DEFINING THE VALUE OF CAMPUS EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT PROGRAMS TO COMMUNITIES

Findings from a Critical Issues Forum

Sponsored by the

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**DEFINING THE VALUE OF
CAMPUS EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT PROGRAMS
TO COMMUNITIES**

A report for the

NATIONAL CENTER FOR CAMPUS PUBLIC SAFETY

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

On October 19, 2018, a group of campus safety leaders and subject-matter experts, with support from the National Center for Campus Public Safety (NCCPS), gathered in Grand Rapids, Michigan, for a one-day forum. The purpose of the forum was to define the value of campus emergency management to the whole community. It also provided potential solutions and recommendations for addressing some of the challenges that campus emergency management teams face in communicating their value to communities. The forum aligns with the NCCPS's role as a nationwide resource for addressing critical issues in campus safety.

Fifteen emergency management leaders came from 13 IHEs across the country to participate in the forum, including university and college emergency managers, chiefs of police, and campus safety administrators.

Strategic Challenges Identified
The forum participants identified three areas in which campus emergency management programs face special strategic challenges in their efforts to communicate their value to communities.

1. **Incident-dependent existence**
    - Human-caused events and natural disasters elevate the profile and importance of emergency management in the IHE community, but often the effect is only temporary, hindering emergency management's ability to maintain significance in IHE leaders' priorities.
    - Many IHEs associate emergency management programs solely with response measures, thereby allocating few or no resources to planning, efficiency, staff development, or strategic growth.

2. **Shrouded and marginalized operations**
    - Emergency management departments are often buried in IHE organizational structures, diminishing their authority and effectiveness.
    - Emergency management departments are often underfunded and understaffed, minimizing their reach.
    - Communities often aren't aware of the emergency management department's purpose or existence, minimizing the team's authority and outreach efforts.

3. **Disconnected visions**
    - Emergency management teams and IHE leaders often use different terminology, making it hard to align on institutional priorities.
    - IHE leaders and emergency management departments often differ widely in their vision of how emergency management should work.

The Search for Answers
The forum participants discussed a broad array of factors, tactics, and strategies for addressing the challenges they identified. Their discussion did not evaluate specific

efforts or policies at particular IHEs, nor did it evaluate individual campus safety programs. However, a series of core principles emerged regarding strategic efforts.

1. **Emergency management teams must do more to…**
   - Elevate their place in IHE leadership structures.
   - Communicate with IHE leaders in relatable contexts.

2. **IHE leaders must do more to…**
   - Learn what emergency management is, how it works, and why it matters.
   - Give their emergency management programs a seat at the leadership table.

3. **IHEs as a whole must do more to …**
   - Incorporate emergency management into campus-wide activities beyond the response phase.
   - Help emergency management programs bridge the gap between short-term reality and long-term vision.

Established in 2013, the NCCPS is a clearinghouse for information, research, training, promising practices, and emerging issues in campus public safety. The NCCPS's mission is to provide useful resources and information to support safer communities. To this end, the NCCPS works to connect campus public safety officers, professional association members, advocates, community leaders, and others to improve and expand services to those who are charged with providing a safe environment.

BACKGROUND
What is the value of campus emergency management programs to communities?

At its most fundamental level, emergency management is a managerial function responsible for creating a framework that helps communities reduce their vulnerability to hazards and cope with disasters so that those communities are safer and more resilient. Institutions of higher education (IHEs), like many communities, are vulnerable to a variety of hazards and frequently must cope with emergencies. For them, the work to identify and mitigate those hazards, as well as prepare for, respond to, and recover from various natural, technological, and human-caused incidents often falls to in-house emergency management programs.

Today, most IHEs have emergency management teams — but many do not. A full 31% of participants in a 2015 survey by campus safety consulting firm Margolis Healy said their IHEs did not have any staff dedicated to emergency preparedness efforts. For two-year institutions, the number was 41%.[1] (This was defined as a full-time staff person or a person with a portion of their position dedicated to emergency preparedness efforts.)

