EAB

Risk Management Tactics for Climate Flashpoints

Three Ways to Use This Resource

- Update your institutional risk identification and assessment processes
- Improve ongoing risk awareness and coordination through regular risk discussions
- Create mechanisms for consistent risk elevation across campus

Student Affairs Forum

Executive Summary

Colleges and universities continue to face a range of climate flashpoints.

Climate flashpoints are the new normal: all types of colleges and universities are grappling with a wide range of incidents on campus. Flashpoints are climate-related incidents or events that cause disturbances in the community or media, including heightened levels of activism, media and public scrutiny, and reputational damage. Flashpoints originate from many different actors (e.g., institutions themselves, third-party organizations or activists, and faculty, staff, or students) and they span a wide range of issues.

Traditional risk identification, mitigation, and response practices do not allow institutions to adequately address climate flashpoints.

Most institutions rigorously track and manage financial, operational, and compliance-related risks. However, reputational risks – especially climate flashpoints – are largely overlooked. Inadequate risk awareness leads to under preparation, lost opportunities for risk mitigation, and slow response times when issues emerge. EAB recommends institutions develop risk management tactics that promote ongoing awareness and early action.

RECOMMENDATION #1

Regularly integrate flashpoints in your institution's risk register and leverage online risk monitoring strategies to promote early action.

Reputational risks, including climate flashpoints, are often missing from institutional risk management frameworks. Data shows that many senior leaders believe their institutions do not have the ability to withstand a major reputational risk event. Integrating these risks into your institution's risk register and online risk monitoring strategy will prompt earlier discussion and action to mitigate the impact of flashpoints.

RECOMMENDATION #2

Improve risk awareness and coordination among senior leaders through systematic tracking of and regular discussions about emerging flashpoints.

At most institutions, conversations about potential flashpoints are limited to incidents that are actively unfolding on campus. But this approach means institutions lose opportunities to prepare for potential incidents and pursue early mitigation tactics. EAB recommends institutions systematically track emerging issues and regularly discuss potential flashpoints to improve coordination among senior leaders.

RECOMMENDATION #3

Create mechanisms for key staff to regularly elevate potential risk areas and proactively manage common flashpoints.

Most risk elevation efforts depend on the right person knowing the right thing at the right time. However, most campuses do not have a clear way for individuals to elevate potential flashpoints. Early and consistent risk elevation mechanisms allow for increased awareness and ongoing assessment of potential risks, and coordinated action to address emerging flashpoints.

No Shortage of Climate Flashpoints

Institutions Continue to Face an Endless Stream of Incidents

Since the early 2010s, colleges and universities have grappled with a wide range of incidents on campus. Flashpoints are climate-related incidents or events that cause disturbances in the community or media, including heightened levels of activism, media and public scrutiny, and reputational damage. Flashpoints come from many different actors (e.g., institutions themselves, third-party organizations or activists, and faculty, staff, or students) and span a wide range of issues.

Despite years of practice, most institutions still struggle to prepare for and respond to flashpoints on campus. Flashpoints are difficult to address because they are hard to predict, evolve quickly (especially on social media), and require institutions to navigate complex, controversial issues that often lack a clear 'right' answer.

Climate Flashpoints Span All Types of Institutions and a Variety of Issues

Wyoming University Slogan About Cowboys Triggers Race, Gender Debate	*Female NYU Professor Accused of Sexually Harassing Male Student*	*Michigan Professor Refuses to Write Recommendation Letter Because of BDS*
UNC Boards Meet in Aftermath of Confederate Statue Toppling	*A Black Smith College Student Was Eating Her Lunch When an Employee Called the Police*	*University of Louisville removes Papa John's name from football stadium*
Racist Slur in Text Roils Georgia Southern	*Harvard Official Apologizes for 'Discriminatory' Comments in Viral Video*	*After calling Barbara Bush an 'amazing racist,' a professor taunts critics: 'I will never be fired'*

What is a Flashpoint?

A climate-related incident or event that causes disturbance in the community or media, including heightened levels of activism, media and public scrutiny, and reputational damage.

Source: EAB interviews and analysis.

Insufficient Risk Management Hinders Agility

Three Recommendations to Promote Ongoing Awareness and Early Action

Today most institutional approaches to risk management overlook reputational risks, especially climate flashpoints. Inadequate risk awareness leads to under preparation, lost opportunities for risk mitigation, and slow response times when issues emerge.

EAB recommends institutions improve risk identification, mitigation, and elevation to successfully navigate flashpoints as they arise on campus. This white paper reviews each of the below challenges and EAB's recommendations for improving risk management for climate flashpoints.

	Challenge	EAB's Recommendation
1	Current risk identification practices overlook potential flashpoints.	Regularly integrate flashpoints in your institution's risk register and leverage online risk monitoring strategies to promote early action.
2	Overwhelming amount of potential flashpoints leads to isolated and reactionary discussions.	Improve risk awareness and coordination among senior leaders through systematic tracking of and regular discussions about emerging flashpoints.
3	Decentralized information about potential flashpoints leads to lost opportunities for early intervention.	Create mechanisms for key staff to regularly elevate potential risk areas and proactively manage common flashpoints.

Source: EAB interviews and analysis.

Risk Management Practices Overlook Flashpoints

Risk Registers and Assessment Practices Do Not Account for Climate Incidents

Most institutions rigorously track and manage financial, operational, and compliance-related risks through a holistic risk management framework (e.g., enterprise risk management). However, reputational risks —especially climate flashpoints— are often left out of this process. As a result, most institutions are largely underprepared to proactively identify emerging reputational risks and mitigate their impact.

The lack of systematic risk management for flashpoints is particularly concerning because data shows that three of the five top emerging reputational risk areas are related to flashpoints: campus climate, sexual assault and Title IX, and student behaviors. Moreover, many senior leaders believe their institutions do not have the ability to withstand a major reputational risk event.

