



EAB

# New Presidents Intensive 2024

**The Balancing Act of Free Speech, Safe Spaces, and  
Deplatforming**

Depolarizing Campus Conversations,  
Navigating Flashpoints

July 30, 2024

# Update Your Name

The screenshot displays a Zoom meeting window. The main content area shows a presentation slide with the EAB logo and the text "EAB Virtual Meetings 2020". On the right side, the "Participants (2)" panel is open, listing "Test Participant (Me)" and "Meeting Host (Host)". The "Test Participant (Me)" entry has "Mute" and "Rename" buttons. A yellow box highlights the "Participants" icon in the bottom toolbar. A callout box with the text "Update your name and add your institution" points to the "Rename" button. Another callout box with the text "Open Participants menu" points to the "Participants" icon in the toolbar. A "Rename" dialog box is open, showing the input field "Enter a new screen name:" with the text "Jane Doe - Institution" entered. The dialog has "OK" and "Cancel" buttons.

Zoom Meeting ID: 841-573-482

You are viewing Meeting Host's screen

View Options

Speaker View

Participants (2)

Test Participant (Me) Mute Rename

Meeting Host (Host)

Rename

Enter a new screen name:

Jane Doe - Institution

OK Cancel

Meeting Host

Test Participant

Mute Stop Video Invite Participants Share Chat Record Leave Meeting

Open Participants menu

Update your name and add your institution

# New Presidents Intensive Curriculum



## VIRTUAL INTRODUCTION | 1:00 – 2:00 PM ET

**Tuesday, June 18, 2024**

## IN-PERSON SESSION | EAB HEADQUARTERS | WASHINGTON, DC

**Sunday, June 23, 2024**

6:00–8:00 pm ET

*Welcome Dinner*

**Monday, June 24, 2024**

9:00 am–7:00 pm ET

*2024 State of the Sector  
Dynamic Strategy and Principled  
Differentiation*

**Tuesday, June 25, 2024**

9:00 am–1:00 pm ET

*AI, The Future of Work and Implications  
for Higher Ed  
What Every President Needs to Know  
about Athletics  
The President as Fundraiser-in-Chief*

## VIRTUAL SESSIONS | TUESDAYS | 1:00 – 3:00 PM ET

**July 2, 2024**

*Shared Governance 2.0*

**July 9, 2024**

*Understanding  
"Generation P"*

**July 16, 2024**

*Blueprint for Growth*

**July 23, 2024**

*Critical Considerations  
for Achieving Financial  
Sustainability and  
Resilience*