In the *National Higher Education Emergency Management Program Needs Assessment* study, which was sponsored by NCCPS and published in November 2016, approximately one-third of the respondents at IHEs from 45 states had no full-time employees in their emergency management programs. Another third had just one full-time employee. Size was a factor, according to the data — 87% of institutions in the survey with fewer than 15,000 students had no full-time employees in emergency management.[2]

Often, the result of small staffing and low budgets is incomplete or ineffective emergency management programs. Although 86% of the IHEs in the Margolis Healy survey had Emergency Operations Plans (EOPs) that addressed threats and hazards specific to their schools, only about 55% said their IHEs had done comprehensive hazard and vulnerability assessments, and fewer than half said their IHEs had routine post-event meetings with emergency preparedness personnel to evaluate the school's emergency plans and assess and address changes. About a quarter of IHEs had never conducted an active shooter exercise on campus.[3]

Of course, emergency management programs are about more than emergency response. Robust programs include risk mitigation and preparation, as well as continuity and recovery planning.[4] Yet, only about a third of institutions represented by

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[1] Margolis Healy, "Campus Safety Survey 2015."
https://www.nccpsafety.org/dir_apply_form/2015_MargolisHealy_Campus_Safety_Survey.pdf
[2] National Center for Campus Public Safety, "National Higher Education Emergency Management Program Needs Assessment." November 2016.
https://www.nccpsafety.org/assets/files/library/NCCPS_EM_Needs_Assessment_FINAL_113016.pdf
[3] Margolis Healy, "Campus Safety Survey 2015."
https://www.nccpsafety.org/dir_apply_form/2015_MargolisHealy_Campus_Safety_Survey.pdf
[4] Many resources are available, however. For example, see National Center for Campus Public Safety, "Business Continuity: Getting Your Ducks in a Row." https://www.nccpsafety.org/training-technical-assistance/webinars/business-continuity-getting-your-ducks-in-a-row

respondents in the *National Higher Education Emergency Management Program Needs Assessment* study had business continuity plans (36%), continuity of operations plans (35%), or recovery plans (31%).[5]

Institutional commitment or buy-in is also one of the biggest challenges emergency management programs face, according to the *National Higher Education Emergency Management Program Needs Assessment* study. An overwhelming 86% of the respondents in that survey agreed or strongly agreed that a training program targeting IHE leaders would be beneficial, and 73% called it a major or critical need. Nearly half of the respondents in that study (48%) also said awareness of emergency management programs would improve leadership commitment to those programs.[6]

These and other significant challenges in IHE emergency management may signal the presence of a larger issue: the lack of a compelling value proposition for emergency management in communities.

A value proposition is essentially a statement explaining how a product or service will add value or solve a problem for the user. Without one, it may be more difficult for an IHE to "see" a reason to fund, staff, or give authority to an emergency management program. These factors prompted the following question:

"How do we define the value of campus emergency management to communities?"

Accordingly, on October 19, 2018, a group of campus emergency management leaders, with support from the National Center for Campus Public Safety (NCCPS), gathered in Grand Rapids, Michigan, to discuss ways to define emergency management's value to whole communities and uncover promising practices for addressing the challenges emergency management teams have in communicating that value.

Key questions during the event, which occurred in conjunction with the 2018 International Association of Emergency Managers Universities & Colleges Caucus Symposium, included:

- What challenges do emergency management programs face in fulfilling the visions they have for their IHEs?
- Do IHE communities and leadership understand the roles of their emergency management programs?
- Do IHE emergency management programs have the staff, facilities, and resources they need, and if not, where are they falling short?
- What is the value proposition for emergency management in communities?

The questions sparked a critical discussion. Participants noted several factors that influence the value that emergency management programs have in communities.

