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DOI: 10.1515/jhsem-2013-0074

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The Professionalization of Emergency Management in Institutions of Higher Education

Abstract: This article explores the development of emergency management as a specialized profession in institutions of higher education (IHE). The authors perform a meta-analysis of existing literature, research, surveys, and best practices to provide an overview of emergency management in IHE in contrast to municipal and county emergency management organizations. A synopsis of institutional emergency management department demographics, typical responsibilities, and regulatory environment is provided to illustrate the unique challenges facing IHE emergency managers. The article concludes with recommendations for the continued maturation of emergency management as a profession within IHE by defining the emergency manager’s role and responsibilities, establishing best practices, and improving access to the field for women and minorities.

Keywords: college; career; emergency management; higher education; university.

*Corresponding author: David Farris, George Mason University – Emergency Management, 4393 University Drive, MS 5E2 Police and Safety Headquarters, Fairfax, VA 22030, USA, e-mail: dfarris@gmu.edu
Robert McCreight: Penn State University, Global Campus Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, Springfield, VA, USA

1 Introduction

Emergency management has a short but rich history in the United States. Beginning in the 19th century and now flourishing in cities, towns, state capitals, and many nations worldwide, it has become a respected profession, especially during the last 15 years. However, what constitutes its core competencies, certifications, and career trajectories remains a subject of diverse opinion (McCreight 2009). What has also become apparent over the past decade is the often fragmented state of preparedness of our nation’s institutions of higher education (IHEs). Violent events and emergencies on college and university campuses drive home the idea that these seemingly insulated communities of students,
scholars, and employees are just as vulnerable as any city or state to the consequences of emergencies.

Within the larger field of emergency management, IHE emergency management is emerging as a distinct discipline in the wake of a number of shootings on our nation’s campuses. The tragedy at Virginia Tech was the catalyst behind a rush to update emergency programs, refine emergency notification systems, and reevaluate university emergency management programs across the nation. This event was also important to the evolution of public policy, federal regulations, and state statutes to improve emergency preparedness programs at IHEs. In addition to the immediate demand for emergency managers to assist with emergency preparations and response activities, mitigation and recovery efforts were given serious consideration for the first time on many campuses, and the effects of Hurricane Katrina made evident the value of continuity of operations plans (COOP) and hazard mitigation plans at IHEs.

Major events and local catastrophes demand that colleges and universities remain vigilant and responsive to emergencies. Recent emergencies at IHEs include a wave of bomb threats in the fall of 2012 that forced the evacuation of campuses across the nation, regional natural disasters that disrupted university operations, and fires or flooding that displaced students from residence halls. Such occurrences have changed the landscape of emergency management on campus, as evident in Incident Command System courses tailored to IHEs, guidance from federal agencies on how to develop emergency operations plans (EOPs) for IHEs, national association caucuses and presymposiums for IHE emergency managers, and, in some instances, state statutes mandating emergency preparedness programs. Virginia Tech was one of the first IHEs to grapple with victim/family assistance programs on a large scale under the scrutiny of the media and public; since then, Texas A&M and Northern Illinois University have refined victim assistance in the wake of a bonfire collapse and shooting, respectively. Moreover, as communities enhance their preparedness programs, state and local governments are turning to IHEs to provide resources needed to support state or local shelter programs, volunteer mobilization centers, and other local or regional programs (Carlson 2013). This requires that the entire suite of emergency management skills, programs, plans, and technologies be available on our nation’s college and university campuses, as well as a unique type of emergency manager – one with the specialized knowledge, skills, and abilities needed to negotiate the organization and political nuances of IHEs.

Emergency management strategies should reflect the environment in which they are practiced; one size does not fit all (Britton 2002). Given the steady rise in campus emergency incidents over the past few years, the question arises of
whether the job of IHE emergency manager is the newest career track in the already complex and ambiguous discipline of emergency management. Although Bruce Marshall (1987) initiated the idea that emergency management is a wholly separate career from emergency response, the concept of emergency management as a career in higher education is a departure from traditional definitions of the profession and current attempts to redefine the field. Relatively new literature, such as *Campus Crisis Management: A Comprehensive Guide to Planning, Prevention, Response, and Recovery* (Zdziarski et al. 2007); *This Is Not a Fire Drill: Crisis Intervention and Prevention on College Campuses* (Myer et al. 2011); and numerous research reports and studies on emergency management at IHEs (referenced throughout this article), reflect the broadening of the definition. Very little empirical primary research exists on the unique elements that differentiate the role of emergency managers in IHEs from that of their colleagues in other public or private organizations; much of the current literature, for example, is focused on crisis communications (Egnoto et al. 2013), the use of social media (Latonero and Shklovski 2011), and IHE emergency management case studies (Farris 2012). But what this growing body of work suggests is that emergency management in IHEs has become a specialized field that demands an emergency management skill set reflective of higher education’s constituency, diverse activities, politics, and role in society.

