

UNIVERSITY OF SWAZILAND

FACULTY OF COMMERCE

DEPARTMENT OF BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION

MAIN EXAMINATION PAPER

FIRST SEMESTER: DECEMBER 2017

IDE STUDENTS

TITLE OF PAPER : PUBLIC RELATIONS 1

COURSE CODE : BA 518 / IDE

TIME ALLOWED : THREE (3) HOURS

- INSTRUCTIONS :**
- (1) TOTAL NUMBER OF QUESTIONS IN THIS PAPER IS SIX (6)**
 - (2) THE PAPER CONSISTS OF SECTIONS A AND B.**
 - (3) ANSWER THE QUESTION IN SECTION A WHICH IS COMPULSORY AND ANY THREE (3) QUESTIONS IN SECTION B.**
 - (4) THE MARKS ALLOTTED FOR A QUESTION /PART OF A QUESTION ARE INDICATED AT THE END OF EACH QUESTION / PART OF QUESTION.**
 - (5) WHERE APPLICABLE, ALL WORKINGS / CALCULATIONS MUST BE CLEARLY SHOWN.**

THIS PAPER MUST NOT BE OPENED UNTIL PERMISSION HAS BEEN GRANTED BY THE INVIGILATOR.

SECTION A: COMPULSORY**QUESTION 1 Read the case and answer the questions that follow:****CASE: CASE : "Gunman on Campus"**

When the man dressed in black walked onto the stage during an ocean science lecture at **Northern Illinois University (NIU)**, many of the students first wondered if it was some sort of prank. But when he leveled his shotgun at the center of the audience and opened fire, chaos ensued.

"All I could think about was, 'I could die at any moment,' sophomore Geoff Alberti later said, 'this could be the end'

By the time former NIU student Steven Kazmierczak ended his rampage by killing himself, five students were dead and 16 others were injured. The horrible events of February 14, 2008, were sadly reminiscent of an even deadlier campus shooting less than a year earlier at Virginia Tech, where a troubled student killed 32 people and wounded 25 before committing suicide. However, the two schools were linked by more than just grief born of senseless tragedies. Within minutes of the shootings, Virginia Tech officials reached out to their NIU counterparts to help them cope with the worst day of their lives.

To their credit, NIU officials had already researched the April 2007 Virginia Tech shootings. And when terror visited their campus on that Valentine's Day, they had already learned valuable lessons from their colleagues in Blacksburg. NIU Assistant Vice President for Public Affairs Melanie Magara had heard a presentation given by Virginia Tech officials just a few months earlier. From that, she learned that the Internet had played a critical role in getting information to students, families, employees, and a concerned public.

"Our first priority was to get a warning out there," Magara said. "Our first message on the website was very simple: **Gunman on campus. Remain in rooms and offices. Campus in lock-down.** NIU also issued emergency alerts via e-mail, voicemail, and the university's hotline.

In the first hour after the shooting, NIU's website registered almost 4.4 million hits and by the end of the day, that figure had climbed to 14 million. However, the website handled the traffic, thanks to recently upgraded servers. That was not a lucky coincidence. In the months following the Virginia Tech tragedy, NIU officials twice had used their revised crisis response plans, once in response to local flooding and the other a result of a racially charged threat scrawled on a residence hall wall.

In evaluating their response to those crises, school officials realized they needed to beef up their computer server capacity

As one might expect, media coverage of the NIU shootings was intense. More than 25 television satellite trucks descended on the campus to report the breaking news to the rest of the world. Magara said the university's crisis plan called for treating the media as partners-not as adversaries-because they had the communication channels needed to reach NIU's publics. She said transparency proved to be the university's best strategy for dealing with reporters.

We told [students and staff] that the university neither encourages nor discourages you from doing an interview," said Magara. "If you [decide to speak to the media], then we simply advise you to stick with what you know and not speculate or share third-hand information" **NIU Public Affairs also helped in coordinating the university's message, one of compassion for the victims and their families and of the commitment of the NIU community to stand together in the face of tragedy. This involved coordinating six news conferences; staffing a media center; and preparing talking points, speeches, and other public communications. The office also helped plan the memorial service attended by 12,000 people on February 24 and created a memorial website that allowed visitors to leave messages of condolence. The university also provided grief counseling for students, faculty, and staff within hours of the last shot being fired.**

University President John G. Peters served as the public face of the university during the crisis. He also attended student funerals and spoke with those wounded during the rampage. He recalls one conversation, when a shooting victim asked him whether his professors might cut him some slack if he missed some assignments.

"It was at that moment," Peters said, "that I knew we were going to be OK."

QUESTIONS.

1. How did NIU Public Affairs helped in coordinating the university's communication to its publics? **[15 marks]**
2. What was the role played by NIU Assistant Vice President for Public Affairs, Melanie Magara, in handling the crises? **[15 marks]**
3. There are certain general **warning signs** that appear when the crises appear. Explain five warning signs. **[10 marks]**

[Total marks 40]

SECTION B

Answer any three (3) questions from this section.

QUESTION 2

The role of public relations is far-reaching in organizations and as such Kitchen identified four types of roles that are not mutually exclusive. Discuss with examples. **[20 marks]**

QUESTION 3

A proactive marketing public relations (MPR) plays a major role in product introductions or product revisions and give an additional exposure to news worthiness and credibility. Discuss the common tools used in gaining proactive MPR. [20 marks]

QUESTION 4

Using relevant examples outline the seven elements of Issues Management. [20 marks]

QUESTION 5

Many public relations practitioners believe that once they win public opinions everything is done, yet there are traps, which are commonly held beliefs about public opinion. Discuss and give examples. [20 marks]

QUESTION 6

- a) Influencing Public opinion requires persuading people use of materials that coincides with their beliefs, emotions and expectations. Discuss the factors you would use in order to persuade people. [15 marks]
- b) How do opinion leaders influence the formation of public opinion? [5 marks]

[Total marks 20]