**July 30, 2024**

*The Balancing Act of  
Free Speech, Safe  
Spaces, and  
Deplatforming*

# Meet Your Facilitator



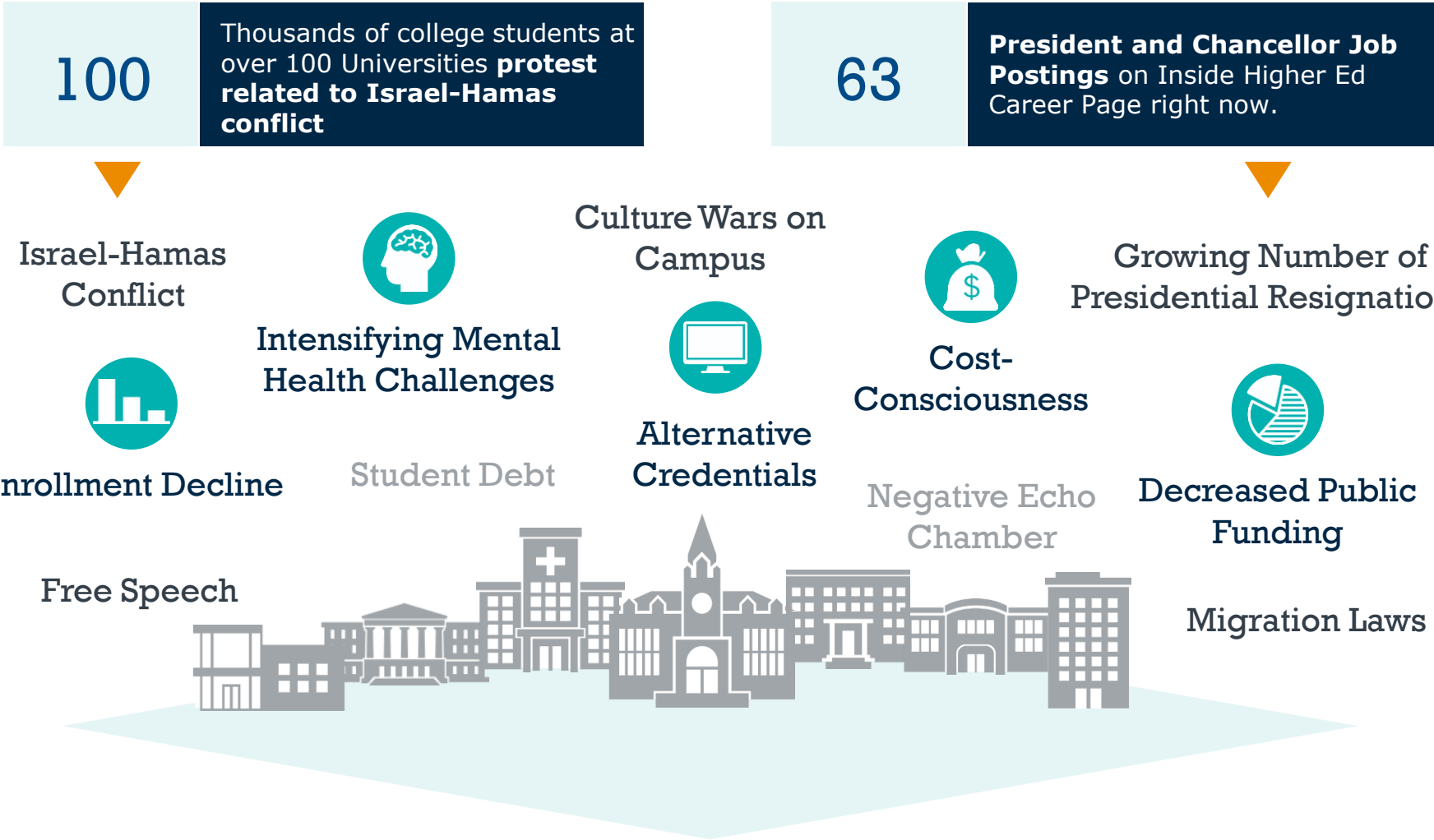
**Khadish Franklin**  
*Managing Director*  
*Research Advisory Services*





# External Factors Reshaping Higher Education

Serving as a University President Increasingly More Difficult





# Caught Up in the Culture Wars

## Representative Policy Debates The Backdrop for the 2024 Election

### Affirmative Action Overturned

*Affirmative Action Ruling Shakes Universities Over More Than Race, The New York Times*

### "Anti-Woke" Legislation

*Texas Senate Approves Bill Barring Professors from "Compelling" Students to Adopt Certain Political Beliefs, Waco Tribune*

### DEI Bans Across the US

*DEI Programs in Universities Are Being Cut Across the Country. What Does This Mean for Higher Education?, CNN*



### Challenges to Tenure

*Georgia's University System Takes on Tenure, The New York Times*

### Critical Race Theory Backlash

*Florida's State Colleges Say They'll Ban Promotion of Critical Race Theory, The Chronicle of Higher Education*

### Student Loan Forgiveness

*Face Off: Student Loan Forgiveness Puts Spotlight Back on Higher Ed, Capital Analytics Associates*