While some may disagree with the specific tasks and job scope assigned to IHE emergency managers as opposed to their counterparts in cities and counties, one can generally find common cause in the array of situations where their expertise is needed. Active shooters, bombings, criminal conduct, vulnerability to natural disasters, and technological accidents are just some of the issues that face both the emergency manager of Notre Dame University, with 14,000 students and 3000 employees, and the emergency manager of South Bend, Indiana, with an urban population of 100,000. In fact, one of the many key issues that need serious examination is the degree to which urban emergency management and collegiate-based emergency management are similar. Related to that issue is the matter of identifying the key differences between them and what those differences might mean for the education and preparation of future emergency managers in either setting.

Emergency management was an afterthought at many IHEs prior to 2001, and if it was a recognized need, it was an ancillary responsibility of a police officer, administrator, or health and safety professional. There simply was no officially designated position that dealt with campus emergencies, and the level of support for such a position was extremely low. Now emergency management is a prominent function in most IHEs, replete with a profusion of federal and state mandates that lend complexity to an already challenging field. In fact, among the
many areas in which urban emergency management and campus emergency management can be fairly compared is the scope of duties, which entail the same array of federal, state, and local mandates and requirements albeit with glaring exceptions, as will be discussed further on.

This article explores the current state of emergency management in higher education and potential challenges facing IHE emergency managers. As noted above, one of several key issues it seeks to assess is the degree to which IHE emergency managers parallel their public and private sector counterparts in terms of such comparable indicators as basic duties, educational qualifications, and organizational placement. Furthermore, this article intends to identify issues that require further research on how emergency management is practiced in IHEs.

2 The Size and Location of Emergency Management Departments in IHEs Today

The size of IHE emergency management departments is a function of the organization’s size and budget; larger organizations can be expected to have dedicated emergency management positions (National Association of College and University Business Officers 2009). Large IHEs tend to have at least one full-time emergency manager/director and, in some instances, a department comprising, for example, a manager/director, assistant director, exercise coordinator, and COOP manager. However, according to a recent survey of universities that subscribe to the Disaster Resistant University e-mail list, approximately 75% of emergency management offices are staffed by only one employee (Kapucu 2010). By comparison, most counties have approximately six full-time emergency management employees (Clarke 2006).

Some could argue that municipalities and counties are much larger than IHEs and therefore should require more staff and resources. However, many public IHEs are university systems comprising multiple campuses with expansive geographic footprints that span multiple counties, states, and even countries. Furthermore, the amount of turnover in student population every 4 years, coupled with the in loco parentis role that society has assigned to IHEs, requires inordinately more attention to each constituent of the institution than to the average citizen in a municipality or county. IHEs are expected, rightly or wrongly, to maintain a higher level of preparedness and vigilance to emergencies than their federal, state, or local counterparts because of the presumed vulnerability of the students in their care. This sentiment is proffered by parents and substantiated
by universities in order to attract and retain students; to exercise vigilance to any lesser degree suggests negligence. Thus, it is necessary to have sufficient staff to meet this heightened level of preparedness, and few IHEs, if any, will claim that their emergency management departments are sufficiently staffed.

The location and reporting structure of the emergency management department within the larger organization has ramifications for the emergency manager’s ability to draw from extradepartmental resources, collaborate with internal and external stakeholders, and marshal resources during an emergency. The greatest proportion, but not the majority, of emergency management departments are a division of police or public safety (37.9%); only 24.1% are stand-alone departments. In US counties, 40% of emergency management departments are stand-alone functions (Clarke 2006). Adam Sutkus, Phyllis Cauley, and Nicole Ugarte with the Center for Collaborative Policy (2011) determined that stand-alone emergency management offices receive more resources and are more effective and successful than emergency management offices that are housed within a larger organization.

Emergency management departments in IHEs are typically situated in one of four reporting structures:

- Within university police
- As a division of the IHE’s Environmental Health and Safety office
- Accountable to the university’s risk management office
- Directly accountable to a senior vice president or president.

