

2018 NATIONAL DRU NETWORK SUMMIT: FINDINGS FROM A ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSION

APRIL 4-5, 2018
EUGENE, OREGON



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Since 2005, the DRU Network has offered a simple yet effective means to increase communication, coordination, and collaboration among campuses to mitigate against, prepare for, respond to, continue operations during, and recover from natural disasters, acts of terrorism, or other human-caused crises or disasters.

One of its most recent activities, the 2018 National DRU Summit, built upon that historical framework by offering participants new tools, resources, and ideas for making campuses more disaster-resilient. Held in Eugene, Oregon, on April 4 and 5, 2018, the summit featured presentations by higher education experts and thought leaders, as well as peer-to-peer discussions, workgroups, and networking sessions to help participants advance the concept of resilience on their campuses.

During the summit, over 100 people from over 50 institutions of higher education gathered for a roundtable session dedicated to discussing four topics:

1. Building effective emergency management teams and partnerships
2. Recovery and continuity planning
3. Engaging leadership response in continuity and recovery
4. Organizational resilience and enterprise risk management

The participants discussed these topics in groups. Using the participants' own notes, as well as findings from interviews with some of the participants who helped lead the group discussions, this report thus captures some of the latest thinking around the challenges, opportunities, and recommended best practices for creating more disaster-resilient universities.



TOPIC 1: BUILDING EFFECTIVE TEAMS AND PARTNERSHIPS

In this discussion, participants talked about the challenges and opportunities in building effective partnerships and teams on campus, including developing formal Incident Management Teams.

EXISTING IMT STRUCTURES

Several participants indicated their Institutions of Higher Education (IHEs) had incident management teams; those IHEs tended to be large. Large universities also tended to report having highly customized IMTs for each of their campuses. Some campus medical centers have their own emergency management teams that communicate with each other to varying degrees.

Some participants noted that their schools have started conducting smaller exercises but do them more frequently or make them more targeted to particular situations.

CHALLENGES

Low awareness. Several participants reported that ensuring campus leaders and the campus community are aware of the existence of the school's IMT is a challenge for many institutions. IHEs often struggle to get attention and focus from these groups; within emergency management teams, this manifests itself in anxiety about effective messaging and communications efforts.

Training apathy. Several participants reported significant difficulties getting people to engage in ICS training. Some IHEs also reported trouble finding enough interested employees to ensure that at least three people can fulfill certain roles during emergencies. Participants said these struggles are often rooted in campus culture, high turnover, low perceived risk, and/or a lack of buy-in from leaders. Training faculty, staff, and students to use new security features also requires significant planning. These challenges leave many schools heavily reliant on state emergency management teams.

Crossed wires. Participants noted that students, staff, and faculty frequently fail to communicate security concerns to the right parties, thereby potentially leaving critical groups out of the loop during planning, mitigation, response, and/or recovery.

OPPORTUNITIES AND BEST PRACTICES

Participants recommended the following:

- **More inclusion during orientation and on syllabi.** Emergency management teams can raise their profiles and boost safety by ensuring that student and employee orientation materials contain safety information, including printing evacuation routes and emergency communications procedures on course syllabi.



- **Add students.** Seek, welcome, and encourage student involvement planning and outreach.
- **Capitalize on change.** Use turnover among campus leaders to campaign for a “seat at the table” and/or cultivate relationships with new leaders who can champion and cheer for emergency management. Ultimately, however, strive for an emergency management organization whose existence does not hinge on the presence or support of a few people.
- **Tell stories.** Emergencies get attention. In meetings and communications materials, use stories of past emergencies to remind everyone what can be lost and learned, even if the events happened at other campuses. Also take advantage of incidents happening elsewhere in the state or country to remind your campus if you have similar risks.
- **Bulldoze culture roadblocks.** IHEs must consciously work to change faculty and staff involvement in emergency management from a “will you?” culture to a “you will” culture.

TOPIC 2: RECOVERY AND CONTINUITY PLANNING

A 2016 National Higher Education Emergency Management Program Needs Assessment found that IHEs tend to be much more focused on response than on continuity or recovery: 83% had emergency operations or response plans, but just 36% had business continuity plans and only 31% had recovery plans. This session focused on challenges and opportunities IHEs face in advancing these efforts.