Source: Hartocollis, Harmon, "[Affirmative Action Ruling Shakes Universities Over More Than Race](#)," *New York Times*, July 26, 2023; McGee, "[Texas Senate approves bill barring professors from 'compelling' students to adopt certain political beliefs](#)," *Waco Tribune-Herald*, April 12, 2023; Heyward, "[Georgia's University System Takes On Tenure](#)," *New York Times*, Oct. 20, 2021; Lee, "[Student loan borrowers brace for 'the wave' as payments restart](#)," *Yahoo Finance*, Aug. 5, 2023; Thomason, "[Florida's State Colleges Say They'll Ban Promotion of Critical Race Theory](#)," *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, Jan. 18, 2023; DuBois, "[Face off: Student loan forgiveness debate puts spotlight back on higher ed](#)," *Capital Analytics Associates*, July 2023; EAB interviews and analysis.



# But Higher Ed Institutions Are Falling Behind

Flashpoints Find Most Colleges and Universities Scrambling to Respond

## Higher Ed's Failed Response Incites Demands

**December 2023**

**Harvard, MIT, Upenn Congressional Hearing, resignations follow**

College presidents at Harvard, MIT and the University of Pennsylvania faced sharp backlash and calls for their resignations following their comments at a explosive congressional hearing about antisemitism on college campuses.

**48%**

Asked how aware they are of their college's written speech policies on campus protest, almost half of students surveyed said they are either "**not aware at all**" (19%) or "**not very aware**" (29%)

## Why Institutions Are Underprepared

- ✗ Outdated policies and protocols
- ✗ No strategy to respond, leading to slow and reactionary responses
- ✗ No coordinated or trained first responders
- ✗ Fail to proactively monitor for potential flashpoint issues
- ✗ Senior campus leaders are surprised or frustrated by students' demands

# A Pressure Cooker

With Real World Consequences for Not Taking Action

## Campuses Feel Rising Pressure from Students, Board, University President

### Students

"I want to feel safe and welcomed on campus."

### Board

"What are you doing to teach students the values of free speech?"

### President

"How can we support freedom of expression and diversity and inclusion?"

## On Top of Rising Pressure, Other Imperatives Pushing Us to Act



### Campus Climate

How do we make students feel included and supported?



### Mission

How do we fulfill our mission to prepare students for civic life?



### Public Perception

How do we help restore public faith in higher education?

