to providing education, support and advocacy for Mercer County, will speak at the vigil.

Our student government leaders have organized a Town Hall meeting Wednesday, Nov. 30, at 6 p.m. in Heritage Hall on the University Park campus for our students to discuss recent events and our path forward with me and other administrators. I'm participating in the meeting with Provost Robert Pangborn; Vice President for Student Affairs Damon Sims and Vice President for Development and Alumni Relations Rod Kirsch, among other faculty and administrators. I'm looking forward to a candid and constructive discussion.

We are moving forward, together. I am especially grateful to our faculty, staff and students who have taken the time to educate others on this important issue and to share available information and related research.

I again thank you for your support and your support of each other as we fulfill the mission of Penn State. We remain a world-class university dedicated to providing excellence in education, path-breaking research and creative activity, and sharing that knowledge with those around us.

President Rodney Erickson

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Honors and Awards

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Publications and Papers

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