EAB

Addressing Campus Climate Flashpoints

A Briefing for Senior Institutional Leaders

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 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.

Climate flashpoints have adverse near and long-term impacts on both institutions and individuals.

The stakes are high when responding to climate flashpoints. Under preparation or mismanaging the response can carry significant consequences. 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. Despite years of practice, institutions still struggle to adequately prepare for and respond to climate flashpoints and mitigate these negative impacts on campus.

Higher education is not unique in experiencing climate flashpoints, as they increasingly impact businesses and other organizations.

Colleges and universities are not the only entities experiencing flashpoints today. Many of these same issues are unfolding across the public and private sectors. Flashpoints around diversity and inclusion, sexual misconduct, and free speech regularly impact prominent businesses and organizations. These events generate significant media coverage and ongoing conversations about the 'best' ways for institutions and organizations to respond to flashpoints as they emerge.

Overlapping issues and changing norms are raising the bar for how institutions respond to climate flashpoints on campus.

Today, students and other stakeholders expect rapid actions that are consistent with their values and address the broader context of an issue, not just the incident at hand. Businesses and organizations outside of higher ed often have greater flexibility when responding to climate flashpoints, resulting in responses that are quick, comprehensive, and ongoing. This can be a challenging standard for most colleges and universities to meet, given higher ed's slow decision-making processes and consensus-driven attitude toward governance.

Effectively managing climate flashpoints is a campus-wide priority that requires advance discussion and planning among senior leaders.

While student affairs, campus safety, and/or university communications may take the lead in responding to a particular incident, it is critical that all senior institutional leaders have a baseline understanding of the current flashpoint landscape. Effectively addressing climate flashpoints is an institution-wide challenge that requires thoughtful preparation and discussion long before an incident ever takes place.

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Executive Summary (cont.)

RECOMMENDATION #1

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

Most institutions rigorously track and manage financial, operational, and compliance-related risks. However, reputational risks – especially climate flashpoints – are largely overlooked, resulting in institutional under-preparation. Integrating these risks into your institution's risk register and online risk monitoring strategy prompts earlier action to mitigate the impact of flashpoints.

RECOMMENDATION #2

Create mechanisms to consistently elevate and discuss potential 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.

RECOMMENDATION #3

Develop a dedicated team to structure and coordinate the campus response.

Institutions often depend on existing relationships to manage flashpoints, but this is increasingly insufficient due to high turnover rates among leadership and the scope and expertise of existing teams. A dedicated team ensures your institution has the structure, oversight, and processes to rapidly and holistically respond to emerging flashpoints.

RECOMMENDATION #4

Set clear expectations on when and how you will respond to flashpoints.

One of the most vexing questions institutions face is whether to respond to a given flashpoint. Institutions are increasingly grappling with complex social issues that do not have a clear 'right' answer and today's charged political climate makes it difficult to issue an innocuous response. A clear, pre-set response framework can expedite decision-making about when and how senior leaders should respond to flashpoints and help students, alumni, and other key stakeholders understand when to expect a senior-level response.

RECOMMENDATION #5

Establish sustainable structures to address the broader context of flashpoints.

All too often, colleges and universities respond to the immediate incident but fail to address the broader context on campus. Responding to the incident at hand is often time-consuming and it can be difficult to make and communicate progress on the systemic issues related to common flashpoints. Dedicated and flexible campus initiatives to address emerging concerns and communicate progress on longer-term initiatives are key to successfully managing flashpoints.

No Shortage of Climate Flashpoints

Institutions Continue to Face an Endless Stream of Incidents

Climate flashpoints continue to be common across all types of colleges and universities. Flashpoints span a wide range of issues, including everything from bias-related speech or actions, sexual misconduct, or controversy about speakers invited to campus. These events and incidents are largely unpredictable and can originate from many different actors, including institutions themselves, third-party organizations or activists, and faculty, staff, or students.

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.

Higher Ed Is Not In a Vacuum

Public and Private Sectors Are Also Experiencing Climate Flashpoints

Colleges and universities are not the only entities experiencing flashpoints today. Many of these same issues are unfolding across the public and private sectors. Flashpoints around diversity and inclusion, sexual misconduct, and free speech are affecting some of the most well-known brands today.

Increasingly, students, alumni, and other stakeholders are comparing responses from their institution and the companies they frequent. This comparison raises the bar on what constitutes an adequate response.

Flashpoints Are Increasingly Common Outside of Higher Ed

Uber Executive Resigns After Race Discrimination Probe

-BBC, 2018

NBC News fires Matt Lauer After Sexual Misconduct Review

-NBC, 2017

Facebook's Free Speech Problem Is Bigger Than Alex Jones

-The New Republic, 2018

Silicon Valley's Diversity Problem Is Its Achilles Heel

-CNBC, 2018

America's Problems with Race Start (But Don't End) At Your Starbucks Bathroom

-Chicago Tribune, 2018

Judge Allows 2,300 Women To Proceed With Gender Bias Lawsuit Against

Alaska Airlines Panned After Gay Couple Had To Give Up Seats

-NPR, 2017

H&M Slammed As Racist

Pixar's John Lasseter To Leave Disney Follo Sexual Harassment Complaints

Chick-fil-A's Canadian Expansion Sparks Pro-

2018

L.A. Fitness Says Employees Accused Of Harassing Two

Racism For Skin-Lightening Cream

tbed for Racist Behavior,' Worker Claims in Suit

"The challenges we are seeing on campus – the #MeToo movement, conflicting views on free and inclusive speech, lack of diversity in our staff – are the same ones that everyone watches play out in Silicon Valley, Washington, and everywhere else. **Students are judging us against them. This comparison raises the bar on what constitutes an adequate response.**"

