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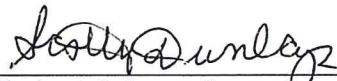
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College Campus Emergency Preparedness: Is Avoidance a Reason for Concern?

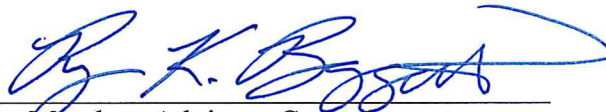
By

Thomas Barnowski

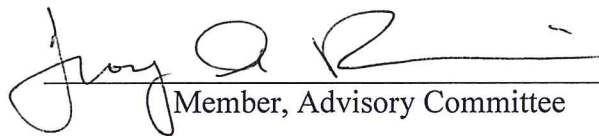
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COLLEGE CAMPUS EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS:  
IS AVOIDANCE A REASON FOR CONCERN?

BY

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Submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School of  
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in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF SCIENCE

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Thank you to the many family and friends who supported my efforts on this quest. Thank you to the colleagues and instructors who assisted and guided my steps along the path.

Words do not express the gratitude for all.

## ABSTRACT

The purpose of this qualitative and quantitative research study was to explore the factors and outcomes associated with the lack of emergency preparedness activities related to college campuses. Within the context of pertinent literature was the confirmation of existing campus emergency action plans but the stated behavioral expectations contained in those plans raised questions related to effective functional performance. Additionally, the apparent refusal of college campus populations to actively participate in the preparedness process while offering a myriad of justifications for their avoidance has raised a number of concerns related to the achievement of desired positive outcomes. Discussion of attitudes and their effects on a minimalist approach to campus emergency action planning and preparedness activities has revealed a theme of denial or procrastination within the assumption of assignment to others for their intervention.

The research survey conducted with this study disclosed a range of performance responses from excellent to lackadaisical. Thematically, the survey revealed that without adequate commitment from the highest-ranking officials at their respective institutions, appropriate response and recovery operations are doubtful. Further review of data from the survey revealed a skewed result in that respondents were all administrators. Additionally, only two-year institutions responded. Nonetheless, the results of the survey offered insight into the presumption of institutional preparedness based on previous experience. Conclusions based on all gathered research have indicated that regardless of the causes of surrounding campus emergency incidents, there will be outcomes directly influenced by the preceding preparedness activities. The accolades or consequences will be reflective of the preparedness efforts or lack thereof.

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## CHAPTER 1

### Introduction

#### **Background**

An Associated Press article from Matheson (April, 2013) quoted U.S. Department of Homeland Security Secretary Janet Napolitano as stating, “as we know from experience a crisis on campus can happen without notice...whether it’s an active shooter situation, a major disaster such as a hurricane or earth quake, or some other hazard that endangers lives (p 8).” Napolitano’s words vividly describe the potential and the possibility of injury or death for those who frequent college campuses. The gravity of her words should inspire immediate attention and performance of the tasks associated with college campus emergency preparedness; unfortunately, the motivation to prepare and exercise emergency action plans appears to be lacking.

#### **Statement of the Problem**

From the perspective of a seemingly lacking approach toward campus emergency preparedness is the essence of a discernable problem. Clearly there are emergency action plans with assigned titles on a number of shelves throughout institutions of higher education, but the questions of functional competencies associated with the individuals who must fill those titled roles seem to go unresolved. Without clear performance expectations and accountability of roles and responsibilities, one has to assume emergency response duties will be assigned in the midst of the emergency. Without specific role performance preparedness, those assigned to perform particular response and recovery tasks will improvise actions based on life experiences and assumptions.

Without internal emergency preparedness, integration with external emergency response assets will be non-existent or at least challenging. Therefore, the problem that has been explored and discussed in this thesis is the perceived minimalist approach associated with college campus emergency preparedness efforts. The quandary that will seek understanding and possible resolution within aspects of implied and explicit requirements is the answer to the question that asks, is campus emergency preparedness avoidance a reason for concern?

Emergency preparedness requirements and pertinent plans per the Federal Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) regulations may not be enforceable obligations for all organizations, even though the existence of an emergency action plan per the outlined regulatory requirements of the (OSHA) 29 CFR1910.38 or respective State Departments of Education or Labor is certainly a best practice to consider and implement. Colleges may have completed written plans stored on a shelf or in a file cabinet within the safety or security department office. As such, the functionality of these dormant plans is called into question. Rubin draws reference to Clarke's (1999) "fantasy documents" as he implies these documents exist to provide an illusionary impression of control and safety (Rubin, 2014). Within these documents, identified individual responsibilities and response expectations are rarely discussed or exercised by students or staff members. Student response roles and expectations within the plans are alluded to on opening day gatherings, but actual performance requirements are not effectively communicated. Information sharing during emergencies has come to rely on cell phones, texting, and electronic notification systems. Han stated, "Merely deploying

an emergency notification system on a college campus does not guarantee that it will be effective (Han et al, 2015, p 910).”