Among IHE emergency managers, there is a general (although undocumented) consensus that the closer they are to the top of the organization, the more likely their programs are to receive financial and administrative support and to subsequently accomplish their goals.

An issue worthy of further inspection is the question of inter- and intra-organizational relationships within and among emergency management and parent or affiliated organizations. McGuire and Silvia (2010: p. 282) found that in county and municipal emergency management organizations, “an organization based in a specific and well-defined program area will collaborate to a greater extent than an organization charged with multiple and conflicting program responsibilities.” This statement is also true for emergency management departments within IHEs. When emergency management is a component of university police, public safety, or environmental health and safety, the department competes for scarce resources not only among university departments but also potentially within its own department. What’s more, when the mission, vision, and effort of emergency management is intertwined with the programs and organizational dynamics of an overarching or parent department,
the result is an obfuscation of emergency management objectives and strategies, which can diminish the quality and effectiveness of emergency management programs.

In IHEs a strong link between emergency management and police or public safety is necessary given the interdependent nature of each function; however, there is still considerable debate over how these two entities should interact and support one another and what their respective roles should be in emergency situations, particularly with respect to leadership. As the field of emergency management evolves, the connection between IHE emergency management and public safety is also diverging within institutions. Renegotiating this relationship to reflect changes in emergency management best practices is much more difficult in established programs. To illustrate the need for the functions to remain separate requires an examination of the core competencies that each brings to an emergency. Individuals who identify with security functions tend to focus on the technical aspects of a position whereas individuals who are associated with emergency management departments tend to gravitate toward management principles as a core competency (Springer 2009).

3 The Nature of Emergency Managers in IHEs Today

The first generation of emergency managers was composed predominantly of former police officers or fire and rescue personnel (Petak 1985). As the discipline of emergency management evolved, it became evident that emergency managers required a distinct skill set that did not necessarily originate from conventional emergency response positions in law enforcement or fire and rescue (Wilson and Oyola-Yemaiel 2001). Today, fewer and fewer emergency managers are transitioning into the field from police and fire departments; rather, more often than not, new entrants to the profession are coming directly out of college, equipped with a degree in emergency management or a related field. A recent spike in the number of colleges and universities offering undergraduate and advanced degrees in emergency management has led to a surplus of candidates seeking entry into the field (Lucus-McEwen 2011). Nationally, emergency management positions are expected to grow by 13% over the next decade (Bureau of Labor Statistics [BLS] 2013). Part of this growth is due to the growing demand for emergency managers and support staff in IHEs. The majority of emergency managers in IHEs have 10 or fewer years of experience in the profession (Sullivan 2011), which is further evidence that the emergency management function in IHEs is still in its infancy.
3.1 Educational Preparation

Today’s IHE emergency manager typically possesses a master’s degree in emergency management, public administration, or a related field, as well as experience working in federal or state emergency management agencies. In IHEs, 85% of emergency managers have a bachelor’s degree or higher (Sullivan 2011) compared with only 57% of emergency managers in counties (Clarke 2006). Findings from an informal survey distributed to members of the International Association of Emergency Managers (IAEM) and county emergency managers in rural North Dakota suggest that county emergency managers receive less formal education than their counterparts in large urban areas, cities, or IHEs. This trend is consistent with US census data: residents of metropolitan areas tend to have attained a higher educational level than residents of rural areas (Department of Commerce 2012).

While there is no evidence that individuals with a formal education in emergency management are any more or less capable than those emergency managers without a college degree or certification, an emphasis on education and training by emergency management organizations and associations suggests that formal education increases managers’ proficiency and subsequent success. The data suggest that emergency managers in municipalities and states are more mature, have attained their position by way of the “traditional” career path, and have more experience in the field. In contrast, emergency managers in IHEs are practitioners of a new discipline; are educated in emergency management; understand the field as distinct from emergency response; and acknowledge that the role is political, civilian, and administrative rather than prescriptive, bureaucratic, and responsive in nature. The new generation of emergency managers is also beginning to infiltrate federal, state, and local emergency management agencies, which will no doubt alter the composition and philosophy of these organizations to the same degree that it is shaping emergency management in IHEs.