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[5] National Center for Campus Public Safety, "National Higher Education Emergency Management Program Needs Assessment." November 2016.
https://www.nccpsafety.org/assets/files/library/NCCPS_EM_Needs_Assessment_FINAL_113016.pdf
[6] National Center for Campus Public Safety, "National Higher Education Emergency Management Program Needs Assessment." November 2016.
https://www.nccpsafety.org/assets/files/library/NCCPS_EM_Needs_Assessment_FINAL_113016.pdf

Emergency Management Departments Have Multiple Duties

Emergency management departments have a wide range of responsibilities, though many communities are aware only of the response phase of emergency management. Forum participants grouped those responsibilities into 10 categories:

1. **Planning and preparedness.** Writing plans, creating situational awareness.
2. **Risk reduction.** Identifying and mitigating risks, and ensuring key resources are in place.
3. **Outreach and training.** Teaching faculty, staff, students, and leaders about emergency management and preparedness.
4. **Response.** Responding to emergencies.
5. **Communication.** Alerting the community about hazards, emergencies, and response efforts as needed, as well as communicating planning efforts and available services.
6. **Continuity assurance.** Devising how key IHE processes can carry on during and after an event.
7. **Recovery.** Helping the IHE resume normal operations after an event.
8. **Coordination and collaboration.** Forming partnerships, agreements, and policies that support the program, and gathering people as needed.
9. **Culture development.** Pursuing professional growth and encouraging the campus community to embrace emergency management concepts.
10. **Administration and budgeting.** Performance tracking, financial management, compliance, vendor management, data collection, systems development, and other duties.

Communities Often Aren't Aware of Those Duties

Emergency management programs are most often in the spotlight during the response phase of an emergency. Accordingly, many communities associate the programs solely with response and are far less aware of the other ways emergency management programs add value to the community.

Emergency Managers Have a Vision for Their Programs

Forum participants said most emergency management programs want to expand their efforts and reach to improve the safety of their communities. This requires thoughtful planning and preparation, as well as meaningful follow-through, focus, and knowledge-sharing. When asked to draw the ideal future state of their emergency management programs, many participants depicted scenarios in which their programs could multitask effectively, make their IHEs more resilient, were fully staffed and funded, were known in their communities, had leadership support, and did work that supported their IHEs' educational missions.

Emergency Management Departments Aren't Ready or Able to Make Their Visions a Reality

Many have meaningful visions for their programs but are bogged down by small budgets, constant "firefighting," and disconnects with IHE leaders. In addition, small budgets tend to reflect emergency management's low priority at many IHEs.

INTRODUCTION

The forum was facilitated by Andrea Young of the National Center for Campus Public Safety (NCCPS). Young guided attendees through a hands-on process of breakout group discussions and exercises. Throughout the day, participants followed the agenda below, raising critical issues and developing practical solutions to address them:

- Identify the roles and responsibilities of emergency management departments today
- Discuss IHE awareness of those roles
- Articulate emergency management teams' visions for the future
- Identify where emergency management departments are falling short
- Draft a value statement for senior IHE leaders
- Develop recommendations to address some of the challenges emergency management programs face in communicating their value to communities

The sections that follow contain key takeaways and conclusions. They constitute the principal findings of this report.

Forum purpose:
To define the value of campus emergency management to the whole community.

DISCUSSION
How can campus emergency management programs communicate their value?

IHE emergency managers have a lot to think about as they work to define the value of their programs in their communities. Questions like these are common:

- How can we encourage campus leaders, local law enforcement, and other safety leaders to engage with the emergency management department as a trusted, equal partner?
- How can we do a better job of making leaders and the campus community aware of us?
- How can we do a better job of making leaders and the campus community aware of the resources and support we can provide?
- What can we do to get IHE leaders and campus community members to support what we're trying to accomplish?

Forum participants had these questions and more. In general, their concerns about communicating emergency management's value fell into three categories:

1. Inconsistent community interest in emergency management
2. Low visibility in the community
3. Poor strategic alignment with IHE leaders

Working through each area with an experienced facilitator, forum participants identified specific strategic challenges in each category and evaluated potential solutions that may help define the value of campus emergency management to communities. This section summarizes their discussion.

Strategic Challenges in Sustaining Interest

Emergency management by definition revolves around emergencies — events that are unusual, are often dangerous, and that require immediate action.

Heard in the forum:
"I think one of our challenges is how do we continue to share that message of value when there's not an emergency happening now on campus?"

