SUCCESS STORIES

Promoting Emergency Preparedness Among Non-English Speaking Students

About The Practice of Emergency Preparedness

When Miami Dade College (MDC) received a U.S. Department of Education Emergency Management for Higher Education (EMHE) grant in 2009, it planned, among other goals, "to improve the college community's level of awareness regarding emergency operations and preparedness resources, and improve interagency collaboration and communication with the agencies that serve and protect MDC."[1] While many institutions of higher education work to improve emergency management at their sites by bettering communication with their constituent population, for Miami Dade College achieving this goal took on a unique dimension. After beginning their grant work, MDC EMHE staff soon recognized that a prime factor in improving communication with its diverse population of students and staff is bridging the ethnic and linguistic differences among them.

With over 174,000 students and eight separate campuses, Miami Dade College is the largest institution of higher education in the United States. Located in southern Florida and spanning most of Miami-Dade County, the college's campus community comprises a diverse array of ethnic and linguistic backgrounds. The majority of students are Hispanic (69 percent), and Spanish is the native language of 42 percent of the student body. When Patrice McDaniel, program manager in emergency management at MDC, and her colleagues began working on the communication piece of their EMHE grant, they quickly realized that one of the key components of improving college community awareness of emergency operations and preparedness resources would be to ensure these important materials were available in the primary languages of as many members of the school community as possible.

Percentage of Miami Dade For-Credit Students, by Ethnicity: 2009	
Percentage	**Student Ethnicity**
8	white non-Hispanic
19	black non-Hispanic
69	Hispanic
4	other

Source: Miami Dade College Facts in Brief available at http://www.mdc.edu/main/about/facts_in_brief.asp last accessed Jan. 31, 2012

Over the course of the two years of EMHE grant work, McDaniel and her colleagues completed several major efforts to improve emergency preparedness at the college. These included activities intended to familiarize students, faculty, and staff with the new emergency mass notification system installed on all eight campuses. This new system uses a unique tone and provides prepared messages giving instructions on how to respond to a variety of different incidents, including dangerous situations, hazardous conditions, weather emergencies, and evacuations.

The MDC EMHE team also used grant funds to create a new emergency management preparedness website, which McDaniel and her team saw as the perfect tool to disseminate information and training on the new notification system. Going a step further to address the needs specific to the diverse MDC population, McDaniel and her team improved information dissemination by creating content videos providing the needed training, translating them into multiple languages, and posting them to the new website.

Accomplishing another key grant goal—improving interagency communication—McDaniel and her team worked with school and Miami-Dade community

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1 EMHE grant abstracts, available at http://rems.ed.gov/docs/EMHE_FY2009_GranteeAbstracts.pdf

partners to write, produce, film, and disseminate these multilingual informative videos. McDaniel wrote the scripts herself, utilizing her background in emergency and disaster management. She aligned what she knew with the information in the emergency mass notification system messages to develop steps for taking protective actions. Then she connected with MDC Media Services to do the filming of the videos and partnered with college and community emergency service providers to create the scenes for filming.

"We had some (functional training) exercises planned with some of the campuses and external partners, and we used these opportunities and partnerships to film the exercises as the background and explanation for the training in the video," McDaniel said. "For example, filming the dangerous situation video worked well with an active shooter drill we had planned at West Campus with the Doral Police Department. Our community partners lent credibility to the videos." In addition, McDaniel used a fire drill at the Hialeah Campus with the City of Hialeah Fire Department and campus personnel present to serve as the basis for three more videos: one on fire, one on general evacuation, and one on areas of refuge. Even the local Channel 7 news chief meteorologist helped out on the severe weather video, and another familiar local entity, the Public Information Office for the City of Miami Department of Fire-Rescue Hazardous Materials Team, did the introduction and conclusion to the hazardous condition videos. Utilizing key safety personnel from the campus and community to serve as the spokespersons for the videos helped lend credibility to the messages and increased collaboration with partners.

Campus Media Services sent videographers to collect the appropriate footage from the drills. After the drills were concluded, volunteer students and staff went to a classroom where McDaniel directed some of the remaining shots needed to complete the videos. Media Services then edited them and provided a rough cut on DVD with English subtitles. Finally, the video scripts were translated, and Media Services created the subtitled versions in the various languages. Each video is around only two to three minutes to maintain audience interest.

Thanks to MDC recognizing a need and capitalizing on available resources, today its students and staff can access important instructional clips on how to respond in an emergency and are familiar with the school's new mass notification system. Both are provided in English, Spanish, Creole, and American Sign Language versions.

Overcoming Challenges
MDC was able to use a variety of campus resources to produce these videos at low or no cost. The only cost incurred was for some of the translations. Even then, McDaniel and her staff were able to draw on the help around them. "Finding and securing translators was the biggest obstacle, at first. Then I realized we had the languages right here on campus." Translators were selected from among the language experts in the system's diverse language departments.

McDaniel also acknowledges that cost would have been much more significant for this endeavor had the video shooting not been done by the in-house Media Services. "We were lucky that we had a Media Services department that was available and wanted to do this for us." Otherwise, the only challenge experienced by the MDC EMHE grant team in accomplishing these products was a delay in completion. "As with any project like this," said McDaniel, "always build more time into the timeline."

Replicating Success
The translated videos are currently available for viewing on the MDC emergency preparedness website. In addition, they are shown at advisory committee meetings, at new employee orientations, and at new student orientations. Based on the reception to them so far, McDaniel highly recommends that other institutions complete similar training tools for their school communities. "It is a great idea for other institutions to be cognizant of their demographics and be able to reach out to their other communities, and in doing so, be able to use their college resources. There are always people with exceptional skills, and when you collaborate, it really helps."

Visit Miami Dade College's Emergency Preparedness website at http://www.mdc.edu/main/prepare/default.asp

To view the Dangerous Situation video, visit http://www.mdc.edu/main/prepare/emergency/dangeroussituation.asp
(available in English, or with English, Spanish, or Creole subtitles)

To view the Hazardous Condition video, visit http://www.mdc.edu/main/prepare/emergency/hazardouscondition.asp (available in English, or with English, Spanish, or Creole subtitles, or in American Sign Language)

To view the Weather Emergency video, visit http://www.mdc.edu/main/prepare/emergency/weatheremergency.asp (available in English, or with English, Spanish, or Creole subtitles, or in American Sign Language)

To view the Emergency Phones video, visit http://www.mdc.edu/main/prepare/emergency/emergencyphones.asp (available in English, or with English, Spanish, or Creole subtitles, or in American Sign Language)

To view the Evacuation video, visit http://www.mdc.edu/main/prepare/emergency/evacuation.asp (available in English, or with English, Spanish, or Creole subtitles)

To view the Fire video, visit http://www.mdc.edu/main/prepare/emergency/in_case_of_fire.asp (available in English, or with English, Spanish, or Creole subtitles)

To view the Areas of Refuge video, visit http://www.mdc.edu/main/prepare/emergency/areas_of_refuge.asp (available in English, or with English, Spanish, or Creole subtitles)

To view the MDC Alerts video, visit http://www.mdc.edu/main/prepare/emergency/mdc_alerts.asp (available in English, or with English or Spanish subtitles)