3.2 Demographic Characteristics

The demographics of IHE emergency management offices are comparable to those of municipal and state emergency management organizations in that the field is predominantly male and Caucasian: according to a recent survey, only 27% of IHE emergency managers are women (Sullivan 2011). Our experience indicates, however, that emergency management in higher education is becoming more diverse as the field expands to include various specialties, such as continuity of operations planning, hazard mitigation, and community training, which
are being filled by women and minorities from emergency management undergraduate and graduate programs.

Of the 6000 “emergency management director” positions documented by the BLS in 2012, 0% were identified as women, black or African American, Asian, Hispanic or Latino, whereas women as a proportion of firefighters and police officers comprise 3.4% and 12.6%, respectively, and minorities constitute 18.7% and 29.7%, respectively (BLS 2012a) – an indication that the transition of women and minorities from emergency response fields (law enforcement and fire and rescue) to emergency management is not occurring as frequently as history and our argument suggests. Whether this is an anomaly in reporting and data collection or a true reflection of the field’s demographics requires further research.

3.3 Compensation

The average annual salary of IHE emergency managers is approximately $73,500 (University of Oregon 2012). By comparison, the average annual salary of municipal emergency management director is $65,400 (Findthedata.org 2013). According to data collected by the BLS (2012b), the average annual salary for all emergency management directors is approximately $65,000. These data suggest that IHEs compensate emergency managers slightly more than other public or private organizations do.

3.4 Typical Duties

The ordinary duties of an IHE emergency manager are a conglomerate of functions typically shared by multiple positions in the federal, state, local, or private sector. Today’s collegiate emergency manager is expected to serve as the institution’s

1. Hazard mitigation expert
2. Emergency planner
3. Exercise coordinator
4. Grant administrator
5. Emergency notification system administrator
6. Emergency operations center manager
7. Continuity of operations manager.

This array of duties in many ways does not differ markedly from those of an urban emergency manager. However, upon closer review we may find some significant
differences. The following is an excerpt from a recent online posting for an emergency management coordinator at an IHE:

Attend emergency preparedness meetings with local, regional, state, and federal level agencies, and report outcomes, decisions, recommendations to university administration and appropriate committees; coordinate and ensure all first responders receive National Incident Management System (NIMS) training; coordinate training programs and emergency operations drills to prepare university staff to respond quickly and effectively to emergencies; coordinate implementation of the Unified/Incident Command System within the university; identify systems and operational problems and recommend solutions; coordinate university participation in the University Mutual Aid Plan; and perform a variety of related duties incidental to the work described herein. Annual review and update of the University Crisis Management Plan; and conduct exercises to test the university’s response to a variety of crisis situations (University of Texas Arlington 2013).

Additional duties that may require the leadership or involvement of IHE emergency managers include managing situations that affect students participating in study-abroad programs; coordinating or supporting major event planning and execution; routine drills required by such campus venues as sports arenas and theaters; and working with various campus departments to ensure that emergency management strategies are integrated appropriately into university policies, handbooks, and programs. Like their urban counterparts, IHE emergency managers are involved in coordinating or directing certain emergency response functions. They are also expected to conduct threat and vulnerability assessments on campus, conduct one or two serious readiness exercises each year, work on emergency plans for individual departments or colleges, build collaborative support from university administrators, and engage faculty and students in preventive activities to mitigate risks. The reality is, however, that for many IHE emergency managers, this agenda of “normal” tasks is somewhat rare and constantly shifting.

Apart from what has been cited thus far, there are at least three additional duties that an IHE emergency manager may be assigned or may assume, which in our opinion are not part of the role of a typical urban emergency manager:

- **Campus safety (i.e., Clery Act reporting, security, and compliance with National Fire Protection Association or state fire safety regulations)**. This is a separate discipline requiring a defined skill set that, if assigned to the campus emergency manager, detracts from that manager’s ability to execute the various responsibilities necessary to address the four phases of emergency management.

- **Support of the academic mission of the university through teaching and research**. Teaching and scholarship require a significant investment in time,
education, and practice that the emergency manager cannot, in our opinion, perform without detriment to his or her principal duties. Thus, it is critical both to define the role of the emergency manager in IHE and to distinguish between emergency management as a profession and emergency management as an educational discipline to be managed by faculty for the benefit of emergency management students.

- **Compliance with special federal and state requirements that pertain to colleges.** Some states have stipulated requirements for the emergency coordinator or director as well as specific emergency preparedness requirements for IHEs; other states have left the determination of how emergency management is executed up to each institution. For example, in the Commonwealth of Virginia, the Office of the Governor Executive Order 41 (Virginia 2011) requires all public IHEs to appoint an emergency coordination officer, maintain an EOP, develop a COOP that fits a specific template, conduct functional exercises of both the university’s EOP and COOP annually, and perform numerous miscellaneous responsibilities deemed necessary by the Office of the Governor.