Avoiding the implicit requirements of planning, training, and exercising seems to be commonplace. The various research sources used to prepare this thesis contain a multitude of excuses and absolutions to justify avoidance of preparedness activities. They range from financial challenges, scheduling priorities, apathy, risk of emotional trauma, and the discomforts of political correctness associated with offending individuals because of scenario characterization or context. Justification to perpetuate the status quo of emergency preparedness avoidance seems to rely on the computations of costs to prepare and exercise versus the actual number of campus crisis occurrences. A study on disaster near misses and their effect on mitigation efforts suggest that incidents that do not reach their maximum damage potential actually affirm the perceptions that reduced mitigation and preparedness efforts are indeed justified (Dillon et al, 2014). Additional studies related to interest and prioritization of emergency preparedness reveal that “most students seem very complacent and do very little to prepare (Lovekamp & McMahon, 2011, p. 141).”

Within these justifications for preparedness inactivity, the consequences of failure to adequately prepare for emergency incidents should be considered while assessing the aspects associated with campus crises and subsequent negative outcomes. Consideration must also include the inherent liabilities and negligence issues that could initiate legal actions. Additional discussion must explore criminal consequences for college campus leadership who fail to adequately prepare for emergency incidents. However, within all the discussion and consideration is the underlying question that asks if adequate

preparedness activities truly affect outcomes as it relates to college campus emergency incidents. The challenge is centered on determining the adequacy of emergency preparedness efforts for college campuses and the subsequent performance expectations and capabilities of all associated stakeholders.

### **Purpose**

The purpose of this qualitative and quantitative research project was to discuss the factors and outcomes associated with the lack of preparedness activities related to college campuses. The research has revealed a strong suggestion that there is a trend towards campus emergency preparedness avoidance. The questions associated with the seemingly apparent refusal by college campus populations to actively participate in the preparedness process along with the myriad of justifications for their avoidance has been asked to determine if there is a reason for concern. Within the inquiries is the discussion of the possible consequences associated with inactivity. Therefore, the overarching purpose of this research project has been to provide thought provoking awareness and discussion of a minimalist approach to campus emergency action planning and preparedness activities and to determine if existing attitudes will have negative effects on outcomes.

### **Significance of the Study**

The significance of this study was found in the discussion and exposure of the attitude that “one of this century’s many trends has been the mantra that emergency action plans have little value (Rubin, 2014, p. 30).” It is this perceived notion that emergencies are rare occurrences on college campuses and as such require only minimalist preparatory efforts. Affirmations of those minimalist efforts are reinforced when potentially devastating outcomes are not realized (Dillon et al, 2014). But is this

attitude a reason for concern as college campus communities continue to rely on impromptu response and recovery efforts when emergencies occur? This study viewed a variety of aspects and circumstances as it relates to campus preparedness activities. The exposing discussion offered analysis and awareness of the concerns and projected outcomes. Affirmation of continuing minimalist preparatory efforts or the advocacy to enhance preparedness activities has become the eventual outcome of this study. The potential transforming significance of this study will be discovered within the administrative continuance of status quo methodology or the implementation of new activities that attach value and vigor to campus emergency preparedness efforts.

### **Assumptions**

The assumptions associated with this study included that all participants provided factual information and honest responses to all survey questions. The selection of participants was representative of a variety of educational institutions over a Northeast United States regional geographic area. Data processing to achieve accurate results was of paramount importance, but it must be stated that results were based solely on the responses of the various surveyed participants.

### **Limitations**

Within the survey participants were the limitations associated with minimal responses to survey questions. As expected, revelation of circumstances or issues that are not conducive to positive institutional image affected limited responses. Only two-year institutions responded to the survey questions. Although invited, there were no four-year institutions that participated. Additionally, only administrators provided survey answers. As results were compiled, a thematic generalized pattern emerged. A response rate of

25% was viewed statistically significant and this study indicated a response rate of 28% and as such the information derived from the survey was used in the discussion.

However, discerned patterns, trends and themes from all research data and sources has affected the usefulness of information to be used as transactional motivation for changes to existing campus preparedness activity. Clearly there is bias and assumption that have ultimately determined the outcomes and appropriateness of the research methodology.

### **Organization of Study**

The study utilizes a qualitative and quantitative research design that included areas associated with campus demographics, awareness of existing plans, awareness of individual roles within plans, expectations of others within plans, attitudes and feelings associated with plans, and self-reflective awareness of performance capability. Utilization of electronic survey tools from Constant Contact Survey provided information that led to descriptive statistics pertaining to age, position, type of college, rural or urban setting for campus, overall emergency awareness, expectations of others, and attitude as it relates to preparedness activities.

After Institutional Review Board approval, twenty five surveys were sent out to randomly selected two and four year college campus safety and or security leadership officials to complete the survey in Appendix A. The sample size was determined by the qualitative process that can be described and delineated assigned as a phenomenological study at one moment in time. Following Creswell's (1998) recommendation, the sample included the minimum of at least five to 25 participants. Research questions included inquiries from individual function through preparedness activities and attitudes. Data collected was processed using a thematic analysis to discover interconnected aspects.



Conclusions and conjectures were drawn within the context of existing literature pertaining to campus preparedness and other associated topics.

