

THE UNIVERSITY PRESIDENT PLAYBOOK

BLUEPRINTS FOR HIGHER
EDUCATION LEADERSHIP

**INCIDENCE RESILIENCE
EVALUATION WORKSHEET**

H.E.E.M Consulting Publications

The University President Playbook: Blueprints for Higher Education Leadership. A
Presidential Executive Worksheet Series

**College & University President High Consequence Incidence Resilience
Evaluation Worksheet
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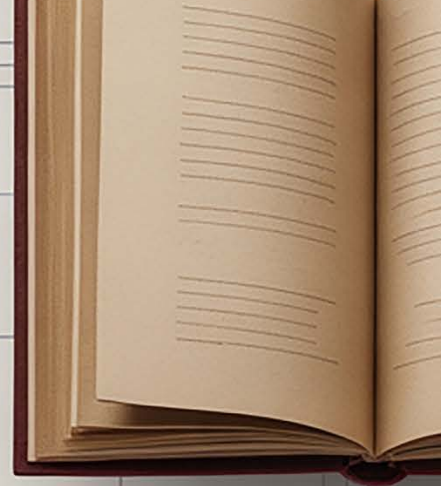
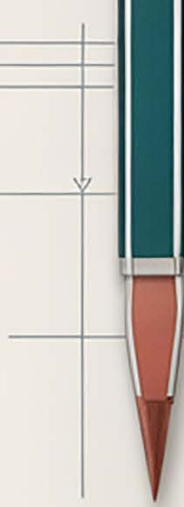
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“Clarity reduces risk.”



President High Consequence Incidence Resilience Evaluation Worksheet

High-consequence incidents rarely arrive with warning or clean boundaries. They emerge amid uncertainty, incomplete information, and intense external scrutiny, often demanding presidential judgment before facts are fully established or options are fully formed. In these moments, leadership posture, decision discipline, and communication choices can shape institutional credibility and trust long after the immediate event has passed. The absence of crises does not measure readiness for such incidents; rather, it is the clarity and steadiness with which leaders navigate them when they occur.

The **President High-Consequence Incident Resilience Evaluation Worksheet** is designed to support candid reflection on your preparedness to lead through these events by surfacing strengths, gaps, and assumptions across decision-making, authority, communication, and support structures. The intent is not to predict specific scenarios, but to strengthen your capacity to respond deliberately under pressure, preserve institutional stability, and lead with confidence when the stakes are highest.

This worksheet supports a candid reflection on readiness to lead through high-consequence events along with a practical preparedness action plan. We strongly recommend completing this worksheet using a pen-and-paper approach. The physical act of writing encourages deliberation, prioritization, and reflection in ways that digital completion often does not, particularly when working through complex leadership commitments and tradeoffs.

President Name:

Institution:

Date:

Section 1: Understanding Your Crisis Leadership Baselines

A. Observed posture: Which option best reflects how you typically respond under real pressure?

- I stabilize the situation quickly and make timely, decisive judgments.
- I seek broad input before decisions are finalized.
- I delay direct engagement in hopes that the issue resolves or de-escalates.
- I centralize control over information and decision-making.
- I delegate extensively across the response.

B. Intended posture: Which option best reflects how you want to lead during high-stakes situations?

- I stabilize the situation quickly and make timely, decisive judgments.
- I seek broad input before decisions are finalized.
- I delay direct engagement in hopes that the issue resolves or de-escalates.
- I centralize control over information and decision-making.
- I delegate extensively across the response.

C. Gap assessment: If these differ, what conditions, habits, or structural factors cause the shift?

Baseline Interpretations

- I stabilize the situation quickly and make timely, decisive judgments.**

Interpretation: This approach supports rapid containment and clarity but may limit consultation and increase the risk of overlooking downstream implications.

- I seek broad input before finalizing decisions.**

Interpretation: This approach promotes inclusivity and informed judgment but can slow response time when urgency is required.