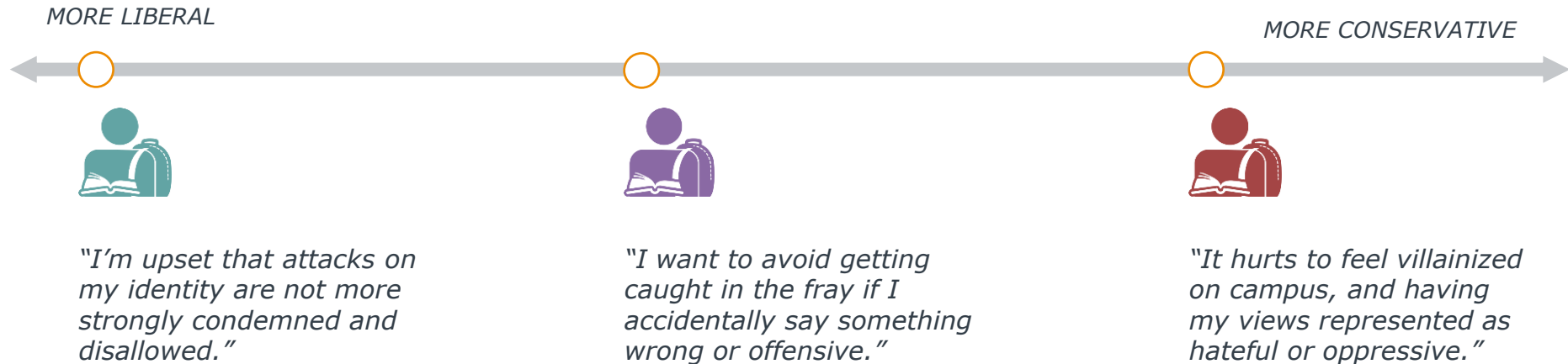




# Uncivil Discourse Harms Campus Climate

Students Across the Political Spectrum Feel Attacked, Victimized

## Impacts on Campus Culture Span Political Spectrum



# Are Our Graduates Prepared for Civic Life?

## Disconnect Between Mission and Reality



### Mission

- ✓ Expand students' worldviews through interactions with diverse perspectives
- ✓ Foster sense of intellectual curiosity
- ✓ Prepare students for enlightened and productive lives



### Reality

- ✗ Students interact mostly with those who agree with them
- ✗ Students avoid speaking out or questioning issues for fear of reprisal
- ✗ Students underprepared for difficult conversations

# How Will We Get it Right?



## Higher Education's Leadership Imperative

“Beyond responding to the latest flashpoint or upsurge of activism, our students are asking us to tackle issues that are rooted in complex social challenges. Oftentimes, **these issues do not have a single 'right' answer.** With today's political climate, any response (or even no response at all) is contentious.”

*President  
Private University*

## Discussion Questions



**1** How do you anticipate the campus community will respond to the 2024 election and its aftermath?

**2** What worries you most about your institution's incident response plan?

# Repercussions Reverberate Through the Years

## Response Failures Have Lasting Impacts on Institutional Reputation

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

**Future crises** associated with the initial incident

**HUFFPOST**

**November 19, 2011**  
*UC Davis Police Pepper-Spray Seated Students In Occupy Dispute*

**The New York Times**

**November 22, 2011**  
*Pepper Spray's Fallout, From Crowd Control to Mocking Images*

**The Washington Post**

**August 9, 2016**  
*UC Davis Chancellor Resigns After Pepper-Spray Scandal*

**Los Angeles Times**

**July 9, 2020**  
*At Some U.S. Universities, A Time to Rethink Cops on Campus*

### Baylor's Sexual Assault Case Damaged Reputation and Dropped Yield

**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

# Five Common Failure Paths

## A Roadmap for Improving Campus Flashpoint Preparedness and Response

### 5 Failure Paths FOR COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES

#### FAILURE PATH 1



Status-quo risk identification practices overlook potential campus flashpoints.

#### FAILURE PATH 2



Information about potential flashpoints is decentralized so institutions miss early opportunities to intervene.

#### FAILURE PATH 3



Leadership teams assume that existing relationships are sufficient for managing the institutional response strategy.

#### FAILURE PATH 4



Institutions are unsure if, when, and who should respond to current or potential flashpoints.

#### FAILURE PATH 5



Institutions address the immediate flashpoint incident, but not the broader context on campus.

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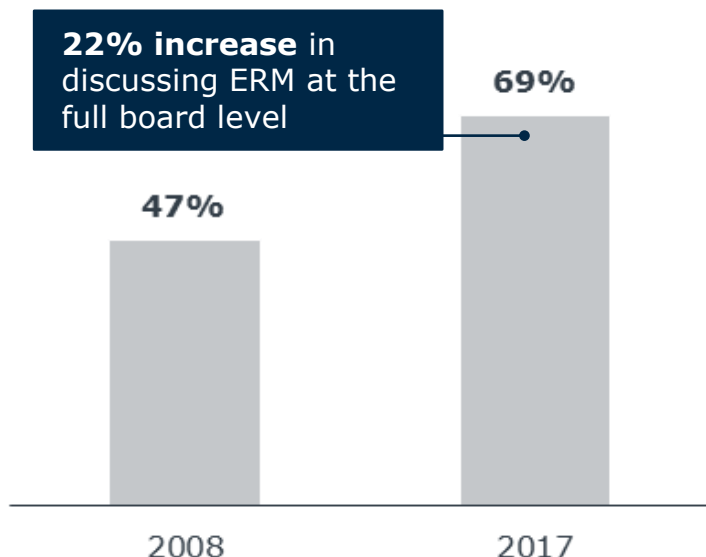