Forum participants noted that communities naturally show more interest in emergency management during and immediately after emergencies. Once the response phase ends, however, that support frequently dissipates. Most other days, communities ascribe far less importance to emergency management, they said.

This in turn has created a cyclical culture and incident-dependent existence in which emergency management programs only get the consideration, support, and resources they need when IHEs are hit with hurricanes, floods, outbreaks, earthquakes, active shooter incidents, or other major events. For many IHEs, especially those in regions or communities that don't carry a high risk of natural disasters, catastrophic events may occur months or years apart.

In turn, many emergency management programs receive funding, leadership support, staffing, or other resources sporadically at best. Furthermore, once the response phase of an incident is over, forum participants noted, many emergency management programs are disregarded altogether, making it difficult to communicate or demonstrate a compelling statement of value to their communities.

In addition, emergency management teams frequently manage multiple relatively minor incidents that are not as catastrophic as a hurricane, as widespread as a disease outbreak, or as notorious as an active shooter incident, but are still critical. The work associated with these events, in addition to the day-to-day work of running the program, can create "constant firefighting," as one forum participant labeled it. This prevents many emergency management

teams from developing or working toward larger goals, especially if those teams are composed of only one or two people. In turn, many emergency management programs are hindered in their ability to demonstrate more comprehensive value to the community.

Visibility Challenges

Forum participants said size, perceived competition, and even IHE organizational charts can create significant challenges in communicating the value of emergency management to communities. Small team sizes, for example, can mean emergency management programs may have fewer resources to do outreach that could improve safety and underscore the value of emergency management programs.

Forum participants also noted that risk assessments, continuity planning, and other campus-wide efforts that require participation from outside the emergency management department sometimes conflict with priorities in other departments. This can fuel perceptions of competition, interference, and power struggles.

In some cases, IHEs' own organizational structures create barriers to communicating the value of emergency management to communities. Often, emergency management programs appear several layers below the vice chancellor level on IHE organizational charts, giving emergency management little or no access to campus leaders and little or no voice in campus-wide decision-making and planning. In addition, forum participants noted that many IHE emergency management programs are born out of other departments as "side jobs." Forum participants said many IHE leaders do not see emergency management as a distinct function. Confusion over whether and how emergency management teams should work with the public safety department is common.

Challenges in Strategic Alignment

Forum participants said emergency management teams often have trouble communicating their value to communities when IHE leaders don't understand their language and/or have numerous other objectives to manage. Emergency management program managers may speak in terms of incident action plans, command staffing, or logistics control, for example, when IHE leaders are thinking through the ramifications of legal risk, reputational damage, enrollment decreases, and other factors.

Heard in the forum: *"When you decrease liability and reputational risk, that's their language. Their language is not ICS [Incident Command System]; their language is not grant-writing."*

Forum participants also reported that campus administrators are often not fully aligned with the vision, role, or purpose of emergency management programs, which further fuels underinvestment and hinders the ability to communicate value to the community. This lack of administration buy-in is a serious challenge for ensuring emergency management teams have the resources they need to be effective, forum participants noted. They also said many IHE emergency management teams struggle to get faculty members and campus leaders on board with much of the non-response work that emergency management programs perform.

Participants said weak standard operating procedures are often a factor in misaligned visions. At many schools, IHE leaders believe the mission of emergency management programs is safety and security rather than safety, security, and preparedness, for example.

POTENTIAL STRATEGIC SOLUTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The forum participants developed several potential solutions that can significantly help campus emergency management programs address the strategic challenges they face in demonstrating their value to the whole community.

Possible Solutions and Recommendations for Sustaining Interest

- **Think long term, even in the short term** – So-called constant firefighting often gets in the way of long-term planning, but forum participants said emergency management departments that take the time to envision how they want to function in the future are better able to identify and focus on what is important, prioritize their resource needs, and communicate their value propositions to the community.

- **Prepare to ask for more when interest is high** – Forum participants said emergency management programs must use the brief periods of high interest in their programs as opportunities to garner the longer-term resources they need to grow and add value. This means maintaining a list of needs, being prepared to justify those needs, and being ready to acquire those resources quickly once the green light appears.