President, Public University
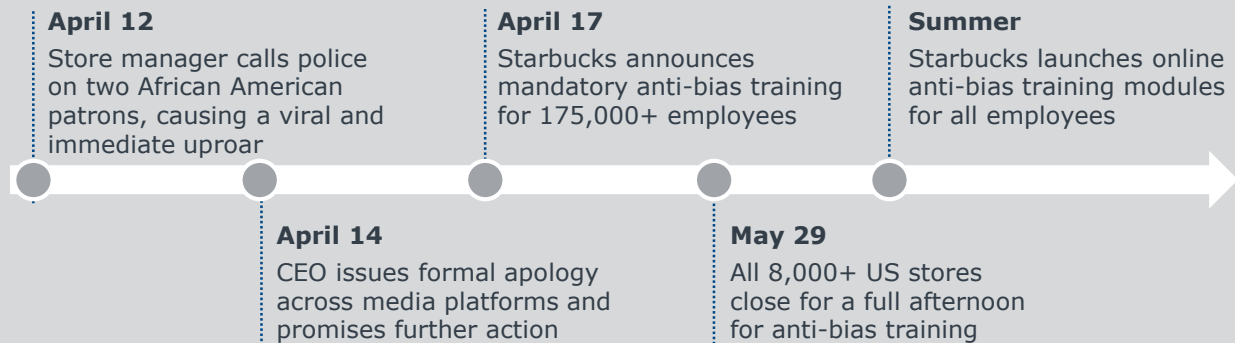
Source: EAB interviews and analysis.

A New Gold Standard Is Emerging

Rapid and Thorough Responses from Companies are Setting a New Standard

Businesses and other organizations often have greater flexibility when responding to climate flashpoints, resulting in responses that are quick, comprehensive, and ongoing. For example, when Starbucks experienced a high-profile bias incident in spring 2018, the company issued a quick and thorough response and took immediate action to address the incident itself as well as the broader context of bias in the workplace.

Case In Brief: Climate Flashpoint at Starbucks

Timeline of Key Events, 2018

April 12
Store manager calls police on two African American patrons, causing a viral and immediate uproar

April 17
Starbucks announces mandatory anti-bias training for 175,000+ employees

Summer
Starbucks launches online anti-bias training modules for all employees

April 14
CEO issues formal apology across media platforms and promises further action

May 29
All 8,000+ US stores close for a full afternoon for anti-bias training

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What Starbucks Got Right

✓ **Swift apology** from senior leadership took full accountability for the incident

✓ Transparent follow-up actions resolved the incident and **addressed underlying concerns**

✓ Continued emphasis on anti-bias and diversity efforts **underscore commitment and values**

This case is just one example of an emerging gold standard for how entities – including colleges and universities – should respond to flashpoints on campus. Meeting this standard, however, can be a challenging bar for most colleges and universities, given higher ed's slow decision-making processes and consensus-driven attitude toward governance.

Source: Rick Kelly, "The Starbucks Incident: A Crisis Management Case Study," Bernstein Crisis Management, 2018; EAB interviews and analysis.

A Higher Bar for Doing Right

Overlapping Issues and Changing Norms Heighten Students' Expectations

Increasingly, today's students, notably millennials and Generation Z, expect the businesses and other organizations they support to demonstrate values consistent with their own. These attitudes carry over to what students expect from their university, particularly around managing climate flashpoints.

The Purpose-Driven Generation: What Millennials and Gen Z Want		Implications for Flashpoint Management on Campus
1 in 2		
Customers will pay more for a product or brand known for it's social value or community commitment	➡	Today's students want institutions with missions and actions that are **consistent with their values**
72%		
Of Gen Z'ers want to see their employers supporting racial equality	➡	Today's students are **socially aware;** they want their institution to make ongoing progress on systemic issues
39%		
Of millennials feel that businesses' top priority should be to improve society	➡	Institutions are expected to go beyond traditional boundaries **to address concerns in society at-large**

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"We Know the Stakes Are High"

Near and Long-Term Impacts Affect Institutions and Individuals

Most institutions recognize the stakes are high when responding to climate flashpoints. In the near term, consequences include heightened activism, media scrutiny, and an all-out scramble as campus leaders piece together information and an appropriate response.

Flashpoints can also have a long-term impact with reverberating repercussions, such as changing students' experiences or lasting media coverage, which can lead to lingering reputational damage and effects on enrollment.

The increased volume of flashpoints on campus can also make it difficult for institutions to stay focused on longer-term strategic initiatives as campuses grapple with increased turnover among senior leadership, staff burnout, and the constant pivoting from one crisis to the next.

Media Coverage Can Continue for Years...
University of California, Davis's 2011 Pepper Spray Incident

Factual reporting occurs in the immediate aftermath	→	**Analysis of stakeholder reactions soon follows**	→	**Crises resurface long after the initial incident**
HUFFPOST		The New York Times		The Washington Post
November 19, 2011		November 22, 2011		August 9, 2016
UC Davis Police Pepper-Spray Seated Students In Occupy Dispute		*Pepper Spray's Fallout, From Crowd Control to Mocking Images*		*UC Davis Chancellor Resigns After Pepper-Spray Scandal*

..And Can Have an Extended Impact on Campus
Sizing the Reputational Impact of Baylor University's 2015 Sexual Assault Case

87% Of parents recalled Baylor's failure to respond to a pattern of sexual assault **two years after the incident**

4.4% Estimated **drop in yield at Baylor** as a result of media coverage

How to Navigate Common Failure Paths

Five Insights to Improve Preparation and Response for Climate Flashpoints

With the continued scrutiny and heightened expectations, there are still many open questions on how to best prepare for and manage flashpoints on campus.

