CRISIS MANAGEMENT AT SMALL LIBERAL ARTS COLLEGES:
PERSPECTIVES ON PRESIDENTIAL DECISION MAKING

C. Andrew McGadney
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In Memory of

Naomi Powe McGadney

(1936–1992)
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ABSTRACT

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C. Andrew McGadney

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Moments of crisis, whether on the busy streets of major metropolitan cities or at small, intimate liberal arts campuses across the country, require adept management strategies, effective leadership, and prompt decision-making attributes. As it relates to small liberal arts colleges, their presidents’ ability to manage effectively, lead, inspire, and project confidence during moments of crisis is critical to the success of the communities they serve.

The critical question that this research project addresses is how crisis situations on liberal arts colleges are managed by presidents. This study explores the complexities of crisis management, presidential leadership, and decision-making attributes at three small liberal arts colleges and the responses during different crisis scenarios. The institutions in the study share characteristics in terms of their relative size, private nature, and liberal arts focus. Although the crises differ, the study investigates the preparation, actions during the crisis, and post-crisis review in order to understand crisis management by the leadership of small liberal arts colleges.

I consulted and examined the relevant literature regarding crisis management and presidential leadership; however, I identified a gap in the literature, specifically
as it relates to crisis moments at small liberal arts institutions. I used a comparative case-study approach to analyze the three cases. The results highlight the complications I observed in discussing crisis scenarios at each location, the importance of communication strategies, the influence and value of a highly performing leadership team, and the importance of presidential leadership style.
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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

For more than two decades, I have worked in the higher education field, 17 of those at a small liberal arts college (including four years as a student) and eight years at a small research university. The experiences, learning environment, and close-knit community members created friendships with colleagues and meaningful relationships with faculty members that have lasted to this day. As a product of a liberal arts education, and a current senior administrator at an elite small liberal arts college, the desire and passion to strengthen such institutions is strong.

Breneman (1994) describes the value of liberal arts colleges and universities in the following way:

This relative handful of leading institutions sets the educational standard against which higher education is measured. Students at these institutions have the freedom and opportunity to spend four years immersing themselves in the best that has been written or produced in literature, science, history, philosophy, mathematics, and art; for our society, our culture, to have any ultimate meaning and value, those pursuits must be kept alive and nurtured as the heart of higher learning. By their very nature, true liberal arts colleges are devoted to that task. (p. 10)

There are competing factors that put these special higher education institutions at risk, ranging from a high-cost financial model to philosophical differences within the marketplace (Breneman, 1994; Ferrall, 2011; Zakaria, 2015). However, there are other factors to consider, including crisis management and, in particular, presidential perspectives on decision making during moments of crisis. In order to make the case for the importance of presidential decision making, I will discuss a series of crisis moments at colleges and universities, as well as crisis scenarios in other sectors, presenting the
ample learning opportunities that can be garnered from these examples. In addition, there are leadership lessons to be learned and emulated from for-profit CEOs and presidents in other environments of the higher education landscape. At the close of this chapter, I will offer some definitions of crisis to highlight the type of situations that may affect small liberal arts colleges and universities.

**Background**

Several different cases highlight the need to study crisis management. James Hurst, president of the University of Wyoming, in 1999 dealt with the tragic death of Matthew Shepard, an openly gay student at the university who was robbed, severely beaten, tied to a fence, and left in the cold, ultimately dying at a local hospital.

Another case occurred in 2005, when the national media focused on Lawrence Summers, president of Harvard, who received a vote of no confidence from the arts and sciences faculty. As Tierney (2007) explained, avoiding such a vote (known as "the nuclear option") involved maintaining strong communication lines among the board, president, and members of the faculty, given that a vote of no confidence represents a complete lack of trust. Overcoming this type of vote, however, is unlikely. "It may be possible for a president to hang on and complete the academic year. No one, however, would assert that ‘hanging on’ is conducive to institutional excellence" (Tierney, 2007, p. 51).

In March 2006 Duke University dealt with a scandal involving sexual assault. Crystal Gail Mangum, a student at North Carolina Central University, accused three white students on the lacrosse team of raping her during a party at a team member’s home. The accusation turned out to be fabricated, and the fallout was dramatic.
Prosecutor Mike Nifong was disbarred; Mike Pressler, the head coach of the lacrosse team, was forced to resign. The lacrosse season was canceled, while those named in the case endured months of hell. The case has become notorious for the legal transgressions and abuse that took place, as well as the notions that student athletes are untouchable and that a university may find students guilty until proven innocent (Taylor, 2008).

The biggest university scandal of our era has been the Penn State child-sex-abuse scandal, which went from athletic controversy to "just plain scandal" (de Vise, 2011). In this case, those in leadership positions—both on and off campus—chose to allow Jerry Sandusky, a sexual predator, to remain free for decades. On July 12, 2012, Louis Freeh, director of the FBI, released a report that accused Coach Joe Paterno, former university president Graham Spanier, and others of "deliberately hiding facts about [Jerry] Sandusky’s sexually predatory behavior" (Sablich et al., n.d.).

Crisis moments that involve large groups or communities are not limited to higher education institutions. Crisis scenarios have taken place in many environments, where the opportunities to learn and develop techniques to mitigate crisis may be derived. For-profit companies have dealt with the after-effects of positive and negative crisis management situations as well. For example, in 1989 an Exxon oil tanker, the Exxon Valdez, ran aground in the waters of Prince William Sound in Alaska, dumping more than 11 million gallons of oil, killing close to 35,000 birds, and devastating the Alaskan fishing economy for years. Exxon's CEO, Lawrence Rawl, was considered highly insensitive to the people of Alaska, based upon his seeming lack of urgency in containing the situation (Barton, 2009). By the same token, after Hurricane Katrina devastated New Orleans and the Gulf Coast in 2005, Wal-Mart reacted by expeditiously redirecting
hundreds of its trucks in order to move vital products to the area; it also deployed a
SWAT team to distribute paychecks to employees living in the affected region (Barton,
2009).

All of these cases—whether they involved college campuses, for-profit
companies, or local municipalities—represent crisis moments that leaders and their teams
were forced to manage (some better than others) and exemplify important learning
opportunities for higher education leadership. Although such examples may stem from
different institutions and various parts of the country, they have one thing in common: the
fact that normal operations were fundamentally disrupted by a crisis.

A widely used definition of organizational crisis and crisis management comes
from Pearson and Clair (1998): "An organizational crisis is a low-probability, high-
impact event that threatens the viability of the organization and is characterized by
ambiguity of cause, effect, and means of resolution, as well as by a belief that decisions
must be made swiftly" (p. 60).

Having the perspective of a long-serving community college president is
important, as his or her vantage point in a campus crisis is uniquely relevant:

What is also clear to me is that crises can take many forms. Whether it is a
labor dispute, student disruption on campus, personal tragedy, fire, theft,
sexual assault, financial malfeasance, community furor over a speaker or
an event, unanticipated downturn in enrollment, reduction in funding, or
reduction in force, a board expects the president to demonstrate the
leadership and managerial skills necessary to deal effectively with these
problems and to avoid or else minimize harm to the institution.
(Fanelli, 1997, p. 63)

Such definitions are important to consider, as they highlight the many types of
cases that presidents and/or leadership teams must navigate to mitigate crisis situations
prior to, during, and after an incident.

The ability of college and university presidents to effectively manage, lead, inspire, and project confidence during moments of crisis is critical to the success of the institution and the president’s career, as well as to the communities they serve. Fain points out that "search committees put an increasing value on crisis-management skills when hiring presidents, while presidents and their aides put disaster training higher on their to-do lists" (2007, A17). According to Michael N. Bastedo, associate professor at the University of Michigan's Center for the Study of Higher and Postsecondary Education, this change stems from the aftermath of 9/11. Prior to that event and the crisis that took place when a gunman opened fire on the campus of Virginia Tech University in April 2007, search committees were not prone to ask questions related to crises. These days they are much more likely to investigate this aspect of a president's skill set.

Today’s university and college presidents are not only asked to manage crises at the start of their tenures; they must be acutely aware of the consequences and the array of scenarios they might face. Such leaders need to know how to move quickly and effectively during the traumatic incidents that today’s campus communities may face.

Focus of the Study

This study seeks to explore, uncover, and understand the complexities of crisis management from the perspectives of three sitting presidents at different liberal arts colleges. It will address how college and university presidents at these institutions have responded to three types of crisis situation—the murder of a student, damage from a hurricane, and a national financial crisis. Given the breadth of crisis definitions, and the various possibilities that may occur, the cases investigated should provide useful findings
for current and aspiring higher education leaders regarding aspects of communication—particularly the use of social media tools—as well as a dramatic move away from a shared-governance model to a top-down management strategy during moments of crisis. This is a topic worthy of consideration as search committees look for leaders with the charisma to deal with 24-hour media cycles, embrace effective communication strategies, and lead their institutions during a crisis.

I used a qualitative approach to establish a comparative case study of the three small, private liberal arts institutions, all of which share established characteristics based on their relative size, private status, and liberal arts focus. The presidents interviewed for this study all benefited from a liberal arts education and/or work experience at such an institution, and they currently lead an institution involved in this case study. Encompassing three crisis scenarios, the study will investigate the preparation, leadership, and procedures taken prior to, during, and after the situations occurred. The intention is to understand better presidential decision making during moments of crisis at small liberal arts colleges and universities, as well as to highlight unique aspects of the different leadership styles.

Albeit the ability to handle crisis situations is complicated, the findings gleaned from interviewing academic leaders should provide new information on this topic. When one begins to evaluate the effectiveness of a leader’s decision-making ability in times of crisis, one would assume that a highly competent president will be better at making effective and timely decisions during moments of crisis than a poorly performing one.
Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to address crisis management strategies used at three small liberal arts institutions and, more specifically, to delve into the presidential response and organizational decision making that helped to mitigate and successfully conclude the crisis scenarios. In particular, the study will explore how presidential decisions are made, as well as the communication strategies that were used to enhance their successful closure, and the roles played by presidents and their leadership teams in such crises. The results highlight the complexities of crisis scenarios at each location, the importance of communication strategies used externally and internally, and the influence and value of a highly performing leadership team. Though there is much literature on crisis management taking place in for-profit and government arenas, this study seeks to shed specific light on the crisis-management challenges seen at small liberal arts institutions, add important information to the topic of presidential crisis management as it pertains to liberal arts colleges in particular, and address the roles of highly performing executive teams in fostering a crisis-planning culture.

Roadmap for the Study

The study of crisis management at small liberal arts colleges, discussed from the perspective of their presidents, occupies its own niche within the crisis-management literature as well as that of higher education. Chapter 2 takes an in-depth look at current literature in the field as it relates to crisis. The following sections will discuss the broad framework and overview of the study as well as subsequent analysis of the data. The review and discussion of the literature covers the following areas: crisis management, liberal arts colleges and universities, presidential leadership, and academic decision
making within the nation's higher education landscape.

Chapter 3 explores the specific methodology used in this study—namely, a qualitative three-site case study, where the presidents who were interviewed for the study selected each specific crisis scenario for evaluation and discussion.

Chapter 4 provides an in-depth review of each case, of the president, and the crisis chosen for discussion. The standard listings of the Carnegie Foundation were used to select potential institutions for consideration. The selected three schools (referred to as College A, College B, and College C) each had an arts and sciences focus. In terms of their enrollment profile, the schools were either exclusively focused on undergraduate four-year education or very high undergraduate profiles. One of the schools, in addition to the arts and sciences focus, offered professions as an element of its undergraduate instructional program. Of particular note, the work of Breneman (1994) included a listing of 212 liberal arts institutions. The three cases chosen for this study were included on Breneman’s list, which employed the following basis for inclusion: "My definition of a liberal arts college stems directly from the earlier discussion of their role as institutions that educate rather than train" (Breneman, 1994, p. 13).

College A serves approximately 2,900 full-time undergraduates plus 400 graduate students and is located in the Northeastern part of the US. College A’s mission is providing a rich liberal arts education. College B is located in the Mid-Atlantic region and includes slightly more than 2,200 undergraduate students. Its mission statement focuses on the development of critical thinkers in an intellectually diverse and vibrant community. College C is a historically black college located in the Southern region of the country, educating approximately 2,100 students. College C’s mission is devoted to
excellence in the liberal arts and sciences through a focused approach around leadership
development.

Finally, Chapter 5 is dedicated to the outcomes of this study: highlighting key
themes, findings, and the analysis of the cases. The final chapter incorporates an
overview of the findings, suggestions for aspiring and current leaders regarding
mitigation of crisis moments on small liberal arts campuses, and a discussion regarding
future research opportunities within the area of study researched.
Chapter 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

“The things people do before a crisis occurs have a huge impact on what occurs during that crisis.”

—Gene Klann, US Army Command, General Staff College, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas

When an unpredictable event occurs at a college, campuses need effective leaders in crisis management. Crises often require quick decisions to limit any potential risk or damage. In order to address the research questions examined in this study, I reviewed the following four components of the literature: crisis management, a discussion of liberal arts colleges and universities, presidential leadership, and academic decision making. As background and context, I identified a series of definitions and descriptions of crises and crisis management by various scholars. Given the range of crisis scenarios likely to occur on campus, I will highlight a sampling of crisis scenarios taken from for-profit and non-profit as well as various types of higher education institutions.

This chapter is divided into seven sections and includes a brief segment dedicated to implications for future research. The sections are arranged to provide a framework for understanding the basics of crisis and crisis management (Crisis Definitions and Descriptions); the various types of crisis scenarios possible on college and university campuses (Types of Crisis); a review of the unique aspects of small liberal arts colleges, specifically how those institutions handle moments of crisis (Liberal Arts and Crisis Moments); a discussion of how institutions/organizations prepare for crisis moments (Preparation for Crisis); and how those same institutions/organizations respond to and learn from past moments (Response to and Post-Crisis Planning). The remaining two
sections emphasize the role of presidents, leaders, and leadership teams in effectively mitigating and navigating crisis situations (Roles of Leaders) and the decision-making process that takes place during normal operations versus moments of crisis (Academic and Crisis Decision Making).

**Crisis Definitions and Descriptions**

Zdziarski (2007) defines a campus crisis as an "event which is often sudden or unexpected, that disrupts the normal operations of the institution or its educational mission and threatens the well-being of personnel, property, financial resources and/or the reputation of the institution" (p. 28). Zdziarski provided deeper meaning by suggesting that crisis-management programs be consistent with a college mission by integrating sub-plans to mitigate the crisis, including—but not limited to—emergency response, business continuity, and crisis communication.

Laurence Barton (2008)—an author, scholar, lecturer, and former executive of a Fortune 500 company—defines crisis management as the ability to focus on "how to respond to victims, employees, and other stakeholders during those precious first eight hours of your situation" (Kindle p. 279). Barton goes on to articulate the need for crisis leaders to implement "teams, systems, and tools in order to respond to a crisis and recover from its impact" (Kindle p. 276).

Whether geared to large institutions or for-profit organizations, such definitions also apply to small liberal arts colleges and universities. Former University of Hartford and George Washington University president Stephen Joel Trachtenberg emphasizes the probability of something going wrong, as well as the vulnerability of small, rural college environments:
Whenever you have a community of people, there is some statistical chance that someone is going to do something untoward. In fact, many of the more consequential cases in this country touching on university safety have taken place in small, rural environments where someone, either from off campus or living on campus, has committed a rape or a murder or other crime against a member of the university community. (2008, p. 198)

Types of Crises

Whether occurring at small liberal arts campuses, large public research institutions, or the campuses of multinational for-profit organizations, moments of crisis are broadly defined, measured, and handled. My research uncovered many situations that could fall under the definition of crisis, leading to the notion that the number and variety of crisis situations faced by university leaders are truly limitless. In an effort to categorize and narrow the focus of crisis scenarios, the following themes emerged: campus infrastructure, economic, felony crimes, and natural disasters. These four themes provide a framework for the complex and varied challenges that college and university leaders must be prepared to handle at a moment's notice. Although there are potentially other themes that could be explored—ranging from unintentional and intentional acts that result in crisis moments to the acts of human beings, such as mental health issues, traffic accidents, or basic human error—they fall outside the scope of this study.

Campus Infrastructure

A president’s personal characteristics and management traits can affect a crisis, especially regarding decisions made during moments of crisis, and lead to an emphasis on securing ethical candidates for positions of power and influence. Daniel de Vise (2011) of the Washington Post has written about eight scandals that ended college presidencies. All involved some ethical mistake, including excessive spending of university resources,
and sexual, athletic, or criminal scandals. In each case, ethical considerations were lacking. For example, at the University of Illinois, an admission scandal was uncovered in which applicants received special consideration based on political ties and/or connections, resulting in the resignation of the president. American University President Benjamin Ladner was ousted in 2005 after his former driver (whom Ladner had fired) tipped off the *Washington Post* that Ladner had used university money to cover the cost of an elaborate engagement party and a personal French chef. Such examples highlight how a lack of ethical conviction may undermine decisive action when a leader is confronted with serious crimes or situations that call for the right response. As a result of misconduct, these leaders were fired or forced to resign.

From 2000 to 2008, Ohio University suffered one of the greatest higher education records breaches, with 4% of all higher education records exposed (McDavis, 2008). This type of security breach can diminish the trust of an entire university community, including alumni, faculty, staff, and students. The university's president, Roderick McDavis, provided a roadmap for other institutions facing this type of incident in his willingness to share Ohio’s experience.

**Economic**

Vitullo and Johnson's 2010 study looks at how colleges and universities handled the impact of the 2008 economic recession and how leaders framed issues through presidential communication. The preliminary findings of the study suggest that the power of the president is essential and that forward-looking steps associated with amplification of mission and values are necessary. The researchers highlighted similarities between university presidents and corporate executives in their use of
corporate rhetoric as well as communication pieces used by universities and colleges.

The 2008 financial crisis wrought havoc on many organizations—government, public, and private institutions. President Gordon Gee, current chief executive at West Virginia University, summed up the impact, saying that in order to survive and succeed, "Colleges and universities will need to make hard choices, set priorities, defer projects, focus on their own distinctive missions, and clarify goals" (Vitullo et al., 2010, p. 481). Though it is clear that the economic crisis created an external financial emergency, several leaders used it to reconfirm the missions of their universities. President Gee took this charge and challenged higher education at the same time:

At this defining moment when our communities and our nation need us more than ever, we must fundamentally reinvent our institutions. We must become more agile, more responsive, less insular, and less bureaucratic. In so doing, we will save ourselves from slouching into irrelevance. (2010, p. 483)

The ways in which leaders of colleges and universities handled the next steps related to the economic downturn were similar to how leaders of the corporate community function (Vitullo & Johnson, 2010). Use of corporate rhetoric—as defined by Cheney, Christiansen, Conrad, and Lair (2004)—turned out to be an effective communication tool for most colleges during times of crisis. Corporate rhetoric is a framework that seeks to understand corporations’ "conscious, deliberate, and efficient use of persuasion to bring about attitudinal or behavioral change" (Cheney et al., 2004, p. 84).