EXISTING PLANNING ACTIVITY

Many participants said they have done little to no business continuity or recovery planning; many said the plans they do have in place were often old, were frameworks only, or had never been used. Participants noted that large IHEs tend to have the resources to do the work; small IHEs generally struggle.

Participants also reported that although they may lack formal business continuity or recovery plans, other emergency planning activities sometimes meet some of their business continuity and recovery planning needs.

CHALLENGES

No plans to plan. Continuity and recovery planning is still relatively rare among emergency managers and IHEs, although participants noted that their IHEs’ IT teams often have these plans. In many cases, business continuity and recovery planning requires cooperation from people all over the organization, which can hinder progress if interest and resources are scant. In some cases, one person ends up creating the plans.

A longing for “Planning for Dummies.” Because IHEs have different teaching, housing, research, and administrative needs, standardizing business continuity and recovery



planning can be risky. However, some participants said IHEs are nonetheless eager for prototypes or model programs to help them take the first steps.

Regulations. Declarations of emergency and other events can impose requirements that affect the mechanics of business continuity and recovery efforts, but IHEs’ plans often don’t incorporate these factors. Other participants noted that local and federal governments are unlikely to let large IHEs “go under,” which may deter IHEs from developing robust business continuity and recovery plans.

OPPORTUNITIES AND BEST PRACTICES

Participants recommended the following:

- **Reframe the issue.** Showing leaders how various events lead directly to revenue shortages may help them connect their IHEs’ survival with business continuity and recovery planning.
- **Establish a body of knowledge.** IHEs are hungry for templates, checklists, and instruction in this area. A repository of these items could jump-start resilience among IHEs.
- **Work in manageable increments.** Business continuity and recovery planning often highlights a list of unmet needs, some of which are complex and/or expensive. Participants recommended that in order to maintain buy-in, IHEs should avoid attempting to fulfill all needs immediately.
- **Welcome grants and MOUs.** Partnerships with third parties or even other IHEs can make IHEs much more resilient by providing access to teaching, research, and administrative facilities, in turn ensuring IHEs stay operational after an event. The National Intercollegiate Mutual Aid Agreement (NIMAA) is an agreement that IHEs can sign onto to access emergency resources from other IHEs. Pursuing grants has also helped some IHEs with resources and hiring.
- **Rethink “normal.”** Business continuity and recovery planning is still a rare process for many IHEs and is “less sexy” than response planning. This hinders buy-in and attention from leaders. Talking about business continuity and recovery planning as a routine part of emergency management can help normalize the process.

TOPIC 3: ENGAGING LEADERSHIP IN RESPONSE, CONTINUITY & RECOVERY

Most (65%) of respondents in the 2016 National Higher Education Need Assessment said they felt their leaders are committed to their IHEs’ emergency management, safety, and risk-management programs. But that commitment takes a variety of forms. This session focused on challenges and opportunities in securing institutional commitment to these programs.



EXISTING PLANS

Many participants said their IHE leaders philosophically support emergency management, safety, and risk management. However, participants also said those same leaders do not always have time for or interest in the details of the programs or their execution. Few reported having more than four hours per year in front of campus leaders.

Some participants noted that their schools have made active threat training virtually mandatory; several schools have also increased their messaging during student orientation. Several participants said they have raised their teams' profiles by pursuing grants and partnering with external organizations. Some have implemented merit-based systems in which department heads and other leaders must meet certain safety or planning standards.

Participants reported that they provide annual reports to boards, vice presidents, and other groups regarding their IHEs' vulnerabilities and claims activity. Some schools have employed cloud-based software and systems that allow them to share information and track data for planning.

CHALLENGES

The news cycle. Participants noted that media coverage of certain events on or off their campuses often drives leadership involvement in emergency management, but when the coverage wanes, so does interest. In addition, IHE communications efforts can be inconsistent between events. Some participants indicated that this is sometimes because employees are unable or unwilling to keep up with technology changes.