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# The New Normal

## Enterprise Risk Management (ERM) Is Sweeping Higher Ed

### ERM is a Growing Priority for University Leaders...



1 in 4

Institutions report discussing ERM at **every board meeting**

### ...And Reflected in Hiring Needs Across Higher Ed



113%

Increase in job postings for risk-titled roles



64%

Increase in job postings that include risk skills

#### Chief Risk Officer

##### *Sample Job Responsibilities*

- Manage enterprise risk management program and report on risk to Board
- Identify emerging reputational risks
- Develop and implement comprehensive risk treatment plans

# Risk Identification Practices Overlook Flashpoints



## Climate-Related Risks Are a Continuing Blind Spot

### 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

- 1 **Campus Climate**
- 2 **Sexual Assault and Title IX**
- 3 Academic Programs
- 4 **Student Behaviors**
- 5 Higher Ed's Business Model



# Integrate Flashpoints in Campus Risk Assessment



Prepare for Reputational Risks by Proactively Identifying Flashpoints

## Flashpoints Challenge Status Quo Risk Registers

### *Common Pitfall*



#### **Narrow Content Focus**

Registers emphasize only financial, operational, and compliance risks, overlooking flashpoints



### *Recommended Action*

#### **Update Your Risk Register**

Include climate flashpoints and reputational risks as distinct risks



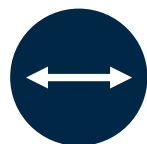
#### **Limited Grading Framework**

Registers assess only likelihood and impact of potential risks, downplaying reputational impacts



#### **Upgrade Your Risk Grading Framework**

Assess velocity and preparedness to account for the rapidly evolving nature of climate flashpoints



#### **Range of Risk Altitudes**

Attempts at being comprehensive yield unwieldy lists of institutional, divisional, and unit risks



#### **Prioritize Institutional Risks**

Prioritize the risks most likely to impact your institution, not unit-level incident-specific risks

# Social Listening Helps Surface Emerging Risks

Provides Real-Time Intelligence for Flashpoint Management

## Social Listening Helps Brands Make Sense of the Online Conversation



### Volume

How many people are talking, and how often?



### Voice

Who is driving the conversation? Who or what talked about?



### Sentiment

Is the conversation positive, neutral, or negative?

## Actionable Insights Result in Strategic Brand Management



Size a growing crisis, target your response, and assess the impact



Learn how prospective students talk about you and your competitors



Identify and connect with student social media influencers



## Social Listening Toolkit



Apply social listening concepts to a climate flashpoint or crisis



Audit your social strategy to identify and address flashpoints



Explore enterprise social listening technology platforms

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# Decentralized Information Hinders Risk Mitigation

## Multimodal Campuses Exacerbate Institutional Information Silos

### Many Offices Have Access to Potentially Important Information...

#### Information Technology

*"This racist reddit thread is really blowing up. Virtual protests are being planned."*

#### Student Center

*"Several students are making a political statement and planning an encampment."*

#### Athletics

*"An athlete was just named in a social media accusation."*

#### Public Safety Department

*"A fraternity is planning an off-campus party this weekend."*

### ...But Uncertainty and Confusion Hinder Action



"How do I know if this social media post will be problematic? Should I do something?"



"How can I keep track of university events when everything's virtual?"



"Who should I tell? I'm not sure who handles stuff like this."



"Why do frontline staff always seem to know what's happening on the ground and I'm not in the loop?"