Through our conversations with senior leaders, EAB identified five failure paths that hinder institutional responses across higher ed. The following pages provide an overview of each failure path as well as recommendations and case examples of how institutions are overcoming these challenges. Regardless of your institution's experience with flashpoints, EAB recommends that senior leaders proactively discuss these failure paths as part of developing and/or refining your institution's preparation and response strategy.

Five Common Failure Paths	Recommendations from EAB
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 Decentralized information about potential flashpoints means institutions lose opportunities to intervene early.	Create mechanisms to consistently elevate and discuss potential flashpoints.
3 Existing relationships are sufficient for responding to campus flashpoints.	Develop a dedicated team to structure and coordinate the campus response.
4 It is unclear when institutions should respond to flashpoints.	Set clear expectations on when and how you will respond to flashpoints, on and off campus.
5 Institutions address the immediate incident, but not the broader context.	Establish sustainable structures to address the broader context of campus flashpoints.

Risk Identification Practices Overlook Flashpoints

Climate-Related Risks Are a Continuing Blind Spot

Currently most institutions rigorously track and manage financial, operational, and compliance-related risks. However, reputational risks-especially climate flashpoints-are largely overlooked. Traditional risk management offices generally do not have the expertise to identify, prioritize, and address reputational risks because of the unfamiliar and rapidly shifting terrain.

This gap is particularly concerning because many colleges and universities believe they do not have the ability to withstand a major reputational risk event. 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. Institutions largely feel underprepared for these risks.

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

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

Range of Risk Altitudes

Attempts at being 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
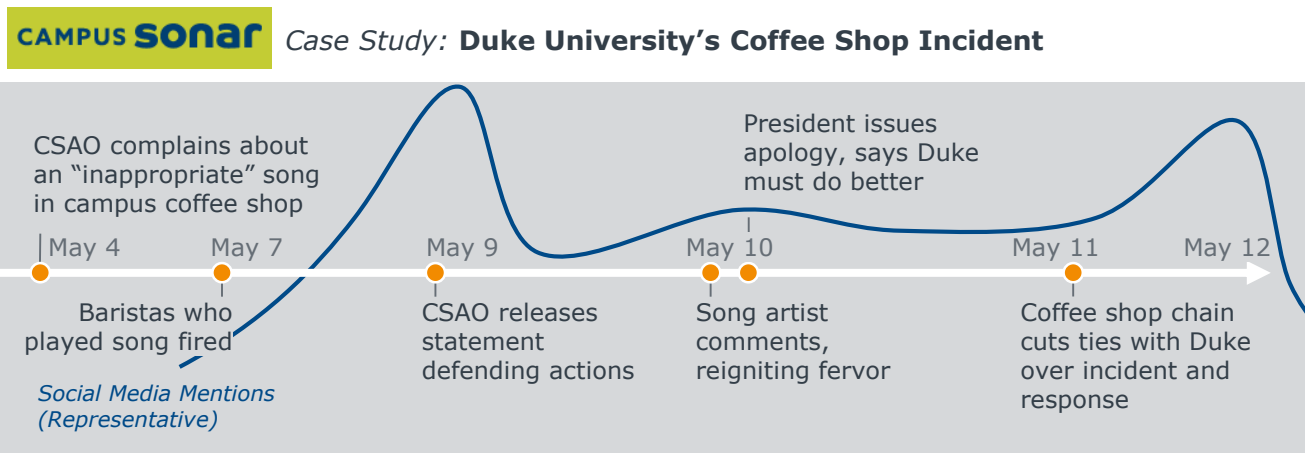
At the end of this briefing, you can find more information about EAB's Climate Flashpoint Risk Identification and Assessment Toolkit. This toolkit will provides recommended practices, tools, and templates for identifying and managing flashpoint risks on campus.

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.

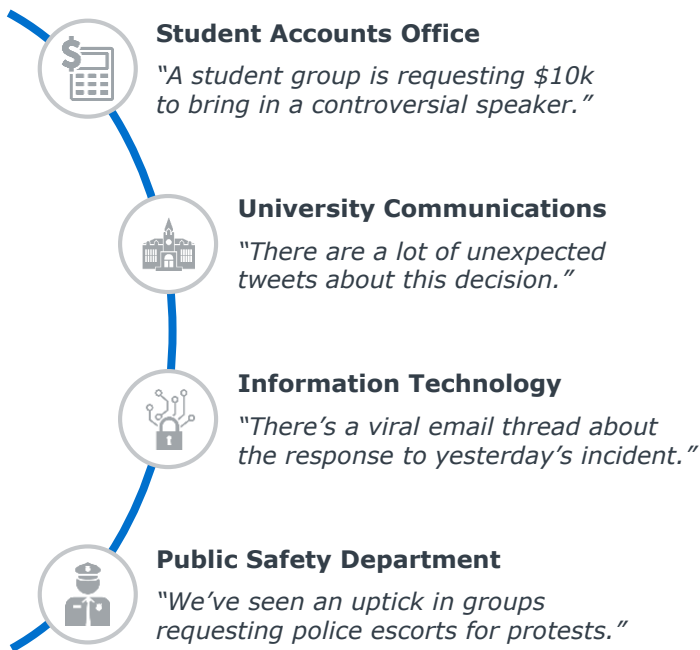# Decentralized Information Hinders Risk Mitigation