## CHAPTER 2

### Literature Review

#### **Introduction**

The news media often reports about crises or emergencies that occur on college campuses across the United States. Often the outcomes are not positive, but as leaders of these institutions are interviewed for their comments about these occurrences, they seem to always report on the positive aspects of the incident while offering praise for the performance of all who were involved or affected by the event. News media releases and sound bites extol praise for the intervening actions and response. It should be questioned if the response or intervening performance was indeed worthy of recognition or if the incident resolved itself with little influence from those involved. Clearly the exposure to disasters, crises, and emergencies is an ever-present circumstance for colleges and universities. Emergency and disaster preparedness plans for most institutions are in existence somewhere on their respective campuses. While the existence of plans seems to be evident, one has to question if the plans are ever reviewed and practiced by those individuals named in the plans. Aspects of sufficient logistics to adequately support and implement those plans seem to be an evasive topic as well. It would appear that the efforts to promulgate the plans as well as exercise response and recovery actions are activities that institutions choose to avoid.

The apparent refusal or lack of motivation by campus populations to actively participant in the preparedness process has created a myriad of justifications for avoidance. These disengaging justifications have fostered a culture of apathy and

disregard. As this disregard is the predominate attitude, the consequences associated with preparedness inactivity are rarely discussed. Current literary research discusses expectations within existing or future plans but rarely focuses on actual implementation, role assignments, and functional exercises. Within the context of this study, research has included areas associated with campus demographics, awareness of existing plans, assignments of individual roles, expectations of others, attitudes associated with plans, and self-reflective awareness of performance capability. Ultimately, the questions associated with attitudes and preparedness avoidance are focused on conclusions as it pertains to preparedness performance failures and the subsequent range of consequences.

Emergency or crisis events will eventually affect college campuses. As such one has to question, what is currently being done in order to facilitate an appropriate effective response? The news media will cover incidents that have occurred or are occurring. But do these reports reflect reality? When viewed from the perspective of an active first responder, it would appear that reporters have little awareness of the actual responses that should have taken place to reduce damage and save lives. Institution supplied public information officers or spokespersons have a significant influence on the images portrayed or the information shared to the media. These images and information are rarely tarnished or challenged by reports of inappropriate or ineffective responses. As events unfold with arriving first responders beginning their interventions, the campus status quo response of reliance on others for action and direction is tacitly endorsed through preparedness inactivity and avoidance. For a number of campuses the image of a politically correct and safe campus has priority over discussions of emergency response concerns. Items that are perceived as uncomfortable are discounted during campus-wide

opening day activities that seem to skim over emergency response actions in order to focus on other administrative policies. Policy review that deals with day-to-day operations of the institution is clearly discussed at these events, with the expectation that professors or instructors will share evacuation and response procedures with students in the classroom. This sharing rarely occurs as most professors or instructors are not sure of appropriate response actions. A 2015 study of university employees revealed “faculty and staff’s knowledge of appropriate responses to various crisis events, specifically actual knowledge, is at a low and concerning level (Liu, Blankson, Brooks, 2015, p. 220).”

As a first responder that has arrived on a number of emergency scenes where appropriate response actions could have made the difference between life and death, it is clear that disengaged attitudes or unprepared responses have adversely affected outcomes. Too often during unfolding incidents the echoes of absolutions for poor or no response performance by those responsible to ensure a state of readiness resulted in accusations of blame and denial. In the midst of the turmoil, the root cause for inappropriate response performance is rarely discussed or explored. Efforts to adequately prepare before an incident and perform according to the institutional emergency plan are often overshadowed by after-incident studies that assign responsibility for failures. Certainly recommendations for remediation are included in after-action reports, but implementation of those identified items is questionable for many. “Many employees indicated they had worked they had worked with the university for a long time and did not remember receiving any emergency training since their new employee orientation (Liu, Blankson, Brooks, 2015, p. 221).”

There is indication that emergency preparedness is not a priority for a number of institutions. Assumptions of readiness were discussed within the scope of a 2016 national tabletop exercise event that was conducted in Chicago by the Department of Homeland Security. Within that exercise “95% of participants expressed concerns with their institution’s ability to prioritize and coordinate personnel resources during an incident (Homeland Security Exercise, 2016).” Colleagues from a number of institutions seem to reveal a reluctance to invest in substantive remediation of these concerns. Financial justifications for this reluctance are reinforced with interpretations of Clery Act statistics that indicate a declining rate of campus crime incidents since 2005 (Department of Education, 2015). The declining rate per the Clery Act statistics of campus incidents appears to validate the cost effective savings associated with minimal preparedness efforts. Nonetheless, “the range of naturally occurring and human events makes it clear that there is no shortage to the types of risks that may threaten the health and well-being of a campus community (Fifolt, et al, 2016, p. 67).”

Risks and threats were considered as part of an external resource overview as it relates to their adequacy to manage any incident on campus without any assistance from institutional assets. Further discussion included the value of maintaining appropriate political correctness directives while avoiding possible discomfort to groups or individuals because of the perceived realities associated with emergency preparedness activities. Ultimately, conclusions considered civil and criminal consequences for avoidance of preparedness activities that could have provided positive outcomes to incidents. Within this context, assessments considered whether apathy and indifference have influenced emergency preparation efforts. As such, the focus of this study offers

insight and conclusions to the apparent dilemma that exists on college and university campuses across the United States. Is emergency preparedness avoidance a reason for concern? In order to explore answers, pertinent existing literature has been reviewed by category: incident potential and occurrences, regulatory requirements, existing conditions, outcomes and consequences.