Other duties typically placed on IHE emergency managers include requirements to support statewide plans. For example, Executive Order of the Governor RP57 (Texas 2013) requires that colleges and universities “provide transportation assets and facilities to enable the execution of state and local evacuation and shelter plans.” As the inclusion of IHE emergency management into larger statewide plans often adds additional duties beyond the control of the institution through unfunded mandates, they thereby create challenges for IHEs to the extent that lawmakers do not consider the relative impact of these mandates on the institutions’ resources, budgets, and staffing.

Like all emergency management disciplines, collaboration and coordination with internal and external stakeholders requires time and finesse to be successful. Because an IHE emergency manager must maintain a delicate balance between work and the unique political atmosphere of higher education, the semi-autonomous governance of university departments, and diverse operations demanding support, the manager can quickly become overwhelmed. If the IHE’s budget allows for additional staff, the director of emergency management may be able to assign a portion of these responsibilities to an assistant director, intern, or emergency management specialist.

Size and resources are a challenge for any organization desiring to construct a comprehensive emergency management program; small IHEs may not have the staff or resources to address the various federal requirements, let alone develop
hazard mitigation, preparedness, response, and continuity programs. The development of IHE-specific grant and resource opportunities, such as the Department of Education’s Emergency Management for Higher Education Grant Program and the Department of Homeland Security’s Campus Resiliency Program, are further evidence that emergency management in IHEs is a distinct vocation that requires specific resources and expertise. Needless to say, the smaller the organization, the more challenging it is to comply with imposed regulations. Fortunately, the IHE community shares plans and programs willingly with other members needing assistance or guidance.

Finally, a valid argument can be made that in certain urban environments where large college campuses are found, IHE emergency managers would be remiss to plan and execute programs for the campus without efforts to coordinate resources, risk assessments, and related issues with the cognizant urban emergency manager. Fire and rescue, police support, transportation, evacuation, and other matters will likely benefit from a joint review that enables both campus and urban emergency managers to assess relevant issues.

3.5 Criteria for Performance Assessment

Part of the challenge in defining the role of emergency management in IHEs is the absence of any clear understanding of what that constitutes and what the appropriate responsibilities of an IHE emergency manager are. A national association dedicated to emergency management in IHEs can be a tremendous asset in defining this function.

The extent to which terms like successful and effective make sense in assessing the actual performance of urban and collegiate-based emergency managers is a topic worth further study in and of itself. Which organizational accomplishments are directly attributable to the emergency manager’s abilities remains a fairly unexamined issue. For example, is an emergency manager deemed “effective” or “successful” if his or her

- Program has the continuing support of top managers?
- Requested budgets are typically approved without changes?
- Educational efforts to inform faculty, staff, and students are always supported?
- Emergency programs have actually mitigated or prevented an emergency?
- Efforts have been coordinated with safety and security programs?

This is not to make the subject of effectiveness and success even murkier but to draw attention to the ambiguous nature of assessing emergency manager per-
formance. Surely the prevention of emergencies seems just as important as the prompt response to emergencies, but is mitigation less valued than recovery? It is yet another important issue that merits a closer look and a better understanding of the elements involved.

4 Support for Emergency Management in IHEs

Aside from the legitimacy and professionalism one can ascribe to IHE emergency managers within the emerging discipline of emergency management, the IHE emergency management community is currently engaged in a spirited dialogue regarding best practices and its future. Right now, the various IHE consortia and caucuses that have formed as components of larger national and state associations are generously sharing information, plans, exercises, and resources; however, a compendium or directory of best practices has yet to be established.

A disorganized community of practice has developed to support IHE emergency managers. IAEM holds a college and university caucus; the University of Oregon manages the Disaster Resistant University, which maintains an associated and heavily trafficked e-mail list; and federal agencies have contributed to the effort with guidance for IHEs in such publications as Building a Disaster-Resistant University (Federal Emergency Management Agency [FEMA] 2003), Action Guide for Emergency Management at Institutions of Higher Education (U.S. Department of Education 2010), and A Guide to Developing High-Quality Emergency Operations Plans (U.S. Department of Education 2013). In addition, FEMA conducts an annual Higher Education Consortium, and numerous consortia and local caucuses have formed across the country to facilitate dialogue among IHEs regarding emergency management issues. However, the IHE emergency management community is really just a network of a few individuals who tie the various divergent efforts together through their involvement in national, state, and local associations. Thus, while existing caucuses, associations, and individual efforts are extremely valuable and participation is worthwhile, better coordination, symmetry, and consistency should be sought and orchestrated among these parallel efforts.

