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**Institutional Review Issued at the Request of the President  
University of South Carolina Columbia  
February 5, 2015, Campus Incident**

On Thursday, February 5, 2015, Ms. Sunghee Kwon shot and killed Associate Professor Dr. Raja Fayad, Graduate Director and Head of the Applied Physiology Division, inside the Public Health Research Center (PHRC) at the University of South Carolina Columbia (USC). Ms. Kwon then shot and killed herself. Ms. Kwon and Dr. Fayad had previously been married and – until just the previous month – had resided at the same address.

This review, issued at the request of USC President Harris Pastides, serves as a general evaluation of the campus leadership’s management of the events of February 5. That is, this document is a broad review of the University’s response to the crisis of February 5, along with a specific evaluation of the executive team’s performance and decisions in response to the crisis.

The general purpose of this review is to improve the University’s preparedness for any future crises by examining University decisions at the executive level, both as those decisions were intended and as they were experienced within the University community, in response to the events of February 5 – and by recommending potential improvements to University policies and practices. USC has a due-diligence responsibility to members of the University community to conduct this assessment, which is fulfilled with attention to the bedrock principle that a safe educational environment is necessary for teaching and learning.

The University conducts this review in the spirit of continual improvement and in an effort to fulfill its duties to current and future members of the USC community; but the University remains solemnly mindful that this review stems from loss of life. The University community mourns the death of Dr. Fayad, who was a gifted and dedicated teacher and researcher.

*This review concludes that the University’s immediate reactions to the shootings in room 403A of the PHRC were appropriate, that executive actions to protect and notify the University community were appropriate as well, and that occasional technical failures in timely and reliable communication to the University community limited executive intent that otherwise might have allayed some portion of the community’s concerns before an “all clear” could be declared. Although reasonable persons might disagree about how and when University actions and communications were executed, these actions and communications were sound in terms of professional standards, in terms of available information, and in terms of appropriate caution in the face of both available and unresolved information.*

*The greatest lessons of February 5 for the USC community are that more participation in emergency-preparedness training is needed at USC and that technological capabilities enabling speed and reliability of emergency notices must be improved. (Indeed, as of this writing, many necessary technological improvements have already been instituted.) Approximately 10,000 new members (freshman, transfer, and graduate students; faculty; staff;*

*and contractors) of the USC community arrive on campus every year, so educating the entire University population regarding safety must be constant and thorough.*

### Commendations

Many in the USC community excelled on February 5 and afterward in serving fellow members of the community, in promoting feelings of safety and recovery, and in demonstrating the strengths of a place where all can learn, live, work, and thrive cooperatively. Noted here are some groups and actions that merit commendation:

*Graduate students on the fourth floor of the Public Health Research Center.* Graduate students who were nearby when shots were fired inside room 403A of the PHRC on February 5 conducted themselves with great maturity and clarity of purpose—locking doors; phoning 911; monitoring laboratory 403 for any movement, while awaiting police support; securing safe areas of shelter for themselves and for peers; and providing law enforcement with valuable, timely information regarding both the crime scene and relevant events in the past. This wisdom in the midst of crisis reflects these students' strength of character.

*USC Division of Law Enforcement and Safety.* Law-enforcement officials with USC responded swiftly and professionally on February 5. The first law-enforcement officer arrived at the PHRC, 1 minute and 53 seconds after a dispatcher received a 911 call from the PHRC's fourth floor. Three more officers arrived at the scene before 2 minutes and 32 seconds had elapsed since the 911 call. By the 6-minute-and-6-second mark, officers entered the laboratory inside room 403 and confirmed the facts that had been described in the 911 call: blood was seeping from under the door of office 403A, adjoining the laboratory. The officers could not open the locked door of office 403A, and no one within the locked office responded to the officers' knocks or calls to anyone inside. A small window within the door was obscured from inside office 403A by translucent paper and by a white lab coat on a hanger. After 9 minutes and 55 seconds had elapsed since the 911 call, officers gained entry into office 403A. (An officer had to break the glass window of the door, reach inside to unlock and turn the door's inner handle, then push aside a body whose weight rested against the door.) After 14 minutes and 33 seconds since the initiating call, officers confirmed that there was but one (locked, at the time of the shooting) point of entry into or exit out of office 403A and that there were two deceased inside the room, with a handgun nearby. Although only a designated official from the Richland County Coroner's Office could formally pronounce the two persons as dead on the scene or identify the two persons or specify the manner of their deaths, it was apparent to members of the USC Division of Law Enforcement and Safety that both were dead from gunshot wounds—that the female had shot and killed the male before shooting and killing herself. The Richland County Coroner's Office would later pronounce that it was Ms. Kwon who had killed Dr. Fayad before killing herself. (Dr. Fayad conducted research in laboratory 403 of the PHRC, and room 403A was his office.) The shooting incident itself was extremely limited in duration (a matter of seconds), in the number (two) of persons directly involved, and in the physical space (111 square feet) that it occupied.

USC law-enforcement officers cooperated with SLED, with the Richland County Coroner's Office, and with other agencies throughout the remainder of the day. The training, expertise, and diligence of these persons are appreciated by all within the USC community.