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 instances where administrators, faculty, or staff may 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

Source: EAB interviews and analysis.
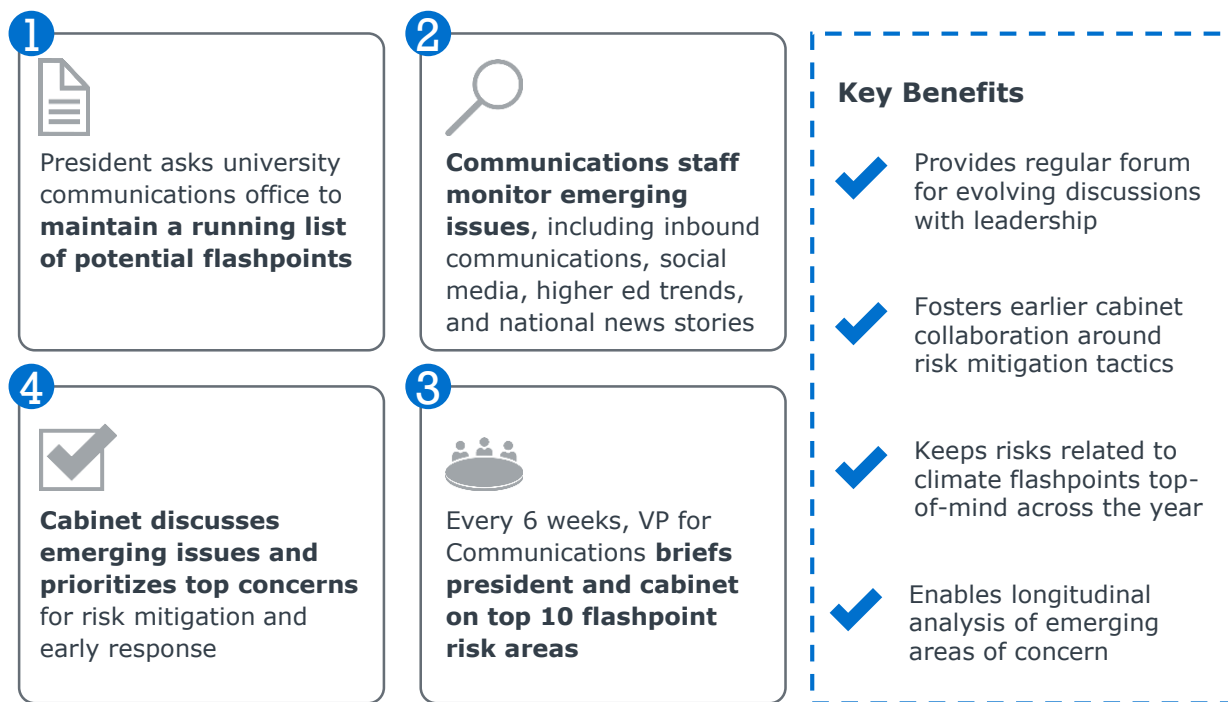
Mechanize Upward Risk Updates

Strengthen Awareness of Potential Flashpoints for Senior Leaders

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.

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

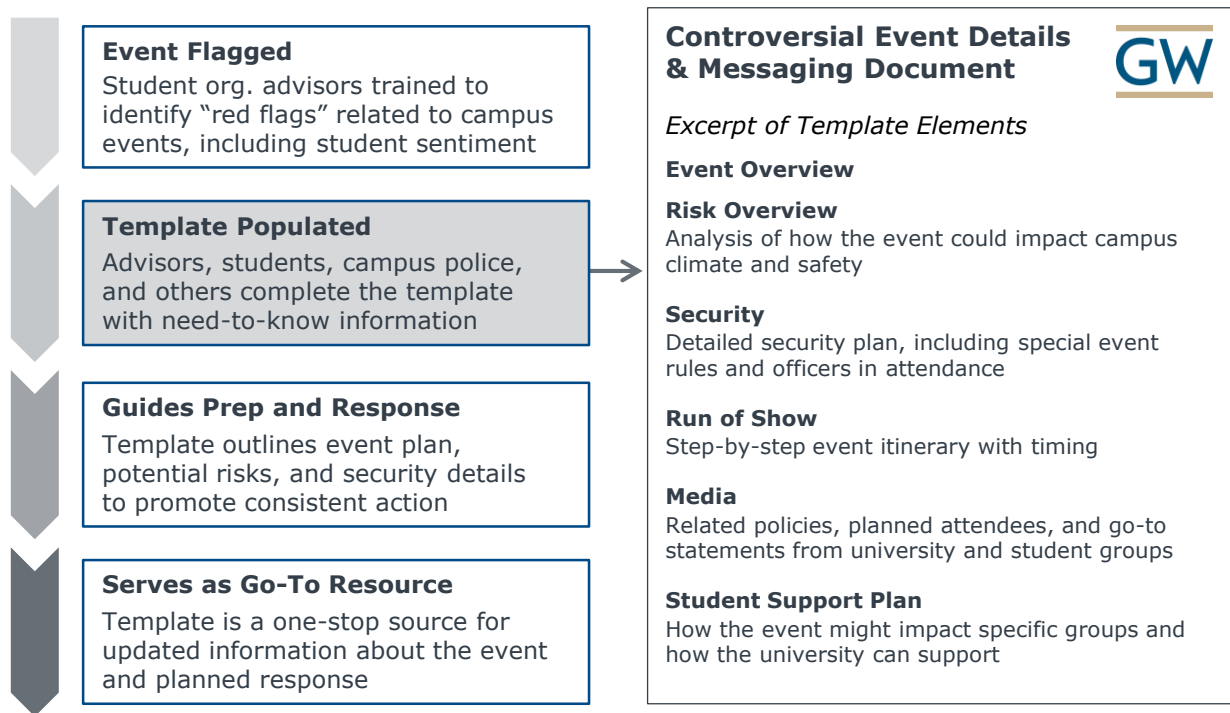Source: EAB interviews and analysis.