- **Audit the emergency management program** – Forum participants said examining the gap between the vision for an IHE's emergency management program and the reality of the IHE's emergency management program not only highlights hidden needs, but also creates a record IHE leaders can use to learn more about emergency management and set priorities, thereby reinforcing the value of emergency management.

Possible Solutions and Recommendations for Improving Visibility

- **Build a culture of self-promotion** – Emergency management teams must develop ways to measure, benchmark, and report their successes before, during, and after incidents occur. This highlights, in tangible terms, the value of the program throughout the year, which not only helps drive more consistent support over time, but also raises the profile of the emergency management program. Peer comparisons also help gain support for efforts.

> **Heard in the forum**:
> *"The other price of self-promotion is being able to define metrics, because that's what they're looking for — they're looking for value."*

- **Get involved in reorganization efforts** – Low positioning in the IHE's organizational chart is a key challenge for many emergency management programs. Forum participants said emergency managers should get as involved as possible in institutional organizational chart design before and during IHE reorganization efforts in order to capitalize on opportunities to move the emergency management program

closer to IHE leadership, thereby improving the program's visibility and in turn boosting its chances of winning more support. This involvement also helps communicate the value of the emergency management department by providing an opportunity to address assumptions, both accurate and inaccurate, about what the program does.

Possible Solutions and Recommendations for Improving Strategic Alignment

- **Speak to leaders in terms of liability and reputation risk** – Forum participants said emergency management programs communicate their value better when they consider the context in which IHE leaders evaluate success. Accordingly, emergency management teams should be sure to address liability issues, reputation risk, and other factors weighing on the minds of IHE leaders.

- **Purposefully cultivate at least one ally within the senior leadership structure** – Emergency management programs suffer when IHE leaders don't understand or prioritize their value and needs; conversely, emergency management teams benefit when they have one or more allies at the highest levels of the IHE leadership team. Forum participants said emergency managers must actively and purposefully cultivate strong, close relationships with as many IHE leaders as possible, and use leadership changes as valuable opportunities to garner new allies quickly.

  Heard in the forum:
  "The difference between a vision and hallucination is the number of people who see it."

- **Develop IHE leader education programs** – For many forum participants, widespread knowledge of and appreciation for emergency management is part of the vision of a high-functioning, optimized emergency management program. Education for IHE leaders is a fundamental part of that vision because it helps communicate to leaders what emergency management is and how it works, in turn demonstrating institutional value.

DEFINING THE VALUE OF CAMPUS EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

The goal of the forum was to define the value of campus emergency management to the whole community. The participants created a list of value-critical elements — key items they felt were critical to developing value propositions. Those elements included the following:

- Being a selling tool to prospective students and families
- Applying structure that leads to better results
- Providing vision during uncertain times
- Establishing a reputation for protection
- Having a process to apply lessons learned
- Minimizing risk
- Serving the IHE's mission
- Demonstrating a customer-service orientation
- Retaining faculty, students, and staff
- Building a resilient institution
- Serving the whole community
- Protecting the IHE's reputation
- Establishing leadership in the community during emergencies and among peer institutions
- Acting as a change agent

Accordingly, the participants drafted three value statements that campus emergency management teams can utilize to communicate their value to their communities.

1. "The value of EM to IHEs is improving organizational agility. Collaborating with campus and community partners, we strive to further reduce risk and liability while preserving our brand. Ultimately, we build a culture of resilience within our campus community."

2. "A dynamic emergency management program will serve the community, reduce risk, build resiliency, protect lives and assets, enhance reputation, promote positive change and instill confidence and trust in [insert institution]."

3. "A dynamic emergency management program will apply a broad structure that guides institutional preparedness, mitigation response, and the recovery process in order to minimize risk. The program will leverage campus stakeholders and external partners with the goal of preserving lives and assets in order to build a more resilient institutions."

APPENDIX: PARTICIPANTS

- **Suzanne Blake,** Massachusetts Institute of Technology
- **Jack Briggs,** New York University
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- **Cait Crisman,** Binghamton University
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