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Campus Crisis Management: A Comprehensive Guide to Planning, Prevention, Response, and Recovery

Eugene L. Zdziarski II, Norbert W. Dunkel, J. Michael Rollo, & Associates; (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2007).

Reviewed by S. Nicole Hoefle

As higher education professionals and faculty members, we are living in a time when our campuses are experiencing unimaginable and horrific criminal acts and natural disasters. These events are forcing us to make policy changes and create crisis management plans within short time periods. *Campus Crisis Management: A Comprehensive Guide to Planning, Prevention, Response, and Recovery* by Eugene L. Zdziarski, Norbert W. Dunkel, J. Michael Rollo, and associates provides guidance to professionals and faculty members as they consider or are in the process of developing a crisis management plan. Tom Ellett, Assistant Vice President of Residential Education at New York University and one of the authors for chapter 11, offers a comment which could serve as the foundational statement for the book: “Crises come in all shapes and sizes and we in student affairs need to be ready and prepared, because expecting the unexpected is now a reality in our society” (p. 272).

The book is sectioned into four parts. Part one defines the concept of crisis management, part two examines the practice of crisis management, part three provides lessons from actual campus crises, and part four offers final thoughts and ideas about the future of campus crisis management.

The authors set the tone of the book by describing a number of crises which have occurred across university campuses in the United States since 1966. From the shooting at the University of Texas in Austin in 1966, to the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina in 2005, real events are outlined to set a tone for what a crisis might look like on campus. These opening accounts allow the reader to expand a vision of a campus crisis beyond a school shooting or natural disaster. The authors describe an airplane crash that killed students who were studying abroad and a bacterial infection that claimed the lives of three university students. They offer a “Crisis Matrix,” which is designed to help professionals determine the level of crisis, type of crisis, and the intentionality of the crisis. They describe a five-phase crisis management cycle: planning, prevention, response, recovery, and learning.

In section two, the authors provide a blueprint for coordinating and implementing a crisis management system on campus. Forming a crisis management team, developing a crisis management plan, managing levels of communication, working with emergency personnel and outside agencies, providing first aid, and training crisis team members are suggested activities presented for crisis team leaders. This section provides beneficial and insightful suggestions from faculty members and student affairs administrators who have experienced crisis management at varying levels. The authors detail the steps needed to formulate a crisis management team, develop a crisis management plan, and train crisis management personnel. They note certain skills and abilities that ought to be found within team leaders and team members. They suggest, “The existence of a written crisis management plan is perhaps the single most important crisis management tool a campus

can have” (Zdziarski *et al.*, p. 74). A step-by-step strategy for gathering information, delineating responsibility, maintaining, and distributing the crisis management plan is also included.

A potentially challenging and frustrating aspect of crisis management is identified as working with the local and national media. The various communication outlets that could be used by crisis team members to communicate important information during and after a campus crisis were discussed in chapter five, including siren systems, portable transmission towers, amateur radio emergency systems, and phone books. A four-step crisis communication process to assist team members in working with the local and national media is also presented. To ease the stress of working with the media, these authors suggest within this four-step plan that crisis team members build relationships with members of the media, identify key communication messages, develop a crisis communication team, communicate with community members during and after the crisis, and note lessons learned once the crisis is over.

In the latter part of section two, the chapter authors provide several strategies for working with emergency personnel and outside agencies, suggest ways to attend to the psychological needs of campus community members and crisis team members, and offer unique ideas for training crisis team members. Tips for working with local and federal agencies, a phase model for intervention services, and sample training activities and case study exercises can be found within these chapters as well.

The third section presents lessons learned from crisis management. Each chapter in this section looks at the varying types of crises that can impact a campus community. Environmental crises, crises involving campus facilities, and crises created by individuals are all extensively discussed. The authors of the chapters in this section present several campus crises and offer a brief description of the incident, the agencies and individuals involved, communication and public relations issues, implications, protocol revision, incident effects, and the author notes on the incident. Each chapter ends with questions for reflection and discussion which could serve as a useful training tool for crisis team members.

The fourth and final section of this book addresses some contemporary issues in campus crisis management such as fan behavior and celebratory violence, internet security, missing students, and acts of terrorism. The section ends with a discussion about where crisis team members ought to head in the future as they work to develop their crisis management plans. Debriefing a crisis is discussed in the closing appendix. The author provides a crisis debriefing checklist for crisis team members to utilize when reviewing and discussing an incident.

Faculty members and student affairs administrators are in need of a crisis management book, especially given the state of campus crises today. We live in a time when we must have a plan for addressing and processing campus crises. I believe the authors of this book provide campus administrators and faculty members such a useful tool as they refine, or begin to develop, and later implement their crisis management plans. Unfortunately, we do not have the luxury of time in developing these plans as they ought to have been developed yesterday. The information in this book is quite beneficial but it is presented in a 341-page format. There are a couple of approaches a crisis team leader could take when reading this book and sharing the material with others. He or she could read the entire book and then create a method for sharing the material, or, he

or she could assign sections of the book to be read by crisis team members. The crisis team members could then come together to share what they learned while reading the book. I think this latter approach would be the most beneficial to the individual team members. With this approach, they have the opportunity to review the material and further retain the material as they teach it to other team members.

I recommend that faculty members and campus administrators read this book. It contains actual scenarios, models, discussion questions, and training tips that could help crisis team leaders and members develop and implement a crisis management plan. This book is a needed and beneficial tool for all involved with managing crises on their respective campuses.

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