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

# Collect and Coordinate Information Sharing

## Four To-Dos to Expand Your Data Points



### Monitor Pulse

*Use social listening data to monitor campus pulse*

Ex: **Earlham College** created a [social media dashboard](#) to connect community during

### Track Virtual Events

*Create mechanisms to track virtual events on campus*

Ex: **Georgia Tech** providing virtual support for student groups to [register events online](#)

### Elevate Risks

*Designate staff for reporting upwards*

Ex: **Cornell University** frontline staff share concerning activity with Dean of Students; DoS elevates critical information to senior leaders

### Debrief Regularly

*Share key intel at cabinet meetings*

Senior leaders are routinely briefed about potential risks

# Strengthen Awareness of Potential Flashpoints

Risk Briefings Ensure Leadership Awareness and Promote Early Action

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

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# The Perils of the Status Quo

## Two Common Approaches Do Not Promote Quick and Consistent Responses

### APPROACH #1

#### Relationship-Based Response



*"We are a very close cabinet. I can always pick up the phone and call whoever I need for any situation."*

#### 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 Fall Short in 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 Rapid Response Team

Set a Specific Charter and Flexible Structure to Enable Agile Responses

## How to Assemble a Rapid Response Team for Flashpoints



STEP 1

### Determine Scope

*Clarify Responsibilities*

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



STEP 2

### Identify Membership

*Delineate Tiers*

- Tier 1: Core members who are always activated in climate flashpoints
- Tier 2: Unit-level designees and/or subject matter experts



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

# Identify and Educate Key Stakeholders

Consider Internal and External Constituencies Who Need to Know More

## Three Key Questions

1. Who **internally needs to be aware** of what's happening?

- Cabinet
- Trustees
- Administrative assistants

2. Who needs to be able to **educate external stakeholders**?

- Admissions representatives
- Alumni relations and development staff
- Government relations staff

3. Who needs to **understand how it might affect their daily roles** and responsibilities?

- Cabinet
- Faculty
- Administrators and staff

## Cheat Sheet for Briefing External Stakeholders about Flashpoint

### SUGGESTED TALKING POINTS

*Sample Categories and Questions*

#### Overview

Short summary of current events and state of campus sentiment

#### Understanding the Issue

Context around why the flashpoint is happening and potential implications

#### Articulating the University's Response

Explanation of the response strategy so far and looking ahead into the future

#### Addressing Top-of-Mind Concerns

Guidance on answering difficult questions

#### Longer-Term Initiatives

Information about the institution's ongoing or forthcoming efforts to address related issues

Check out [EAB's FAQ Builder](#)



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# Should We Respond?

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

### 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*


# Clarify When the Institution Will Respond

Set Expectations Before a Flashpoint Arises, On or Off Campus



## University of Maine System’s *Stoplight Framework* Simplifies Decision Making for Institutional Statements

	Category	Sample Issues	Process	
	<b>GREEN ZONE</b> <i>Mission Critical</i>	Directly impacts the institution and community	Institutional finances; student and employee health and safety; campus operations	Chancellor and presidents can freely issue a statement
	<b>YELLOW ZONE</b> <i>Mission Indirect</i>	Does not directly impact the mission and institution	Immigration policy; labor standards; national protests	Time permitting, chancellor and presidents should consult with <i>rapid advisory committee</i>
	<b>RED ZONE</b> <i>Mission Unrelated</i>	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

 *Routinely update framework to be relevant to current campus, national, and global climate*