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 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.

1) View the full template from George Washington University in the Appendix.

Source: EAB interviews and analysis.

Status Quo Is Not Sufficient for Managing Flashpoints

Two Common Approaches Do Not Promote Quick and Consistent Responses

Systematic preparation for potential flashpoints is cumbersome and time consuming. As a result, many institutions are not fully prepared for climate flashpoints on campus.

First, high turnover rates among senior leadership exacerbates challenges associated with under preparation. Institutional memory disappears as long-time leaders turnover and new leaders learn campus norms and processes, resulting in unclear expectations, slow decision-making, and disorganized responses. Second, existing response teams on campus often fall short in scope, skill, or expertise required to size and respond to flashpoints. Flashpoints require campus-wide coordination and preparation.

Strong Relationships and Existing Teams Fall Short

APPROACH #1
Relationship-Based Response

1 in 5
Chance that president, provost, and CSAO overlap at an institution for 4 years

Preparation Falls by Wayside As People Assume Relationships Will Suffice

- ✖ Assumption that primary actors will remain constant year over year

- ✖ Lack of formal protocols because everything is based on conversations

- ✖ Belief that strong relationships result in quickly coordinated action

- ✖ Unrealistic expectation that preparation will happen when there is leftover time

APPROACH #2
No New Team Required

"We already have so many related teams and task forces…do we really need one more?"

Existing Teams Do Not Have the Appropriate Scope, Skill, or Expertise

Emergency Management Teams are focused on campus safety and tactical response for true emergencies (e.g., natural disasters)

Behavioral Intervention Teams are focused on student behaviors and impact on campus community

Climate Taskforce matches in subject matter expertise, but often lacks senior perspective and tactical expertise

Create a Dedicated Flashpoint Strike Force

Set a Specific Charter and Flexible Structure to Enable Agile Responses

Effectively addressing climate flashpoints is an institution-wide challenge that requires thoughtful preparation and discussion long before a flashpoint ever takes place. Campus leaders must develop a dedicated strike force to respond to these types of events on campus. The specific scope, membership, and processes for your team will likely depend on your institution's unique culture, existing teams and taskforces, as well as the interests and skills of key campus leaders. Consider these recommendations for assembling a strike force on your campus.

How to Assemble a Strike Force

STEP 1
Determine Scope
Clarify Responsibilities

- Communications vs. tactical operations
- Specify how this group interacts with existing teams and departments
- Determine meeting frequency

STEP 2
Identify Membership
Delineate Tiers

- Tier 1: Core members who are always activated in flashpoint situations
- Tier 2: Unit-level designees and/or subject matter experts who are activated as needed

STEP 3
Define Roles
Assign Ownership for Next Steps

- Who does what as a crisis unfolds?
- Who has final sign-off authority?
- What terrain is each member responsible for?

Key Elements

✔ Define specific parameters for when the team is activated – and when they are not

✔ Educate campus and address expectations about team scope and responsibilities

✔ Establish internal and external communication channels to receive and disseminate information

Source: EAB interviews and analysis.

"Should We Respond?"

Lack of Clarity and Varying Perspectives on When and How to Respond

One of the most vexing questions institutions face is whether to respond to any given flashpoint, on or off campus. Institutions are increasingly grappling with complex social issues that do not have a clear 'right' answer and today's charged political climate makes it difficult to issue an innocuous response.

Currently there are varying perspectives on the ideal moral reach of institutional leadership, particularly when it comes to political or controversial issues. Many share the aspiration that today's presidents are moral leaders of their institutions, or even communities at large. However, this can be challenging as leaders are often left making case-by-case judgment calls on when and how to respond to flashpoints, leading to slow and inconsistent responses across issues.

Presidents Split on Speaking Out About Political Issues

Inside Higher Ed, 2018 Presidents Survey

55% Of presidents reported **speaking out more on political issues** in 2017 than they typically do

54% Of presidents said they intend to **speak out more about issues beyond those directly affecting their college**

"

Aspiration Shared by Many...

"I believe the president is a moral leader of the university... I know it's difficult, but I'd like them to be more bold about standing up for the values the campus espouses."

Mark Yudof
Former College President

...But Difficult in Execution

"Presidents find themselves having to make such judgment calls all the time and in turn they are judged by the quality of those judgments."

Anonymous
Former College President

"

Source: Doug Lederman, "Leading in Turbulent Times: A Survey of Presidents," *Inside Higher* Ed, March 9, 2018; Marjorie Valbrun, "Walking a Tightrope on Controversial Speakers," *Inside Higher Ed*, May 16, 2018; EAB interviews and analysis.

