Managing the Unthinkable: Are YOU Ready?

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Today’s Speakers

Moderator
Gretchen M. Bataille, President, GMB Consulting Group; and Strategic Partner, ROI Consulting Group

Panelists
Janice Abraham, President and CEO, United Educators
Cynthia Lawson, Vice President for Public Relations and Communications, DePaul University
Teresa Valerio Parrot, Principal, TVP Communications
Joseph Urgo, Senior Fellow, Association of American Colleges and Universities; Former President, St. Mary's College of Maryland

Managing the Unthinkable
Agenda

• Introduction
• Preparing for Campus Crises
• Communications During and After a Crisis
• A President’s Role/Perspective
• The Support System Necessary for a Campus
• Q & A
Preparing for Campus Crises

- Understanding Roles
  - President/Chancellor
  - Communications by Vice Presidents and Senior Leaders
Develop and Practice Your Plan

• An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure; proactive crisis mitigation is a MUST
• Hire an outside firm to assess your institution’s plan and crisis readiness
• Ensure that your crisis response plan is ICS-compliant
• Avoid a potential management crisis; make sure your leadership team participates in tabletop scenarios and drills
• Practice without electricity
Role of the President/Chancellor

• Chief spokesperson at press conferences
• Consultation, advice, and encouragement
• Investigation or assessment: What needs to change?
  – People
  – Processes
  – Policies
• Support and backing for subordinates’ rapid decision making
• And remember: *Don’t let the crisis deter your role and responsibilities as university president.*
# Communications Roles of Vice Presidents and Senior Leaders

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<td>Board; National: Senators, Representatives, US President</td>
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How To Shape Media Coverage

• You can never go wrong by telling the truth
• Communication must reflect the institution’s short- and long-term interests
• Ensure your talking points summarize the current state of events and provide direction for the future
• Provide resources to help tell the story
• Ask national associations to provide context
Media Tips for Presidents and Campus Leaders

- Remember your job is to be a leader—now is the time to live it.
- Ensure statements that bear your name sound like words you would say.
- Write in words the “average person” understands and avoid jargon.
- Share information that tells your story and then stop talking.
- Watch and learn from others as they navigate through crises.
What To Avoid With The Media

- Don’t “spin”
- Don’t use “no comment” as a response
- Don’t go off the record
- Don’t take too long to respond to the media’s questions
- Don’t make a reporter resort to Freedom of Information Act requests to obtain information
- Don’t respond when you are exhausted
- Don’t take public responses personally
Managing the Unthinkable
Team, Integrity, Community

• The crisis no one planned for
• Moratorium on blame
• Assemble expertise based on needs
• Responsiveness, responsibility, and the community’s future
The Support System to Weather a Crisis

- Strong Leadership
  - Set the tone
  - Provide resources
  - Establish roles and responsibilities
The Crisis Response Plan

- Identifying potential crises
  - Question sacred cows
- Practice, practice, practice
- Communicate the plan to the community
Rebuilding the Team

- “Cool Head, Warm Heart” response to crisis
- Provide emotional support to the community and to your team
- Open communication at all levels to rebuild community together
Advice From President and Chancellors

• Make balanced decisions
  – Surround yourself with people who have a huge amount of common sense; take advice from them
  – Take advice from lawyers, but do not allow them to make decisions for you
  – Don’t let a single, particular constituency trump your decision making
Advice, continued

• Provide clear communication
  – Speak with one voice
  – Hire the best PR person or firm that you can
Questions?
For More Information

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