Flashpoints Are an Unfamiliar Risk Terrain

"Our campus has a well-oiled process for assessing and managing financial, operational, and compliance risks. But we are not there yet with respect to campus climate, in part because of who is and is not involved in risk discussions. We need to do a better in order to prepare for the next climate crisis."

Vice President for Student Life
Private University

54%

Of institutions believe they do not have the ability to withstand a major reputational risk event

Top Five Areas of Reputational Risk
United Educators, 2017

1. **Campus Climate**

2. **Sexual Assault and Title IX**

3. Academic Programs

4. **Student Behaviors**

5. Higher Ed's Business Model

Source: United Educators, ERM and Reputational Risk: More Talk Than Action?, 2017; EAB interviews and analysis.

Regularly Update Your Institution's Risk Register

Campus Risk Assessment Practices Should Integrate Flashpoints

Preparing for reputational risks requires proactive identification of potential campus flashpoints. As a campus leadership team, determine how your institution will identify, prioritize, and address potential flashpoints. First, EAB recommends regularly updating your institutional risk register to include flashpoints. Including flashpoints in your risk register will increase awareness of key reputational risk areas and promote early risk mitigation tactics.

Flashpoints Challenge Status Quo Risk Registers

Common Pitfall

Recommended Action

Narrow Content Focus

Most registers emphasize only financial, operational, and compliance risks, overlooking flashpoints

Update Your Risk Register

Include climate flashpoints and reputational risk areas as distinct risks

Limited Grading Framework

Registers assess only likelihood and impact of potential risks, downplaying the impact of reputational risk events

Upgrade Your Risk Grading Framework

Create mechanisms to assess velocity and preparedness to account for the rapidly evolving nature of climate flashpoints

Broad Range of Risks

Attempts to be comprehensive yield unwieldly lists of risks that span institutional, divisional, and unit risks

Prioritize Institutional Risks

Prioritize the risks most likely to impact your institution, not incident-specific risks that can be managed by individual units
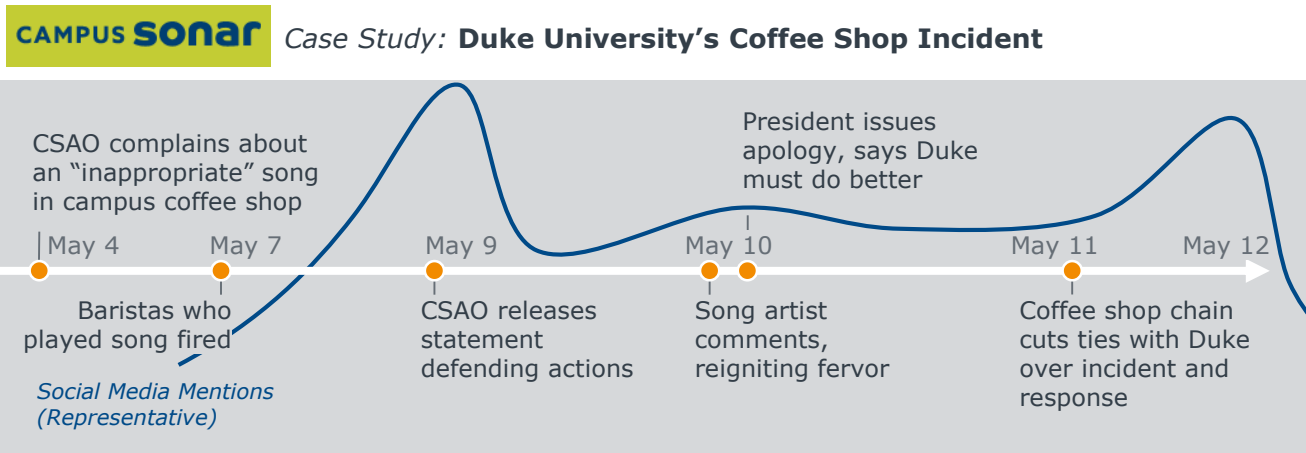
At the end of this white paper and at eab.com, you will find EAB's Climate Risk Compendium and Flashpoint Risk Grading Framework, which includes guidance on updating your risk register.

Static Risk Register Is Not Enough

Rapid Evolution of Flashpoints Requires Ongoing Risk Identification Online

Updating your institution's risk register to include climate flashpoints is an important first step. But given that most flashpoints develop very quickly online, institutions must also improve risk identification efforts on social media. On most campuses, social media monitoring is reactive and siloed across individual departments.

Progressive institutions recognize the need for continuous and centralized monitoring, as described by the concept of social listening, which generates actionable intel on specific topics or stories of interest. Social listening typically requires investment in an enterprise-level software platform that can be used to monitor developing stories related to the institution and size an ongoing crisis situation.

CAMPUS SONAR *Case Study:* **Duke University's Coffee Shop Incident**

CSAO complains about an "inappropriate" song in campus coffee shop

President issues apology, says Duke must do better

| May 4 | May 7 | May 9 | May 10 | May 11 | May 12 |

Baristas who played song fired

Social Media Mentions (Representative)

CSAO releases statement defending actions

Song artist comments, reigniting fervor

Coffee shop chain cuts ties with Duke over incident and response

Key Crisis Metrics

VOLUME	VOICE	SENTIMENT
2033% Increase in online mentions in the 10 days following the incident, compared to previous 10-day period	Actions by the coffee shop and rapper changed social conversation volume, trajectory, and sentiment over the course of the crisis	*Trending Hashtags* • #firemoneta • #firecoffey • #DismantleDukePlantation

Above is an illustration from Campus Sonar, a social listening agency for colleges and universities, of how social listening tactics might have informed Duke University's response to a flashpoint in spring 2018. Monitoring key metrics, such as volume, voice, and sentiment, allows institutions to identify potential risks earlier and deliver a proportional response throughout a developing situation.