Felony Crimes

Cases of sexual assault have become so pervasive on today’s campuses that President Obama created a White House task force aimed at protecting students from assault. Dvorak (2014) reiterated some of the scary statistics quoted by the president:
"One in five women on college campuses has been sexually assaulted during their time there." Dvorak reveals that the real tragedy is often in the way that administrators fail to act appropriately; some university personnel allow victims to be victimized a second time by botching cases handled by the school. The result can be dropped charges, hurt families, and victims feeling dismissed as not important or substantial enough to warrant legal action. DeSantis (2014) reported that the University of Connecticut (UConn) failed to act after allegations were made that a professor had committed sexual abuse. The investigation found evidence that the professor engaged in inappropriate conduct with minors and that the university had not provided safety for its community or members. The investigation found a consistent failure in how senior officials and administrators handled the crisis.

UConn joins a list of institutions that have dealt with matters of sexual abuse in an incompetent fashion. Its new administration, led by President Susan Herbst, now aims to require best practices. "Last February the current dean of UConn’s School of Fine Arts reported to the university’s Title IX coordinator that she had just become aware of a new allegation and that after that, UConn acted with commendable urgency" (De Santis, 2014, para. 5). Dealing with sexual assault on campus requires swift and decisive action. Having qualified leaders who are versed in crisis leadership may be beneficial in mitigating any crisis. Wooten and James (2008) cite leadership competence as paramount, which, if accessible, "help[s] [the] organization effectively and efficiently resolve the crisis and achieve a resiliency in its strategy, human capital, and other resources" (p. 353).

To date, the most publicized and biggest university scandal of our time is the
Penn State controversy, a child sex-abuse scandal that quickly moved—according to de Vise (2011)—from athletic controversy to "just plain scandal." In this case, several people in leadership positions, both on and off campus, chose to let a sexual predator roam free for years. On July 12, 2012, Louis Freeh, former federal judge and director of the FBI, released his report that "accuses Paterno, the university’s former president and others of deliberately hiding facts about Sandusky’s sexually predatory behavior" (Sablich et al., n.d., para. 44). All of these examples highlight how lack of ethical conviction and decisive action when confronted with serious crimes or situational activities that call for different reactions can harm an institution. Each leader of these institutions was either fired or forced to resign.

**Natural Disasters**

The ability to seek out resources from nontraditional circles is critical when attempting to navigate an institution out of harm's way. Case in point: On August 29, 2005, Hurricane Katrina damaged many colleges and universities along the Gulf Coast. Creative decision making was essential during the crisis. One campus, Dillard University, suffered close to $400 million in damage, its campus virtually destroyed. President Hughes, in an attempt to manage the crisis with her leadership team, found support, guidance, and assistance from Dillard alumna Ruth Simmons, who was then president of Brown University. Princeton and Brown both provided expertise and assistance to the Dillard community.

The fast and creative thinking to reach a powerful alumna with influential connections and a multi-billion-dollar endowment was critical to assist the recovery efforts by Dillard. "The Dillard recovery teams [were] organized by both universities,
and when we called upon the teams, their members responded instantly" (Hughes, 2005, p. 18). President Hughes went on to say:

In the waves of destruction and chaos left by Katrina, one thing remains clear: To heal America, we must rely upon one another in a way that this mighty country has often dreamed of, yet rarely realized. We must, in the words of Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., substitute courage for caution. I submit that we also must have the confidence and the courage to change. (2005, p. 16)

Liberal Arts and Crisis Moments

The literature in the field of crisis management is extensive, including reference materials ("how-tos") based on the actions of various leaders and crisis management teams. Albeit crisis scenarios are not commonplace at American institutions, events such as the shooting at the University of Texas in 1966 and horrific events at Virginia Tech in 2007 have awakened administrators and the entire college/university community to the possibility that "bloody, murderous attacks upon the academic communities of American universities have become a horrible, inexplicable part of campus life" (Trachtenberg, 2008, p. 197). Given that the number of liberal arts colleges is comparatively small given the extensive array of choices in the American educational system, it is not surprising to find a gap in the literature of crisis management strategies pertaining specifically to small liberal art institutions. The need for discussion and research is evident, considering that these institutions are known to provide a high-quality undergraduate education.

The following sections provide background on the historical arguments for and against liberal arts education, the financial model of a high-cost, labor-intensive liberal arts education, and the long-term benefits of this educational model. The challenges facing these institutions, as well as their value to society, provide a foundation for
understanding how they prepare for, manage, and learn from crisis moments. Roth (2014) presents a persuasive argument for the importance of a liberal arts education and the prospects for the recipients to "challenge convention and change the world" (Clark University website).

In an age of seismic technological change and instantaneous information dissemination, it is more crucial than ever that we not abandon the humanistic frameworks of education in favor of narrow, technical forms of teaching intended to give quick, utilitarian results. Those results are no substitute for the practice of inquiry, critique, and experience that enhances students’ ability to appreciate and understand the world around them—and to innovatively respond to it. A reflexive, pragmatic liberal education is our best hope of preparing students to shape change and not just be victims of it. (Roth, 2014, p. 10)

The first two chapters of Roth’s 2014 book, Beyond the University, take examples from history for the "deep commitment to liberal learning" (p. 8) that America has had since its founding and highlights the works of writers including David Walker, Frederick Douglass, W.E.B. Du Bois, Jane Addams, and William James. Roth uses Du Bois’s rejection of Washington’s focus on vocationalism in support of liberal arts education as evidence for his argument.

Roth highlights the age-old debate over the value of a liberal arts education versus a professional or vocational degree. One of the values of the higher education system in America is the choices and freedom to direct one's path from an educational perspective. Back in Booker T. Washington's time, many blacks were slaves who were later freed. How does a race move beyond "the curse of slavery"?

It has been necessary for the Negro to learn the difference between being worked and working—to learn that being worked meant degradation, while working means civilization; that all forms of labor are honorable, and all forms of idleness disgraceful. It has been necessary for him to learn that all races that have got upon their feet have done so
largely by laying an economic foundation, and, in general, by beginning in a proper cultivation and ownership of the soil. (Washington, 2007, p. 5)

Given the context of its time, Washington’s argument is understandable. Du Bois, emerging from a different context, and with a different educational experience (Fisk University), provides another argument, one that is often used to defend a liberal arts education. His criticism of Washington "reinforces the association of education and freedom, especially for those that have been oppressed" (Roth, 2014, p. 9).

But this is true: A university is a human invention for the transmission of knowledge and culture from generation to generation, through the training of quick minds and pure hearts, and for this work no other human invention will suffice, not even trade and industrial schools. (Du Bois, 2007, p. 21)

Though the argument over a liberal arts education versus a vocational and/or professional education remains a constant platform for the public, media, and politicians, the troubling financial model for small liberal arts institutions remains. The question of affordability and sustainability are constant themes for this particular educational model. Breneman’s 1994 book, *Liberal Arts Colleges: Thriving, Surviving, or Endangered?* accurately summarizes the ongoing conversation about these academic institutions. Breneman’s work suggests that while its high cost and reliance on tuition revenue put small liberal arts colleges at a "competitive disadvantage with larger, state-subsidized universities," the outcome is not the same for all. The data from Breneman’s study highlight the "extremes of wealth and expenditure per student" (p. 85), contradicting the grim financial futures predicted for these institution. Even as some small liberal arts colleges have vanished, Breneman points out the importance of factors such as "dedication, commitment, loyalty, sacrifice, and belief" (p. 135), which can move mountains during times of crisis.
Private colleges have many alumni, friends, and employees who believe in them deeply, and an effective president can mobilize enormous support when institutional survival is at stake. (Breneman, 1994, p. 135)

Use of alumni can be effective when institutions are in turmoil or in need of philanthropic support. Unrestricted and restricted donations in support of scholarships, endowed chairs, and facilities help these institutions remain competitive. For elite institutions, such funding separates the weak from the mighty. Ferrall (2011) highlights the end product of a liberal education by sharing the accomplishments and professional stature of many alumni of small liberal arts institutions—"a list of thirty-nine liberal arts college graduates who are current or former corporate CEOs and presidents of companies" (p. 160). Ferrall explores similar lists of successful entrepreneurs, politicians, actors, public figures, and sport figures—testaments to the value of a liberal arts education. As summed up by Fareed Zakaria (2014), CNN host and contributing editor to The Atlantic,

The central virtue of a liberal education is that it teaches you how to write, and writing makes you think. Whatever you do in life, the ability to write clearly, cleanly, and reasonably quickly will prove to be an invaluable skill. (Kindle p. 72)

Preparation for Crisis

Given the small size and vulnerability of the liberal arts college, determining the factors that will lead successfully to mitigating or assisting in the management of a crisis scenario is crucial, especially laying out plans for managing a crisis and a proactive approach to preparation. During a 20-year study done at University of Southern California, Mitroff (2003) monitored Fortune 500 companies and their crisis readiness. Researchers grouped the companies into two categories: crisis prepared (or proactive)
and crisis prone (or reactive). The major findings of the study suggest that proactive companies develop plans for a greater number of potential emergencies, leading to a reduction in "calamities companies have to grapple with" (p. 110), stay in business longer, have a better frame of reference for financial risk management, and end up with better corporate reputations.

Albeit the lessons garnered from the Mitroff study are based on for-profit companies, many of the informational points could be transferred to universities. The crisis-prepared institution is one with a crisis management team (CMT), a crisis plan, and ongoing crisis-management training. They also have effective leaders at the heart of the institutions as well as energizing, philanthropic board members. Training, development, and learning opportunities are part of successful environments, whether they stem from the military or from developing and testing crisis-management plans, including the ability to learn from other organizations.

Community college presidents who have faced challenges during moments of crisis also can offer invaluable lessons. Floyd, Maslin-Ostrowski, and Hrabek (2010) articulated the benefits of reflecting on crisis situations:

Carve out time to stop, think, and reflect regularly. Emotions are part of leading and are to be embraced. Create a work culture where power is shared and where all members including the president are able to grow and develop. Presidents no longer have the luxury of a grace period, so build a network of support, people to learn from and with, upon entry. (p. 71)

The effective management of a crisis can protect the institution from unknown consequences as well as highlight the need for a crisis plan and the ability to enact that plan when necessary. Some key questions regarding crisis plans include: Who knows
about the crisis plan? Who developed it? Were key stakeholders involved? How do you know that each person knows and understands their responsibility and the roles of other key players? How often is the plan refreshed?

Laurence Barton, known for his pioneering work in the cause and response to crisis scenarios, discusses his framework to mitigate crisis scenarios through effective decision making and business-continuity strategies. Barton (2008) divides crisis management/response into two distinct phases: a response phase, usually within the first eight hours of the crisis, and a second phase that deals with business continuity, extending eight hours and beyond, after the crisis incident. Barton divides the first phase into three sections of response: "Response and victim support, protection of business assets [and] stabilize situation" (p. 282). The second phase, broken into four sections, is the more complicated part of the effort; not only is the potential cost to resume normalcy significant, but the details associated with recovering from the crisis and restoring normal operations may be substantial.

**Business Continuity Plan**

**Section I.** Assess damage to core businesses (facilities, IT); execute plan as directed by the incident commander during an emergency.

**Section II.** Respond to immediate and short-term needs of victims, employees, community.

**Section III.** Determine what resources the BCP coordinator needs to succeed and fund/provide those resources.

**Section IV.** Organized under a formal incident command system structure

- Rapid restoration of critical business operations
Decisions on external resources/intervention needed. (p. 282)

Through Barton’s many presentations, publications, and books, one of his central themes is the insight that crisis will occur for organizations; the best strategy is to enable your organization or institution to be in a place where "the best crisis truly is the one prevented" (Barton website).

Zdziarski (2007) describes several crisis frameworks, in particular the crisis matrix, a "conceptual model developed to provide a basic framework for assessing a crisis" (p. 36). The model assists with determining what a campus community will need to do in order to mitigate the crisis as well as to "provide benchmarks to measure its need for resources allocation and deployment" (p. 37). Although the crisis matrix is helpful, Zdziarski also articulates the need for a crisis-management system in order to gain the full picture and understanding of a crisis. Unlike the framework that Barton (2008) describes, Zdziarski adds the element of post-planning.

To effectively manage crises, administrators need to take action well before a crisis hits, as well as long after the crisis subsides. A good crisis-management system needs to address not only the response phase but the pre- and post-phases as well. (p. 46)

**Response to and Post-Crisis Planning**

Once a crisis occurs—whether it be a shooting, a natural disaster, or intentional destruction caused by an individual or a group—the actions of the leader or the leadership team can be reviewed, evaluated, and improved by others. Various frameworks exist for how to deal with a crisis during and afterward. Past and current leaders may offer strategies for consideration as well as scholars with a specialization in crisis management.

Earlier in the chapter, I highlighted the event at Ohio University where thousands
of electronic records were exposed. Following the crisis, the president utilized a three-step plan designed to regain the trust of the community. It included broad, focused, and open communication with all the compromised groups; an IT oversight committee to provide advice and implement best practices; and a technology consulting firm engaged to manage these approaches (McDavis, 2008). The actions President McDavis took follow the 2014 counsel Crandall, Parnell, and Spillan (2014) suggested in terms of the steps needed to get an organization back on its feet. They refer to this end-of-crisis strategy as "the ability of the business to resume or continue activities after a crisis occurs. Essentially, business continuity is about maintaining the important business functions during and after a crisis" (p. 184).

Sean Fanelli, president of Nassau Community College in Garden City, New York, has close to 30 years of leadership experience and is the recipient of the prestigious William J. Brennan Jr. Award. He is the first college president to receive the award, which honors individuals devoted to the principles of free expression, presented by the Thomas Jefferson Center for the Protection of Free Expression. Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg said that Justice Brennan would have celebrated Dr. Fanelli’s "caring, courageous endeavors to preserve and advance academic freedom" (Nexus, 2001, p. 1). A recognized advocate of academic freedom, Fanelli provides compelling advice regarding crisis mitigation and management expectations:

"Whether it is a labor dispute, student disruption on campus, personal tragedy, fire, theft, sexual assault, financial malfeasance, community furor over a speaker or an event, unanticipated downturn in enrollment, reduction in funding, or reduction in force, a board expects the president to demonstrate the leadership and managerial skills necessary to deal effectively with these problems and to avoid or else minimize harm to the institution. (Fanelli, 1997, p. 63)"
Fanelli suggests there are three essential components to deal with a crisis in higher education. The first is solid, open, and effective communication between the president and the board; second, the use of broad and frequent communication channels; and, finally, taking time to prepare in a stress-free environment prior to any crisis occurring. He shares lessons learned to prevent a crisis from turning into a disaster.

To insure that a crisis does not become a disaster, three things must be done: communicate, communicate, and communicate. Communicate with the board, communicate with the college community, and communicate with the stakeholders. It is imperative that the communication be done effectively; it should be complete and timely. Above all, good communication between the president and the board is necessary in dealing with any crisis. The emphasis, however, is on the effectiveness of the communication; serious harm results from poor or incomplete communication. (p. 65)

Fanelli emphasizes the importance of communication, which leads to broader crisis communication, and the effects within and without crisis communication strategy. In the 2012 issue of *The Presidency*, Janice Abraham, president and CEO of United Educators, shared some lessons learned from different crises. Of these, two major approaches concern communication: the need to "have expert media relations counsel ready and able to assist," given that even the most experienced communication staffer may struggle with trying to "effectively handle Anderson Cooper," and the fact that "poor communication can be as damaging as the crisis itself. UE [United Educators] learned early on the importance of both compassion and careful investigation. We should subscribe to the ‘cool head, warm heart’ approach to crises" (p. 2).

Patricia McGuire, president of Trinity Washington University in Washington, D.C., has written about how colleges and universities need to change their response in moments of crisis. McGuire referenced the horrific events of 9/11, the murder at Eastern
Michigan University, and the shootings at Virginia Tech, and how communication techniques and police response protocols have changed since those events occurred. She shares her communication strategy: "Tell the truth, tell it quickly, tell it often; important news travels quickly; do not assume ‘that would never happen here’; have something to say about important issues" (2007, p. 18). McGuire underscores the importance of broad communication with a focus on keeping the president informed at all times. For McGuire, the golden rule is "no surprises."

In today’s world of 24/7 news cycles, the power of social media, and the prevalence of smart devices where information travels within moments of incidents across the globe, crisis communication has taken on a whole new meaning. Berinato (2010) believes that the combination of social media and consistent news cycles means there will never be another major disaster/crisis that won’t involve the public. Crandall et al. (2014) recall the days when it was "acceptable to wait 24 hours before making a public statement to the media. Today, 24 hours is just too long" (p. 197).

Luecke, who writes for the Harvard Business Essentials series and other works in business literature, addresses the key factors needed for crisis resolution, which include the importance of moving quickly and decisively after the crisis. He spends considerable time discussing the importance of communications and project-management techniques. Through the use of powerful examples, Luecke emphasizes the importance of leadership, such as the attributes former New York City Mayor Rudy Giuliani exhibited during the aftermath of 9/11, when he was seen on street corners, news conferences, and within the command center leading the rescue operations. Luecke (2004) articulates the importance of documenting all "actions throughout the course of crisis resolution" (p. 81) and
references the military:

Military organizations do chronicle their decisions and actions. Doing so provides a record from which after-action lessons can be drawn. At the beginning of World War II, for example, the U.S. Navy assigned Harvard historian Samuel Eliot Morison, a high-ranking naval reserve officer, to the task of chronicling the war at sea from beginning to end. . . . Their collective effort produced a fifteen-volume work from which the next two generations of naval students, strategists, and tacticians would draw important lessons. (p. 82)

Additional lessons from business literature related to post-crisis planning include business continuity and the needs of employees and families after a crisis situation. Crandall et al. (2014) focus on how to return an organization back to normal, and share lessons learned by organizations who accomplished the right things at the right time. Organizations that made poor choices in post-crisis scenarios are used to highlight long-term ramifications, such as Malden Mills, a New England manufacturing plant that suffered a traumatic fire that destroyed its facilities. The CEO made the generous decision to pay its workers until the facility was repaired. Although this action garnered widespread acclaim, the decision eventually led to a second crisis: bankruptcy (p. 186).