### **Incident Potential and Occurrences**

Mitroff, Diamond, and Alpaslan, (2006) stated that events like Hurricane Katrina and the September 11th terrorist attacks alerted university leaders and governing boards about the dangers associated with of both natural and manmade disasters. They further contend that the lessons learned from these experiences should not have been needed. As one views Mitroff, Diamond, and Alpaslan's (2006) research, the potential for crisis, emergencies, disasters and catastrophes is ever-present and affirmed. As one views a variety of incident occurrences, the very nature of college campuses is conducive to acts of violence due to dense populations and a low police presence. The contention that campuses are usually safer than surrounding communities is somewhat diminished with information that indicates violent attacks on college campuses have increased in recent years (Sulkowski, 2011). As past and present events of campus tragedy continue to be reported in the news media, the questions associated with preparedness and crisis management seem to demand answers.

According to Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) there is a methodology of preparedness for college campus disasters. Within phase two of the process as outlined by FEMA, there is discussion centered on identification of potential hazards and emergency incidents (FEMA, 2003). The range of incident potential includes

fires, explosions, weather related issues, floods, active shooters, acts of terror, medical emergencies, chemical releases, riots, and epidemics. In order to discover the extent of emergency incident potential for college campuses the suggestion from FEMA is to contact local emergency management agencies for past occurrences and trends. While lists can be extensive and varied, the inclusive concern that affects all college campuses is the exposure to emergency incidents and crisis situations.

The urgency of action surrounding these potential hazards and concerns associated with college campus safety and security has been proclaimed by Matheson (2013) who reported on Homeland Security Secretary Janet Napolitano as stating, “As we know from experience a crisis on campus can happen without notice... whether it’s an active shooter situation, a major disaster such as a hurricane or earth quake, or some other hazard that endangers lives (p 8).” Within this article is the information that a Federal initiative “will entail school administrators, students and community members working with homeland security and emergency management officials to assess campus safety, develop crisis plans and train responders (Matheson, 2013, p. 8).” With such initiatives and reports of past campus incidents, one can only conclude that the occurrence of future college campus emergency incidents or crisis situations has significant potential.

### **Regulatory Requirements**

The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) in CFR 29 §1910.38 requires pertinent workplaces to have an emergency action plan. While a significant number of colleges and universities would be exempt to the OSHA requirement due to statutory limitations, the practice of having an effective emergency action plan is a best practice. Rubin (2014) stated that effective planning is priceless. The basic requirements

of the OSHA plan include procedures to emergency reporting, evacuations, critical operations, accountability, rescue and medical duties, and a listing of responsible people. The intention of this OSHA requirement was to establish a minimum expectation of preparedness for staff and workers within their respective workplaces. Within each authority having jurisdiction or State there are departments or agencies that also require emergency action plans and preparedness activities.

Additionally, as nationally publicized incidents have challenged emergency responders to interoperate within a functional response system while coordinating with local resources, a series of Homeland Security Presidential Directives were issued. Within Homeland Security, Presidential Directive # 5 the National Incident Management System was established to “provide a consistent framework for incident management at all jurisdictional levels regardless of the cause, size, or complexity of the incident (NIMS, 2012, p. 2-4).” The requirement to include this management methodology in college campus emergency action plans is apparent. There is an inherent responsibility to become active and involved in institutional emergency planning to assure the safety and well being of the campus communities (Sulkowski, 2011). But as plans are prepared or as they currently exist, there is concern that this methodology may be unfamiliar to those who would need to perform within its prescriptions and parameters.

### **Existing Conditions**

Heiselt and Burrell (2012) imply that most higher education institutions are vulnerable to the effects of crises because of planning concerns. They further their view with awareness that colleges and universities trail behind corporations and organizations with their preparedness activities. Their assertion is that most chief administrators in



academia are unfamiliar with crisis management concepts. While most campuses have plans in place, the familiarity of performance expectations is in question. Heiselt and Burell (2012) reported on a sampling of college presidents and their perspectives on campus crisis management systems. Over ninety percent of surveyed and responding college presidents reported the existence of crisis management plans and that those plans were reviewed annually. Interestingly, the surveyed presidents reported confidence in their plans although a significant number of presidents had assigned oversight duties to other members of their respective staffs. Infectious disease was the most significant item within preparedness plans and severe weather i.e. hurricanes was the least consideration.

Mitroff, Diamond, and Alpaslan (2006) reported the results of a survey that revealed that colleges and universities were generally prepared only for those crises that they had already experienced. Within that survey result, it is interesting to note that preparedness efforts seemed to follow those incidents that had been experienced by the institution. Fires and criminal activity were incidents of most familiarity and therefore were adequately handled in the preparedness activities. But similar survey results of college presidents imply that severe weather related preparedness activities along with campus evacuations were accommodated with a lower priority (Heiselt and Burrell, 2012). Important to note from the study is that sabotage and ethics violations were frequent occurrences on campuses with little or no accommodation in the crises preparedness plans.