Clarify When the Institution Will Respond

Set Expectations Before a Flashpoint Arises, On or Off Campus

Institutions must set clear expectations on when and how they will respond to flashpoints, in advance of a particular incident or event. For example, the University of Maine System uses a stoplight framework to simplify decision-making about when and how senior leaders should respond to controversial issues that directly, indirectly, or do not relate to the institutions' missions and operations. This straightforward response framework helps students, alumni, and other key stakeholders understand when to expect a senior-level response.

Stoplight Policy Framework[1] Guides Chancellor and Presidents and Simplifies Decision Making for Institutional Statements

	Category	Sample Issues	Process
GREEN ZONE *Mission Critical*	Directly impacts the institution and community	Institutional finances; student and employee health and safety	Chancellor and presidents can freely issue a statement
YELLOW ZONE *Mission Indirect*	Does not directly impact the mission and institution	Immigration policy; labor standards	Time permitting, chancellor and presidents should consult with rapid advisory committee
RED ZONE *Mission Unrelated*	Unrelated to the university's mission or financial stability	Political events; state and federal policies not related to the university	Chancellor and presidents should generally avoid making statements on these topics

1) View the full policy text from the University of Maine System in the Appendix.

Incident-Only Response Is No Longer Enough

Institutions Face More Pressure to Address the Broader Context

All too often, colleges and universities respond to the immediate incident but fail to address the broader context on campus. Responding to the incident at hand is often time-consuming and it can be difficult to structure an ongoing response or longer-term strategy to manage related concerns. Increasingly, institutions must proactively build capacity and systems to address the flashpoints as they emerge as well as students' deeper concerns.

Responses Often Miss Critical Component

Illustrative

NEXT STEP

Flashpoint	Responding to the Incident	Addressing the Broader Context
• Racial slur is spray-painted onto the main sidewalks in the quad • Quickly goes viral on social media, with many students expressing upset	• Bias response team reaches out to related student groups • University releases statement condemning the language	• Response is integrated into larger community engagement initiatives • Dedicated forum for campus to deliver feedback and present potential solutions

Addressing the Broader Context Is No Easy Task

✖ Immediate incident response efforts are all-consuming

✖ Difficult to make and communicate progress on systemic issues

✖ Wanting to get it "right" delays a comprehensive response

✖ Higher ed processes and decision making is slow moving

Source: EAB interviews and analysis.

Address the Broader Context, Not Just the Incident

Prepare to Proactively Address Emerging Areas of Concern on Campus

In advance of a specific flashpoint, institutions should develop structures to proactively address emerging areas of concern. The below case from Emory University illustrates what this structure might look like on campus. Emory uses flexible working groups to address action items as they emerge and the institution maintains a website to communicate progress on longer-term initiatives.

EMORY UNIVERSITY — Building a Lasting Structure to Address Students' Concerns

Commission for Racial and Social Justice

- Established in **2015** to address 15 concerns identified by Black students on campus
- Now serves as the model for future initiatives

Support for Undocumented Students

- **2016** petition to university demands further support for undocumented students
- Commitment to improving financial support, services, and staff training

First-Generation and Low-Income Student Initiative

- **2017** exchange between students and leadership illuminates area of need
- Goals to improve admissions processes, services, and outcomes

> "Our goal was to build a structure that could accommodate issues from communities across campus. We want to hear directly from students. We want them to see our progress and know the system works. With this structure, our students went from marching in the street to working collaboratively with institutional partners to address these difficult issues."
>
> *Dona Yarbrough, Senior Associate Dean*
> *Emory University*

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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 *(Forthcoming, 2019)*

Risk Management Tactics for Climate Flashpoints

How to Use Social Listening for Climate Flashpoints and Crises

Prep Pack: Case Study Compendium and Resources

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)*

![EAB]

Appendix

- Appendix A: Cabinet Self-Audit
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Cabinet Self-Audit

Identifying Strengths and Areas of Improvement for Your Campus

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.

As a leadership team, use these questions to guide your assessment and discussion of your institution's current practices in preparing for and managing climate flashpoints. Your responses to these questions can help you 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. Does your institution regularly update risk identification and assessment tactics, including your risk register, to address climate flashpoints?					
2. Do separate divisions and departments coordinate social media monitoring efforts to identify and address emerging risks consistently?					
3. Are senior leaders regularly made aware of emerging risk areas and possible flashpoints?					
4. Do frontline staff have established processes to elevate potential risks and coordinate campus action on common flashpoints?					
5. Does your institution use a dedicated team to navigate climate flashpoints and manage the institution's collective response?					
6. Does your institution prepare for potential flashpoints with regular case studies and response drills?					
7. Does your institution have set standards about when leaders will speak out on controversial or political issues?					
8. Is your campus community aware of when they can expect comment from senior leaders on controversial or political issues?					
9. Does your institution address the broader context of flashpoints as they occur, opposed to strictly the incident at hand?					
10. Does your institution have a standing infrastructure to address students' ongoing concerns and manage long-term change on campus?					

Source: EAB interviews and analysis.

Controversial Event Template Text, GWU

The George Washington University, Center for Student Engagement

Controversial Event

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 Event Template Text, GWU (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

Policy Text, University of Maine System

GOVERNANCE AND LEGAL AFFAIRS

Section 212 Free Speech, Academic Freedom, and Civility

Effective: 11/21/67

Last Revised: 1/23/74; 3/27/17.

Responsible Office: General Counsel

Policy Statement:

The University of Maine System is an organization of public institutions of higher education committed to excellence in teaching, research, and public service. Together, the students, faculty, and staff form our statewide University community. The quality of life on and about the System's member universities is vitally enhanced by preserving the rights and freedoms described in this policy.