Crandall et al. (2014) also highlight aspects of effective response and mitigation efforts designed to minimize damage to internal and external stakeholders. The importance of assessment was used as a test for "determining the decisions that must be made next" (p. 185). The ability to assess business operations accurately and make recommendations for the future is an essential component of a post-crisis framework.

Role of Leaders

In reviewing the literature on presidential leadership and surrounding components of crisis leadership, an interesting argument emerged regarding links between leadership competencies and crisis management. Wooten and James (2008) articulate leadership as
a developing series of events that build with exposure. Leadership attributes can change during a crisis situation: "Leadership is collective and dynamic and requires perception and sense making skills by leaders in order to determine appropriate courses of action" (p. 354). Wooten and James expand this concept into a series of competencies for crisis leadership, including decision making, communication, creating organizational capabilities, sustaining an effective organizational culture, managing multiple constituencies, and developing human capital. Based on the 2006 work of Senge, such competencies suggest that successful crisis leaders must create an environment where staff members of an organization are rewarded for thinking and working collectively.

In a body of work of which Peter Senge is the lead author (2006), learning opportunities become part of crisis management. Senge shares five components of a learning organization, including systems thinking, personal mastery, mental models, building shared vision, and team learning. He articulates that the key to team learning (otherwise known as "better performance") is the use of dialogue.

Crandall et al. (2014) define and discuss how learning occurs and the barriers to organizational learning:

Organizational learning is the process of detecting and correcting errors; it seeks to improve the operation of the organization by reflecting on past experiences. In the context of crisis management, learning should occur when the organization experiences a crisis. It should not be assumed that learning always emanates from a crisis, because some organizations do not appear to learn effectively. (p. 225)

Crandall et al. introduce two types of learning: single- and double-loop learning. Single-loop learning is best understood by using the example of driving in the snow, where the driver feels the car sliding in one direction toward oncoming traffic and tries to correct
the slide by steering back and forth until danger is averted. Double-loop learning is defined as "learning [that] involves the detection and correction of an error, but there is also a change in basic underlying organizational norms" (p. 226). The example used to illustrate double-loop learning is a 1990 Canadian tire fire where firefighters had to adapt their underlying assumptions about how to fight this type of fire and use different strategies to put out the fire. Consequently, the way tires are stored changed. Crandall et al. articulate that a change in belief can help leaders to understand the value of an "evaluation-rethinking process," which eliminates the belief that an organization is not vulnerable to crisis scenarios.

With academic literature from the business community as well as the non-profit world, continuous opportunities exist for presidential leadership improvements. Several academic scholars and higher education leaders provide evidence in support of areas of improvement (Birnbaum, 1992; Fisher et al., 1988; Kezar, 2011 & 2014). Kezar (2014) highlights the value of political theories in the development of bottom-up leadership strategies that can effect change. These grassroots efforts, with their bottom-up approach to leadership, can have considerable influence on students and curricular adjustments (Kezar, 2014). Kezar and Lester (2011) identify grassroots leaders as those with the ability to leverage different strategies in an effort to create change by incorporating various approaches—such as using classrooms as forums, hiring like-minded people, and partnering with influential external stakeholders. In addition to training and development, effective presidential leaders possess the skills and attributes to gather information, assess a situation quickly, and have the confidence to make solid decisions.

Knowing the difference between good and bad leadership can help determine the
ways in which aspiring, current, and past presidents evaluate areas for improvement and adjustments that need to be made to daily performance practices. Birnbaum (1992) provides an example of a positive outcome of good leadership: "Good leadership permits college constituents to maintain or move toward agreement on basic institutional norms and values, which in turn affects their willingness to accept influence from others and increases their commitment to the collective enterprise" (p. 151). Along with this definition, Birnbaum offers substantive concepts that give presidents the necessary tools to become effective leaders of their institutions. "Instrumental leadership, which makes some things more visible and obvious, and interpretive leadership, which makes some things more desirable[,] are two techniques for presidents to influence their institutions" (p. 152). Birnbaum also highlights the need for effective assessment tools. Knowing how to determine what has actually been done during a crisis remains a concern.

Judgments about the nature of good leadership may also be biased by the assessor’s preconceptions and values. One expert may most readily see good leadership in a president who heals a wounded campus or renews an institution’s culture, while another finds it more in a leader’s potent strategy or ability to make tough and courageous decisions over strong opposition. Experts may be able to explain their judgments retrospectively, but they seldom specify in advance the criteria they use in sufficient detail to permit their assessments to be reproduced by others. (Birnbaum, 1992, p. 52)

**Leadership Teamwork**

The process of filtering knowledge and charting a pathway to the end of a crisis scenario highlights another element worth consideration: the role and involvement of the leadership team, which requires leaders to have the ability to collaborate successfully. Bringing others into the solution by way of collaboration is an essential part of leadership. The effective leader needs to be supported by "colleagues in senior positions
who think institutionally, not functionally" (Pierce, 2012, p. 70), by those who understand the big picture and not just the operational details within their own arenas.

Pierce discusses the importance of an inclusive leadership strategy during moments of crisis, be they natural disasters or campus shootings. Even as such moments require deliberate, decisive, and immediate action by the leader, other times prior to, during, and after the crisis call for the assistance and partnership of others. Pierce describes the importance of involving the entire campus community, including faculty and staff, to assist during the aftermath in bringing a sense of normalcy to a campus.

Involving those who support the leader and vice versa is not a new concept. Retired Lieutenant General George J. Flynn of the United States Marine Corps articulated the importance of leaders focused on their people. His description of the inner workings of the Marine Corps serves as a great example of the important aspects of leadership, perseverance, and organizational success.

Such organizations have strong cultures and shared values, understand the importance of teamwork, create trust among their members, maintain focus, and, most important, understand the importance of people and relationships to their mission success. These organizations are also in a position where the cost of failure can be catastrophic. Mission failure is not an option. (Sinak, 2014, p. ix)

Along with the importance of effective teams, "shared leadership was found to predict team performance" (Carson et al., 2007, p. 1217). Thus, there is a correlation between a team that exploits the leadership talents within an organization and personal satisfaction in the mission with success and willingness to share information with the group. This type of shared-leadership model, especially during moments of crisis, represents a "resource for improving team process and performance" (Carson, 2007, p. 1224).


Academic and Crisis Decision Making

Academic decision-making may be the domain of traditional faculty senates, but it is also involves ad hoc processes and nontraditional players. It is about deliberation, examination, and debate, but it is also about responsiveness, opportunity, and agility. It is about tradition, academic values, and scholarly community, and it is about new ways of doing business, leveraging institutional resources, and capitalizing on institutional strengths. Academic decision-making is all of these things at the same time. (Eckel, 2006, p. vi)

This definition evokes harnessing competing forces: deliberation and debate versus responsiveness and agility, and the competing concerns of tradition and innovative processes or ideas. Cohen and March (1986) use a garbage can metaphor, where academic decision making can be seen as a dumping ground for problems to be solved, with outcomes reflecting whatever was in the garbage can at that moment. Eckel (2006) uses a different illustration, suggesting that decisions depend on three streams that flow together, incorporating decision makers, institutional problems, and potential solutions. In the end, decisions are made based upon the mix at that particular time. For Cohen and March, decisions are made up of three types: resolution, whereby individuals develop an answer/solution to a problem or challenge; oversight, combining different problems into solutions that may or may not solve the original situation; and flight, whereby leaders with competing priorities are unable to devote the time and expertise to problems, and in the end make decisions with little focus and cooperation.

When thinking about and researching the factors needed to address institutional crises, the effectiveness of college governance is an important aspect. Birnbaum (1988, 1992) suggests that "governance is just a process that permits people to work together" (p. 229) and that the effective leader/president is responsive to the three most important constituents of a college community: faculty, trustees, and staff members. Chait (2005)
broadens that view, seeing governance as leadership divided into three modes: fiduciary, strategic, and generative. "When trustees work well in all three modes, the board achieves governance as leadership." (Kindle p. 364)

Governance as it relates to crisis moments poses an even greater challenge in terms of what and how decisions are made. "Each crisis raises the question of whether the development of good governance practices could have averted the crisis or mitigated its impact. College and university governing bodies should understand, and take advantage of opportunities to develop good governance practice" (Trakman, 2008, p. 41).

Eckel (2006) highlights the challenges facing shared governance and suggests that little has been changed through the years. He references several aspects that compound these challenges, from increased professionalization of senior leadership teams to centralized decision making. Eckel provides four potential changes "that have the potential to reshape academic decision making":

- Changing dynamics between state and colleges/universities;
- Market forces that push schools to find new resource streams;
- Globalization as an essential component versus a concept on the margins;
- Changing academic workforce and reduction in the number

An example of institutional culture playing out during a crisis can be seen in the research of Harris and Hartley (2011), who describe the diverse nature of institutions, with each department or community of practice understanding the organizational mission from its own perspective. They maintain that "such divisions are often tellingly revealed during times of crisis" (p. 693). Their research into an impending crisis situation uncovers a potential challenge for many institutions grappling with crisis decision
making: "The role of historically strong stakeholder groups and diffused power within higher education governance systems provides potential fuel for the development of multiple ideological interpretations" (p. 714).

This review of the literature associated with how crisis situations at liberal arts colleges may be managed by their presidents reveals several themes. First, leaders of small liberal arts institutions must face a broad range of various crisis scenarios on their respective campuses, and the ways in which these moments are handled can have huge implications for the viability of their institutions, professional careers, and members of the college community. Second, organizational learning that occurs during and post-crisis can lead to mitigation of crises and successful crisis-management strategies. The roles of leaders and leadership teams during moments of crisis and how they adjust to challenging and unforeseen events have important consequences for how a crisis is handled. Third, crisis planning and preparation play a vital role in the effectiveness of a leader and his/her team activating and implementing mitigation techniques. As was highlighted in the literature, prompt action is key. Fourth, the communication techniques employed during a crisis scenario are crucial. How leaders and their organizations communicate with internal and external stakeholders may determine how others view the final outcome of a crisis. Fifth, styles of presidential leaders and their teams are essential to how management teams operate prior to, during, and after crisis moments. Ideas garnered from these leaders can suggest ways that management teams insure a successful outcome. Finally, a thorough discussion of the difference between academic decision making and crisis decision making on small liberal arts campuses is an important area of study.
This chapter identifies areas of overlap related to crisis-management strategies at various organizations, including small liberal arts colleges and universities. The themes that have emerged highlight a gap in the literature regarding how presidents at small liberal arts colleges make decisions during moments of crisis. This topic is worth exploring and adding to the literature, as moments of crisis at such important academic sites will continue to happen.
Chapter 3

METHODODOLOGY

It was an unexpectedly humbling experience to visit the campuses of several liberal arts colleges to identify, investigate, and learn how they and their leadership teams manage during a crisis. Throughout the interviews and my review of emergency operational plans, archival communication material, and local/national media posts, the level of compassion and dedication to the well-being of the students and the surrounding community demonstrated by administrators, faculty, and staff was remarkable, as was the professionalism exhibited by the leadership teams at each campus.

The purpose of this research project was to provide insight into crisis-management challenges at small liberal arts institutions and add important information to the topic of crisis management as it pertains to public and higher education. Additional perspectives and viewpoints of presidents at small liberal arts institutions regarding decisions made during moments of crisis provide a platform to establish common themes as well as contrasting results gleaned from a comparative case study approach (Yin, 2009).

The research method employed for this study is a qualitative, multiple-site case study, designed to allow the greatest flexibility in terms of the research design to support study outcomes (Maxwell, 2013). Three institutions sharing similar characteristics (mission, size, private status, significance of the crisis) were chosen to be part of the study. In each case, a crisis had taken place within the last four to seven years; however, each president interviewed could choose the topic for discussion.
These findings are presented so as to provide a brief overview of each institution, an executive summary of the president who led the college or university at the time of the crisis, and details of the actual scenario. The institutions will be referred to as College A, B, and C, in order to protect the names of the institutions and the individuals interviewed, and in keeping with the informed consent signed by each participant. Additionally, no interviewees are named; however, certain positions or titles will be cited to convey the relative roles of personnel within the institution. Although participants were cautioned about keeping details of the discussions confidential, they understood that this study was designed to contribute to the literature in the field. Thus, the information shared would not only be of interest but could prove valuable for scholars studying crisis management, presidential leadership, and decision making during moments of crisis.

Research Questions

The key research questions used to investigate the focus and purpose of this study were:

1. How are crisis situations at small liberal arts campuses managed by college presidents?
2. What are the necessary factors needed to create an environment for success during crisis situations?
3. How do institutional culture and broad functionality affect operations with respect to a crisis?

These questions served as a guide for interviewing college leaders in order to determine how they addressed the initial crisis, the types of communication they used, and how
human capital was deployed in dealing with the crisis, as well as formulating lessons learned following the crisis. Albeit a series of questions were prepared in advance that allowed room for flexibility, participant-led information was extremely helpful in identifying common themes throughout the project. (See Appendix B for a full list of interview questions used.)

**Research Design**

In determining the method of analysis, the work of Robert Yin regarding case study methods seemed to provide the right platform for analyzing crisis scenarios at the three institutions under study:

In brief, the case study method allows investigators to retain the holistic and meaningful characteristics of real-life events—such as individual life cycles, small group behavior, organizational and managerial processes, neighborhood change, school performance, international relations, and the maturation of industries. (Yin, 2008, Kindle pp. 350–52)

Yin’s (2009) description of case study methodology suggests use when one seeks to answer "how" and "why" questions regarding events beyond the control of the researcher or where the focus is on a contemporary phenomenon. In this case, the best approach was to investigate or evaluate the decisions made by college leaders during moments of crisis as a case study. The ability to delve more deeply into the thinking, actions, and considerations of the actors involved seemed best uncovered in this manner.

Rising cost of tuition, the inability of recent graduates to find meaningful employment opportunities, increasing college loan debt, and competition from a global economic workforce threatens the existence of many of America’s higher education institutions. Although the challenges are great, US universities are still seen as preeminent institutions by the world, and their purpose and benefit to society remain at an
all-time high. The talented men and women who lead them must have specific skill sets and talents to insure that their respective institutions remain relevant and effective in today’s world. To that end, there is great value in establishing and highlighting the research derived from a compelling comparative study of three small liberal arts colleges and the effort to address how crisis situations are managed and mitigated by strong and effective leaders.

Creswell (2007) describes the key determinants of case study research as the ability to provide a comprehensive understanding of a specific case. In order to provide a comprehensive review and understanding of each case, different forms of qualitative data were collected, ranging from a review of campus literature (college newspapers, websites, and crisis-plan documents), observations of local/national media posts, and a series of in-person interviews. Campus literature provided additional context and details regarding specific crises, including the establishment of timelines as well as the messaging shared by the president and/or members of his/her senior team throughout the crisis.

**Site Selection**

The initial process to select sites for this research project began during the development of the conceptual framework and the use of a "process theory" approach (Maxwell, 2013), in order to obtain the best information, data, and outcome for my research questions: “Process theory . . . tends to see the world in terms of people, situations, events and the processes that connect these; explanation is based on an analysis of how some situations and events influence others” (p. 29).
In studying the leadership decisions made during a crisis situation by university leaders, using a qualitative approach provides the opportunity to adjust the research questions based upon the participants, situations reviewed, events observed, and the connections made. Given this approach, selection of sites seemed to point in two different directions: one was to pursue three different institutions that had suffered the same crisis; the other was to select three different institutions with varying crisis scenarios. With the first approach, I was cautioned about the willingness for institutional leaders to share parameters of the case openly, especially if the crisis was controversial or had potential negative ramifications. Even though the second approach had similar challenges with regard to the willingness of leaders to share meaningful details with an outside observer, ultimately a decision was made to interview three different liberal arts institutions with three different crisis scenarios.

Upon further discussion and consideration, I reached a position where the president of each institution would decide what crisis would be evaluated for the project. This final determination was made in an attempt to allow for the most open and meaningful dialogue. The challenge with this approach was that the crisis scenarios might not differ if the presidents were allowed to pick the topic for discussion. With this discussion as background, the elements of site consideration included such items as similar institutional characteristics, a crisis scenario of significance, diverse presidential leadership, and significant access to the president and his or her leadership teams.

First, I had to investigate which liberal arts schools had endured significant crisis scenarios on or near their campus, one that attracted enough media attention to fit the definition of a campus crisis defined by Zdziarski (2007) and shared in Chapter 1. The
original list of institutions considered can be found in Appendix A. This list was created using online searches, reviews of college newspaper articles, telephone interviews with colleagues at various institutions, and recommendations from higher education professionals. Though the list did not contain all crisis moments that occurred at small liberal arts colleges across the country, it did provide a starting point for assessing the types of challenge facing higher education leaders of such schools.

To determine the three sites of the study and provide purposeful sampling of the data, I utilized the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) to review data on enrollment, admissions, finances, etc. The purpose of the review was to insure that the institutions selected were sufficiently similar for useful comparison and to make recommendations based on the limited sample. Table 1 highlights the relevant data observed in IPEDS in preparation for the study.

**TABLE 1**

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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>College A</td>
<td>Private, not-for profit</td>
<td>Four or more years</td>
<td>Baccalaureate Colleges—Arts and Sciences (BA/MA)</td>
<td>752</td>
<td>3,205</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College B</td>
<td>Private, not-for profit</td>
<td>Four or more years</td>
<td>Baccalaureate Colleges—Arts and Sciences (certificate)</td>
<td>520</td>
<td>2,129</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College C</td>
<td>Private, not-for profit</td>
<td>Four or more years</td>
<td>Baccalaureate Colleges—Arts and Sciences (certificate)</td>
<td>579</td>
<td>2,448</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In addition to the IPEDS data, sites were based on the desire to explore small liberal arts institutions in different parts of the country. Thus, the chosen schools were located in the Northeast, Mid-Atlantic, and Southern region of the country. I also explored the financial makeup of each institution, with the thought that the financially stronger schools might perform better during moments of crisis than those with a less secure financial footing. This hypothesis, however, did not play out within the study.

Another aspect of site selection was obtaining a diverse sample of presidential leadership. All three presidents had different backgrounds. One was an African American woman with a background reflecting a traditional presidential track (climbing the faculty ranks); one president rose from a non-traditional track to the presidency (through the Office of Development and Alumni Relations), while the third had served as president of another institution before heading the college under study. Each leader brought a different set of skill sets and experiences to moments of crisis.

The final component of site selection was my ability to have access to the president, college leaders, and any community members who played significant roles in the crisis that occurred at their respective institutions. Once it was explained that all institutions and personnel would not be named, full access was given. All of the college leaders were willing to assist with the research project and were helpful in providing contact with senior administrators and/or other staff members. In one case, my relationship with a senior staff member allowed for an additional interview, which gave greater context to the crisis discussed.

