

**Tip Sheet:
Key Communications
Questions to Ask
During a Crisis**



Key Communications Questions Amid Physical Risks

Important: The answers to these questions are not necessarily meant for sharing with the media, campus, or public. **In fact, most aren't.** They are instead intended to ensure the institution knows the facts and is prepared to communicate with care, nuance, and clarity.

FACTS

- 1) What is the exact nature of the physical risk?
- 2) **IF** relevant: Who did what to create this physical risk (e.g., alleged “perpetrators”)? Identify as much detail as possible about the “who,” such as:
 - i) All demographic information.
 - ii) A student? If so, what year, program, hometown, etc.?
 - iii) A faculty or staff member? If so, extent of direct contact with students, years of campus employment, program/office, responsibilities, direct supervisor, etc.
 - iv) A non-student? If so, all physical and demographic details, and be prepared to answer the question: why was this person on campus?
 - v) Has this person ever been involved in something like this before?
- 3) **IF** some *thing* (e.g., utility, system, object, database) is the source of the risk, identify as much detail as possible about the “what,” such as:
 - i) What specifically did it do (e.g., breakdown, get hacked, fall, catch on fire)?
 - ii) What is the purpose of this thing at the institution?
 - iii) Which office/employee(s) is/are responsible for managing this thing?
 - iv) What is the thing’s age, size, use, and manufacturer?
 - v) How often is this thing used?
- 4) When did the incident happen?
- 5) Where?
- 6) How many people have been harmed?
- 7) How many people are still in harm’s way?
- 8) How extensive was the damage?
- 9) What specifically did the institution do immediately in response?
- 10) What do institution policies contain that is relevant to this situation?
- 11) What does the community know about this situation that is correct?
- 12) What is being shared about this situation that is incorrect?

ACTION

- 13) Is further damage still possible?
- 14) What can those on campus do to minimize the risk to themselves? And how can the institution help?
- 15) When will the risk end?
- 16) What is the institution doing specifically to end the risk?
- 17) What specifically will the institution be doing to prevent the risk from recurring?
- 18) What is being communicated about this matter in social media, public, rumor mill?
- 19) What specifically has the institution learned from its investigation that it can share?

RESPONSIBILITY

- 20) What could the institution have done to prevent this risk?
- 21) When did the institution first learn of the risk?
- 22) When did the President first learn of the risk?
- 23) What steps has the institution taken previously to mitigate risks like this?
- 24) Has this type of risk happened before? If so, what is different about the institution’s relevant practices or procedures since then?
- 25) Has this risk occurred at other campuses? If so, what lessons were learned at other campuses? How will those lessons be applied at the institution?

Key Communications Questions Amid Values Risks

Important: The answers to these questions are not necessarily meant for sharing with the media, campus, or public. In fact, most aren't. They are instead intended to ensure the institution knows the facts and is prepared to communicate with care, nuance, and clarity.

FACTS

- 1) What is the specific value at stake in this situation?
- 2) Why is that value important to the institution?
- 3) What relevant guidance do institution policies contain around this value?
- 4) What does the community know that is correct?
- 5) What is being shared in the community about this situation that is incorrect?
- 6) **IF** someone on campus was involved in a specific values-risk campus situation:
 - i) Who was it? Answer all possible questions about them (see item #2 in Physical Risks list).
 - ii) What did they say or do specifically?
 - iii) What office, program, or organization do they represent?
 - iv) Have they ever been involved in something like this before?
- 7) **IF** a campus incident is perceived to have violated institution values:
 - i) Where did the situation arise?
 - ii) When did the situation start?
 - iii) How many people heard or saw the situation happen personally?
 - iv) What specifically did the institution do in response?
- 8) **OR:** Are those involved affiliated with an outside group? If so, which one(s), and what do we know about them (see types of questions in #6 and #7 directly above)?

ACTION

- 9) Is further risk to the institution's values from this situation still possible?
- 10) What specific value does the institution want to clarify in this situation?
- 11) How can the institution express this value best for the community—in what language, through what media, to which audiences, on what schedule?
- 12) What is the institution doing specifically to act upon this value?
- 13) What steps will the institution take to act upon this value immediately? In the near future? Long term?
- 14) What can students, faculty, staff, or others do in this situation? And how can the institution help?
- 15) What is being communicated about this matter in social media, public, rumor mill?
- 16) What other audiences will be highly attuned to the institution's language?
- 17) Are there experts/organizations that the institution can turn to for vital insight or shared action?
- 18) What specifically will the institution be doing to prevent this value risk from recurring?

RESPONSIBILITY

- 19) What specifically has the institution learned from this situation that it can share?
- 20) What could the institution have done to prevent this situation?
- 21) When did the institution first learn of the risk?
- 22) When did the President first learn of the risk?
- 23) What steps has the institution taken previously to express related values?
- 24) What steps has the institution taken previously to mitigate values risks like this?
- 25) Has this type of values risk happened before? If so, what is different about the institution's relevant practices or procedures since then?
- 26) Has this values question occurred at other campuses?
 - i) If so, what lessons were learned at other campuses?
 - ii) How will those lessons be applied at the institution?



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