The Board of Trustees of the University of Maine System affirms its commitment to the rights of free speech, free inquiry, and academic freedom. To protect these rights, all members of the University community should act toward each other with civility, mutual respect, integrity, and reason.

Free speech, free inquiry and academic freedom, and civility are interrelated and interdependent rights and values that will be protected together at University of Maine System institutions according to the following policies.

FREE SPEECH

The Board of Trustees is committed to protecting the rights all University community members share to free speech, which includes free expression and assembly, as enshrined in the U.S. and Maine State Constitutions. There shall be no restriction at any System institutions on these fundamental rights, although the University may prohibit speech that violates the law, defames specific individuals, genuinely threatens or harasses others, or violates privacy or confidentiality requirements or interests.

The University may also reasonably regulate the time, place, and manner of the exercise of these rights to preserve order for the System's universities to function as institutions of higher learning.

Free speech requires tolerance for diversity of opinion and respect for an individual's right to express his or her beliefs, however unpopular they may be, without social or legal prohibition or fear of sanction. Tolerating and respecting another's views, however, does not mean those views are immune from critical scrutiny. Indeed, it is the university's responsibility to foster an environment where all are free to critically evaluate the ideas presented to them, and to accept critical evaluation of their own ideas.

Finally, although the University System greatly values civility and expects community members to share in the responsibility for maintaining a climate of mutual respect, demands for civility and mutual respect will not be used to justify restricting the discussion or expression of ideas or speech that may be disagreeable or even offensive to some members of the University community. Free speech is not absolute, and one person's claim to exercise his or her right to free speech may not be used to deny another person's right to free speech.

Policy Text, University of Maine System (cont.)

FREE INQUIRY AND ACADEMIC FREEDOM

The Board of Trustees affirms that a fundamental purpose of public higher education is free inquiry—the unfettered and relentless pursuit and dissemination of truth—and that within the academy, free inquiry is indistinguishable from one's freedom to inquire, present, discuss, and evaluate all matters relevant to the pursuit of truth without constraint, or fear of constraint, in the performance of one's teaching, research, publishing or service obligations.

Academic freedom is the freedom to present and discuss all relevant matters in and beyond the classroom, to explore all avenues of scholarship, research and creative expression, and to speak or write without any censorship, threat, restraint, or discipline by the University with regard to the pursuit of truth in the performance of one's teaching, research, publishing or service obligation.

System faculty and staff have the right to comment as employees on matters related to their professional duties, and the functioning of the University, subject to the need for courteous, professional and dignified interaction between all individuals and the parties' shared expectation that all members of the campus community will work to develop and maintain professional relationships that reflect courtesy and mutual respect, recognizing an employee's responsibility to refrain from interfering with the normal operations of the University and the ability to carry out its mission.

Employees as citizens are entitled to the rights of citizenship in their private roles as citizens, including to comment on matters of public concern outside of their employment. System employees have a responsibility and an obligation to indicate when expressing personal opinions that they are not institutional representatives unless specifically authorized as such.

CIVILITY AND MUTUAL RESPECT

Free speech and expression and academic freedom have an important corollary: the responsibility all University community members share for maintaining an environment in which their actions are guided by mutual respect, integrity, and reason. These responsibilities are expressed in our constitutional freedoms: The U.S. Constitution's right of the people *peaceably* to assemble, and the Maine State Constitution's right of citizens to freely speak, write and publish, *being responsible for the abuse of these liberties*. Although members of the University community are free to criticize and contest views expressed by others on campus – indeed, a guiding premise of free inquiry is that truth is more likely to be discovered if the opportunity exists for the free exchange of opposing opinions – no member of the University community may obstruct or otherwise interfere with another's freedom of speech, even if he or she disagrees with, opposes, or even loathes the other's views.

ENFORCEMENT

Each System university's administration is responsible for consistently enforcing this policy according to System-wide policies and standards, and for protecting individual rights through adequate and timely review of alleged violations. This policy shall not be construed or applied to restrict academic freedom within the University, nor to restrict constitutionally protected speech.

References

U.S. Constitution, Amendment 1

Maine State Constitution, Article 1, Section 4

2015-2017 Agreement between UMS and AFUM, Article 2

University of Chicago Report of the Committee on Freedom of Expression

Policy Text, University of Maine System (cont.)

GOVERNANCE AND LEGAL AFFAIRS

Section 214 Institutional Authority on Political Matters

Effective: 3/19/18

Last Revised:

Responsible Office: General Counsel

Policy Statement:

The University of Maine System is a public institution and instrumentality of the State of Maine, consisting of the University of Maine, including its regional campus the University of Maine at Machias; the University of Maine at Augusta, including its campus in Bangor and University College centers around the state; the University of Maine at Farmington; the University of Maine at Fort Kent; the University of Maine at Presque Isle; and the University of Southern Maine, including its campuses in Gorham and Lewiston-Auburn. UMS's public mission is to advance higher education in Maine through teaching, research, and public service; the System and its campuses receive significant state and federal taxpayer support to do so in ways that best serve all Maine citizens.

This policy is subject to Board Policy 212, *Free Speech, Academic Freedom, and Civility*, so as to best respect all UMS community members' constitutionally protected free speech rights, individual rights as citizens, and faculty academic freedom. The Board recognizes its faculty as subject matter experts in their areas of teaching and research and encourages them to responsibly disseminate their research and knowledge. This policy does not restrict any UMS faculty, staff, or student from speaking on political matters, including testifying before or speaking with legislators or policy makers, about the subjects of their teaching or research expertise or personal experience, provided they do not represent that they speak for their campus or the System unless specifically authorized to do so.