All the selected institutions had endured a crisis and its associated aftermath, which provided a lens for various aspects of presidential leadership. The chance to
interview a sitting president who had made crisis decisions and developed lessons learned from previous examples was of primary importance, as well as the willingness and openness of the leaders to participate in the study. Their candor was critical to achieving the fundamental purpose of the research.

The three presidents of Colleges A, B, and C were willing to share their experiences during whichever crisis they had identified. During initial site selection, some of their colleagues at the leadership level were reluctant to mention potentially controversial topics and, in two cases, members of the senior team asked me to avoid discussing specific issues. In each case, however, the president chose to discuss the most challenging scenario as part of the project. They seemed to appreciate the researcher’s interest in crisis management, noting there was rarely a specific playbook available during moments of crisis.

Given the small number of participants, one might take issue with the validity of a research project based on such a limited sample (see Table 2). However, I purposely approached only individuals who had direct involvement with the mitigation of a crisis scenario. Despite the limited sample, rich outcomes resulted. Among the three cases, the presidents and their leadership teams observed several similarities, including the role of social media techniques.

### TABLE 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>College A</th>
<th>College B</th>
<th>College C</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>President</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior Administrators</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Staff/Faculty</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
I also witnessed interesting differences based on the ways in which the presidents and their leadership teams responded during moments of crisis. One example was the provost at College A, who strongly disagreed with the approach of small numbers of people deciding the appropriate action to mitigate a crisis. The provost believed the following:

I think the tendency in crisis situations and often in non-crisis situations is to huddle with your small group and make decisions and I think actually the opposite is the better move, that is to make it as transparent as possible, which costs you time, which you don’t always have in some crisis situations. But I think this is a tradeoff that is endemic to administration. Time goes by . . . getting buy-in from different constituencies takes time.

One institution, College C, did not have a strong crisis-planning culture. Although it did not have a crisis plan, the way in which the crisis was mitigated proved effective. The vice president of advancement explained how College C had handled its financial crisis: "[It ] was a plan that evolved out of necessity . . . [the] mother of invention."

Their strategy was based on the understanding that not everyone connected to the college/university and surrounding community could participate in the study (Maxwell, 2013). It was deployed in an attempt to obtain the most effective outcome from the data. *Purposeful selection*, a term derived from Maxwell (2013), allowed for a specific focus on individuals outside of the presidents who had direct knowledge and/or interacted with the crisis scenario directly. The primary focus was on obtaining the "most information of the greatest utility from the limited number of cases to be sampled" (Patton, 1990, p. 181) in order to answer the research questions and specifically address the variables of a given crisis scenario. I believe purposeful selection provided a focused process to obtain
relevant information. It addressed the research questions and produced good data.

**Limitations of the Study/Analysis**

I gathered evidence through qualitative data collection. To garner the most value during the discussions with the participants, I used a technique called episodic interviewing. Defined by Flick (2000), this form of interviewing calls for the participant to reflect on specific events and actions and allows for greater internal processing, which in turn can produce rich contextual information from the participants.

The main principle of the episodic interview is applied: To ask the interviewee to remember a specific situation and to recount it. Which situation he or she remembers or selects for responding to this invitation is not fixed by the interviewer. (p. 7)

All interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim, though interview responses were deidentified for inclusion in the study. The point of the interviews was to answer the research questions based on responses from different campus leaders. Special attention was given to decision-making strategies used by the president and his/her team, and the effectiveness of those strategies on crisis communications. As part of the crisis-communication evaluation, I conducted a review of each college/university website, as well as the various types of communication channels (blogs, newsletters, presidential correspondence, etc.) used during and after the crisis.

Additional questions addressed how the presidents presented or framed the crisis, and when and how the presidents identified the crisis. The use of semi-structured questions enhanced my ability to delve deeper into issues and/or comments shared by participants, and provided greater depth and understanding to their answers. All the interviews were completed onsite in a one-on-one format, with the exception of three
interviews that had to be conducted by telephone due to scheduling conflicts. Each interview lasted approximately 60 to 75 minutes.

The excerpting and coding process was supported by the use of Verbal Link, a transcription service, and Dedoose, a qualitative and mixed methods research software, designed to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of research work (http://userguide.dedoose.com). The media files from Verbal Link were uploaded into the Dedoose software, which facilitated the process of excerpting, coding, and tagging. One useful feature of the software was the ability to begin analysis while developing graphical presentations of the findings. In addition, the Dedoose software assisted with filtering, analysis, and presentation of the findings. Key themes/concepts were identified, sorted, and ultimately used to organize, understand, and communicate the findings. Coding was guided by the research questions as well as themes in the literature identified at earlier stages of the research process.

**Reliability, Validity, and Coding**

In order to test the quality of the overall research design, I conducted a review of the literature to determine best-practice strategies to emulate. Validation techniques are frequently seen as drivers for quality research; however, the literature on this topic varies widely. Stack (1995) and Creswell (2007) developed critique checklists to assess case study reports. Albeit Creswell’s set of questions is not as lengthy, both researchers highlight key areas to be considered: clarity of the cases, description and identification of the issues, importance of readability, scholarly case analysis, limitations of the study, researcher bias, and personal intentions. Writing, editing, and care given to participants in the study were also noted. In order to insure that the data was high quality, the study
followed the criteria set out by Creswell (2007):

- Is there a clear identification of the case or cases in the study?
- Is the case (or cases) used to understand a research issue, or because the case has intrinsic merit?
- Is there a clear description of the case?
- Are themes identified in the case?
- Are assertions or generalizations made from the case analysis?
- Is the researcher reflexive or disclosing about his or her position in the study?

I reviewed such questions prior to and during the process to enhance the outcome.

This process represents a form of ongoing audit, where

one seeks dependability that the results will be subject to change and instability. The naturalistic researcher looks for conformability rather than objectivity in establishing the value of the data. Both dependability and conformability are established through an auditing of the research process. (Creswell, 2007)

In order to identify the variables that go into making decisions and provide the most detailed responses possible from study participants, my focus remained on liberal arts schools that encountered crisis scenarios as identified by their college presidents. In order to provide "corroborating evidence from different sources to shed light on a theme or perspective" (otherwise known as triangulation) (Creswell, 2007), I performed additional interviews with a subset of other individuals involved in the crisis and its resolution.

The type and number of community members interviewed varied by institution. Although these interviews provided rich data and interesting findings, other techniques beyond interviewing were incorporated to insure that the final project findings were
meaningful (Dexter, 1970). I used interview data to create visualization reports through the use of a qualitative research tool (Dedoose); continual writing/drafting; reviewing the data; referencing and consulting relevant literature; review of documents, reports, and websites; as well as reflection on the interconnectedness of the process—that is, "comparing my findings with my personal views, with extant literature, and with emerging models that seem to adequately convey the essence of the findings" (Creswell, 2007).

All interviews were audiotaped and transcribed verbatim by a transcription service, which stored the recordings on their secure servers for 30 days before deleting them after confirmation of receipt. The digital transcripts were then uploaded to the Dedoose software, at which time I began the process of excerpting the transcripts, using the research questions as a primary guide. Identifying the most compelling and relevant aspects was based on the following units of analysis: management strategies to assist college presidents during crisis scenarios, environmental factors required to mitigate and/or end crisis situations, and the role of culture and functionality in crises at small liberal arts colleges/universities. Once the excerpts were highlighted for each participant, the coding process began, with the identification of multiple factors that assisted in the mitigation of crisis scenarios. I created codes based on the various excerpts. This process—assisted by the Dedoose software used to sort, filter, and provide presentations of the data—ultimately produced 11 parent codes with 61 sub-codes (approximately 5 to 6 sub-codes per parent code). The resulting data provided the early indications for how I would share the findings from the project. The codes and sub-codes can be found listed in Appendix D.
Foss et al. (2007) described this point in the process as the "beginning of an explanatory schema" of findings (Kindle p. 195). I used their example of metaphors to advance my thinking related to the development of multiple relationships between the labels and the excerpts created in the coding process. A metaphor involving the leader of a division of the US armed forces preparing for a conflict, the resulting battle, and the aftermath of that conflict proved to be useful in creating the fundamental organizational principle for my schema (Foss et al., 2007).

**Limitations**

Despite the in-depth review of the literature in the field and the creation of thought-provoking research questions, there were limitations to this study. Although the choice of the case study method was based on a desire to "retain the holistic and meaningful characteristics of real-life events," other research methods could be used to produce rich and meaningful research outcomes (Yin, 2009).

Growing concern over crisis management, in the view of the public and higher education community, means a call for more studies. I hope these findings will inform aspiring and current presidents as well as the staff and volunteers who fill crisis-management roles in higher education. Interviews and details that I uncovered during the literature review and conversations I have had about this topic could enhance the depth of understanding regarding issues of crisis and leadership decisions. However, my ability to make broad recommendations for change or guidance based on the study remains limited.

This study focused on three institutions that were similar in nature but which each highlighted a different crisis moment for evaluation. The range of crisis scenarios, while helpful in providing ways to explore how leaders manage moments of crisis, limited the
outcomes of this study and how they could be broadly applied. Albeit the themes exposed in the research may be helpful for current and aspiring presidents, the specific outcomes might not have a predictive quality that would mitigate future crisis scenarios.

Another limitation was my level of familiarity with higher education based on decades of exposure to such institutions and leaders. This involvement at the senior level could establish a bias based on an intimate understanding of how crisis moments are dealt with at small, private liberal arts institutions.

A final limitation was the number of participants interviewed outside the senior leadership team. Though the input, stories, and details I garnered from this group of willing, thoughtful, and supportive participants was fruitful, a broader selection of contributors might have enriched the findings and strengthened the triangulation process. Including information and interview feedback from community leaders and neighboring institutions as well as pivotal contacts within the state (political figures, city/town officials, military contacts) also could have proven helpful. The value of these relationships and their impact on management during moments of crisis would have added depth to the research. During the interviews, certain respondents touched on these roles but not in any meaningful way. Personal feedback about the perceptions of the president, and how he or she managed the campus, would have been beneficial and served as a learning opportunity for future studies.
Chapter 4

CASE STUDIES

College A

Institutional Profile

College A is a private, coeducational, nonsectarian school of liberal arts and sciences. It offers undergraduate, graduate, and doctorate programs, and is located in the Northeastern United States. With approximately 2,900 full-time undergraduates and 400 graduate students, College A has an 8:1 student-faculty ratio and offers more than 1,000 courses in 45 majors and 11 minors.

College A participates in a competitive Division III athletic conference, with close to 30 varsity teams, more than 15 club sports, and approximately 10 intramural sports, with 700+ students engaged outside the classroom. The cost to attend College A exceeds $60,000 a year, including tuition, residential fees, books, supplies, and miscellaneous expenses. Not surprisingly, College A is an extremely wealthy institution, with more than $800 million in endowment funds. It raises more than $40 million a year from alumni, family, and friends.

Located on a hill occupying 300 acres of land, College A offers a spectacular view of the state’s main river, with majestic views of the entire campus from certain vantage points. The 300+ buildings include some registered National Historic Landmarks, which is relevant given that College A’s official charter dates back to the early 19th century.

College A’s governance structure is composed of 33 trustees, including the
president. The board of trustees has the power to hire and fire college presidents, who may confer academic and honorary degrees as well as grant diplomas approved by members of the board.

The mission of the college is to provide a liberal arts education that encompasses boldness, rigor, and a commitment to high ideals. The college prides itself on the caliber of its scholar-teachers and their close working relationships with students, who take advantage of flexible disciplines that allow for global exploration. College A values diversity and energy within its students, faculty, and staff, and their ability to think critically and creatively.

**President of College A**

Prior to his appointment, President A also served as the president of a West Coast institution for close to a decade and received accolades from the local media for developing the school into one of the best of its kind. President A has a history of excelling in all areas: graduating in three years from a highly selective liberal arts institution, earning university honors summa cum laude and Phi Beta Kappa, a doctorate from an Ivy League institution, and a teaching position at a premier West Coast college, before being named to an endowed chair. President A led a graduate studies department at another institution and founded the doctoral program within that department. He is well known as a historian, curator, author, teacher, and dynamic leader.

As president, President A has pledged support for students to receive financial aid. He also led the creation of a new Center for Public Life, a writing center, and a number of interdisciplinary colleges focused on advanced research. During President A’s tenure, he assembled a strong and capable administrative team. In the process of
implementing such campus assets, he successfully navigated some extremely challenging crisis situations on campus, ranging from a student murder (described below) to a "snow-pocalypse" event where the campus went without power and heat for several days, to a student rape case that drew national attention, along with fraternity lawsuits and negative media attention.

**Crisis at a Local Café: The Tragic Murder of a Gifted Student**

Around midnight on a weekday evening, a young man in his late twenties bade his father farewell and traveled to another state—or so the father thought. Based upon conversations with his son, the father believed his son was finally moving out of the house to live on his own. Unfortunately, the young man had other plans. After leaving his New England home with a gun and several rounds of ammunition, he arrived in the quaint town where College A is located. He proceeded to record entries in a composition notebook that referred to killing a particular student, other college community members, and Jews.

Wearing a disguise, the assailant walked into a coffee shop and shot a female student as she worked behind the counter. According to the *New York Times*, the assailant escaped to the basement using a conveyor belt. He was detained by the authorities and released before anyone realized he was the perpetrator.

As news of the shooting spread, the vice president for finance and administration was in a meeting with the dean of students. He immediately contacted the chief of staff and director of public safety. Within 20 minutes the vice president canceled the longstanding and popular Spring Fling (an outdoor party that includes music, food, and activities) that was scheduled for later that day. Electronic communications drafted by
the president were sent via the emergency notification system, instructing all students to remain inside until further notice. The notifications related that police had made the school aware of a shooting at a local café and that the perpetrator had not yet been captured. By the time President A entered the crisis room, he already had spoken to the victim’s parents.

According to the vice president of finance, "My job was to try and get other law enforcement, so I called up [University X], I may have even talked to [State School Y]. . . . My view was, wherever I am on campus I want to be within eyesight of a cop." The idea of bringing armed security officers on campus created unexpected issues of jurisdiction and potential loss of overtime. Questions about whether officers from other schools would be welcome without an official call from local authorities might have caused potential problems for the college.

A few hours after the shooting, another emergency update from President A was delivered, stating that a College A student had been killed and that the suspect was still at large. Additional emergency notifications continued to arrive from the president, dean of students, and public safety officials. One offered information on counseling services while others instructed community members to stay indoors and remain vigilant. Continued details appeared on President A's blog the day after the murder, reiterating the facts of the case and explaining that the gunman had hostility against the college community and Jews. The president explained that the school was deploying additional security and instructed students to stay indoors.

A day and a half after the shooting, the community finally breathed a sigh of relief when the killer was caught. The student paper reported that the gunman had turned
himself in after buying a Smoothie at a nearby convenience store. The editor wrote that the assailant had asked the store clerk for a phone "because he needed to call the police." After placing a call to the authorities, the assailant was grabbed by police officers.

**Victim and Assailant Background**

Two years earlier the victim and the assailant had attended a summer course on diversity held at another urban campus. They started off as friends, sharing the occasional coffee, but at some point he began to criticize the way she dressed, suggesting that her attire was provocative. Then the assailant began to stalk the student. By the time the course ended, she had complained to the university about his harassment, citing threatening emails and negative references to her background. By the time the police were contacted, the assailant had left the state, so formal charges were never brought.

Digging deeper into his background, the *New York Times* reported that the assailant had had a fairly normal home life, including a privileged upbringing in a large New England city and membership in an extended churchgoing family. He graduated from an elite prep school before entering the armed forces, where he finished a four-year stint in the military with an unblemished record. However, upon returning to civilian life, problems began to emerge. According to the *Times*, he struggled to hold a job for any meaningful amount of time and took classes at a nearby college before moving back in with his parents.

The female victim was a bright and gifted student whose grandmother had been a survivor of the Holocaust. Only a year from graduating, she had planned to devote her
life to helping those in need by earning a master’s degree in international public health with a focus on women’s access to health care and reproductive rights. Although the contributions of her bright life never will be realized, her legacy lives on through family, classmates, and fellow students and alumni. Following her death, students created a health care clinic in Africa in her name. The focus of the clinic is to help the "bodies and souls of women and girls" so they may become strong and independent leaders within their community.

**Presidential Response and Reflection**

At College A the president and his leadership team made decisions and took actions to navigate the challenging situation presented by the murder and the threat of an active shooter on campus. The entire community went into a state of shock that lasted for days. The possibility that the shooting would remain unsolved sent the college and city into turmoil. For the president, "There was so much sorrow and fear, and for me, I’m sure one of the most important things I’ll have ever experienced in my job was trying to work with this campus community as well as the family of the slain student." He described the presidential decisions and leadership actions during times of crisis as being of the "ultimate importance" and immediately began to devise a solution to the challenge.

He explained, "I make all the decisions. When we have a cabinet meeting, we don’t vote on anything." Three elements were clear regarding the leadership that President A showcased: an extremely small inner circle; crisis communications handled and written by the president; and a laserlike focus devoted to returning the institution to normal.
President A took it upon himself to write all communications that were sent. As leader of a small, tight-knit community, the actions, voice, and direction of the leader is important. President A felt the need to report on all steps taken to mitigate the damage to others. His focus was on "trying to keep the community informed and get us back to normal as soon as it was safe to do so." A considerable amount of time was devoted to getting the messages right, using his blog as a source of intelligence for students, parents, and alumni.

The chief of staff found such communications powerful, based on their warmth and intimacy. He shared feedback that the parents, alumni, and students had regarding President A’s messages, which left "an indelible imprint on the entire crisis." The value of having a charismatic president in a moment of a crisis, someone who can connect with others through voice and words, is a powerful advantage for any campus community. In this crisis, President A’s leadership action and communication clearly helped others cope, heal, and chart a path back to normalcy.

Even though most aspects of the communication from the institution were positive, the dean of students shared a particular lesson:

We didn’t really communicate with the campus as effectively as we might have. We got feedback that it would be good to let people know when they would get the next update from us, because we were in lockdown for quite a while and it didn’t occur to us when we first started our communications out to the community that we should say our next update to you, unless something critical happens, will be at noon, or 3 p.m. or whatever.

The focus on returning to normal was a main driver for the president. It was a focus criticized by some, but it remained the underlying focus. "Maybe the dominant thing for me is getting back to normal, which means holding classes as soon as it’s safe to do so."
That last piece is a judgment call. How do you know it's safe?"

