

Institutions of higher learning and their surrounding communities depend on each other to prepare for disasters and reduce potential losses of life and property. Universities and colleges can provide the expertise, technical resources, and research support that communities need to improve their resistance to hazards. At the same time, communities that reduce their vulnerability to hazards and develop strong emergency management plans offer a safer and more secure environment for local colleges and universities.



Recognizing this mutually beneficial opportunity for collaboration, many communities have built risk reduction partnerships with colleges and universities, combining and leveraging their resources to improve risk management more effectively than they could individually.

Benefits of Partnership

Hazard mitigation partnerships between communities and institutions of higher education generate knowledge, solve problems, and aid in planning. Examples of collaboration through partnerships include:

- Developing hazard mitigation plans.
- Sharing expertise and access to specialized tools, such as geographic information systems (GIS).
- Conducting watershed management studies.
- Conducting risk assessments of exposures and vulnerabilities.
- Providing architectural and engineering assistance.
- Conducting attitudinal community surveys.
- Developing emergency management course curricula.
- Facilitating student-led retrofit and mitigation projects (e.g., safe rooms).
- Hosting university mitigation symposiums, business preparedness meetings, and professional retrofit seminars.
- Conducting marketing activities, cooperative extension activities, and awareness seminars.
- Developing and assisting in grant applications and planning processes.

What Colleges and Universities Can Offer

Colleges and universities can help communities strengthen their resistance and preparedness in three basic ways:

Education/Instruction

- Provide educational workshops and training for community leaders.
- Incorporate risk management topics into course curricula.
- Initiate student community service learning projects.
- Help communities in their public education and outreach efforts.

Research

- Gather information and conduct analyses to help communities make better hazard risk reduction decisions.

Service

- Apply expert knowledge to solve community problems.
- Offer GIS labs, meeting rooms, conference facilities, and other resources to support the community's emergency management program.
- Provide technical staff to facilitate meetings and coordinate projects.
- Work with the local business community to address their vulnerability to local hazard risks.

What Communities Offer

To help colleges and universities mitigate risk, communities can offer the following:

Assistance from Local Government Agencies

- Hazard mitigation planners, public safety units, and local planning divisions can offer data and technical assistance such as mapping.
- Planning departments maintain demographic, economic, and physical data, and planners can offer meeting facilitation, research skills, and extensive contacts.
- Staff and other individuals connected to local schools, park districts, regional government associations, flood control districts, fire suppression programs, and vegetation management districts can provide hazard information, technical support, and post-disaster impact data.

Access to Non-Governmental Resources

- Nonprofit and voluntary organizations, such as the American Red Cross and United Way, offer emergency preparedness materials that colleges and universities can use to help prepare faculty, staff, and students for possible disasters.
- Local businesses may provide technical assistance, staff support, and even financial support to the disaster planning effort.
- Community leaders and members can serve as guest instructors or speakers.
- Local governments and businesses can provide mentoring, internships, and fellowships to college or university students, staff, and faculty.

Input from Infrastructure Providers

- Utilities and repair services have critical information about the security of utility connections and service on a campus, and thus should be involved in college and university planning efforts.
- Community transportation specialists can provide important information and resources, particularly for evacuation plans.

Building Partnerships

Partnerships Initiated by the Community

Community leaders can initiate partnerships with colleges and universities by developing relationships with the president or chancellor, offices within the institution, and interested faculty and staff. Local emergency managers can identify appropriate faculty and staff through informal networks, contacting academic departments that may be interested in community risk reduction projects, and contacting centers and institutes that help with risk reduction activities. Typically, the president or chancellor will be responsible for entering into a partnership on behalf of the institution. However, a specific division of a college or university will often act as the driving force for successful partnering with communities.



Courtesy of United States Department of Agriculture.

Partnerships Initiated by Educational Institutions

A college or university can take the first step toward partnership by forming an advisory committee to identify individuals within the institution who will make decisions about the emergency plan and individuals in the community who can serve as resources. Professionals on campus who are already involved in emergency preparedness, crisis response, or risk management should be involved in the committee. Community stakeholders, such as officials from local government and key businesses, should also be involved. The committee must be able to build strong relationships to facilitate compromise and engender commitments to implement the disaster mitigation plan.



Resources

US Environmental Protection Agency
Local Emergency Planning Committee Database
www.epa.gov/ceppo/lepclist.htm

Campus Firewatch
www.campus-firewatch.com

Campus Safety Health and Environmental Management Association
www.cshema.org

FEMA How-To Guide: Building a Disaster Resistant University
www.fema.gov/fima/dru.shtm

National Association of College and University Business Officers
www.nacubo.org

National Center for Education Statistics
nces.ed.gov/globallocator

Society for College and University Planning
www.scup.org

University Risk Management & Insurance Association
www.urmia.org

Public Entity Risk Institute
www.riskinstitute.org

Building Partnerships to Reduce Hazard Risks

Tips for Community Officials, Colleges and Universities

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