As organizations viewed their own capabilities at a 2016 National Seminar and Tabletop Exercise and it was interesting to note that “95% of the participants expressed concerns with their institution’s ability to handle and process the scene of mass fatality

incident while 94 % expressed concerns with their institution's ability to deliver assistance and support to those affected by an incident (Dept. Homeland Security, 2016, p. 10)." Within those concerns are the issues associated with day-to-day business operations. Functionality was called into question when "72% of participants expressed concerns with their institution's business continuity operations (Dept. of Homeland Security, 2016, p. 11)." There appear to be apprehensions surrounding adequate preparedness efforts as exhibited in the survey results from 80 institutions of higher learning who participated in the Tabletop Exercise. As surveys and self-recognition reveal vulnerabilities, one has to question if the potential negative outcomes and consequences will move campus leadership towards correcting efforts.

### **Outcomes and Consequences**

Discussion of outcomes and consequences associated with college campus emergency preparedness is broad in its scope. There is a myriad of studies that range from disaster preparedness and health behaviors (Pampel, 2012) through impacts of a college course that discusses perceptions of terrorism preparedness activities (Farner, & Notoro, 2006). Information about disaster communications and the apparent apathy of the public to heed weather warnings with a general complacency towards all emergency warnings has caused reasons for concern (Patnaude, 2013). However, almost all sources used in the preparation of this thesis universally conclude that continuing studies to gather additional information must be completed before conclusions can be drawn about campus emergency response and recovery outcomes. Discussions within the various sources of literature advocate for preparedness activity but do not offer conjecture or significant comment on preparedness avoidance behaviors. The possible consequences of

preparedness avoidance are sometimes alluded to in analysis, but there is a general vagueness that surrounds any concluding statements. Within the context of this literature review, the question and answer of college campus emergency preparedness avoidance with the associated outcomes and consequences remains allusive.

### **Conclusions from the Literature Review**

“The concept of emergency management for U.S. higher education institutions is complex because of the range of potential hazards and disasters is almost limitless (Fifolt, et.al. 2016, p. 61).” This statement of awareness of crisis and disaster occurrences on college campuses is not a new revelation. As a result of this awareness, there are a wide array of plans have been compiled and placed in a variety of locations throughout campuses across the county. While a significant number of institutions confidently view their ability to adequately administer planned events, they question their ability to adequately manage emergency response and recovery efforts (Department of Homeland Security, 2016). There are a number of institutions of higher education that are able to support their own fire, police, and emergency medical services responders. For a number of reasons, other institutions do not maintain their own emergency responders. They rely on surrounding communities or municipal services to meet their emergency responder needs. However, regardless of the first responder affiliation to the institution, once responders are engaged with intervening response activities there must interfacing actions with the institution to achieve positive outcomes. All stakeholders must know their roles and be able to function accordingly. The advocacy of this aspect seemed to have a presence in the literature reviewed for this thesis, but the application of performance expectations via exercise and practice was a vague consideration.

Within the literature that has been reviewed for this thesis, there were discussions that include threat recognition and analysis, use of background checks, campus assessments, use of alerting and communication systems, statistical analysis, overviews of commercial response systems, political implications, and hazard vulnerability analysis. A variety of associated topics were explored to discuss and provide information related to the concerns associated with campus emergency preparedness. The concepts of planning and exercising were promoted within the various discussions, but there was little conversation about procedures to exercise and evaluate the associated desired outcomes. One has to question if preparedness methodology is discussed, how is implementation of these concepts fostered or ensured. The Federal Homeland Security Exercise and Evaluation Program (Department of Homeland Security, 2013), or HSEEP, has a methodology and procedures needed to organize and evaluate exercise activities, but this program was not mentioned in any of the reviewed literature for discussion. It appeared that the predominant call to action in most literature discussions was summed up by the recommendation to “integrate crisis/emergency preparedness training into routine university training, including new employee orientations and regular training events (Liu, Blankson, Brooks, 2015, p.221).”

## CHAPTER 3

### Methodology

#### **Context of the Study**

Through the use of a qualitative and quantitative design, research was conducted in areas associated with campus demographics, awareness of existing plans, awareness of individual roles within plans, expectations of others within plans, attitudes and feelings associated with plans, and self-reflective awareness of performance capability. Utilization of electronic survey tools from Constant Contact Survey provided information pertaining to age, position, type of college, rural or urban setting for campus, overall emergency awareness, expectations of others, and general attitude as it relates to preparedness activities.

#### **Selection of Participants**

After Institutional Review Board approval, twenty five surveys were sent out to randomly chosen 2 and 4 year college campus safety and or security leadership officials to complete the survey in Appendix A. The northeast region of the United States was the predominate area surveyed. Creswell (1998) recommended at least five to 25 participants to be solicited for response.

#### **Research Question**

One research question guided the investigation. Is the current state of emergency preparedness cause for concern?

## **Data Collection**

Surveying was used to collect data. Surveys were prepared with “yes and no” questions along with open ended questions to allow for expression of thought and analysis of themes from the responses. Additionally, research included a review of current literature for perspectives and information or those publications that provided verifiable statistics and pertinent regulatory foundation. Within one week after e-mailing survey questions, a reminder email was sent to motivate completion and return of the survey. All results were tallied and analyzed in week three. The IRB approval letter in Appendix B was sent along with the electronic survey explaining the research study. Surveys were posted on Constant Contact for a total of three weeks. Prompting of selected participants was made via e-mail communications to respond to the survey over the three-week period. Seven of the twenty-five invited participants responded to the survey. This represented a 28% participation rate.