After many decisions and actions in terms of frequent communication, contact with local and state law enforcement, and planning a campus vigil, President A focused on the well-being of the students. As hours passed since the shooting and the ordered lockdown, President A began to think about the students stuck in their dorms without food. Despite the risk, he and his chief of staff walked across campus, delivering food to students. This effort and outreach was a tremendous testament to the value President A placed on his role as leader, adviser, and protector of the campus community. For him, it was "a really intense moment of vulnerability and of strength." The decision to get the community fed quickly brought the wounded campus back to some form of normalcy. As the chief of staff reflected, "In terms of the value and culture of the institution, that left an imprint on me, inasmuch as what we were doing and the priorities we set were governed in some ways by the goal of getting the students back in a safe, comfortable environment, back into the classroom."

Years later, President A recalled a comment made by a parent who had received a call from his daughter during the lockdown. "I'll always remember when my daughter called home when we had them on lockdown and she saw you coming to them with sandwiches to the dorm. She burst into tears, [and] I promptly burst into tears. I felt it was going to be okay, that you were there—and it was."

The dean of students, however, held a different view regarding the resumption of classes after the murder. Conflict existed between returning the school to a sense of normalcy versus insuring that all preparations for the community had been made. Despite the difference of opinion by certain members of the leadership team, the overall
sense of President A’s leadership was positive in terms of his handling of the crisis. The chief of staff and vice president of finance clearly appreciated the quick, decisive, and thoughtful actions brought about by the president’s leadership. The senior leadership team at College A acknowledged that President A’s consistent presence and decisive abilities during the crisis had made a big difference in how the school weathered the crisis.

**Power of the Team**

In the heat of the moment, when a leader is collecting information from multiple sources, the importance of an effective team, where each person knows his or her respective role, drove the process at College A. The vice president of finance used the analogy of flying a plane.

I'm a private pilot, so they say when something happens, the first thing you have to do is fly the airplane. And that's what we have to do. So when [crises] happen, you want to do things that keep you going rather than worrying about all the other stuff.

The chief of staff commented on the selection of the inner circle and the preparation in advance of crisis moments.

You put a good team, a good plan in place, and it’s a lot of preparation, not just the moment of crisis. I think that is the gauge of that individual’s leadership or ability, because a good leader is prepared in some ways for the eventuality of a crisis.

Collectively the team took a series of actions, including canceling the spring fling; locking down the campus; arranging for effective communication with the school community; contacting parents; and providing safety, shelter, and sustenance to the students in a timely fashion. The small team and associated departmental staff never had to worry about analysis paralysis. As one team member said, "You need to make some
decisions, and you need to make them relatively quickly, and you can second-guess yourself until the cows come home, but having a relatively small group that can work effectively in these sorts of major crisis is probably the most important thing.” President A was not only comfortable making decisions during critical moments, he favored keeping his closest leadership members at the table.

President A exuded supreme confidence in making decisions and, according to a security/crisis expert consulted, ultimately made the right calls in this particular case. President A recalls the conversation with the consultant:

I did talk to a security/crisis person . . . who does this for different schools. I was talking to him late at night, and he said, "You’re doing everything I would have told you to do. . . . You may not know what you are doing, but you are doing it right."

An additional power of the team relates to institutional culture. During the discussions with team members, a can-do attitude within the leadership team became evident. The vice president articulated the culture by thinking about the staff members within his departmental purview, especially the food-service team:

You have to have relatively good people and trust in those good people that they can deliver. So you have to enable them; you have to have a culture that allows that to happen. And it comes back to that decision-making thing. If I feel I've worked well with you and I trust your judgment and I trust your capacity, and then a crisis hits, I'm going to go to you. You're my go-to guy.

College B

Institutional Profile

College B is a highly selective, private, four-year liberal arts college affiliated with a religious group, located in the Mid-Atlantic region of the US. The college offers
40 majors covering the humanities, fine arts, social and natural sciences, as well as pre-health, pre-law, pre-theology, business, and education. With approximately 2,200 undergraduate students and a full-time faculty of 171, College B has a 12:1 student/faculty ratio. Like College A, the school participates in a competitive Division III intercollegiate athletic conference. It offers 20 varsity sports and numerous intramural and club sport activities. College B has a fairly active Greek system with 10 national fraternities, sororities, community service fraternities, and one multicultural sorority.

The cost to attend College B is approximately $55,000 a year, including tuition, room and board, and other expenses. Approximately 80% of the students on campus receive some form of financial aid, both need-based aid and scholarships. The financial foundation for College B includes an endowment in excess of $200 million, and it raises approximately $7 million a year from alumni, family, and friends. The campus sits on 82 acres overlooking a beautiful valley. College B recently completed construction of a new, 40,000-square-foot Life Sports Center.

College B’s governance structure encompasses 40 elected trustees in addition to the president. The board comprises clergy and laypeople who serve as ex-officio trustees with the power to hire and fire the president. The college mission is devoted to the development of independent thinkers who seek zest in life, are intellectually nimble, and committed to the diversity the world has to offer. The college believes in and fosters lifelong learning where members of the community are committed to leadership and service. The curriculum offers opportunities to combine the strength of a liberal arts education with the advantages of pre-professional studies.
President of College B

President B graduated from an Ivy League institution and continued his education, earning a PhD at another Ivy League institution. President B then pursued a dual-track career, teaching as an adjunct faculty member while working within the administration in various roles at his alma mater. After nearly two decades as both a doctoral student and faculty/administrator, President B left to lead the development office at a small liberal arts institution. For the next 15 years President B continued to teach at least one class a year while maintaining a demanding job that involved travel and meetings on campus.

As president of College B, he presided over a solid school and made it better during his decade-long tenure. College B has been recognized as a best-value institution, a top school for its return on investment.

Impending Storm

Every late summer/early fall, colleges and universities across the country prepare to receive returning students and faculty, as well as a fresh crop of new students to replace the recently graduated class of seniors. The time is one of excitement, anticipation, and anxiety as families bid farewell to their children. At the same time, returning students and faculty greet each other as they embark on a new academic year. Like many institutions, College B spends a lot of time organizing activities designed to make move-in and orientation go as smoothly and problem-free as possible.

In late August 2011, however, the Office of Public Relations posted a hurricane/housing update on the college’s website, warning students and families that Hurricane Irene was forecast to reach the East Coast during the orientation period. Normal festivities,
including a back-to-school barbecue, were moved inside, while freshman orientation planning continued. Parents and returning students added to the chaos, flooding the phone lines. As was true at College A, issues of safety, food, and shelter as well as decisions on communicating operational details to those affected were of the utmost concern. Fears that students and members of the community might encounter fallen power lines, loss of power, or be unable to connect with loved ones during the storm were primary. Although it was possible that the storm might be pushed offshore, away from the campus, the threat was real enough to trigger planning for a major incident.

**Storm Development**

According to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), Hurricane Irene was "the most significant tropical system to make a direct landfall in the Northeast since Hurricane Bob in 1991." NOAA’s website lists sobering statistics about Hurricane Irene, with more than 45 deaths and approximately $7.3 billion in damage. NOAA touts its accurate prediction of Irene’s path "four days in advance," that it would strike eastern North Carolina and track northward.

Even before the storm was named, meteorologists believed the summer storm would hit the East Coast, with satellite images supporting local and national reports. The technology used to predict the storm included various hurricane models, aircraft observations, and data that allowed families and organizations to plan well in advance of the storm making landfall. College B administration was not alone in its concern and preparation; various members of the college community wondered what would happen and how the institution would respond, given that one weather model had the storm traveling directly over the college.
Local and national newspapers warned residents with headlines like "What to do if your house is flooded," and cited several governors who were asking President Obama for emergency disaster assistance in case the storm hit their states. Damage assessment and recovery language were in high gear. One local reporter wrote about his own challenges with Hurricane Irene:

As I write this, we're 25 hours into our power outage, which began at 11 a.m. Sunday. Neighbors told us Sunday evening they had been assured that power would be restored by 7:30, but that didn't happen. We spent a candlelit evening reading and playing Scrabble.

In its coverage leading up to Irene's landfall, the New York Times commented on the importance of watching the cone's potential track, which happened to curve "just far enough away from the Florida peninsula to cause emergency officials up and down the state to breathe a cautious sigh of relief." Even as some states had dodged the bullet, others were in the storm's direct line of sight.

**Quiet before the Storm**

Days before the prospective weather event, the IT director began to think through scenarios. He called his trusted colleague, the director of campus events, to discuss next steps in case the early predictions proved to be a reality. The initial meetings between the directors took place without any direction from President B. The director of the campus union and campus events summed up the model of operation:

It wasn’t a call from the top saying "you need to think about this." It’s because we’ve been driven to anticipate and prepare from the top down. We’re driven to think proactively. That’s where that comes from. But to pull a pool of people together and have them respond and show up without having to get a message from the top down is really what makes us successful.

Crisis preparation, planning, and execution were not new concepts to this experienced
group of administrators. In the words of the IT director, the mindset and culture on campus took crisis planning and execution very seriously. "In our world, a crisis is not over until you’ve assessed how well you’ve communicated, and you’ve assessed what issues you’ve encountered, and whether or not they could be remediated." The president believed that having a plan—no matter its original intent or purpose—was better than having no plan at all, as one always could adjust and adapt it. The other component of this strategy was the realization that during intense, pressure-packed crisis situations, where time is precious, using a general outline that people can implement is far easier than starting from scratch. In fact, the culture of crisis management at College B was evident during the span of three different presidential administrations. "We had a very well-informed crisis leadership team on campus, one that is involved in anticipating crises, in managing crises, and then, the more important part, post-crisis assessment and planning." This long habit of crisis preparation served College B well.

**Hurricane Irene and College B**

The ability to get the institution back to normal operation was a primary concern for the leadership team. When all was said and done, although Hurricane Irene claimed lives across multiple states, not one life was lost on the campus of College B.

On Wednesday, August 24, an early-morning email from the director of campus events was sent to event contractors regarding the removal of tents set up for student orientation. The director assembled a support-services team to review concerns and contingencies regarding the weather, including moving events inside and protecting equipment and services. Two meetings were scheduled for Friday with a larger group of community members, including the Crisis Management Response Team (CMRT). The
following day, Thursday, brought a crisis-response exercise where communication avenues were discussed. By 7:14 a.m. on Friday, August 26, President B had sent the following message to the senior team:

As we said in our crisis-response exercise yesterday, people crave information in a situation like this. Should we be preparing more proactive communications to the community both on campus (email) and off campus (email and web) about what we are doing and are preparing to do? Thoughts?

Later that morning, a draft proposal and agenda were sent to President B for review prior to the first meeting. The 20 or so people in the room represented academic administration, residential services, food service, plant operations, faculty, and campus safety. The purpose of the meeting was to answer questions, address areas of vulnerability, and plan next steps. Questions included:

- How can we keep our communications secure?
- What are our communications capabilities?
- How might the campus community be affected by the storm in case of a power outage?
- What are our safety systems that will keep students safe?
- How will a power outage affect the campus?

Another meeting led to answers and discussion of the message to be sent to the college community later that day. These two meetings on Friday were instrumental in mapping out a strategy for the Freshman Orientation and upperclassmen's move-in. A storm-categorization plan was developed and disseminated to the campus that included four levels of severity and action items based upon the storm threat (see Appendix D). With student orientation imminent, the group began reviewing the impact of programs and events; consideration was given to moving events inside and what impact that would cause for food preparation and logistics. The email from President B on Friday morning included such specific items as "the scaffolding on the chapel and other work sites," roofs
prone to leaking and "drains prone to pluggage [sic]," as well as traffic on major routes into the area, given that evacuation orders might be enacted. The group discussed the prospect of losing power across campus and potential safety issues.

As calls to the switchboard increased and the senior team shared their views, President B sent a message to the entire community a day earlier than planned, which addressed many of the questions posed by the senior team and members of the CMRT. The message, which went out at 12:56 p.m. on Friday, August 26, informed the college community that move-in day would continue as planned for first-year students. Upperclassmen were encouraged to stay home until after the storm, but move-in hours on Saturday were extended from 8:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. Outdoor activities were moved to the campus center, with the possibility of moving the convocation until after the storm passed. The president warned that classes scheduled to start on Monday might be canceled and encouraged communication between students and faculty regarding class schedules.

President B also spoke of possible power outages and indicated that though the campus had emergency generators for some buildings and equipment, "college staff are reviewing contingency plans for such an eventuality." The message explained that the most reliable form of communication would be through text messages and encouraged students, faculty, and staff to register their cell phones with the E2Campus emergency system. President B explicitly asked that parents and outside community members not register for the system, "as the extra traffic would compromise its effectiveness."

Separate procedures for receiving communications were shared, primarily through use of an information hotline.
From President B’s perspective, three items were critical: providing leadership during meetings to achieve the best solutions for the crisis at hand, insuring an inclusive management style that would allow all viewpoints, and activating the existing crisis emergency plan. Once the first meeting of the expanded CMRT began, President B focused on keeping the community safe during the storm and discussing solutions for returning the college to normalcy as soon as possible. In his view, clarifying information and answering questions succinctly and clearly, with confidence and accuracy, remained a priority. Time was critical, and understanding the capabilities of the organization to address the crisis had to remain at the forefront.

President B politely asked for input from others, in essence serving as an effective moderator and limiting the input of nonessential personnel. Still, President B’s inclusive style of asking for opinions and keeping the dialogue going was essential to getting the right information at the right time. He understood the value of such a style throughout the planning and actual crisis.

One would try to keep the group small because you’d think a small group is a more nimble group, but I think that’s a mistake. You don’t want everybody trying to talk over each other, you have to have somebody who’s really a moderator, and that is my role. But you needed the key people there and you needed them to hear what was going on from each other. So the campus safety director, the IT director, and plant ops director, all those people need to be there, [but] they don’t all need to talk.

Asked how an institution’s culture or internal operational values might affect the broad functionality of a presidential leader with respect to Hurricane Irene, his response concerned College B’s shared governance and the important aspects of the crisis: the safety and well-being of the students.

I would say [College B] let the president be the president. That doesn’t
mean they expect me to stride into the room and start barking orders at everybody. But if I’m there, I can convene a meeting. I can turn the floor over to the head of campus safety or the head of IT or to somebody else. But I can always interrupt with questions, and nobody’s going to think I’m being a jerk.

President B’s focus was on "putting students first, putting students at the center of things, something that is widely shared, widely understood," and not up for debate. It was understood that communicating with faculty about protecting any academic experiments in case of a power outage was important, but not as important as losing fire-safety systems or "keeping students fed, making sure the buildings have adequate heat," or staying safe when there were no active security on the doors across campus. In short, President B’s role and focus were on keeping the students safe and being present throughout the crisis.

On Sunday, a majority of students were on campus without power as Hurricane Irene roared through the state. Thankfully, the communication process that College B used throughout the ordeal was comprehensive, from early messages to the campus and parent community about preparatory plans to the text messages and social media during the storm that warned students about downed power lines and indicated which buildings were open and ready to take visitors. One text posted at 1:33 p.m. on August 28 relayed the following information:

The campus picnic is cancelled. Alternate food service will be provided to staff and students. A decision about Opening Convocation will be made later today. The freshman campus resource sessions are cancelled. Please avoid walking under large trees. Branches are still falling due to high winds.

Luckily, the model that predicted the storm would move directly over the college was wrong, and the campus was spared the brunt of the storm. Even so, the school was
left without power, and the local power company could not say when power would be restored. At this stage, the CMRT was in full gear, making sure that student health and safety issues were addressed. A campus bulletin was sent to parents, highlighting the fact that students had received dinner the first day of the storm and that locations were available on campus to charge phones, socialize, and seek assistance if needed. The campus bulletin included information about alternative light sources, shuttle services, drinking water, and plans for the next day, including class for all students, even though restoration of power was not likely.

The vice president of student affairs focused on the dorms and the high risk of fire from the use of candles, which were forbidden. The situation required quick action and decision making.

The residence halls were wide open and could be easy prey. We had a local security company we use for big events, commencement, big concerts, and President Obama when he was stumping on the campaign trail. We deployed them and called on young faculty and staff. I had coaches, I had nurses, and we came in and literally did duty at doors, and also sent people through the residence halls to be sure students weren’t lighting candles.

The importance of including all the people in the room during the crisis emerged as the CMRT addressed student safety in the dark dormitories, and the vice president of development shed light on an otherwise dark situation:

You might say, why have the vice president for development and alumni relations at the table? Because of a fundraising opportunity? It turned out that they happened to have a thousand small flashlights they had gotten to give to alumni at reunion weekend. They had the biggest supply of flashlights probably in the [area]. When we said, can we have them, they said absolutely. So when the power went out, we went around handing out [these] little but powerful flashlights to all the freshmen. And we would never have known about that if they hadn’t been at the table.

The power outage lasted approximately 20 hours. Thanks to crisis planning, the
college was prepared to feed students for at least three days. If needed, they could have stretched things for an even longer period. Throughout the storm, the priority was the safety and well-being of the students and getting back to a normal set of activities. Before the power returned, President B announced that classes would be in session on Monday, unless a class was scheduled before 10:00 a.m. or after 6:00 p.m. Plant operations staff were asked to report at their normal times; and food distribution, while not on a regular schedule, was broadened to accommodate larger numbers for longer periods of time. On Monday morning, full power was restored to the entire campus and a normal class schedule was resumed, along with the convocation, which was pushed back to the evening to be held in "a clean, well-lighted place."

College C

Institutional Profile

College C was founded in the 1800s as a historically black college or university (HBCU). College C has received numerous awards and recognition, and it has been highly ranked as a leading regional liberal arts college in the southern United States. College C has approximately 2,100 students from more than 15 countries. It reports that a typical class is approximately 30 students, with upper-level classes containing fewer. Despite this range, the student to faculty ratio is 10:1, comparable to other schools in the study. College C has a strategic focus on student health and wellness services designed to enhance the collegiate experience for a greater number of the college community.

The cost to attend College C is approximately $40,000 per year, including tuition, room, and board, as well as miscellaneous charges. More than 85% of students receive
some form of financial assistance. Regarding its financial foundation, College C has a solid endowment of approximately $360 million and was featured in a 2009 asset-management case study for its remarkable growth over time, from $44 million in 1988 to a positive position today of more than $360 million. The case study cites an initial $2 million investment of the college’s endowment in a venture-capital partnership. Eight years after that investment, its CFO learned that their initial investment had received an approximate return of 87 percent. Much has been written about the growth of the endowment based on a succession of strong leaders, including presidents, the long-serving chair of the investment committee, and a similar tenure by the CFO.

College C is located on a picturesque campus just outside a bustling downtown metro area. The college is a historic landmark, nestled on approximately 40 acres. It is part of a consortium of institutions that have developed effective partnerships that share classes, resources, and centers. Its mission is to prepare students for academic excellence in the liberal arts and sciences, with a particular interest in the empowerment of the whole person. The values of the college encourage engagement with diverse cultures to inspire dedication and commitment to positive social change.