EAB recommends institutions explore social listening capabilities to improve flashpoint identification and management. At eab.com, you can find resources on How to Address Climate Flashpoints and Crises Through Social Listening.

"What's Next?"

Under Preparation Stems From Inadequate Risk Awareness

Flashpoints can manifest in a number of forms, with no limit to what can cause a flare-up on campus. Everything from a viral social media post to a bias incident to a controversial speaker can escalate to a full-blown flashpoint. Persistent uncertainty around what will ignite makes flashpoint preparation difficult, as institutions feel overwhelmed by what to track and prioritize for preparation and mitigation efforts.

At most institutions, conversations about potential flashpoints are limited to incidents that are actively unfolding on campus. But this approach means institutions lose opportunities to prepare for potential incidents and pursue early mitigation tactics. Instead, colleges and universities should keep awareness of flashpoint risk areas at the forefront across the year.

What Will Ignite?

"We can have very different responses to incidents based on what the impact is on institutional reputation. But it is still **hard to read the tea leaves to determine when an incident on campus is going to catch the attention of media**."

Tanya Winegard, Vice Provost for Student Life
Creighton University

"There are hundreds of groups, each with their own agenda. We have dozens of speakers coming to campus every month. Everyone is on social media. **How can I prepare in advance when I'm not sure what will flare up next?"**

Dean of Students
Private College

Source: EAB interviews and analysis.
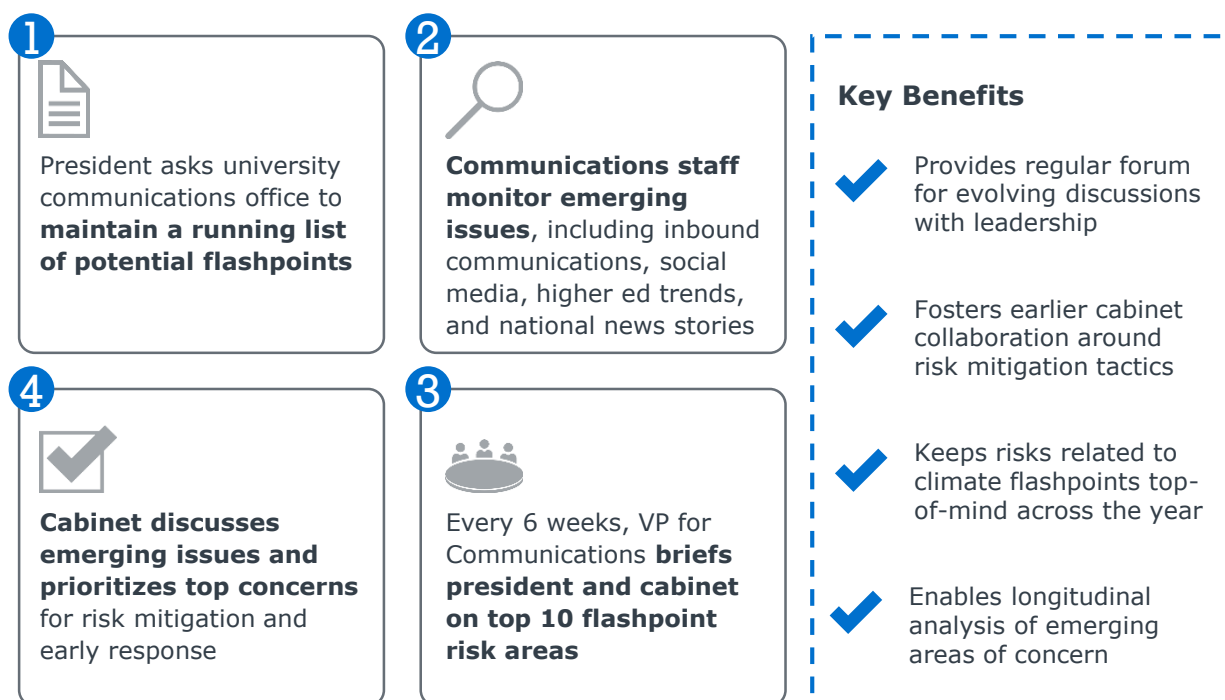
Conduct Proactive Risk Briefings

Strengthen Awareness of Potential Flashpoints for Senior Leaders

EAB recommends institutions continually monitor and discuss potential flashpoints to improve risk awareness among senior leaders and key staff. Heightened risk awareness leads to thorough risk preparation, opens opportunities for early risk mitigation, and enables faster responses when an incident arises on campus.

Proactive risk briefings ensure senior leaders are well-versed in climate-related risk areas before they escalate to full-blown flashpoints, as seen in the below case study from a public research university.

Proactive Risk Briefings Ensure Ongoing Awareness and Promote Early Action
Public Research University

1 President asks university communications office to **maintain a running list of potential flashpoints**

2 **Communications staff monitor emerging issues**, including inbound communications, social media, higher ed trends, and national news stories

4 **Cabinet discusses emerging issues and prioritizes top concerns** for risk mitigation and early response

3 Every 6 weeks, VP for Communications **briefs president and cabinet on top 10 flashpoint risk areas**

Key Benefits

✔ Provides regular forum for evolving discussions with leadership

✔ Fosters earlier cabinet collaboration around risk mitigation tactics

✔ Keeps risks related to climate flashpoints top-of-mind across the year

✔ Enables longitudinal analysis of emerging areas of concern

Proactive risk briefings ensure that senior leaders are aware of emerging issues that might escalate into full-blown flashpoints. Regular risk discussions about trending concerns fosters earlier collaboration and focuses preparation and mitigation tactics on the most pressing issues.

At the end of this white paper and at eab.com, you can access the Proactive Risk Briefing Guide for further guidance.

Source: EAB interviews and analysis.