## **Data Analysis**

Data Analysis was conducted using Descriptive Statistics and Qualitative Thematic Analysis of Data. Refer to Table A1. Question # 1 indicated that all respondents were involved with administrative duties. Question # 2 revealed that only two-year institutions responded to the survey. Questions # 3 and # 4 verified that emergency action plans exist on surveyed campuses and respondents know their individual role in the plan. Question # 5 confirmed that training has taken place. Question # 6 suggested that the majority of respondents are ready to manage a variety of emergency incidents. Question # 7 stated that all respondents have participated in campus preparedness exercises. Questions #13 and # 14 revealed a range in age of respondents

from 25 to over 66. The majority of respondents were over age 55 and are male.

Qualitative Thematic Analyses of the Data can be seen in Tables 1-6 below for Questions 8-12.

Table 1:

Thematic Analysis Research Question 8

Value to preparedness drills and exercises

Analysis	Themes	Relationship
Equating value perceived versus financial applications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Critical</li><li>• Safety</li><li>• Security</li><li>• Training</li><li>• Drills</li><li>• Controlled scenarios</li><li>• Role playing</li><li>• Critical to success</li></ul>	Exercises and training are perceived as critical to achieve successful outcomes

Table 2:

Thematic Analysis Research Question 9

State of preparedness at your campus

Analysis	Themes	Relationship
<p>Assessment of preparedness broad spectrum of perspectives as it relates to campus preparedness</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Problem</li> <li>• Range from poor to above average</li> <li>• Assignment of responsibility to others</li> <li>• Expectations of functional performance by other for others</li> <li>• Live in a womb</li> <li>• Prepared but always concerned</li> </ul>	<p>Disconnection between theory, practice and reality</p>



Table 3:

Thematic Analysis Research Question 10

Rewards or Consequences

Analysis	Themes	Relationship
<p>R- Assessment of readiness based on projected outcomes</p> <p>C- Assess of lack of readiness and resultant negative outcomes</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• R- Well prepared to take action  Save lives  Alert for eventuality  Sense of safety</li> <li>• C- Ill prepared to take action  Loss of life</li> </ul>	<p>Appropriate actions result in desired outcomes</p>

Table 4:

Thematic Analysis Research Question 11

Attitude

Analysis	Themes	Relationship
Discuss the range of attitudes as it relates to emergency preparedness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Excellent</li><li>• Appreciative and willing</li><li>• Poor and lackadaisical</li><li>• Most likely to complain</li><li>• Say protect me</li></ul>	Depending on your role there will be a reciprocal attitude applied to campus emergency preparedness activity  Attitude adjustment needed in some areas

Table 5:

Thematic Analysis Research Question 12

Avoid or Embrace Activities

Analysis	Themes	Relationship
Underlying theme to engagement or disengagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Top down</li><li>• Create an atmosphere of cooperation and importance of drills</li><li>• Someone else's responsibility</li><li>• Laziness in general</li><li>• Mindset it will not happen here</li></ul>	<p>Inconvenience and reluctance to accept responsibility drive the preparedness activities to be assigned to others</p> <p>Participation will take place only if perceived as necessary</p>

Table 6:

Connected Thematic Analysis of the Intersection of Research Questions 8-12

- All participants acknowledge that desired positive outcomes require commitment to prepare for all campus emergencies.
- Concerns related to the campus community at large are centered on the avoidance of preparedness activities as justified by the perceptions of unlikely occurrences or incidents.
- Rationalization for avoidance of preparedness activities is rooted in the assignment of performance responsibility to others.
- Active response participation will take place only when perceived as essential to survival and those response actions will be under the guidance of those individuals who may or may not be prepared to assume leadership roles.

**Subjectivities or Bias**

The subjectivity of the survey is readily apparent. Intertwined with objective questions of campus emergency action plan existence and performance capability are the subjective measures of campus population attitudes and feelings about preparedness activities. Additional bias is clearly indicated with respondents' affiliation with two-year schools. Four-year institutions did not respond. Only administrative staff was asked to participate and only administrative staff offered responses. Campus populations comprise a variety of staff members along with diverse student bodies. Input from those segments of the total campus demographic was not included in the survey results. As such, the results of the survey reflected administrative personnel perspectives that for the most part are directly responsible for preparedness efforts. It is likely their bias toward affirmation of functional readiness has been skewed toward their perspective.

The survey response perspective from a diverse campus population would likely influence a broader awareness of actual response and recovery capability. Conjecture suggests that administrators who have a functional role in an emergency response are likely to be aware of the campus emergency action plans for their respective institutions. All survey responding administrators who have a functional role have indicated associated training to prepare for their individual role performance. Demographics associated with responding administrators to the survey are predominately male with four of seven respondents over the age of 55. All respondents indicated a sense of value for preparedness activities, but as the subjective nature of value is assessed, one has to question if faculty and students are also adequately prepared to respond appropriately to any potential emergency occurrences.