Twenty-five trustees, plus the president, who serves as an ex officio member, govern the college, along with 10 emeritus (lifetime) trustees. The authorized size of the board is 30, but the college tries to leave room at the table, while guarding against decision making in a cumbersome environment. Members of the board focus on governance, not management techniques, as well as asset development.

President of College C

Prior to her appointment, President C served in several roles, including heading a
prestigious women’s college in the Northeast for more than a decade. President C’s style is one of quiet strength and solid relationships with constituents: students, faculty, administration, alumni, and families. President C rose through the ranks of the faculty at various institutions. She believes in the importance of faculty service and credits this experience with helping her in the role of president.

President C expressed the belief that her experience as a faculty member had paid big dividends. "When you can say I’ve been a department chair, I know what a drag that is, I have been there, done that; when you can speak from that experience, when you demonstrate that you can do what they do and you’ve done it well, then you get a certain amount of street credit, which is important." President C’s experience in the classroom also has led to many speaking engagements, workshops, and publications.

As the recipient of awards, honorary degrees, and service on several boards of directors, President C is an accomplished professional who has strengthened College C by successfully raising and strengthening its endowment, while also making the bold move to eliminate athletics and replacing them with a state-of-the-art wellness center committed to educating the whole person. She graduated from a small liberal arts college in the Northeast and earned two master’s degrees and a PhD from a leading public university that offers top graduate programs.

Financial Crisis at an HBC

The financial crisis of 2008 left banks and hedge funds that had invested heavily in sub-prime mortgages saddled with worthless assets. As foreclosures continued to rise, banking giants such as Bear Stearns and Lehman Brothers collapsed, and the larger banks merged: Bank of America purchased Merrill Lynch, JP Morgan Chase purchased
Washington Mutual, and Wells Fargo purchased Wachovia. The *Wall Street Journal* reported on Treasury Secretary Henry Paulson's historic actions in September 2008:

> When he refused to rescue Lehman Brothers Holdings, saying the government had no authority to bail the investment bank out of trouble, faced with the prospect of a collapsing financial system and U.S. economy, Mr. Paulson sought congressional approval for a $700 billion bailout, known as the Troubled Asset Relief Program, that the government ultimately used to inject billions of dollars directly into the nation’s largest banks, auto companies, and financial institutions.

Higher education was not immune to the crisis, and in 2008 College C looked at the budget projections for the coming year and saw that it had a $4.8 million deficit caused by the banking institutions getting out of the private student loan business, leaving many students in the lurch. President C summed up the gravity of situation: "We lost students who just couldn’t come to school, and because we were off our budgetary number, in the course of that fiscal year we had to reduce our budget by about $5 million."

In addition to low-income students struggling to find private loans to continue their education, College C faced fiscal challenges with under-performing departments and auxiliary programs in the red. It could not increase tuition to offset conditions and, faced with making difficult decisions to remain a viable educational system in the South, ongoing operations were threatened, which increased the school's reliance on fund-raising. College C’s fundamental mission to educate students of color, many of whom needed significant financial support to attend, was in jeopardy.

College C was not alone in this challenge, but the population it served presented a greater burden to its financial framework. The question was whether families could find the resources to enroll their students and keep them enrolled. In addition, the existing
governance culture at College C was being questioned by faculty, as their salaries were frozen and concerns about how budgets were allocated became prevalent. President C described the existing governance culture:

The culture of HBCUs is that the president is very presidential, . . . so you have in some ways more authority or latitude to move quickly than you might have at a more traditional or majority institution.

The longtime CFO of College C explained the governance culture this way: "In most HBCUs, the president and the CFO do everything. They make the budgets. They make academic decisions. They make student decisions. They make it all." Reflecting her ability to predict situations five years before the economic collapse, President C began testing a new model of shared governance that had been nonexistent at the college. Up to this point, the president had complete authority and the faculty's voice was nil. As the vice president of enrollment described it:

Being able to really be flexible and understand there are forces beyond the institution's control that can impact our ability to do what we do, whether it's federal and state regulations, an economy that completely tanks, and adversely or disproportionately impacts the core group of the students that we're educating, but also thinking about what's next on the horizon.

President C helped the college mitigate a potential crisis for three main reasons: foresight in helping to navigate the financial crisis and understanding the need for a reliance on fund-raising; exceptional use of communication avenues to inform, debate, and convey action strategies to mitigate the crisis; and a change in the shared-governance practice commonly associated with HBCUs.

First, there was her ability to forecast the need for greater philanthropic resources and recognize a catastrophic economic downturn. After meeting with the enrollment vice president in spring 2008, President C learned that many banks were no longer offering
student loans, which would have a direct impact on many families that College C served. In an article published at the time, President C reflected on the impending anniversary of Hurricane Katrina while facing yet another storm, this time an economic one:

The storm that we see coming is that students who need loans are not going to be able to get them, and that those students are going to be washed up on the beach like starfish after a big storm, and our challenge will be to get those students who have been washed out of school because they don’t have money back into school and the private philanthropy is going to have to replace private lending.

President C challenged individuals who had the capacity to support and sponsor students to do so. The very day the essay ran, College C received a gift of $20,000 to support students in need, spawning the President’s Safety Net Fund. President C was bolstered by this gift and a subsequent article in the *New York Times* that suggested not everyone was affected by an economic downturn. As President C noted, the article was about "some rich guy who had taken his friends out on his yacht, he was living it up, because even though the economy was falling apart, there were still people with discretionary income to spend." Between the gift of $20,000 and the realization that there were individuals with funds, a new strategy was developed that focused on philanthropy to support scholarships. The strategy was successful in generating several million dollars to help students stay in school. President C reported that the strategy kept "on average . . . 100 kids a year in school as a consequence."

The need to ramp up fund-raising came on the heels of a major investment bank that had committed a $10 million gift to College C. The college received the first installment of $3 million in 2007, but by September 2008, the investment bank had declared bankruptcy and the remaining pledge was never fulfilled. President C’s essay
appeared several months before the bottom fell out, but in retrospect she looked like a visionary for predicting an economic storm that dwarfed all expectations.

During academic year 2008–2009, the CFO approached President C with the fact that the college was losing students. The CFO articulated the reality:

The world says we can't increase our tuition or fees. We've got all these programs that are extraordinary as well as some that are just inefficient, and more important, we have a deficit of almost $5 million that we can project on a budget of $75–80 million, and we've got do something to balance this budget, because the College C board of trustees has the philosophy of pay as you go. Translation: no deficits.

Seeing the data proposed by the CFO, President C convened a meeting of the senior staff and began a series of tough discussions about the future of the college and how best to navigate troubled waters. Throughout the discussions, a common theme emerged: maintain a stable environment.

The first set of proposals came from the CFO, who reported which programs were high performing and which ones were weak. The good news was that information about the programs was readily available, with years of thorough reviews highlighting weak and/or under-performing programs.

Sometimes it takes a crisis to effect change. In this case, the education department topped the list of weak departments, with declining enrollments and large numbers of tenured faculty. One of the most difficult decisions was whether to eliminate or restructure the department. With various proposals in hand, and financial information supporting the consideration to eliminate or restructure, President C and her leadership team approached the Resource Allocation Committee (RAC) and a group of interested and vested community members to discuss which cuts would need to be made. The
initial collective reaction was to do nothing, but after further discussion, the step was
taken to reduce administrative assistantships from 12 months to 10 months. Although it
was not the job that staff had signed up for, the result was a reduction in cost while
maintaining jobs.

With more cuts needed, the declining enrollment in the education program and its
aging faculty became the elephant in the room. Eventually, the CFO pushed the envelope
by saying, "All we need for you guys to do is give up a million dollars out of your
[respective] programs. Tell me how you’re going to do it and get on with it." The
collective response was to eliminate the education department instead of taking money
away from other programs. The final plan restructured the department into a focused
program around teacher development and partnered with a neighboring institution where
students could participate in a teacher-certification program. This solution eased budget
constraints by reducing faculty assigned to the department. Most faculty close to
retirement were offered severance packages, and these positions were not refilled. By not
eliminating the entire department, College C successfully navigated a potential firestorm
of angry alumni, many of whom had graduated from the education department. Given
the department’s historical significance, President C's decision to tackle a sacred cow was
risky politically but essential in order to move the institution forward. The positive
outcome was the result of collective involvement and active communication by the
college community until all "hearts and minds [were] clear."

The integrated approach of having discussions with faculty and administrators
significantly assisted the college in mitigating a potential crisis. This collective
involvement and active communication was the beginning of an evolving model of
college governance, loosely defined or categorized into three parts: 1) increased 
transparency and involvement with regard to critical institutional decision making; 2) 
greater communication avenues with regard to all aspects of the college; and 3) marginal 
adjustments away from a "president-centric" model. For the move toward a 
comprehensive shared-governance model, President C signaled her willingness early in 
her tenure. As a former dean of an elite majority liberal arts institution, President C was 
inclined toward a shared-governance model; however, she had inherited a president-
centric model at College C.

Prior to the financial crisis, President C developed the RAC in response to faculty 
interest in having more input into the budgeting process. Though many institutions 
across the country have similar RACs, up to that point College C did not. This 
committee comprised administrators, faculty, and staff who were tasked with discussing 
priorities for the institution. The committee met on a regular basis to address budgetary 
challenges, and an atmosphere of trust and transparency developed. This is not to say 
that discussions were easy or quick; however, to have discussions happen on a regular 
basis, with the best intentions of the college at the forefront, made a great deal of 
difference, especially during the financial crisis in 2008.

Greater communication avenues also opened prior to the crisis in 2008. In fact, 
the first State of the College address happened during President C’s tenure in 2003.

I did something that had never been done before, which is [deliver] an 
Annual State of the College address. When the budget is approved by 
the board, I do a presentation after the April board meeting, where I 
announce all the things the board decided, such as tenure decisions, 
but I also showed the budget.

Albeit the address highlighted the budget, it did not provide granular detail, just
enumerated decisions regarding tuition increases and major budgetary categories, including enrollment figures. President C shared PowerPoint slides with the entire faculty after each meeting. By the time the financial crisis hit the campus, the college community had witnessed five years of regular communication. Additionally, President C increased the discussions from annually to twice a year (fall and spring) two years prior to the crisis. Once the early signs of trouble with enrollment were identified and shared, the RAC was expanded to include others providing ideas for how the budget shortfall could be mitigated. President C’s primary goal was to communicate. As she noted, "My goal [was] to preserve people’s employment, preserve jobs, [and] maintain a stable environment throughout the financial crisis."

The adjustment from a president-centric model to a shared-governance model was highlighted by the ways in which President C involved the faculty and an expanded group of community members to address the crisis that the institution faced. In the typical president-centric model followed by many HBCUs, decisions would have received scant input from faculty. President C had discussed raises for faculty and staff with the college community earlier in the year, but once she saw the enrollment numbers, she felt such increases could not go forward. In the meantime, a nearby college not only promised increased salaries, it delivered on that promise. Though it had a larger endowment, College C held onto its resources. President C chose to maintain a fiscally stable environment. When its competitor had to rescind the raises it had offered, College C was vindicated. Though pay raises and vacations were suspended, College C maintained its payments to the TIAA/CREF pension fund as well as benefits.
Managing the Financial Crisis

To surmount the financial crisis, decisions needed to be made. First, the education department became a target, with fewer FTEs and reduced administration. Fund-raising became critical, especially financial aid/scholarships, and a broad spectrum of the community was engaged in making the decisions about cutting programs. Additional action items were needed to make up the $5 million shortfall, approximately 5% of the budget, including freezing all appointments, closing the daycare (a sentimental favorite that was nevertheless losing money). Raises were put on hold, and staff was furloughed for several weeks at a time. The CFO described the path forward:

We can save a million dollars sending people home for two to three weeks, have the whole college on vacation, but you can’t call nobody. We can’t call you, and we did that. Everybody got their regular paychecks. It was an ingenious way of saving money. You had to be creative in the way you did stuff.

The nursery program held great emotional value for the community. It was originally opened to help members of the college community and neighbors in the area, but it was now losing more than $500,000 a year. Nor was the nursery/kindergarten serving its intended purpose: rather than accommodating college and neighborhood children, the primary users were families of the town's utility and law firms. Had there not been a dramatic need to balance the budget, closing this community asset would have been an impossible battle.

Moments for Reflection

After successfully navigating a difficult financial crisis and realizing that a tuition-dependent and federally funded institution would face more financial challenges, President C paused to reflect. One topic she had second thoughts about was salary...
increases. After the financial hold was lifted, President C mandated a flat increase
across the board a few years after the economic downturn. She later pondered whether a
different approach might have produced a better outcome. In 2014 a program of pay
increases was instituted that took into consideration income equality. This might have
been a better choice, given those families in greatest need.

So in this moment, sitting in my house in the middle of a snowstorm, I came up
with a strategy which we implemented . . . I talked to the RAC about it and I
talked to my senior team and introduced the idea, let everybody wrap their brains
around it. Some people liked it, and some people didn’t, but the basic idea was
that there would be a set amount of money that everyone would get as a
consequence of addressing the cost of living.

The amount settled on was $1,200 for each employee (basically $100 more a month),
and the balance, approximately $300,000, would be allocated at the discretion of the
departmental vice presidents based on performance or other metrics chosen by the
senior team.

Many of the president’s decisions and changes had been positive, leading to more
effective, frequent, and meaningful lines of communication; involvement of key
constituents; allowing members of the senior team to lead; and an increased ability to
anticipate College C's needs into the future.
Chapter 5

ANALYSIS

In my analytical process, I identified four themes/findings and important learning outcomes worth exploring and discussing. These include presidential leadership, crisis management, communication, and academic decision making during crisis situations.

The important findings related to aspects of presidential leadership include the value of keen listening skills and the ability to make and take decisive action as well as the aptitude to convey trust and confidence to those within the college community. The key findings in regard to crisis management revolve around the factor of preparedness and the key players on the team knowing their respective jobs extremely well so that all members can move immediately into action if and when needed. In addition, the crisis culture of an organization determines the effectiveness of a school’s ability to react faster compared with those who are not prepared or accustomed to crisis scenarios.

The last key finding concerning academic decision making is that the normal process of shared governance becomes nearly nonexistent during moments of crisis. This shift in decision making is a perfect segue to discussing important aspects of crisis management that emerged from the research, including comparing aspects of crisis decision making at small liberal arts colleges to the operational details of the United States military. Where appropriate, I will highlight areas of commonality.

The process I used to address my research questions includes the use of a thematic cross-case analysis. This led to the identification of major themes/findings about the successful decision-making strategies of presidents at small liberal arts colleges during
moments of crisis. Again, the research questions guiding this project were:

- How are crisis situations on small liberal arts college campuses managed by presidents?
- What are the necessary factors needed to create an environment for success during crisis situations?
- How do institutional culture and broad functionality affect operations with respect to a crisis?

**Key Themes**

Several themes emerged in the process of answering the research questions associated with the study. Foremost among these were aspects of leadership, best-practice details of crisis management, the importance of communicating with constituents on a regular and frequent basis during and post-crisis, and the stark difference between normal modes of decision making compared with crisis decision making.

**Presidential Leadership**

The information related to presidential leadership focused on one central concept as articulated by University of Pennsylvania professor Matthew Hartley: "Much of leadership is faithfulness to small things, not heroism" (personal email communication, June 20, 2015). The concept of thinking about crises in every decision an administrator makes may seem like overkill, but the key component of the above statement has to do with the trust and confidence that a community builds up over time rather than an overabundance of preparation for a crisis. For example, President C realized she needed to build a layer of trust and let the community know she had its best interests at heart. After several years at an institution where everyone knew and trusted her, President C
was aware that she needed to build the same level of confidence and trust at her new institution.

You have to establish yourself as a trustworthy person . . . you have to establish that sense of credibility in advance. I think it’s very difficult if you come into a new situation and there’s a crisis and you don’t have that already established . . . because I had been [at another institution] for 13 years where everybody knew me to be an honest person with a lot of personal integrity, and of course I just assumed everyone here would think that too. I had to earn it again.

During the financial crisis at College C, the president made a point of being visible and out front, despite the actions of neighboring institutions that promised increased salaries during the economic downturn but subsequently had to rescind them. President C used her presidential platform to communicate unpleasant news via small-group discussions with her senior team, with faculty and staff leaders, and broadly through campuswide discussions. Her general message articulated the creation of a stable environment throughout the crisis. In order to create that environment, tough decisions had to be made: closure of a daycare on campus, restructuring a prominent department, and reduction of hours for administrative functions. With vital financial data at her fingertips, clear messaging techniques to communicate the changes, and a willingness to answer questions, President C gained respect during a difficult time in the college’s history and achieved recognition for staying true to her word.

President A was equally present during the aftermath of the shooting on his campus, personally providing food to students during the lockdown as well as expressing his sorrow, pain, and support to the community through his blog and speeches on campus.
Strong Executive Teams

Another strategy essential to managing crisis scenarios in a small liberal arts college environment is the realization that presidents are not all knowing. This point, along with having the confidence to allow others to lead at various moments, can go a long way toward successfully navigating moments of crisis.

As the case studies showed, though presidential leadership was valuable, the presence of mind shared by the senior leadership team was essential to its ability to act and the president to lead. One example took place at College A, where the vice president canceled a popular outdoor party due to the threat of an active shooter on campus. At College C, creative thinking by its CFO led to cost-saving options, some of which were controversial but had solid financial backing. These included closing the nursery center, restructuring the education department, and furloughing staff so that additional savings were possible. The value of a strong leadership team—where department heads are not concerned only with their specific area but take the entire institution’s needs into consideration—adds value to the college community and ultimately insured a better outcome in moments of crisis.

Sinek (2014) highlighted this form of strong leadership team when describing the purpose of the Marine Corps Officer Candidate School:

Simply wanting to be a leader and being willing to work hard is not enough. Unlike the private sector, where being good at something is often rewarded with a position of leading, in the Marines leadership is also a matter of character, not just strength, intelligence or achievement. (p. 148)

President B allowed others to call the shots at various times, but it was always clear who the president was and where the ultimate authority was concentrated. At College C, the
CFO shared his perspective on this topic during a personal interview:

Her leadership actions were extremely important because she maintained control of the presidential platform, but she delegated the responsibility of correcting programs or figuring out what actions she should take to her experts, whether they were Student Affairs or the CFO’s office or academic affairs.