***Executive Policy Group of USC's Emergency Management Team.*** Senior officials within the Executive Policy Group convene monthly to review the University's emergency policies and practices. They have prepared for crises. They have conducted table-top exercises and other crisis simulations, to hone their preparedness skills and to familiarize themselves with processes. On the afternoon of February 5, the Executive Policy Group encountered a real test of its skills and abilities, and the group responded with wisdom and with caution. Furthermore, this group convened again on February 6, to assess its own performance during the previous day's crisis.

***USC's Counseling and Human Development Center.*** On and after February 5, it fell to professionals with USC's Counseling and Human Development Center (CHDC) to advise persons suffering from grief and anxiety due to violence in their place of study or work. In Rutledge Chapel on February 5; at the University's vigil on the Horseshoe on February 6; through more than 33 walk-in consultations with affected persons; at meetings with faculty, students, and staff of the Arnold School of Public Health; at special gatherings of Dr. Fayad's graduate students; in classes of undergraduates taught by Dr. Fayad; for community support within the Medical School; for witnesses and others affected at the scene of the February 5 crime; and for many University groups requesting advice and support – staff with USC's CHDC offered necessary aid so that others might begin the processes of coping and healing. Dr. James Carson (Professor and Chair of Exercise Science, Associate Director of The Center for Colon Cancer Research, Director of the Integrated Muscle Biology Laboratory at the Arnold School of Public Health) affirms that persons within the Arnold School of Public Health have received aid from CHDC staff, have been made aware that continued aid is available, and indeed have sought out additional aid in some circumstances. With the help of the University Registrar, CHDC staff facilitated the relocation of one of Dr. Fayad's Spring 2015 undergraduate classes, since members of this class believed that a change in location might make Dr. Fayad's absence in front of the classroom more manageable emotionally. In addition, CHDC staff engaged proactively with any members of the USC community known to the CHDC whose past experiences suggested that gun violence on campus might cause strife to resurface.

***Staff and contractors with USC's Department of Facilities.*** The PHRC was closed to the public after the shooting incident on Thursday, February 5. A limited number of faculty and staff had access to the building on Friday, February 6. Through the weekend, staff and contractors with USC's Department of Facilities worked to prepare the building for a return to normal operations on the morning of Monday, February 9. Doing so entailed cleaning a crime scene (in cooperation with expert contractors), replacing the door to office 403A, and making structural repairs inside office 403A. These efforts have been commended by G. Thomas Chandler, Dean of the Arnold School of Public Health. Restoring the building and the crime scene to its pre-February-5 state made it possible for those who study and work in the PHRC to do so with no physical reminders of the previous week's crisis.

***Reporters and staff with the Daily Gamecock.*** With their conduct and publications on February 5 and 6, reporters and staff with the *Daily Gamecock*, USC's student newspaper, demonstrated outstanding judgment and leadership in resisting supposition and in adhering to standards of professionalism.

Other laudable efforts in ways large and small certainly transpired on USC's campus on and after February 5. Documenting every commendable act is not feasible here. The University's collective resilience is but one indicator of the mutual support for neighbors that is among the University of South Carolina's core values.

### **Recommendations**

Honest assessment of any institution's performance will identify numerous opportunities for continual improvement. So the University of South Carolina acknowledges here opportunities for improvement that emerged during this review of the events and after-effects of February 5. Recommendations for improvement are being enacted in an effort to safeguard current and future members of the USC community and to improve USC's preparedness for any future emergencies:

***Recommendation 1: Offer improved training programs and increase participation in training programs for all members of the University community regarding emergency preparedness, crisis management, professional development regarding emergencies, and proper interactions with law enforcement.***

- Some members of the University community felt unsure as to how they should react to notice of a gun incident on February 5. This persisted despite regular emergency-preparedness training opportunities for students, faculty, and staff at USC. Because approximately 10,000 new persons (freshman, transfer, and graduate students; faculty; staff; and contractors) arrive on the USC campus annually, initiating and maintaining crisis education for all must be structured, proactive, and highly visible.

***Recommendation 2: Assess and improve University emergency notifications and systems.***

- Capacity constraints delayed the delivery of emergency notifications (and further updates) via email throughout the day on February 5 and into the following day. These constraints were dictated by a ceiling on the number of email messages that could be broadcast to the USC community in a single hour, and these constraints have since been removed.

***Recommendation 3: Review University policies and practices regarding crisis preparedness, safety, and access – along with University communications regarding each of these.***

- Emergency-alert sirens and Alert FM notices were not deployed in accordance with University protocols.
- Some iterations of Carolina Alert notifications contained errors or did not register on digital displays as intended.
- The University's Internet homepage did not initially display the emergency status of the University during the crisis.

***Recommendation 4: Evaluate facilities and infrastructure in regard to emergency management, while ensuring utility of safety plans for University buildings.***

- Lack of building-level awareness of appropriate practices in the event of an emergency – and in the event of a gun incident in particular – produced some confusion as to whether and how facilities should be secured or monitored.

***Recommendation 5: Operationalize all of this report's recommendations and promulgate them so that other institutions might benefit from the University of South Carolina's self-study.***