## CHAPTER 4

### Research Findings and Analysis

There is no question that emergency action plans exist somewhere on campuses of colleges and universities across America. Within those same plans are the assignments, either by name or title, for a number of staff members throughout academia. But the research gathered for this thesis casts a significant shadow of doubt related to the performance capability of those named in the plans along with the attainment of desired outcomes. The 2016 National Seminar and Table Top Exercise Summary Report indicated that 95% of participants recognize and expressed concerns about their institutions ability to prioritize and coordinate personnel resources during an incident (Department of Homeland Security 2016). Rubin referenced Clarke's (1999) "fantasy documents" as he implied these documents exist to provide an illusionary impression of control and safety (Rubin, 2014). The sense of preparedness on paper without efforts to verify performance capability has fostered a minimalist preparation approach for campus emergencies. Studies revealed that disaster near misses actually affirm the justification to avoid preparedness efforts (Dillon et al, 2014). Within the apparent justifications of avoidance, students have developed complacency and are content to do little to prepare for campus emergencies (Lovekamp & McMahon, 2011).

The consequences for minimalist efforts could be catastrophic. The compounding effects of inappropriate actions could make bad situations worse. In a litigious society, the legal ramifications for institutions and the individual liabilities for staff members is staggering. As this thesis was being researched, the legal aspects revealed that discussion

on legal considerations could stand-alone as its own paper focused solely on liabilities, duties, and negligence. Therefore, the discussion here has alluded to legal concerns, but its focus is on practical application with emphasis on concerns. Within that focus, the compilation of research acknowledged that the apparent avoidance and justification for minimalist efforts seems to affirm Rubin when he stated that “one of this century’s many trends has been the mantra that emergency action plans have little value (Rubin, 2014, p.30).” If plans have no value, then one can only assume that actual preparedness efforts have even less perceived worth.

## CHAPTER 5

### Conclusion

#### **Discussions and Implications**

The implications of this research are revealed in the survey results. The college administrators who responded all shared a desire for positive outcomes as it relates to response and recovery for campus emergencies. There seemed to be no question that preparedness has value but the challenge to prepare is found in the priorities of the various institutions. Exercises are perceived as critical for verification of role assignments while ensuring success. Sadly, while the acknowledgement of practice and exercises have value, they do not seem to fit into a campus schedule of events. Consequently, the preparedness efforts along with exercises are easily dismissed. Justification of that preparedness dismissal is easily attained within the context of rare campus occurrences. One has to ask, will there never be an emergency occurrence? Mrad, Hannigan, and Batemen (2014, p. 16) offer a sobering reflection when they state "...institutions of higher learning remain particularly vulnerable given the open access and freedom of most campuses."

The perception of unlikely occurrence seems to foster the low priority for preparedness activities. The survey conducted for this thesis revealed concerns about the disconnection of unreasonable expectations and the realities of response. Theories about what to do are overshadowed within the realities of what can be done and by whom. Assignments within plans based on title with no assessment of individual capability and training to adequately fill a role will likely go undone. Without adequate performance



through practice, successful outcomes are unlikely. Too often plans assign responsibilities to external responders with no assessment of their capability to handle unique events. Unrealistic appraisal of external responder numbers and their abilities to immediately intervene will likely have dire consequences. Leadership within a campus community poorly prepared to handle campus emergencies will likely make bad decisions. Sadly, as the survey results reveal, active participation and prioritization of emergency response preparedness efforts will only take place when perceived essential to survival.

### **Conclusions and Recommendations for Future Research**

The question that this thesis asked was, “Is the lack of campus preparedness a reason for concern?” The answer is yes. While there are some campuses embracing preparedness, they seem to be a rarity. Liu, Blankson, Brooks’s state “the result here indicates that training and communication is lacking (Liu, Blankson, Brooks, 2015, p.220).” While there are statements of preparedness within the administrative ranks of campus communities, one has to question if those statements transfer to adequate response performance. If a catastrophic incident would occur on campus, the survey conducted offered some sobering comments that alluded to ill prepared campus populations with expectations of negative outcomes. The underlying theme that transcends throughout is the apparent attitudinal disconnect that has an exasperating effect on the ultimate outcome.

There is no question that campus leadership has many challenges within a myriad of concerns. Financial implications abound within the context of day-to-day operations. Funding expenses and investments are ever-present concerns. Priorities must be

considered within the mission of the institution. College campuses are unique. They are not K-12 education facilities with locked doors, accountability of staff and students, and security monitors to gain entry. There are no locks preventing entry in the various halls and common spaces. Populations vary by the hour on college campuses. Within that context of an ever-changing mass of humankind that can exceed thousands, consideration must be given to the realities of crisis and appropriate response. For that appropriate effective response to take place, effort and priority must be given the support and resources needed to achieve the state of readiness. Anything less and outcomes are not likely to be positive.

Future research to validate and offer insight for appropriate effective response should include a wider perspective of campus populations. Insight from faculty and students will provide opportunities for interaction and awareness. Clear understanding of capabilities and expectations will enhance continuing efforts. Scheduling of practice and exercises will dispel confusion while affirming the interrelationship of all stakeholders to achieve the desired outcome of all campus people. In an emergency crisis scenario “when so many factors are not controllable, even more emphasis needs to be put on preparing key stakeholders with the proper knowledge and skills to manage emergency situation and to minimize harm (Liu, Blankson, Brooks, 2015, p.222).” To that end, campus emergency preparedness must become a reason for concern that must be addressed.