This ability to allow others room to perform while never ceding the presidential platform represents a solid form of leadership. Sinek (2014) discusses successful crisis management based on "leadership excellence and not managerial acumen" (p. ix):

In physics, the definition of power is the transfer of energy. . . . The higher the wattage, the more electricity is transferred into light and heat and the more powerful the bulb. Organizations and their leaders operate exactly the same way. The more energy that is transferred from the top of the organization to those who are actually doing the job, those who know more about what’s going on, on a daily basis, the more powerful the organization and the more powerful the leader. (p. 147)

Crisis Management

One of the themes of preparedness and the ability to act appropriately during moments of crisis stemmed from key players knowing their jobs in a real way. To use President B’s phrase, "People have to know their jobs." He expected the head of the student union to know "how many days of food do we have?" Likewise, he expected the leaders of various operations to know the answers or get answers quickly. "The ability to do triage is important," he noted.

The director of campus planning described a continuous process of preparation:

I don't think we can ever stop preparing, because there are just too many potential crises and too many variables within a crisis. You change one variable and it could change the whole approach to something. But I can tell you that we run regular tabletop exercises.

As President B explained, it is easier to adjust an existing plan during an emergency than
to make one up from scratch.

Although crisis preparation is key, President B was clear about the need for trust and a positive history of effective communication channels to a community that is willing to listen and trust. College B was without power for approximately 20 hours, yet the campus had a separate power grid to energize parts of campus and enable key operations to continue, including food service. At the time power was lost, the worst of the storm had passed. Even though parts of the main campus did not lose power, many emergency generators failed to operate despite monthly testing. In addition, many of those facilities lacked emergency equipment to operate essential utilities and/or backup battery power for fire and safety/security operations.

At the same time, fast thinking by staff members made for best practices. One example was the vice president of student affairs placing counselors at locations where students could charge their phones. Many of the students required services to address anxiety and concerns about their well-being. This dual-purpose stop proved invaluable as a resource for students in need.

The comprehensive ad hoc report completed in December 2011 contained a detailed review of basic assumptions related to the need to provide accommodations for the college community for a period of up to 72 hours; a discussion of the emergency-power generation; buildings that would require evacuation in the future; plans of refuge; and the potential disruption of other utilities, such as water and natural gas. The report concluded with alternatives to consider, including investing in megawatt generators to power the main campus, centralized emergency power, and minimum emergency power. Each option included estimated budget/investment implications.
**Prompt Action**

The ability to receive information quickly, contemplate various ramifications, and then act is not only a necessity for small liberal arts colleges during moments of crisis, it is an essential part of overall crisis management. Transfer of information and prompt decision making may mean life or death. As Napoleon said, "Take time to deliberate, but when the time for action has arrived, stop thinking and go in." The importance of crisis-communication strategies and prompt actions are tied together. Describing the need to be nimble during moment of crisis, President C emphasized that "if you’re the kind of person who has to sit a long time and study an issue, the boat is going to have left without you; so being able to be quick on your feet metaphorically in the sense of being able to digest information and move quickly is essential."

The literature in the field of crisis management (Barton, 2008; Crandall et al., 2014; Zdziarski, 2007) and actions of the leadership at all three colleges reflect the importance of prompt action in crisis mitigation. The ramifications of inaction far outweigh any criticism that can be levied by acting and making mistakes when charged with leading a large group of students, faculty, and staff.

**Crisis Culture**

In addition to leaders who act promptly and decisively during moments of crisis, another compelling factor is the culture of crisis planning prior to a crisis and post-crisis review, work that is essential to long-term success. Deverell and Olsson (2010) write about the effects of organizational culture on strategy and how adaptability is deployed in crisis management. They suggest that top managers get involved in changing the culture in order to meet crisis scenarios: "Changing stakeholder relations in crises requires top
managerial ability to adapt to the changes, as well as to adjust the everyday organizational culture to the changes made" (p. 131).

The importance of crisis planning and active decision making were paramount on the campuses I studied. The institutions in this study had undertaken various degrees of crisis preparation and maintained different cultures of crisis management. College B seemed to excel when it came to prevention, planning, and post-crisis review. The systematic thinking of key members of the staff, and the presidential leadership that allowed them to perform duties outside their purview, continue to pay dividends for the institution. In the words of the ITS director, "We had a very well-formed crisis leadership team on campus, one that is involved in anticipating crises, managing crises, and then the more important part, which is post-crisis assessment and planning."

College C was the only institution that did not have a crisis plan. All the participants involved in the interview process tiptoed around the question, answering with examples of how they had mastered other crisis scenarios or used a strategic plan as a guiding document when faced with tough decisions. College C’s success in the area of crisis management was not based on a long history or a strong culture but rather the singular leadership and past experience of its president.

President C reflected on the benefits of her academic training and robust interpersonal skills:

I think it helps tremendously to be a psychologist, but I think it is certainly a necessity to have good interpersonal skills. And you have to be energetic, you have to have a certain amount of stamina because of the demands of the job. So that’s true under all circumstances. In this particularly changing landscape, I think you have to be nimble, able to make decisions quickly.
The fundamental truth is that a crisis will likely happen during a president’s tenure. What became clear during the interviews and literature review was the importance and value of a strong crisis culture within the organization. When the entire leadership team as well as professionals within various levels of the organization focus on "what-if" scenarios prior to a crisis, the institution's ability to prepare and react is enhanced. During a crisis, time is the enemy, and the ability to respond quickly is essential. There are multiple examples of universities and corporations that failed, due to a lack of crisis preparation and/or slow response to the issue at hand. The cost of failure can be catastrophic: lives are at stake; the institution's reputation and brand are in jeopardy; and professional careers are threatened.

The final, critical aspect of a crisis-preparation culture revolves around the ability to have duplicate or backup systems in case a primary source fails. Though preparing for an exact crisis is impossible, thinking as a group or leadership team may be helpful to know how to navigate a real crisis. The what-if scenario reflected in the tabletop exercises conducted at College B put the college in a better position to act at the first sign of a crisis. "Initial CMT [Crisis Management Team] activities are important, and an effective first response may help shorten the duration of the crisis" (Zdziarski, 2007, p. 66).

The literature and the case studies support the importance of a crisis culture. Having a strong culture is important, but College B almost seemed over the top in this regard as the director of the student union explained: "I don’t think we can ever stop preparing, because there are just too many potential crises and too many variables within a crisis." There were numerous examples of how the team at College B worked together
under pressure, with the primary goal of protecting the students on campus. Detailed post-crisis planning after every event and lengthy tabletop exercises were ongoing, designed to test the preparation and areas of exposure at the college, keeping all members of the team involved and engaged in the process.

An additional element of "never stop preparing" is commitment to a continuous-process improvement methodology that takes into account crisis-management training and exercises but whose fundamental purpose is to provide top professional development in order to enhance the effectiveness of the team. Sinek (2014) points out the value of a comprehensive training culture within an organization:

Organizations that offer people an opportunity to fully commit work tirelessly to train their people. This goes beyond the occasional class on how to write a better PowerPoint or be a more effective presenter; these organizations offer endless opportunities for self-improvement. The more training they offer us, the more we learn. The more experienced and confident we become, the more the organization is willing to give us greater and greater responsibility. And ultimately, the organization, our management and colleagues, is willing to trust us to know when to break the rules. (p. 74)

Sinek uses the theme of knowing when to break the rules in various examples where highly trained individuals must make decisions in order to save lives versus worrying about rules or regulations. Although rules are designed to protect people and situations, highly trained and caring leaders must know when to break them for the greater good.

Communications

An additional component necessary to create an environment for success during crisis situations is clear and effective crisis communications. When I first embarked on this study, communication strategies seemed like a logical finding to explore. However, the complexity of the communication streams needed during a moment of crisis proved to
be extensive. Presidential communications are a must, given the importance of a presidential presence at a small liberal arts college. Prompt response to a crisis is critical, and the voice of the leader is vital. The cases I reviewed each showed positive examples of leaders who took ownership in addressing the crisis head on through various forms of communication. For example, after the shooting at College A, the president immediately contacted the family of the slain student and personally communicated with the college community about the incident and the lockdown procedures. The messages that followed after the threat was contained were personally drafted by the president and communicated via social media and traditional methods.

Crandall et al. (2014) cite the importance of a president or CEO of an organization serving as point person: "The more severe the crisis, the more likely the CEO should be in control and visible" (p. 201). This personal touch had a unique quality of empathy, support, caring, and warmth, and was an essential component in the healing of the community. No public affairs person could have led this approach or served as spokesperson on behalf of the university; it had to be President A’s voice/message that rang true. He was seen delivering food across campus at the height of the crisis, to insure students on lockdown had access to nutrition.

While the literature is not unanimous in terms of having a leader serve as spokesperson during a crisis, this study supports the notion that a presidential voice—whether in person, written form, or via social media—must be consistent and frequent to insure success. That is not to say that others can't relay important messages along the way, but the community needs to know the leader of a college is in charge and working on behalf of the organization and its people.
Communication strategies during crisis moments are critical, and the timeliness and savvy use of social media were critical to help mitigate the crisis at hand. Social media expertise is a must within any small liberal arts college when it comes to the ability to confront, mitigate, and manage a crisis situation. "The speed with which an institution responds to a crisis by disseminating critical information to its various target audiences can become the primary factor in whether or not the institution is perceived as managing the crisis well" (Zdziarski, 2007, p. 97). The ability to communicate with a broad audience quickly is a major benefit, although it places a premium on leadership, given that nowadays response time is expected to be minutes rather than days or hours.

President B seemed superbly in tune with the importance of communicating quickly. During the lead-up to Hurricane Irene and the crisis situation on the campus, as well as the post-crisis communication and strategy sessions that followed, President B was masterful at keeping everyone informed. The speed with which the initial communication was delivered and the consistency of additional messages added up to everything being extremely well received. The messages to parents and returning students—while delivering unpopular news (limiting the return of upperclassmen, informing parents who wanted to drop off their children to stay home)—provided up-to-the-minute information about the university’s preparation and its current thinking, as well as alerting the community to potential outcomes if the storm continued to track over the institution.

According to the ad hoc committee's crisis-management assessment of facilities, equipment, and systems, emergency systems and crisis response "worked well during the storm and its aftermath." Of note was the college’s use of communication channels.
Seven text messages and 11 email messages were sent between August 26 and August 29 (some texts were sent in several parts to accommodate the length of the messages).

The *Hurricane Irene Emergency Communication Review* (9/15/2011) document highlights the use of social media as an effective tool for the college, including six posts to the college Facebook account, which generated 2,000 impressions per post. Twitter was also used to share information, along with the "effective use of web-based documents for dissemination of information, including the expanded use of embedded links in email messages and even in text messages (the document was accessed over 800 times during the weekend)." College B was fortunate that its Wi-Fi capacity remained constant within the limits of available emergency power—coverage never fell below 60%, providing service to 19 campus facilities.

**Academic Decision Making versus Crisis Decision Making**

During normal operations at small colleges, day-to-day operations and activities are not unlike a military operation. During moments of crisis, the two types of organization operate similarly, except in the use of a shared-governance model.

Unlike other organizations in which those at the top of the hierarchy make key decisions, in colleges and universities these responsibilities are shared (or divided, depending upon one’s perspective) mostly between faculty and administrators, each acting on their own source of organizational authority. (Eckel, 2006, p. 7)

President C articulated the value of a shared-governance process and how culture affects operations with respect to a crisis:

The traditional liberal arts college shared-governance environment is a slow-moving machine, and in a crisis you have to move quickly. So one of the things you have to navigate is paying respect to the culture of shared governance and the expectation that core constituents, specifically the faculty, will play a role in your
decision making, at the same time that you make clear that decisions have to happen quickly.

Once a crisis occurs, prompt action is a must. With prompt action, clear and decisive direction needs to take place. In a shared-governance system, this type of quick action is almost impossible, requiring one person or a small group of people entrusted to make decision with the best interests of the college in mind. The ability to operate under such conditions resembles the military where clear and decisive direction is given from the top and there is trust in those tapped to perform the duties.

President B and the senior leadership team had several advantages regarding crisis decision making: an effective, longstanding senior team; a culture of crisis planning that included a robust review process following crisis situations on campus and across the country; and effective communication with frequent, clear, and accurate information transmitted via multiple channels. Having the right people in the right place at the right time is a cliché, but the leadership at College B embraced this type of thinking through the years. The long-serving CFO summed up this mindset:

It’s hiring the right people, having that relationship ahead of time so they know how far they can go. [The Director of IT] is great at taking the bull by the horns, even if it’s maybe a little out of his area, saying hey, this is in the best interest of the college. We need to do this or we need to look at this.

The importance of pre- and post-crisis planning are strategies incorporated in the military as well as within best-practice institutions. In this case study, two out of the three institutions had crisis plans and were accustomed to using and testing them. Many times the plans put in place are not identical to the actual challenge the organization faces. As President Eisenhower remarked on the importance of planning, "In preparing for battle I have always found that plans are useless, but planning is indispensable."
Learning Outcomes

Small liberal arts college communities are unique and important academic sites within the United States higher educational system, one that is regarded worldwide for its learning opportunities. The small size of these schools highlights close relationships between faculty and students and the ability to educate the whole person for lifelong success. The community prides itself on the congenial nature and shared-governance approach to decision making, with the ultimate goal of making informed decisions.

Given their small, intimate communities, when a crisis occurs the resulting actions and post-crisis scenarios unfold in far different ways than might occur at larger institutions where the involvement of senior officers and/or the president might not be necessary. At a small liberal arts school, its leadership "links the president, the faculty, and the board in a well-functioning partnership purposefully devoted to a well-defined, broadly affirmed institutional vision" (Bahls, 2014, p. 8).

As President Theodore Roosevelt aptly stated, "Nobody cares how much you know until they know how much you care." Oftentimes small liberal arts college communities look to their leader in times of crisis. If the leader is not accustomed or willing to play the role of compassionate leader, the community will suffer. The need for compassionate and effective leaders and a presidential presence on campus is evident in the literature. Gilley, Fulmer, and Reithlingshoefer (1986) articulate how effective presidents are "people oriented—caring, supportive and nurturing" (p. 115).

All three presidents interviewed for this study exhibited the personal qualities referenced by Gilley et al., with a primary focus on the well-being of students and the campus community. Two different leadership styles emerged during my review of the
three cases: an inclusive and exclusive style. President A’s approach to managing the murder of a student near campus involved a small management team that allowed for prompt decision making and fast, action-oriented solutions. President A was at times faulted for not including his team during the crisis, but he navigated the challenging times on his campus. The advantage for College A and its president was that two trusted advisers on his team were extremely knowledgeable. The background of the vice president of finance included a knowledge of systems, finances, human resources, and the physical plant, while the chief of staff had extensive knowledge of the campus and a long tenure with strong relationships across campus; he was a trusted adviser of the president since the moment he took office.

Reflecting on the aftermath of the shooting, the chief of staff recalled the fundamental shift when the model went from a team-inclusive strategy to one involving only an inner circle: "When the people in that room tightened up, I felt the decisions flowed and things moved much quicker." As Pierce (2012) suggests, inclusiveness during moments of crisis means "a process for making rapid but considered decisions" (p. 75). On the other hand, Birnbaum (1992) suggests that leadership must be exerted by a person who can "exercise independent judgment and discretion [where the leader’s] actions are seen as having positive consequences" (p. 15).

Presidents B and C both favored the inclusive approach, with expanded versions of their existing team structures. For President C, the RAC was increased to include community members to assist with ideas and strategies to help cut the budget. During hurricane preparation and the storm, President B took advantage of a broader group in the room, especially his vice president of development, who used alumni gifts to light an
otherwise dark campus. Given such varied approaches, the best style to handle moments of crisis is most likely a versatile one. In order to be effective, leaders of small liberal arts colleges must listen carefully to an inclusive group of stakeholders in a prompt fashion, but at the same time they must take decisive actions to mitigate or manage the crisis at hand. In some cases, the act of involving others may not represent the right decision at the time, but the process is essential to long-term viability of the campus community.

As President A exercised "independent judgment and discretion," it could have alienated other college or community leaders. Reviewing the blog posts of parents after the crisis on campus, many were thankful for President A’s approachable, personal, and heartfelt language, while others seemed infuriated by the pace at which the college returned to regular classes and exams, possibly putting undue stress on students during a traumatic time for the community. Though that move was understandable in attempting to mitigate the crisis, it highlights the importance for leaders to understand the nature and intensity of the crisis. In addition to presidential response and presence, the small liberal arts colleges I surveyed also respond differently to different crisis scenarios. The range and magnitude of disruptive events can run the gamut from murder to natural disasters or financial crises; with each event, the response calls for a different type of intervention. Depending on the circumstance and level of urgency, the response by the leader or leadership team will be different, and it may or may not require additional resources on and off the campus.

Organizational Learning

Throughout the research project, I consulted frameworks for dealing with crisis
scenarios in the public and for-profit sector (Crandall, 2014; Fanelli, 1997; Luecke, 2004; McDavis, 2008; Zdziarski, 2007). Each framework offered excellent examples and suggestions for current and future leaders managing crisis situations. However, the framework with the greatest promise seemed to be that of organizational learning—the work of Peter Senge, who was influenced by the late W. E. Deming. The five disciplines associated with organizational learning could have a profound effect on systems thinking as well as team interplay and the effectiveness of managing teams. It was Senge (2006) who offered the example of the military in discussing aspects of systems thinking. The root of the war on terrorism, he suggests, was based on the "way of thinking both sides share[d]" (Senge, Kindle p. 1247). The two viewpoints, that of the Americans and the view of the terrorist, highlight straight lines that form a circle. Thus, there needs to be a shift in thinking about problems or a crisis where leaders see "interrelationships rather than linear cause-effect chains, and see processes of change rather than snapshots" (Senge, Kindle p. 1296).

I found the aspect of team learning an important one in learning from crisis scenarios. Senge (2006) uses the example of basketball great Bill Russell. "Russell’s Celtics demonstrate a phenomenon we have come to call 'alignment,' when a group of people function as a whole. In fact, alignment is the necessary condition for empowering the individual who will empower the whole team" (Senge, Kindle p. 3637). Along with continuous review and practice exercises, College B was the most systematic in post-crisis planning, documentation, and implementation. Following Hurricane Irene, President B authorized formation of an ad hoc committee to review the aftermath of hurricane preparation and operations that resulted in a formal proposal to address the
needs that emerged and purchase of a comprehensive generator system for the campus.

We couldn’t buy them all the first year, but we had to make some decisions during budget time about how much we were going to set aside. We had to have a strategic plan, to do two or three this year, two or three next year. We were prioritizing. We knew we needed generators for where we’re preparing food; that’s central because that’s where people gather.