Despite attempts to define the practice of emergency management in IHEs, an enigmatic climate remains because discussions about it in reports and literature often confuse or intertwine it with the teaching of emergency management. For example, the phrase “emergency management higher education community” (Cwiak 2012) is used to describe the collective group of
emergency management educators rather than practitioners of emergency management in IHEs. There is a general consensus that scholarship in IHEs is leading the charge in shaping the future of emergency management through the exploration of new technologies, practices, and formal education (Hite 2003); however, it is imperative to distinguish between the practice and study of emergency management.

Although these two functions are housed within the same institution, the academic and administrative divisions of the organization may or may not be in sync (Rothman et al. 2011). At many IHEs the collaborative relationship between the faculty teaching emergency management and the on-campus administrative staff of emergency management professionals simply does not exist. In fact, there is some evidence that on certain college campuses, professors who teach emergency management may actually avoid collaborating or consulting with campus emergency managers because they may be uncomfortable reconciling the academic and operational dimensions of the job. This may seem strange given the apparent kinship between the two groups. However, one valid explanation for this anomaly is that one group is theoretical and academic in nature while the other is pragmatic and administrative.

5 Current Challenges

Many challenges faced by IHE emergency managers are similar to those faced by their county, municipal, state, and federal counterparts: shortage of personnel, limited resources, shrinking budgets, and an increasingly complex litany of federal and state requirements. However, IHEs are unique in both organizational structure and expectations: unlike in state, private, and municipal organizations, hierarchies and lines of authority in IHEs are largely symbolic. IHEs tend to conform to the professional bureaucracy organizational structure (Mintzberg 1986), which is characterized by a consolidation of power within the faculty and individual departments rather than a traditional top-down hierarchy. Thus, most college campuses resemble small cities with various stakeholders vying for resources. And this poses three significant challenges.

5.1 Untraditional Organizational Structure

First, the on-campus organizational structure does not lend itself to the traditional methods of prescriptive emergency management strategies. In a municipal, county, state, or federal organization, it is much easier to define the roles of
agency or department employees because their responsibilities in an emergency do not deviate drastically from their routine responsibilities. For example, in an emergency, the transportation department, state police, and fire and rescue agency are assigned responsibilities to provide transportation, maintain security, and establish incident command, respectively – tasks that are consistent with their day-to-day duties.

In IHEs, however, emergency management procedures must be “negotiated” with the faculty and staff, who must be solicited, trained, and exercised to fill roles needed to prepare for, respond to, and recover from emergencies. Should a crisis arise, personnel from various disparate functions are expected to come together (Weick 1976) and assume unique roles distinct from their normal duties. This structure largely depends upon the political capital and goodwill garnered by the emergency manager and on the meta-leadership the manager is able to exercise.

However, the flexibility that this model lends to emergency response strategies gives it an advantage over the federal, state, or local emergency management organizational structure. While public emergency management systems can be bureaucratic and regimented, research suggests that the loosely coupled networks typically found in IHEs can actually be more effective at responding to emergencies (Neal and Phillips 1995) because they are more adaptable and receptive to novel solutions. Unfortunately, without a model or systematic process to leverage this advantage, the inherent value is lost in IHEs.

5.2 Inconsistent Standards and Undefined Best Practices

Second, there is no blueprint for emergency programs in higher education; no consistency among IHEs in how emergency programs are organized and maintained; and very little in the way of best practices beyond the information shared at symposiums, consortiums, and discussion groups. It is evident that IHE are migrating toward a core set of emergency management competencies. For example, there have been attempts – some successful – to apply the Emergency Management Accreditation Program to IHEs; the Department of Homeland Security is currently working with six universities to develop a campus resiliency pilot program that aims to discover best practices; and some “standards” are beginning to emerge within IHE emergency management consortiums and caucuses, although very few, if any, are documented. These efforts are being driven by the tight emergency management community that has formed around IHEs, the federal government’s growing attention to this discipline, and the increased representation of IHEs in emergency management associations. But despite these efforts, what is neces-
sary to define and solidify the strategies that are most appropriate for IHEs is an association of IHE emergency managers that can facilitate this process and map the professionalization of emergency management in IHEs.