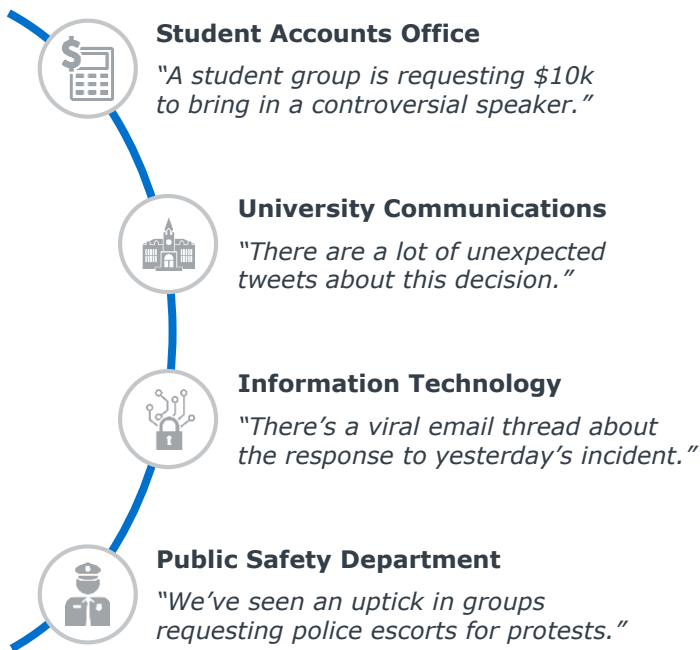# Decentralized Information Hinders Risk Mitigation

Key Intel Gets Lost Without Established Processes

Most risk elevation efforts depend on the right person knowing the right thing at the right time. On any given campus there are several opportunities for administrators, faculty, or staff to learn about risky scenarios. However, most campuses do not have a clear way for individuals to elevate potential flashpoints. This leaves institutions at a disadvantage because it limits opportunities for proactive planning and early risk mitigation tactics.

Ad Hoc Risk Elevation Falls Short

Many Offices Have Access to Potentially Important Information

Student Accounts Office
"A student group is requesting $10k to bring in a controversial speaker."

University Communications
"There are a lot of unexpected tweets about this decision."

Information Technology
"There's a viral email thread about the response to yesterday's incident."

Public Safety Department
"We've seen an uptick in groups requesting police escorts for protests."

But Uncertainty and Confusion Hinder Consistent Risk Elevation

? "I'm not sure that this matters… is it worth raising this with someone?"

? "Who should I tell? I'm not sure who handles this type of information."

? "How should I elevate this trend? There is not an easy way for me to do so."

! Actionable info gets lost without established expectations on when and how to elevate potential risks

eab.com

Gather Early Intel from Campus Partners

Create a Dedicated Space for In-Person Risk Discussions

EAB recommends institutions develop mechanisms that make it easy for stakeholders to elevate risks before they escalate to full-blown flashpoints. Early and consistent risk elevation allows for ongoing assessment of potential risks and coordinated early action to address emerging flashpoints.

The University of Miami's Campus Climate Committee is a standing forum for discussion among key staff about potential and emerging risk areas. Since its founding 20+ years ago, this committee has identified and helped address concerns on a variety of climate-related issues, including a lack of LGBTQ representation on campus and inadequate services for a growing population of veteran students.

University of Miami's Campus Climate Committee

Purpose
Keep pulse on climate and catch potential issues early

Membership
30 members from a wide variety of student affairs departments

Logistics
Six 90-minute meetings per year, with dates set well in advance to minimize conflicts

Structure
CSAO facilitates open discussion that promotes honest dialogue about emerging concerns

Set Agenda Composed of Three Simple Questions

1 How is my current work and initiatives affecting the campus climate for students?

2 Are there any issues that may disrupt the climate on campus?

3 Are there patterns or information that we all may need to address together?

"The Campus Climate Committee provides a lot of latitude for our team to **solve smaller problems before they become bigger problems**. Proactive communication is vital on a campus where things move so quickly. Through the committee's regular meetings and its backchannels, we are able to tackle potential issues early and find workable solutions."

Pat Whitely, Vice President for Student Affairs
University of Miami

At the end of this white paper and at eab.com, you can access the Climate Risk Team Development Guidelines for further guidance on creating a climate risk team.
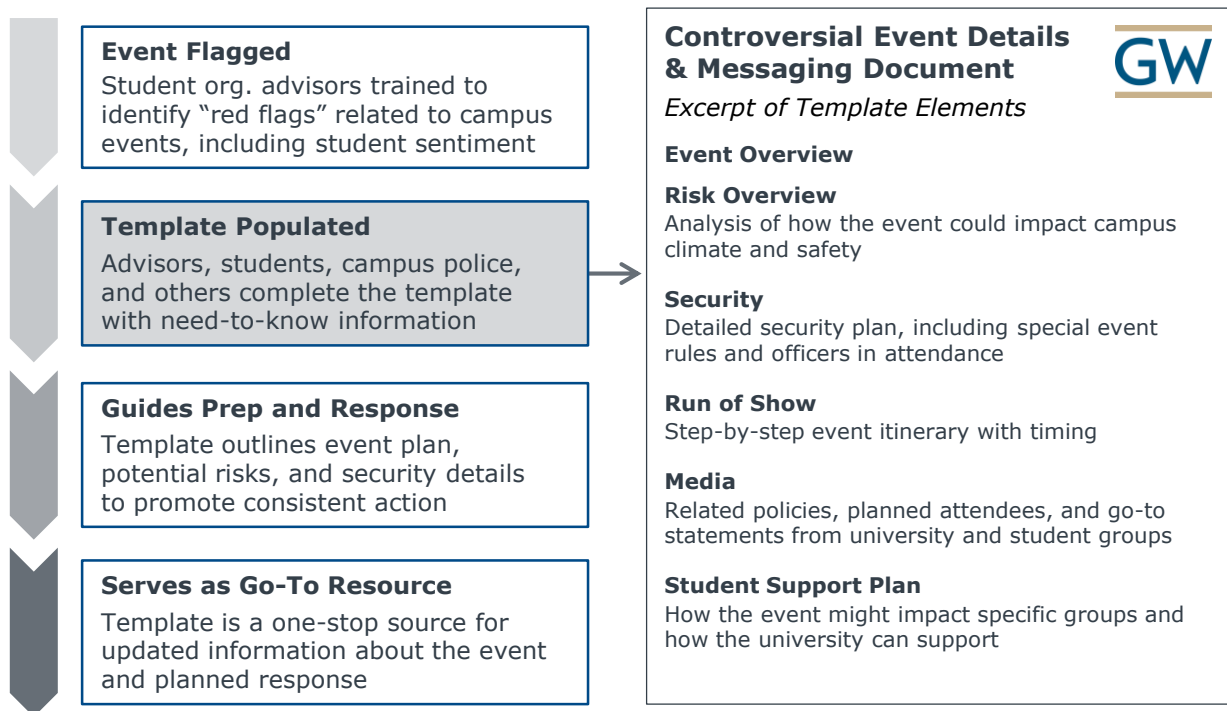
Make It Easy to Address Common Risks Early