Limited education. Comments from participants suggest a correlation between support for emergency management programs and the amount of formal training leaders have on the topic. Some participants noted that IHE leaders often don't have the time to engage in formal training, which can last days.

Authority chokeholds. Participants said true leadership support for emergency management has three elements: access, budget, and staff. Emergency managers rarely have the authority to require student and staff trainings, and they often lack a "seat at the table" to push for what they need from decision-makers. Participants also said leaders often look to what other schools are doing as a benchmark for granting funding requests, which inadvertently penalizes IHEs that want to do more.

Delegation. Some participants noted that even though high-level IHE leaders may support and encourage emergency management, the people to whom they delegate the execution may be less enthused, creating a disconnect between words and deeds among IHE leaders.



OPPORTUNITIES AND BEST PRACTICES

Participants recommended the following:

- **Keep it short.** Campus leaders often don't have time for lengthy presentations and explanations. Participants who were able to separate "urgent" from "important" in their presentations, who focused on talking points, who used data to make their cases, and who strove for brevity reported more success in capturing attention and support from leaders.
- **Change the training.** Many IHE leaders do not have time for meetings or trainings that take several days or even several hours. IHEs that find ways to deliver that knowledge in a short amount of time and even virtually have a better chance at getting support and investment from leaders. Participants reported more success getting leaders to attend exercises (especially if smartphones are banned) rather than listen to PowerPoint presentations.
- **Write it down.** Participants said accountability among IHE leaders increases when policies and procedures explicitly identify what offices are responsible for supporting specific efforts.
- **Capitalize on change.** Identify rising campus leaders and use leader turnover to campaign for more engagement from new chiefs who can champion and cheer for emergency management, and who are not plagued by "we've always done it this way" beliefs. Ultimately, however, IHEs should strive for emergency management organizations whose existence do not hinge on the presence or support of a few people.
- **Create opportunities for leaders.** Participants said that providing quick wins that senior leaders can take positive, public credit for can boost support for emergency management. Some participants also recommended clearly explaining what will happen in an emergency if the IHE doesn't have a plan.
- **Join forces.** Participants said joining local and national emergency management associations, working groups, or task forces, as well as doing more to partner with state resiliency officers, can help raise an IHE's profile and create opportunities to leverage information.

TOPIC 4: ORGANIZATIONAL RESILIENCE & ENTERPRISE RISK MANAGEMENT (ERM)

In this discussion, participants talked about the steps their IHEs have taken in this area, as well as challenges and opportunities they face.

EXISTING PLANS

Few participants said their IHEs had made any formal efforts in this area, though most were aware of the topic and were interested in its implementation. Some had developed extensive, methodical processes.



Participants noted that their IT teams were often further down the road on this topic than much of the rest of the university. Some noted that state-level programs provide a safety net, particularly for smaller schools and community colleges.

CHALLENGES

Confusion. Many participants reported not being sure how to define or explain what organizational resilience and enterprise risk management are; many referred to them as “buzzwords.” Few had training on the topic or knew how to translate the concepts into concrete tasks our goals.

Size. Organizational resilience and enterprise risk management were largely associated with large IHEs. Many small IHEs reported not having the time, resources or expertise to engage in the efforts. Many participants said their IHEs were much more focused on emergency management and response.

Burnout. Some participants reported that the efforts involved in mitigation, response, business continuity, and leadership management leave little interest, funding, or staff hours available for developing resilience and enterprise risk management programs, particularly at small schools.

Authority chokeholds. Participants said they rarely have the authority to require students, faculty and staff to do anything.

OPPORTUNITIES AND BEST PRACTICES

Participants recommended the following:

- **Outreach.** Participants who networked with the campus community were more likely to get interest in implementing organizational resilience and ERM from more groups and uncover hidden partnership and resource opportunities.
- **Join a group.** A few participants noted that becoming part of the DRU Network was a good first step in understanding and implementing resilience and ERM concepts. Others said collaborating with other IHEs provides help on the topic and paves the way for other partnerships.
- **Look for quick successes.** Participants said implementing organizational resilience and ERM programs requires some degree of salesmanship. Fast wins can garner immediate support and funding, and they can sustain what is often a years-long process.