5.3 Heightened Expectations and Unfunded Mandates

The third significant challenge to IHE emergency managers lies in the expectations placed upon them by federal and state agencies. With the increase in public attention to emergencies – specifically, active shooter events – at IHEs, there has been a corresponding increase in federal regulations designed to mitigate threats to students. Although most college campuses are no less safe and, arguably, are safer than most communities and public venues, IHEs are mandated to both inform the public annually of the crimes and fires that have occurred on campus and notify the community within a “reasonable” amount of time whenever an immediate threat to its safety exists (Clery Act 1990; Higher Education Opportunity Act 2008). Imagine for a moment if these requirements applied to shopping malls, municipalities, counties, or houses of worship? The standards applied to IHEs far exceed the expectations of the general public or the communities served by local, state, and federal agencies. While the intention behind these regulations is beneficent, albeit unfunded and slightly abstruse, it does emphasize the need for emergency management programs at IHEs. Moreover, these regulations can be used as leverage to advocate for additional resources, staff, and compliance with and participation in emergency management programs.

6 Future Issues Integral to the Development of Emergency Management in IHEs

Understanding the distinct environment of IHEs and what it means for the application of emergency management strategies is critical to developing effective emergency management programs. Unfunded mandates from state governments, as well as guidance from federal agencies that do not appreciate the complexity and nuances of IHEs, can cause frustration among IHE emergency managers. If we agree that the application of emergency management principals at IHEs is still relatively new, most emergency managers are engaged in program development, which demands a significantly greater investment of effort than engagement in established programs. As the discipline evolves, IHE emergency managers must be able to articulate the strategies that have proven to be most successful on our
nation’s campuses. The specific challenges facing these managers are similar to those faced by the emergency management community at large – with some very subtle but important distinctions. We identify three principal issues that demand further attention: defining the role of the emergency manager in IHEs, recognizing that this function is a specialty within emergency management, and improving access to the field for minorities and women.

6.1 Defining the Role of the Emergency Managers in IHE

Efforts to define the role of IHE emergency managers appear to face three primary challenges.

1. The job duties and scope of responsibilities of IHE emergency managers – and of emergency managers in general – remain vague. The Center for Collaborative Policy at California State University in Sacramento released a report concluding that “there is not a true national view on the role and scope of duties for the emergency manager role” (Sutkus et al. 2011: p. 2), much less a vision for the IHE emergency manager role. “Emergency management in higher education” must be clearly defined; too often this phrase is used interchangeably to refer to the development of curriculum and teaching of emergency management in higher education to advance the profession and the actual practice of emergency management in the community. We argue that there must be a distinction between the academic role of higher education in the field of emergency management and the practical application of emergency management principals in IHEs. Scholarship and administration are two very different professions, both in their skill sets and their functions within IHEs.

2. The location of emergency management with IHEs has significant ramifications for the success of emergency management programs. It is evident that as the field of emergency management evolves, it is less likely to be a subfunction of police or public safety. Assuming that emergency management is a wholly administrative function and not an offshoot of an academic program, the positioning of emergency management within the IHE organizational structure should be explored, and best practices should be developed.

3. There is an arguable distinction between emergency management in IHEs and emergency management in other environments. IHEs present a unique environment that does not lend itself to conventional applications of emergency management principals; their politics, culture, and organizational structure demand unique strategies to mitigate, prepare for, respond to, and recover
from emergencies. In addition, the numerous federal and state requirements to which IHEs are subject present challenges not faced by emergency managers in other environments.

6.2 Recognizing Emergency Management in IHEs

an Emergency Management Specialty

The emergency management community of academics and practitioners continues to explore and define the role of emergency management and seek to understand the knowledge and experiential basis expected from an emergency management professional. Just as engineering, health care, and technical fields have specialized knowledge, so too should the emergency management field. Carol Cwiak outlines the characteristics of a “profession” as a field’s ability to create “dependence in others, its ability to control entry into it, and its ability to control itself internally” (Cwiak 2011: p. 10) through its monopoly, autonomy, and authority over specific knowledge. We agree that this is essential to the profession of emergency management; however, we also recognize that this scope is far too broad to make any significant advances in creating more qualified and competent IHE emergency managers. The assumption that a core set of competencies can satisfy the demands of the unique environment of IHEs is misguided. Instead we argue that, in addition to defining a basic set of emergency management principals, the industry must begin to develop specific competencies and resources for the various branches of emergency management (e.g., federal, state, municipal, county, higher education, and business). This strategy requires the development of three essential components:

1. Associations dedicated to emergency management in IHEs. At present, there are numerous organizations or associations that address emergency management in higher education, but they are tangential to either the organization’s primary audience or its mission. Caucuses and consortiums are excellent forums for sharing best practices and raising the challenges of emergency management in IHEs, but they are insufficient to address the issues outlined above.