Strengthen Campus Prep with Coordinated Information Sharing

Beyond ensuring awareness of key risk areas, EAB recommends that institutions proactively implement processes to mitigate or manage common risks. An increasingly common flashpoint occurs when potentially controversial speakers or events happen on campus. Responding to controversial speakers and events is a task that requires cross-campus collaboration, as illustrated by this example from George Washington University (GWU). As frontline staff flag potentially controversial events, they generate a shared document that outlines key information about the event and how the institution will respond.

George Washington University's Controversial Events Template[1]
How It Works

Event Flagged
Student org. advisors trained to identify "red flags" related to campus events, including student sentiment

Template Populated
Advisors, students, campus police, and others complete the template with need-to-know information

Guides Prep and Response
Template outlines event plan, potential risks, and security details to promote consistent action

Serves as Go-To Resource
Template is a one-stop source for updated information about the event and planned response

Controversial Event Details & Messaging Document

GW

Excerpt of Template Elements

Event Overview

Risk Overview
Analysis of how the event could impact campus climate and safety

Security
Detailed security plan, including special event rules and officers in attendance

Run of Show
Step-by-step event itinerary with timing

Media
Related policies, planned attendees, and go-to statements from university and student groups

Student Support Plan
How the event might impact specific groups and how the university can support

GWU creates about five event templates per semester for events such as controversial speakers, campus activities (e.g., Israeli Apartheid Week), and campus visits from politicians or government officials. This process promotes advance planning and consistent information, allowing the institution to streamline preparation and response efforts.

At the end of this white paper and at eab.com, you can access guidance on using a controversial events template and a customizable, ready-to-use template for your campus.

---

1) View the full text of George Washington University template in the Toolkit section.

Source: EAB interviews and analysis.

EAB

Toolkit

- Tool 1: Self-Audit: Flashpoint Risk Management
- Tool 2: Climate Risk Compendium
- Tool 3: Flashpoint Risk Grading Framework
- Tool 4: Proactive Risk Briefing Guide
- Tool 5: Climate Risk Team Development Guidelines
- Tool 6: Controversial Events Template

Self-Audit: Flashpoint Risk Management

How to Use This Tool

Colleges and universities continue to be surprised by campus climate flashpoints. Left unchecked or mis-addressed, flashpoints negatively impact the student experience, overwhelm staff and resources, and ultimately affect an institution's reputation and ability to make progress on key initiatives. Comprehensive risk management is essential to effective preparation and early mitigation.

As a leadership team, use these questions to guide your assessment and discussion of your institution's current approach identifying and addressing potential flashpoint risk areas. Through these questions, you can identify strengths and prioritize areas of improvement for your campus.

Rating Scale: 1) Never, 2) Rarely, 3) Sometimes, 4) Often, 5) Always

Key Questions	1	2	3	4	5
1. Do your institution's risk identification processes, including your risk register and social media monitoring strategy, address climate flashpoints?					
2. Does your institution's risk assessment framework consider how soon a risk will occur (i.e., velocity) or your institution's preparedness?					
3. Do senior leaders regularly discuss emerging risk areas as well as proactive strategies for risk mitigation and response coordination?					
4. Does your institution regularly solicit information about and address potential risks from diverse departments or divisions across campus?					
5. Do frontline staff have established processes to elevate potential risks and coordinate campus action on common flashpoints?					

Source: EAB interviews and analysis.

Climate Risk Compendium

Purpose of the Tool

Campus climate flashpoints pose significant risk to colleges and universities, yet most risk registers do not include these types of reputational risks. The lack of systematic risk management around climate flashpoints leaves institutions vulnerable to under preparation, missing opportunities for early risk mitigation, and slow or inadequate response strategies. EAB recommends institutions review their risk management processes, including the risk register, and integrate flashpoints in the institutional risk assessment and mitigation strategy.

How to Use This Tool

Use this compendium to assess your institution's risk register and identify any risk gaps that should be addressed in your institution's existing risk management policies and processes. In addition to the representative risks listed in this compendium, you should also consider risks that are specific to your institution's context and climate.

The Climate Risk Compendium is organized into two categories: **institutional risks** and **incident-specific risks**.

- **Institutional risks** refer to major risks that require campus wide preparation, set policies, and a holistic evaluation of response readiness. This compendium divides campus climate flashpoint risks into four key areas: 1) compliance, 2) reputation, 3) safety, and 4) finances.

- **Incident-specific risks** are isolated or recurring events that have an impact on the campus community and climate. Incident-specific risks do not pose an existential threat to the institution and typically fall within one of the identified institutional risks. This compendium divides examples of incident-specific risks into three main categories: 1) diversity and inclusion, 2) free speech, and 3) sexual misconduct.