An element of organizational learning that is paramount for institutions to incorporate into their post-crisis planning is thus the habit of recording what happened and what actions were taken after a crisis. For decades the military has made a point of recording information during and after battles. Barton (2006) highlights the work of the US Army, where the mission of the organization is to "learn whatever it can from every type of combat operation and turn that learning into practical advice that it then disseminates to soldiers in the field" (p. 114). The learning process is vital and even more powerful when it includes an important feedback loop that consists of ongoing reassessment. Through time, organizations become more effective at planning and training, decision making during a crisis and post-crisis; thus, they continue to improve the overall function of crisis-mitigation strategies. Effective organizational learning needs to operate consistently as an iterative process for true long-term success.

Final Reflection

The importance of communication and communication strategies were vital to assisting in the mitigation of these crisis scenarios. I was particularly struck by the use of social media and the savvy use of it by the presidents of all three institutions who participated in the study. Not only did each utilize social media themselves; current
forms of technology were used to communicate with students, faculty, staff, and families. From the detailed, heartfelt blogs of President A to the hurricane updates from President B to the consistent tweets from President C regarding financial strategies and improvements to her community, these presidents were able to communicate directly with their most important constituents, in their own voices. The use of social media has accelerated the pace of communication, as well as helping establish a personal touch from the leader of a small college community, and its presence came as something of a surprise in terms of project findings.
Chapter 6

CONCLUSION

Given that I have been a member of three different senior leadership teams at two institutions, understanding the inner workings of small liberal arts colleges during moments of crisis is of great interest to me. Comprehending the dynamics and expectations of members within a small, close-knit community as they relate to preparation, actions taken during a crisis, and post-planning activities provide a unique learning opportunity.

During the time I was involved in this research project, I had my own brush with such a crisis experience, when a young and talented student at my institution took his own life. Effective communication with the family and the broader community was something that the senior team, of which I was a part, spent considerable time "getting right." Allowing the community to mourn, speak out, and share their anger, sorrow, and even laughter played an important role in helping people cope with the tragedy. They were able to see the president of the college stand in front of a grief-stricken community and address the audience, hear about the first call to the mourning family, and the toll it took on a leader who clearly understood the importance of a presidential presence at such a time.

The ability to witness these moments and participate in conversations about the timeliness of communication to the community and the board, to discuss counseling and support services for the campus community, strengthened my understanding of the importance of this research. People expect timely, personal, and meaningful responses to
moments of crisis. But are most campus communities and leaders able to navigate crisis scenarios successfully?

The purpose of this study was to find out how crisis situations that occur on small liberal arts campuses are managed by their presidents. In addressing this question, I interviewed three outstanding leaders at such colleges, as well as their senior leadership teams; reviewed crisis documents, news, and social media posts; and explored the extensive literature on crisis management, presidential leadership, and decision-making strategies. Although the presidents and their leadership teams differed in how they performed and sought solutions, all of them navigated the given crisis scenario to a successful conclusion. Despite the difference in leadership styles, teams, and institutional culture, each case study demonstrates ways in which a crisis scenario may be handled and how the campus responded. The results show how presidents interact with their leadership teams, participate in important aspects of crisis communication, and personally immerse themselves in a serious moment.

Implications

One of the rewarding aspects of this project was the ability to explore real-world implications for crisis management, which may benefit current and aspiring leaders, as well as their extended college communities. Below are the major findings of this project and a list of the top ways of managing crisis moments at small liberal arts campuses in various parts of the country.

Presidential Presence and Leadership Matters

One of the major themes that emerged was the importance of the presence and
leadership in the corner office to provide direction, instill confidence, inspire, and create an environment where senior colleagues are empowered to act with the idea of returning the life of the school back to normal promptly. Providing visible and obvious leadership is essential, whether it is addressing the community as soon as possible in order to share updates, plans, and actions regarding a financial meltdown, or personally providing sustenance to the student body during a campus lockdown.

Birnbaum (1992) highlights the importance of good leadership, which "permits college constituents to maintain or move toward agreement on basic institutional norms and values" (p. 151). The ability to move toward agreement on norms and values does not always demand that it be the president making that determination. One aspect of leadership is the value-add of creating an environment where capable senior colleagues feel comfortable sharing their thoughts and ideas. The leader of the college/university becomes a better leader for the organization when the senior colleagues around him or her are empowered and encouraged to participate in finding the appropriate solution that most clearly aligns with the institutional norms and values of the organization. In essence, effective crisis management depends greatly on the presence and utilization of an environment where people understand that their contributions, whether or not those ideas are related to their special area of expertise, become potential ideas to help mitigate a crisis moment/scenario.

**Crisis-Planning Culture**

As the case studies demonstrated, aspects of crisis preparation and post-crisis planning are important for how crisis situations may be managed by small liberal arts colleges. The importance of advance planning was highlighted in the cases of Colleges A
Planning must assume that a crisis will occur. The culture of constantly being prepared—learning from or testing out various tabletop exercises—remains an essential ingredient for long-term institutional success. An emerging trend suggested by Crandall et al. (2014) is the combination of crisis-management and strategic planning, which makes crisis awareness an ongoing process reviewed in conjunction with an organization’s long-range plans. Providing a safe environment and promptly returning the institution to normalcy are important elements of a crisis-planning culture.

It is important to learn from the mistakes of others and to do a comprehensive review when a mistake is made so that the leader and the organization are better equipped to succeed. Barton (2008) highlighted an example of learning from a failure—the botched US-led invasion of Cuba (the so-called "Bay of Pigs" incident)—where mistakes occurred due to poor planning and execution. Barton describes how President Kennedy applied the lessons learned from the Bay of Pigs and leveraged his newfound skills during the Cuban Missile Crisis. "The result was a combination of remarkable tenacity, grace under pressure, and superb, measured crisis response" (p. 258). The ability to learn from past mistakes or improper planning was evident in the successful crisis culture at College B, where consistent post-planning activities were in place through three presidential administrations. Taking immediate action to review, discuss, and learn from past incidents creates a thriving management team while helping to mitigate future crisis moments.

Even as learning from past experiences and mistakes is vital for improved performance during crisis moments, it is also important to note the significance of creativity and adaptability during challenging moments on small liberal arts campuses.
Often the leader and/or members of the leadership team act based upon their gut feeling during the moment. Each president highlighted in the three cases reacted in the moment, without past experience of the crisis that they confronted. The successful conclusion of the crisis involved creative thinking and prompt decisions influenced by positive feedback from senior colleagues and faculty members. Throughout this document, I reference the importance of planning and recording details after moments of crisis, yet the probability is very high that most crisis scenarios are difficult or impossible to predict. Thus, one can prepare for various scenarios but, during the moment, the leader and his or her team need to rely on their training, confidence, and trust in one another in order to approach crisis moments with open minds. For those in battle, decisions are made at split-second intervals, which can save lives, help to declare victory, or move the assault forward. The successful teams at small liberal arts colleges are well prepared and able to adapt under stressful and difficult crisis moments.

**Effective, Prompt, and Clear Communications**

"The power that social media have to influence opinions and even actions cannot be overstated. Even small, off-the-radar blogs can move mountains" (Fink, 2013, Kindle loc. 1256). Fink describes the evolution of social media as it relates to crisis communication and has changed the communications landscape for all organizations and situations. President A used his blog to share critical and timely information about the details of the campus lockdown and to report ways to get help and shelter in place. As he said, "I wrote all the communications to everyone and I used my blog a lot to communicate with both the students and the outside world, and it seemed like I spent quite a bit of time trying to get that right." President A now uses his blog to
communicate typical as well as urgent messages to the community. In addition to social media, communicating up-to-the-minute status reports during a crisis is important, as well as continuing to communicate and inform people when the next update will take place.

Highly Performing Teams

At College B, the leadership team was extremely effective, having had the benefit of crisis preparation and support during three administrations. As its longtime director of IT stated during the interview, "We had a very well-formed crisis leadership team on campus, one that is involved in anticipating crises, managing crises, and, most important, post-crisis assessment and planning." This type of anticipatory action insured that College B’s response to Hurricane Irene was exceptional, as members of the team began discussing various options to cope well in advance of weather reports that predicted the storm's path would lead it directly over the school—something that fortunately did not transpire.

During my three on-campus interviews and witnessing actions as part of my current leadership team, it is evident that the importance of having and listening to all members of the team is essential. And during a crisis scenario, colleagues can and will bring ideas to bear outside their normal area of expertise. In all of the cases and within the crisis example shared from my current institution, important solutions were offered by senior collegaues who had no direct experience in the area of the crisis. For example, at College B, the IT director focused on preparation, planning, and exercising options as it relates to crisis. It seemed as if his level of comfort with IT allowed him to devote time and energy to an area that was of interest to him. In so doing, College B became the
leading school in the area as it related to best practice for crisis management. The IT
director commented:

Here at [College B], we find that when we reach out to others to discuss
best-practice documentation, others say, “WOW! When you draft something
will you share it with us?” And so, we tend to be a year before on a lot of
these things.

Trust and Transparency

The best way to emphasize the importance of trust and transparency for leaders of
small liberal arts institutions is by discussing what can occur when these qualities are not
apparent. Although the provost of College A was sometimes critical of the president, he
made a valid point when he stated:

Suspicion makes everything harder. A habit of transparency and trust makes
everything easier, so what is the culture? You know, in a lot of places, there is an
automatic assumption that the faculty and the administration are at odds with just
about everything. That is, even if the administration does something the first
thing faculty think is "How are they trying to screw us?" And that makes
everything harder in times of crisis and times of non-crisis.

Crandall et al. (2014) also articulate the value of trust among team members as a
way to enhance the effectiveness of operating as well as building trust among team
members in advance of a major crisis.

Even as these themes are important aspects of the critical question this research
project proposed to address— How are crisis situations on liberal arts colleges managed
by presidents?—there are other interesting points worthy of additional research.
However, the top five themes were common to all cases reviewed and may serve as
important guidelines supported by the literature and research outcomes.

Future Research and Conclusion

This study offers implications for additional study by aspiring and sitting
presidents. As I interviewed these leaders, I was struck by the difference in how leadership teams performed when senior and/or executive officers were known quantities as opposed to those who lacked expertise and longevity. Barton (2001) articulated the negative aspects of dysfunctional teams leading up to a crisis moment and the likelihood of dysfunction taking place during a crisis. It would be interesting to delve into this within a small liberal arts college setting.

Another area identified as a point for potential research deals with relationships with community leaders and neighboring institutions as well as pivotal contacts within state government (politicians, city/town officials, law enforcement, etc.) and their impact on management during moments of crisis. In this study, portions of the interviews touched on these roles but not in sufficient depth to address them in any meaningful way.

Understanding the needs of boards of trustees and their role in partnership with presidents of small liberal arts colleges during moments of crisis is an aspect worthy of further study. Although there was contact between leaders and the board chair and/or certain board members during the crises observed in this project, the extent of the dialogue and its influence on the outcomes was not easily identified. The role of boards and board leadership is an interesting one, as today's boards tend to be involved in day-to-day operations more than purely strategic roles. Given this development, additional studies regarding the pros and cons of this type of involvement would add helpful data to the leadership literature.

I noted the importance of communication in this study as well as the use of social media as an interesting value; however, the work of Bruce Blythe (2014) suggests that "social media can serve as a vehicle for planned chaos" (Kindle p. 7738) in cases of
potential violence to the college community. With the benefits of technology come the additional challenges that could be brought upon an organization. Future study regarding the appropriate protection against technological breeches or flash mob attacks is worth pursuing. One regret was the lack of faculty involvement in the interviews and subsequent discussion. Faculty are the heartbeat of small liberal arts institutions, and their voices, actions, and influences could be a main feature of additional study.

An interesting component of working at small liberal arts institutions is the type of safety officers hired to protect the community. Some of these institutions have public safety officers who patrol the campus without weapons; other campuses use police with the same authority as a major metropolitan city police department. What is the difference when it comes to safety, crisis management, and reaction within the community? The question to arm or not to arm would be a fascinating study; the resulting answers could provide components to help crisis-scenario mitigation on campuses across the country.

Another dimension of presidential leadership worth exploring is the role that leaders play in helping members of the community understand the crisis moment and how the crisis has affected the future operation of the college. Literature in the field pertaining to the framework of this type of learning is frequently referred to as sensemaking. Deeper understanding of this important role by presidents would be an essential aspect to explore when writing and/or researching elements of presidential leadership and decision making during moments of crisis.

Overall, researching presidential leadership during moments of crisis highlighted for me the value of strong executive teams; the significance of pre- and post-crisis planning; and clear, consistent, and transparent communication regarding a crisis. In
evaluating the response to the Virginia Tech crisis, Barton (2008) shared a principal test of crisis management: "When in doubt, act quickly, tell your public what you know and don’t know, and overcommunicate at every step of your decision-making process" (p. 37).
### Appendices

**APPENDIX A**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Campus</th>
<th>Crisis</th>
<th>Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Claremont McKenna College</td>
<td>Falsifying SAT Scores</td>
<td>Los Angeles, CA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muhlenberg College</td>
<td>Natural Disaster and Financial Crisis</td>
<td>Allentown, PA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pine Manor College</td>
<td>Financial Crisis</td>
<td>Chestnut Hill, MA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rollins College</td>
<td>Rape and Murder</td>
<td>Winterpark, FL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smith College</td>
<td>Commencement Speaker Withdrawal</td>
<td>Northampton, MA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spelman College</td>
<td>Shooting on Campus, Financial Crisis</td>
<td>Atlanta, GA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swarthmore College</td>
<td>Sexual Assaults</td>
<td>Swarthmore, PA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Kings College</td>
<td>Presidential Scandal</td>
<td>New York, NY</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trinity College</td>
<td>Student Death, Presidential Extravagance, Fraternities</td>
<td>Hartford, CT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wesleyan University</td>
<td>Sexual Assault, Power Outage, Murder, Fraternities</td>
<td>Middletown, CT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Williams College</td>
<td>Sexual Assaults</td>
<td>Williamstown, MA</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX B
Interview Questions

➢ Please take a minute to think about the one or two best small liberal arts presidents that you know. Now, describe to me what makes them great.

➢ What are the skills that make for an effective college and/or university president in today’s changing landscape of higher education?

➢ What key attributes/characteristics are necessary to ensure effective handling of critical decisions during moments of crisis?

➢ What are the necessary factors needed to create an environment that mitigates crisis?

➢ How does the institutional culture at liberal arts colleges and overall governance functionality affect operations with respect to crisis?

➢ How does an institution’s culture or internal operational values affect the broad functionality of a presidential leader with respect to crisis?

➢ Do you have a crisis plan? If you do, have you ever had to use it? If yes, how could it be improved?

➢ What are the typical mistakes made when preparing for and/or managing a crisis?

➢ During crisis scenarios at small liberal arts colleges, how important are presidential decisions and leadership actions?

➢ What are the necessary factors needed on liberal arts campuses to assist presidents toward a successful outcome during a period of crisis?
APPENDIX C
Crisis Management Plan for Hurricane Irene
Saturday, August 27–Monday August 29, 2011

- The college's crisis response team has developed a working plan for the college's response to Hurricane Irene. The attached outline provides community members with basic information about how we plan to proceed, depending on the storm's impact in our area. The crisis response team will continue to monitor the situation as the storm develops and will provide updates to the campus as necessary via text message (E2Campus), email, the college website, and the campus emergency hotline (484.664.000). Note that in the event of power outages, access to email and the website may be compromised, but text messaging and the campus phone system should continue to function. We expect all members of the community to exercise good judgment to ensure their personal safety and to adhere to any safety guidelines issued by the college or civil authorities. Scheduled activities, programs, and classes proceed as planned.
- Level II: Disruption in Facility or Utilities and/or Dangerous Outdoor Conditions
- Possible modified schedule, menu, and service for dining operation

Possible modification of schedule for non-essential personnel travel to and from campus
- Cancellation or postponement of activities, programs, and classes
Employees to contact supervisors before traveling to or from campus

- Duration of this condition may require further measures.
APPENDIX D

Note: The coding units of analysis include the following: management strategies to assist college presidents during crisis scenarios, environmental factors required to mitigate and/or end crisis situations, and examples of the role of culture and functionality in crisis moments at small liberal arts colleges/universities.

CODES AND SUB-CODES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PRESIDENTIAL ATTRIBUTES</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>➢ Ability to remain calm</td>
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<tr>
<td>➢ Accessibility</td>
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<tr>
<td>➢ Emotional Intelligence</td>
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<tr>
<td>➢ Exude Confidence</td>
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<td>➢ Humility</td>
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<tr>
<td>➢ Integrity</td>
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<td>➢ Positive Attitude</td>
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<td>➢ Wit</td>
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<tr>
<th>COMMUNICATION</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>➢ Clear and Frequent Communication</td>
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<tr>
<td>➢ Communication with Various Constituents</td>
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<tr>
<td>➢ Effective Infrastructure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>➢ Importance of Communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>➢ Importance of Internal Communication</td>
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<tr>
<td>➢ Partnership with Communications Team</td>
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<tr>
<td>➢ Presidential Communication</td>
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<thead>
<tr>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>➢ Dependence of Community Relations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>➢ Importance of Strong Relationships w/Community Leaders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>➢ Working with the Community</td>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>CORE MEMBERS (Team)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>➢ Decisions without the Leader</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>➢ Distribution of Decision Making</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>➢ Good Team</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>➢ Power of the Team</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>➢ Prompt Action</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>➢ Right People in the Room</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>➢ Strong Executive Team</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>➢ Support of Senior Leaders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>➢ Value of a Small Crisis Team</td>
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</tbody>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CRISIS MANAGEMENT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>➢ Flexibility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>➢ Good Judgment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>➢ Knowledge of Data</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Nimble
Outside Consultants
Safety First
Transparency

CULTURAL ASPECTS (Team)
- Bottom Up and Top Down
- Empathy
- Existing Culture prior to a Crisis
- History of Effective Decision Making

DECISION MAKING (Presidential)
- Being Decisive
- Collaborate Then Decide
- Importance of Presidential Actions
- Personal Action
- Personal Decision Based on Moment

LEADERSHIP (Presidential)
- Getting Back to Normal
- Invest in Leaders
- Mission Centered
- Leadership
- Presence

PRESIDENTIAL MANAGEMENT
- Keep the Board Informed
- Respect to/for Shared Governance But Ability to Move Quickly
- Value of Being Inclusive

PLANNING
- Crisis Exercise/Practice
- Crisis Plan
- Post-Crisis Planning
- Redundancies
- Think of the Long Term

TEAM DYNAMICS
- Conflicting Priorities
- Importance of Accurate Information
- Knowledge of Responsibilities
- Point Person Not Always the Likely Suspect


Campus, 4(3), 5–11.