2. A specific curriculum for emergency management education programs focusing on the role of emergency management in IHEs. Professional associations can play an instrumental role in developing and vetting this curriculum for higher education academic programs.

3. Certification for professionals specializing in IHE emergency management. Certifications, certificates, or degrees in IHE emergency management will
reinforce the unique nature of this field while simultaneously improving the quality of the professionals in it through the implementation of standards and educational requirements. We see this as an urgent educational challenge for both urban and campus emergency managers (McCreight 2009).

6.3 Improving Access to the Field of Emergency Management for Women and Minorities

Anecdotal evidence and personal experience suggest that the field of emergency management is being diversified by the induction of the newest generation of emergency managers in IHEs. Nevertheless, significant work must still be done to attract women and minorities to the field. Perhaps, despite the new generation’s attempts to define it as wholly unique and progressive, the emergency management profession has to some degree inherited the stigma of emergency response organizations as a male occupation unfriendly to women and minorities. But women and minorities in the field can strengthen an organization’s cultural competency, can offer alternative perspectives that lead to better programs, and can create opportunities for underrepresented groups. Their representation in the field of emergency management can be accomplished in many ways, some of which are under the purview of emergency managers in IHEs. Internships, job opportunities, and recruitment of candidates through the occasional guest lecture or public forum can solicit greater interest and subsequent career-seeking behavior in underrepresented groups.

7 Conclusion

Our intention with this article is to advance conversations regarding the role of emergency managers in IHEs and to raise key issues for future research. At the outset, any comparison of the practice of emergency management among urban, private sector, and collegiate settings requires a closer look. Looming questions about the emergency management field in general continue to stall any serious progress toward defining emergency management as a profession in IHEs; however, if the emergency management community at large begins to address the issues of job scope and function on a discipline-by-discipline basis, perhaps these questions can be addressed in a systematic and pragmatic manner to produce a clear and concise formula for developing competent professionals in the various environments requiring emergency managers.
A disciplined approach can also be used to explore standards for individual emergency management career tracks and establish the competencies needed to mature within a particular field or transition to a new branch of emergency management. For example, emergency managers may often transition from urban to IHE emergency management because their responsibilities in those environments are quite similar even though their career entry points and trajectories are quite different. If “specialties” are developed within emergency management, corresponding curricula and certifications can follow, which will provide further constraints on entry into the field while simultaneously ensuring that entrants possess the most basic knowledge to be successful. In this way the profession will be able to control entry through knowledge monopoly, autonomy, and authority (Cwiak 2011).

Despite all of the calls for research to support emergency management strategies, we seem to know much less about the community of IHE emergency managers than we should. With the exception of a handful of surveys, conference papers, and conference presentations, very little primary empirical research has been done on the duties, structure, culture, and practice of emergency management in IHEs. In order to advance the field of emergency management in IHEs and to provide adequate and properly tailored support to these unique communities, emergency managers in IHEs should advocate for a multifaceted approach to exploring the profession of emergency management, one that includes IHE emergency management as a distinct specialty.

Further research and serious examination of a comparative and focused nature is needed to assess the task domains of IHE emergency managers, to examine this career in juxtaposition to its urban counterpart, and to find ways of structuring appropriate academic preparedness programs for the related fields. Sorting this out not only will advance emergency management in the United States but also has global value.

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David Farris, MBA, is Director of Emergency Management and Fire Safety at George Mason Uni-
versity in Fairfax Virginia. He has over nine years of experience working in higher education and
is pursuing a PhD in Higher Education Administration from George Mason University’s College
of Education and Human Development.

Robert McCreight, spent 26 years at the State Department and 27 years concurrent Special
Operations Army Service handling crisis management, terrorism, intelligence, weapons proli-
feration and NATO policy planning. He has taught graduate programs in crisis and emergency
management at George Washington, Georgetown, and Penn State Universities.