Source: EAB interviews and analysis.

Climate Risk Compendium: Institutional Risks

Note: This compendium is organized into four key categories: compliance, reputation, safety, and finance. These categories occur in most university risk registers, but you might reorganize the specific risks to fit your institution's risk register and assessment framework.

Compliance: Compliance risks identify key laws and regulations to follow to avoid campus climate flashpoints. Compliance risks also include institutional policies, or a lack thereof.

Failure to meet state and/or federal laws

Perceived failure to comply beyond minimum requirements

Lack of and/or unclear guidelines and polices

Lack of services for key student groups

Reputation: Reputational risks identify institutional risks that pose a major threat to your institution's reputation. These risks can be perceived or actual.

Failure to promote an inclusive campus environment

Hiring policies

Enrollment policies

Institutional historical context and/or past flashpoint incidents

Increased incidents of sexual misconduct and/or hate incidents

Lack of content neutrality and/or political support or dissent

Conflicting views on support for academic freedom, free speech, and/or inclusion

Safety: Safety risks identify institutional risks that threaten the safety of students, faculty, and staff. In this context, all risks are climate-related.

Incidents of sexual misconduct, harassment, hate incidents, and/or bias incidents

Student, faculty, or staff involvement in a climate-related incidents

Campus demonstrations, protests, sit-ins, or rallies

Controversial events and speakers on campus

Finance: Finance risks identify institutional risks that threaten university operations, revenue, donations, and endowment.

Donor(s) rescinding high-dollar donation or support

Ongoing reputational damage from a single flashpoint

Enrollment declines from ongoing/recurring flashpoints and/or lasting reputational damage

Climate Risk Compendium: Incident-Specific Risks

Note: This compendium is organized into three key categories: diversity and inclusion, free speech, and sexual misconduct. Each category features representative climate risks, but this is not an exhaustive list. Each example risk relates to institutional risks on the previous page (i.e., compliance, reputation, safety, and finance).

Use these examples as guidance as your team compiles incident-specific risks related to your institution's specific context and prioritized institutional-level risks.

Diversity and Inclusion

Lack of multicultural center or LGBTQIA center

Controversy around affirmative action enrollment practices

Perceived lack of diverse hiring practices

Protests against Confederate statue on campus

High-dollar donation rescinded because institution renamed a building

Free Speech

Controversy around student-invited speaker

Censorship of professor for op-ed

Far right speaker invited to campus

Donor protests due to censorship of campus newspaper

Tenure-track professor loses job due to extra-professional activities

Sexual Misconduct

Lack of compliance with Title IX, Clery Act

Media story on university adjudication process of sexual harassment and assault

High-profile faculty member accused of sexual misconduct

Continued media references to previous sexual assault cases

Enrollment difficulties directly attributed to sexual assault scandal

Flashpoint Risk Grading Framework

Purpose of the Tool

Universities typically use two assessment metrics to evaluate risk: likelihood and impact. These traditional grading frameworks often do not include metrics that examine how soon a flashpoint risk might ignite and how prepared existing institutional policies are for the risk. EAB recommends institutions use two additional metrics to determine flashpoint risk priorities: velocity and preparedness.

How to Use This Tool

Use this risk grading framework to evaluate and prioritize institutional campus flashpoint risks. Consider the metrics in this grading framework and how they might supplement your existing framework in risk prioritization.

The following pages include an example risk calculation using the traditional and suggested grading frameworks. At eab.com, you can also download a ready-to-use template for risk evaluation to quickly grade flashpoint risks with the below framework.

Key Terms

Likelihood: Measures the chance a risk will occur/develop on campus

Impact: Measures the effect of the risk to campus operations, reputation, etc. if it occurs

Velocity: Measure of how soon a risk would occur/happen on campus

Preparedness: Measures efficacy of existing institutional controls on mitigation of a risk

Suggested Grading Scale

Your institution may use a set scale for risk evaluation metrics. If your team does not use a set scale, you can consider the following scale as a starting point:

Likelihood: Scale from **1 to 3**

- 1 is low/remote, 2 is moderate/possible, 3 is high/probable

Impact: Scale from **1 to 5**

- 1 is minor impact, 2 is moderate to low impact, 3 is substantial impact, 4 is severe impact, 5 is critical impact on operations

Velocity: Scale from **1 to 3**

- 1 is long-term, next 5-10 years, 2 is medium-term, next 2-4 years, 3 is near term/imminent, less than one year

Preparedness: Scale from **1 to 3**

- 1 is very prepared, existing institutional controls should suffice, 2 is moderately prepared, may need to develop new policies, 3 is unprepared, new policies and roles required

Sample Flashpoint Grading Risk Comparison

Hypothetical Risk Assessment
Traditional University Risk Assessment Metrics

Risk Name	Faculty Involved in Climate-Related Incident	Controversial Speaker on Campus
Likelihood *1= low, 3= high*	2	3
Impact *1= low, 5= high*	3	2
Risk Score *1= low, 15= high*	6	6
Outcome	The two flashpoint risks score equally. An institution might **deploy equal resources or spend critical time on both sets of risks.**	

Hypothetical Risk Assessment
Climate-Focused Risk Assessment Metrics

Risk Name	Faculty Involved in Climate-Related Incident	Controversial Speaker on Campus
Likelihood *1= low, 3= high*	2	3
Impact *1= low, 5= high*	3	2
Velocity *1= low, 3= high*	2	3
Preparedness *1= prepared, 3= unprepared*	2	2
Risk Score *1= low, 135= high*	24	36
Outcome	The risk framework with velocity and preparedness shows the **disparity in needed resources related to each risk.** The institution can better strategically focus on the more imminent concerns related to controversial speakers and proactively prepare for potential faculty incidents in the medium-term.	

Source: EAN interviews and analysis.

