

# IOWA STATE UNIVERSITY

## Safety guidelines for scholars during trolling or doxing

Scholars at higher educational institutions nationally have been subjected to trolling (deliberately following and provoking others online, often with offensive content) and doxing (publishing private or other identifying information with malicious intent) related to scholarly activities. Those practices can include threats against safety, and have a profound impact on faculty and staff personally.

Such situations, while generally short in duration, can be very intense and difficult to experience, while generating hundreds of calls and emails to the targeted scholar, university administrators, department chairs, and other public-facing units.

The guidance below is meant to help scholars, departments, and colleges understand and manage these situations, and to leverage the expertise of other units on campus.

If you are subjected to trolling or doxing:

- **Step 1** – Remain calm as the university works with you. Your safety is a top priority.
  - If you believe you are in imminent physical danger call 911.
  - If you are concerned for your safety and want safety planning assistance, contact the ISU Police Department at 515-294-4428 or [dpsinfo@iastate.edu](mailto:dpsinfo@iastate.edu)
- **Step 2** – Immediately contact your department chair or supervisor to explain what has happened. Share documentation that will help others in assessing the severity of the issue and creating a customized response.
- **Step 3** – Engage issues management support, beginning with the communications lead in your college or unit. The college communicator, dean, and/or others will brief the Provost's Office, which in turn will engage other campus resources, including ISU Police Department, Strategic Relations and Communications, Office of General Counsel, University Human Resources, and Government Affairs.
- **Step 4** – Forward all media and other inquiries upward in the chain of command, as noted above.
- **Step 5** – Maintain a low profile.
  - Consider removing your contact information and profile from university websites for a period of time.
  - Depending on the nature of the issue, you may choose, or be advised, to have a colleague teach your classes for a short period of time, or to hold class virtually in order to avoid disruption of student learning.
  - Consider suspending activity on social media for a short period of time. Trolling and doxing attackers often monitor social media accounts for responses or other opportunities to engage.
- **Step 6** – Resist the urge to respond to emails and calls, or to engage with attackers. It can be difficult to keep silent when attacked, but this approach is best – even when claims may be inaccurate, unfair, or out of context, and when attacks are personal as well as professional. Engagement with complainants will further extend the issue over a longer timeframe.

***Public safety contact:***

ISU Police Department, 515-294-4428 or [dpsinfo@iastate.edu](mailto:dpsinfo@iastate.edu)

***Issues management contacts:***

Rob Schweers, Office of the Senior Vice President and Provost  
515-294-6142, [rob@iastate.edu](mailto:rob@iastate.edu)

Angie Hunt, University Marketing and Communications  
515-294-8986, [amhunt@iastate.edu](mailto:amhunt@iastate.edu)