UMS and its constituent universities fully embrace the First Amendment rights of all citizens, including all students and employees, to hold and express political, social, or religious views of any kind. Because UMS is funded in significant part by all Maine taxpayers and student tuition revenue sourced from federal financial aid programs, and because UMS must also maintain its federal 501(c)(3) tax-exempt status, the System and its universities, and individuals speaking or acting on their behalf, must at all times remain impartial as to such viewpoints except as provided elsewhere in this or other System policies.

UMS Legislative Advocacy

The UMS Charter authorizes and directs the UMS Chancellor to develop and implement an effective statewide legislative program for the System. All UMS legislative advocacy without exception will therefore be managed through the Chancellor's office, specifically the Office of Community and Government Relations. System legislative advocacy, including university-specific advocacy, may only be pursued by individuals authorized by UMS for that purpose.

For the purposes of this policy, "UMS (or System) legislative advocacy" includes interaction with the State Legislature, including individual legislators or legislative committees and their staff, the Governor's office and staff, or any other public official or the general public *when the purpose of the interaction or communication is to advocate for a specific UMS institutional position or outcome*.

Policy Text, University of Maine System (cont.)

Institutional interactions with the United States government's Executive Branch and agencies, Congress and congressional staff, and the various federal regulatory bodies having legal jurisdiction over each System university's operation and activities are subject to this policy as well, except in cases where a specific campus or System office has primary responsibility for a function closely tied to the functional responsibility of the governmental office at issue (e.g., Department of Education Title IV officials and campus financial aid offices; Department of Education Office of Civil Rights and System General Counsel, etc.). Further, this policy does not restrict any UMS faculty, employee, department, division, or office from providing information, research, survey data, or policy advice to a local, state, or federal government official or office when required to do so by grant, contract, or legal mandate (e.g., the University of Maine Center for Community Inclusion and Disability Studies (CCIDS), which, by federal law, is required to advise, educate, and disseminate information to state and federal policymakers about individuals with developmental disabilities, or any similarly-purposed office or activities).

Restrictions on Partisan Political Activity

UMS and its universities cannot participate or intervene in any partisan political campaign on behalf of, or in opposition to, any candidate for public office, which, for the purposes of this section, is referred to as "partisan political activity."

If System and university employees wish to become actively involved in partisan political activities, they must do so on their own time, without using System or University funds or resources of any kind, and in such a way as to not interfere with or impair performing their regular System/university duties. When exercising their rights to participate in the political process as individuals or as otherwise permitted by this Policy, System/university employees should emphasize that their comments or actions are their own, and not those of the System or university unless they have been specifically authorized to speak or act on behalf of a System institution. This disclaimer is especially important if an employee, when speaking or acting as a private citizen or as otherwise permitted by this Policy, is using his or her title or affiliation with the System or a university for identification purposes or to establish his/her competence in a particular field.

Employees Seeking Elective Office

See Board Policy 403 (http://www.maine.edu/about-the-system/board-of-trustees/policy-manual/section403/)

Policy Text, University of Maine System (cont.)

Chancellor and Presidential Authority to Make Institutional Statements

Because public statements made and actions taken by the UMS Chancellor and System University Presidents may be ascribed to or perceived as the institutional position of UMS and/or its universities, respectively, this section applies only to the Chancellor and Presidents, who:

Have authority to speak or issue statements, or designate official spokespersons to speak or issue statements, on behalf of their institutions on issues core to the System/university mission (green/mission critical issues)

Should review in advance with the rapid response advisory team described below, when time permits, issues related to but not directly mission central (yellow/mission indirectly related issues); and

Are not authorized to speak, including through official spokespersons, on issues beyond or only tangentially related to core institutional mission (red/mission unrelated issues).

Issues are not static in relevance, but may vary in public or political salience over time; the Board will review and update the mission issue examples below for relevance at least every three years. Issues may shift from one concentric circle to another, or overlap, depending on context. The Chancellor and System University Presidents must at all times strive to maintain impartiality on political, social, or religious matters, subject to their duties to advance the missions of their institutions and the System as a whole.

Issues that involve legislative matters or advocacy must be coordinated as provided in "UMS Legislative Advocacy" above.

A standing rapid response advisory committee of six members, including two Trustees, two Presidents, and two senior UMS staff (one of whom should be the System General Counsel or his/her legal designee) should be available to review, when time permits, the reasonableness of making statements on issues brought forth by the Chancellor/Presidents that appear to fall in the yellow zone.

GREEN/Mission Critical

Academic administration, curriculum, institutional finances and planning, health and safety of students and employees, and general issues critical to the financial or functional stability and wellbeing of the institution and its students, e.g., Pell grant funding, guns on campus, defunding TRIO programs, marijuana dispensaries near campus.

YELLOW/Mission Indirectly Related

Issues important or relevant to society at large that may impact an institution or its students or employees, but not in such a way as to undermine the institution's educational mission or prevent the institution from carrying it out, e.g., climate change, labor standards, immigration policy.

RED/ Mission Unrelated

Issues of local, state or national import, but not relevant to educational mission or institutional financial or functional stability, e.g., abortion policy, tax reform, global trade policy.

The Board retains the right at all times to issue statements, including through the Chair or Chancellor, on behalf of the University of Maine System that cover all System universities.

Student Affairs Forum

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