Proactive Risk Briefing Guide

Purpose of the Tool

Climate flashpoints are unpredictable, develop quickly, and have the potential to significantly disrupt campus operations if the institution is underprepared to respond. EAB recommends institutions continually monitor and discuss potential flashpoints to improve risk awareness among senior leaders and key staff. Heightened risk awareness leads to thorough risk preparation, opens opportunities for early risk mitigation, and enables faster responses when an incident arises on campus.

Use this tool to establish proactive risk briefings with campus leaders and other key staff.

Tool Elements

Flashpoint Identification Guide

Use this guide to develop a running list of potential flashpoints for risk briefing meetings. The provided guiding questions are meant to help your team determine which risks to keep an eye out and prepare for.

Risk Briefing Discussion Guide

Use these discussion questions to facilitate a conversation about emerging risks with senior campus leaders to identify key risk areas, next steps in preparation and response, and early mitigation tactics.

Risk Briefing Template

At eab.com, you can find a customizable, risk briefing template. This template can be used to prepare for briefings and track information about next steps. An excerpt is included in the following pages.

Flashpoint Identification Guide

How to Use This Guide

Consider these guiding questions as your team creates a list of 10-20 upcoming flashpoint risks to proactively prepare for at risk briefings.

1 What on-campus sources of information might we look at to predict emerging risk areas or potential flashpoints?

- ❑ Previous incidents at our institution
- ❑ Upcoming events in the next quarter/semester
- ❑ Upcoming speakers (e.g., commencement speaker, lecture series, political candidates)
- ❑ Institutional historical context (e.g., building names, statues)
- ❑ Key student populations (e.g., underrepresented students, underserved students, student political groups)
- ❑ Other:_____

2 What online sources of information might we look at to predict emerging risk areas or potential flashpoints?

- ❑ Facebook
- ❑ Twitter
- ❑ Instagram
- ❑ Other social media:_____

- ❑ Campus news outlets (e.g., newspapers, websites, blogs)
- ❑ Local news outlets
- ❑ Statewide news outlets
- ❑ National news outlets

3 What off-campus sources of information might we look at to predict emerging risk areas or potential flashpoints?

- ❑ Previous flashpoint at peer institutions
- ❑ Political and social movements in the media (e.g., Me Too, Black Lives Matter)
- ❑ Local happenings (e.g., local elections, city council meetings)
- ❑ Other:_____

4 What overarching themes are present in these risks?

- ❑ Bias incidents
- ❑ Discrimination
- ❑ Diversity and inclusion
- ❑ Free speech
- ❑ Sexual harassment and/or misconduct
- ❑ Other:_____

Source: EAB interviews and analysis.

Risk Briefing Discussion Guide

Discussion Questions

1. What are the common themes across these emerging risk areas? Consider primary parties involved, issue areas, or types of concern.

2. Which emerging risk areas relate to flashpoints we've previously experienced on campus? Which emerging risks are new to our campus community?

3. As a senior leadership team, how should we continue to monitor these emerging risk areas? Beyond this group, who else on campus should be informed about these risks?

4. How will we know if this risk becomes more significant or immediate for our campus? Who should monitor this risk and update this group as needed?

5. How should we act now to prepare for or mitigate potential flashpoints related to this risk area?

Briefing Template

Use the below template example and the ready-made template on eab.com to plan response strategies for each identified flashpoint. Fill out the first five rows prior to cabinet discussions and complete the final four as a group during the flashpoint debrief.

Potential Flashpoint	Upcoming speaker series, sponsored by a liberal-leaning student organization and faculty sponsor
Type	Free speech
Key Groups	Students; Faculty/Staff
Overview	Speaker series includes at least two well-known speakers: a current political candidate and a popular liberal activist
Key Facts	Events will be hosted in campus auditorium; security details are limited at this time; at least one protest is being planned so far
Mitigation Strategy	Assess need for further security and advance messaging about venue rules (e.g., sign requirements)
Response Required?	Yes
Key Internal Stakeholders	Vice President for Student Affairs, Student Activities Director, Faculty Sponsor
Review Date	Assess updated plan one week before each event

Climate Risk Team Development Guidelines

How to Use This Tool

EAB recommends schools mechanize upward risk updates through a climate risk team. Use a climate risk team to quickly identify and address emerging flashpoints before they ignite and keep a pulse on campus sentiment. See the profile of the University of Miami team for inspiration and use these steps to establish your own team.

Determine a Sponsor

Senior-level support lends credibility and value to risk identification efforts. Sponsors should attend meetings, facilitate discussions, and share ongoing progress with the broader campus.

Common sponsors include chief student affairs officers for divisionally-centered teams and presidents for institutionally-centered teams. Your institution's specific culture and context will determine the best sponsor for your climate risk team.

Define a Clear Scope

Set a scope that leads to clear priorities, manageable meetings, and actionable solutions. Will your team be divisionally or institutionally focused? Will your team focus exclusively on students' climate concerns or will it also address concerns with faculty and staff? What elements of climate will your team address? Consider questions like these as well as other teams on campus, available resources, and your goals for this team.

Determine Team Composition

Include members from a range of departments. Consider the seniority level of most team members and whether or not you'll allow departments to nominate members.

For a divisionally-focused team, suggested members might include representatives from housing and residence life, student activities, identity-based centers, student union, career services, student conduct, and the counseling center. For an institutionally-focused team, suggested members might also include university communications, chief diversity officer, vice presidents, and the university's general counsel.

Set Meeting Frequency

Choose a meeting frequency and length that maintains participants' interest, ensures enough time for discussion, and allows for follow-up work to be completed between gatherings. Consider the size of your climate risk team in choosing meeting frequency, as larger teams may require meetings set further in advance to minimize conflicts.