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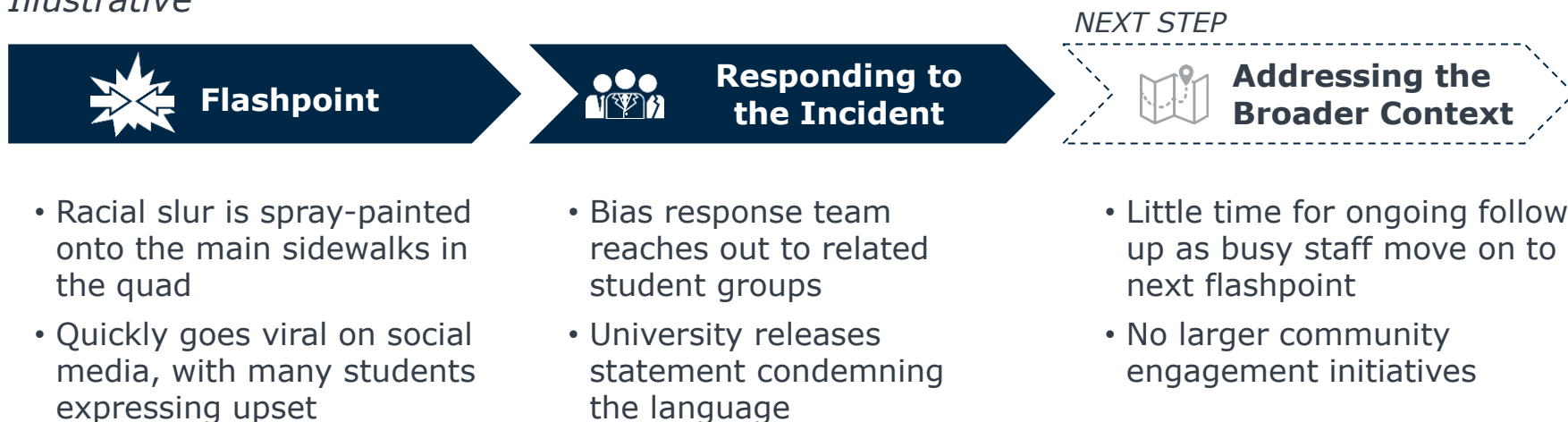
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# Incident-Only Response Is No Longer Enough

Institutions Face More Pressure to Address the Broader Context

## Responses Often Miss Critical Component

*Illustrative*



## 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        |

# Address the Broader Context, Not Just the Incident

Proactively Address Emerging Areas of Concern Using Varied Approaches



## Speak Out

President wrote an [open letter](#) to campus community **condemning racial injustice** happening across the country and historically on U.S. college campuses.

Colgate University



## Facilitate Discussions

Tufts University's report offers **ten recommendations to increase student voting and to improve campus conditions for political learning, discourse, and agency** during election seasons and beyond.

INSTITUTE FOR  
DEMOCRACY &  
HIGHER EDUCATION



## Track and Report

Cornell developed an **online tracking system** that reports the status of [institutional initiatives](#) on campus climate and diversity.



Cornell University



## Solicit Solutions

**Crowdsource ideas** for university initiatives like George Washington University's Building Renaming Framework





# Preparing for the 2024 Election

## Cabinet Work Plan

### **Step I: Prepare for Controversial Campus Events**



Establish a Process for Preparation, Collaboration, and Response

Develop a Controversial Events Template for Your Campus

### **Step II: Audit and Update Your Free Speech Policy**



Complete Self-Audit to Identify Areas of Focus and Improvement

Evaluate Your Current Policy and Consider Changes

### **Step III: Create a Dedicated Crisis Strike Force**



Complete Self-Assessment and Review Strike Force Organizational Chart

Enable Agile Response by Identifying a Flexible Response Structure in Advance

# Special Guest President



**President Suzanne Rivera**  
*Macalester College*



# Poll

I'd like to learn more about...

- 1 Cabinet Engagement on Campus Flashpoints
- 2 Guided Access to the Higher Education Crises and Flashpoints Resource Center
- 3 Campus Speech Policy Review
- 4 Something else? Choose this and we will follow up with you.

# What's Next?

## How EAB Can Support You Moving Forward

# 1

### **1:1 Debrief with Your Facilitator**

Your facilitator will reach out to schedule a one-on-one meeting with you to recap the intensive and your school's EAB portfolio.

# 2

### **Resource Center**

In follow-up, we will share with you a landing page that will have all the slides and recordings from each session.

# 3

### **EAB.com Access**

You should have access to [eab.com](https://eab.com) for our research and resources throughout your first year as President.

# 4

### **Reunion Sessions Coming Soon**

There will be three additional reunion sessions being scheduled across the year that will cover relevant topics for your first year in the role.



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