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=STANDARDS

## **APPENDICES**

## Appendix A: Survey Questions

## Survey Questions

1. What is your function on campus?
  - a. Student
  - b. Faculty
  - c. Administration
  - d. Clerical
  - e. Custodial
  - f. Maintenance
  
2. Describe your campus. Select all that apply.
  - a. Two year
  - b. Four year
  - c. Private
  - d. Public
  - e. Other
  
3. Does your campus have an emergency action plan?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
  
4. If yes, do you know your individual role in the plan?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
  
5. Have you received any training pertinent to the campus emergency action plan?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
  
6. Please indicate if you feel prepared for the emergency scenarios listed below.
  - a. Active shooter or hostage
    - i. Yes
    - ii. No
  - b. Fire and explosion
    - iii. Yes
    - iv. No
  - c. Natural disasters
    - v. Yes
    - vi. No
  
7. Have you participated in campus preparedness exercises?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No



8. Do you feel there is value to preparedness drills and exercises?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
9. How would you describe the state of readiness at your campus?
10. What do you think the rewards or consequences would be for your current state of campus readiness?
11. How would you describe the attitude of most people on campus as it relates to emergency preparedness activities?
12. Why do you think people on campus avoid or embrace emergency preparedness activities?
13. Which category describes your age?
  - a. Younger than 18
  - b. 18-24
  - c. 25-34
  - d. 35-44
  - e. 45-54
  - f. 55-65
  - g. 66 or older
14. What is your gender?
  - a. Male
  - b. Female
  - c. Prefer not to answer

Table A1

Campus Security Descriptive Statistics Results

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Dates sent: 7/20/17, 7/27/17, and 8/3/17  
 Survey closed: 8/11/17  
 Sample size: 25  
 Responses: 7

<i>Function on campus</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Student	
Faculty	
Administration	100%
Clerical	
Custodial	
Maintenance	

<i>Campus</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Two year	100%
Four year	
Private	
Public	
Other	

<i>Have an emergency action plan</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Yes	100%
No	

<i>Knowledge of role in emergency action plan</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Yes	100%
No	

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Table A1 (continued)

<i>Received training pertinent to the campus emergency action plan</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Yes	100%
No	
<i>Preparation for the emergency scenarios listed below.</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Active shooter or hostage: Yes	71%; No 28%
Fire & explosion: Yes	85%; No 14%
Natural disasters: Yes	83%; No 16%
<i>Participation in Exercises</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Yes	100%
No	
<i>Age</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Younger than 18	
18-24	
25-34	14.2%
35-44	14.2%
45-54	14.2%
55-65	28.5%
66 or older	28.5%
<i>Gender</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Male	71.4%
Female	14.2%
Prefer not to answer	14.2%

Appendix B: Letter to Participant College Emergency Planner Survey

## Letter to Participant College Emergency Planner Survey

You are invited to participate in a research study about College Campus Emergency Preparedness: Is Avoidance a reason for Concern? You were selected randomly as a possible participant because your facility was listed on the Pennsylvania Department of Education website as a college campus and you may be listed as the emergency preparedness facilitator. I ask that you read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be a participant in the study.

This study is being conducted by Thomas Barnowski, BS and master student at Eastern Kentucky University (email: [tbarnowski@northampton.edu](mailto:tbarnowski@northampton.edu) 484-221-2160), under the direction of Dr. Scott Dunlap, at Eastern Kentucky University.

### Background Information:

The purpose of this study is: to explore college campus emergency preparedness: Is avoidance a reason for concern for colleges and universities?

### Procedures:

If you agree to be in this study, you will be asked to fill out a demographic questionnaire and qualitative questions related to emergency preparedness. This study will take approximately 10-20 minutes.

Please go to the LINK below to participate in the survey. A completion of the surveys indicates that you have provided informed consent to participate.

Please note while it is understood that no computer transmission can be perfectly secure, reasonable efforts will be made to protect the confidentiality of your transmission of the survey information.

### Risks and Benefits of Being in the Study:

There are perceived risks for participating in this study. However, some of the questions may be personal in nature as the survey requires some introspective reflection. Prior to participation it is recommended that you read through the survey and determine if any phase will cause discomfort. If there is sense of trepidation or concern do not complete or participate in the survey.

The benefits to participation are associated with enhancement of emergency preparedness efforts for colleges and universities.

### Confidentiality.

The records of this study will be kept private. In any sort of report we might publish, we will ensure your confidentiality and the identity of a participant will not be possible. Research records will be kept in a locked file; only the researchers will have access to the records. Computer files will be encrypted and locked in the file. All data will be destroyed three years after completion of the research (CFR 46.115).

### Voluntary Nature of the Study.

Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with the researcher or Eastern Kentucky University. The participation in the study is voluntary, and you are free to withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships previously identified. In order to withdraw from the study, written documentation is required by the participant and the research data obtained will be retained for the three year period and then destroyed. There is no monetary exchange occurring; therefore, there will be no exchange of reimbursement.

### Contacts and Questions:

The researcher conducting this study is Thomas Barnowski, BS email address: [tbarnowski@northampton.edu](mailto:tbarnowski@northampton.edu) 484-221-2160

Thank you in advance for your participation, it is greatly appreciated.

This study has been approved by the Eastern Kentucky University Exempt Review Committee.

Thank you.

Thomas G. Barnowski, BS