Set Meeting Agenda

Use a set meeting agenda with standard questions to reduce preparation and incentivize participation from committee members. Consider open questions about trending issues with students, patterns of information that require divisional or institutional attention, and how current initiatives or upcoming decisions may disrupt the climate on campus.

Assign Post-Meeting Responsibilities

Consider who will follow-up on action items from the meeting. Ensure that progress will be communicated with the team and broader campus as needed.

Source: EAB interviews and analysis.

Controversial Events Template

Purpose of the Tool

Controversial speakers and events are common flashpoints on campus. Managing the institutional response to these events can be challenging because information is decentralized and may not be elevated to someone who can act. This tool provides a formal mechanism to use with campus partners to elevate controversial speakers/events and promote coordinated, early planning.

Tool Elements

Discussion Questions

Use the following discussion questions with colleagues to establish a process for flagging potentially controversial speakers and events, populating the template, and sharing information across campus.

GWU's Controversial Event Details & Messaging Document Template

The original document from GWU is included on the following pages. Use this template as an example to guide discussions around formalizing risk mechanisms at your institutions.

Customizable Template

On eab.com, you can download and customize a Word version of the template to adapt for your institution.

Discussion Questions

Flagging Potential Events

- Who has access to information about potentially controversial speakers and events?
  Consider speakers and events hosted by student groups, faculty and staff, and third-party organizations.

- What types of "red flags" should staff watch for when keeping an eye on events and speakers?
  Consider hot topics in the news, political speakers or events, and previous events that have led to controversy.

Raising Awareness

- How should staff elevate information about potentially controversial speakers and events?

- Which staff member(s) will be responsible for deciding when an event warrants cross-campus preparation?

Populating and Updating the Document

- Who will populate the document?
  Consider university communications, public safety, staff who work with student groups, and students themselves.

- Which stakeholders hold decision-making power around university-response and/or security?

Access and Utilization

- Where will the document be housed? Online? How will users access it?

- Who will be able to access the document? Who will decide?

Controversial Events Template (cont.)

The George Washington University, Center for Student Engagement

Controversial Event Details & Messaging Document Template

Event Details:
- Event name
- Hosting Organization/Department
- Event Date
- Event Time
- Event Location
- Venue Capacity
- Event website/Facebook page

Event Overview

Brief description of event and purpose

Risk Overview

Brief overview of concerns associated with event. Some questions to consider:
- Is there a potential for protest?
- Is there triggering content?
- Have there been concerns expressed by community members?
- What is the current 'vibe' regarding this event on GW's social media channels and word of mouth (are students angry, indifferent, etc.) What have you heard? What have the student organizers heard?
- Are there concerns related to crowd control?
- Are there concerns about attendees (public or student)?
- Are there concerns related to student mental wellness?

On-Site Staff/Organization Contacts

Include staff advisor and student organization contacts (including president, event planner, and press contact, if applicable)

Access and Ticketing:

Describe how access to the event will be managed (a ticketing system is generally recommended to provide a more accurate idea of how many will be in attendance):
- If tickets are required to attend – how are tickets being distributed, who can acquire tickets, how will tickets be checked at the door, how many tickets have been sold?
- If tickets are not required – how will entry be managed, how many attendees are anticipated?
- Line control/ID-check plan (if GWorld only)

Controversial Events Template (cont.)

Security:

Detail security plan.

- How many officers (and what type of officers – GWPD or CSC)
- Any posted rules/policies for event (no bags, no signs, etc.)
- Will officers be doing bag checks?
- What conversations have already occurred/will occur with GWPD to prepare for the event?
- Is the speaker or performer bringing their own security?

Run of Show:

Provide a time-based run-of-show, beginning with set up and including times for doors opening and doors closing.

Media:

Provide information related to media attendance and related policies for the event, including what media are permitted to do and if there will be a separate space/check-in for media.

Student Organization Statement Regarding Event

Work with the hosting organization to craft a statement regarding the event – this should be their standard language they use to promote the event and/or address concerns, if applicable.

University Statement About Event

[confirm with media relations, but typically it is something such as the following] The George Washington University has more than 450 registered student organizations, which can host campus events in accordance with university policies and procedures. The university supports the rights of individuals to express their opinions even when the speaker is controversial. The presentation of an event such as this implies no endorsement of the speaker's views.

Media Attending

Other Relevant Details

Include if applicable. This could include information related to speaker hospitality, non GW guests in attendance, involvement/potential involvement of other student organizations, or a summary of administrative conversations that have occurred.

Student Support Plan

- What is the plan for student support following the event?
- Is there a need for CAPS staff at the event?
- Have CARE reports been submitted, if necessary?
- Which populations/organizations of students might be impacted by the event?

Questions? Contact Anne Graham – awein@gwu.edu

How EAB Can Help

Research and Resources to Guide Your Next Steps

To equip institutions with the information they need to better prepare for and manage climate flashpoints, EAB offers several white papers, tools, on-demand webinars, and more. Members can access, download, and order hardcopies of these and related resources at eab.com.

Selected Resources from EAB

Improving Institutional Preparation and Response

Addressing Campus Climate Flashpoints: A Briefing for Institutional Leaders

How to Use Social Listening for Climate Flashpoints and Crises

Prep Pack: Case Study Compendium and Resources (*Forthcoming, 2019*)

Managing Free Speech Issues

Free Speech Policy Audit and Compendium

How to Educate and Engage Today's Student Activists

Strategies for Responding to Bias-Related Incidents

Building Stakeholder Awareness on Campus

Cabinet Briefing: Navigating the New Wave of Student Activism

Student Unrest: What Advancement Leaders Need to Know

Strategic Communication to Mitigate the Enrollment Impact of Campus Climate Crises (*Forthcoming, 2019*)

Student Affairs Forum

Project Director

Murphy Donohue

Contributing Consultants

Hailey Badger
Liz Brown
Lindsay Kubaryk
Alexander Polyak

Managing Director

Liz Rothenberg, PhD