- I delay direct engagement in hopes that the issue resolves or de-escalates.**

Interpretation: This approach may reduce immediate tension, but risks loss of control, escalation, or the perception of inaction.

- I centralize control over information and decision-making.**

Interpretation: This approach can improve coordination and message discipline but may constrain situational awareness and suppress critical feedback.

- I delegate extensively across the response.**

Interpretation: This approach leverages distributed expertise but can dilute accountability and weaken coherence if roles and authority are unclear.

D. Adjustment commitment: One specific action you will take to align better observed and intended posture:

Section 2: Strengths & Vulnerabilities Assessment

A. Your top three strengths in crisis leadership (write plainly):

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

B. Your top three vulnerabilities (what could fail first):

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

C. Your personal stress signals (how others can tell):

- Shorter temper
- Withdrawal
- Over-talking
- Over emailing
- Sleep disruption
- Decision rigidity
- Other:

D. Your non-negotiables (values you will not trade, even in crisis):

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Section 3: Reality Check: What You Actually Know Right Now

For each item, mark your status and name the single person you would call first.

READINESS AREA	STATUS	FIRST CALL
Institutional emergency operations plan (EOP)	<input type="checkbox"/> Strong <input type="checkbox"/> Partial <input type="checkbox"/> Weak	
Crisis communications protocol and spokesperson rules	<input type="checkbox"/> Strong <input type="checkbox"/> Partial <input type="checkbox"/> Weak	
Law enforcement relationships and escalation pathways	<input type="checkbox"/> Strong <input type="checkbox"/> Partial <input type="checkbox"/> Weak	
Board chair alignment during emergencies	<input type="checkbox"/> Strong <input type="checkbox"/> Partial <input type="checkbox"/> Weak	
Legal counsel access and decision thresholds	<input type="checkbox"/> Strong <input type="checkbox"/> Partial <input type="checkbox"/> Weak	
HR policies for rapid staffing actions	<input type="checkbox"/> Strong <input type="checkbox"/> Partial <input type="checkbox"/> Weak	
IT incident response and ransomware playbook	<input type="checkbox"/> Strong <input type="checkbox"/> Partial <input type="checkbox"/> Weak	
Title IX and high-profile misconduct response	<input type="checkbox"/> Strong <input type="checkbox"/> Partial <input type="checkbox"/> Weak	
Student death, suicide, or serious harm protocol	<input type="checkbox"/> Strong <input type="checkbox"/> Partial <input type="checkbox"/> Weak	
Campus unrest, protests, and disruptive events protocol	<input type="checkbox"/> Strong <input type="checkbox"/> Partial <input type="checkbox"/> Weak	
Financial liquidity and emergency spending authority	<input type="checkbox"/> Strong <input type="checkbox"/> Partial <input type="checkbox"/> Weak	
Continuity of instruction plan (academic continuity)	<input type="checkbox"/> Strong <input type="checkbox"/> Partial <input type="checkbox"/> Weak	

If you marked “Weak” anywhere, write the consequence if a crisis hits this week:

Section 4: Your “First 24 Hours” Decision Discipline

A. Decision rights clarity (be specific):

In a crisis, final decision authority resides with:

Consultation is required from:

Decisions you must personally approve (list 3 to 5):

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

B. What you will not do in the first 24 hours (to prevent self-inflicted failure):

- Promise facts you do not have
- Use email as command and control
- Let a large committee run the response
- Communicate without legal and comms review
- Delay a decision to avoid backlash
- Other: _____

C. Minimum viable operating picture (MVOP):

By hour 2, I must know:

1. What happened (verified):
2. Who is affected right now:
3. Immediate safety exposure:
4. What we are doing in the next 2 hours:
5. Who is speaking publicly and when:

Section 5: High Probability Crisis Scenarios for Your Institution

Scale: **Likelihood** 1–5, **Impact** 1–5, **Preparedness** 1–5 (5 = ready)

SCENARIO	L	I	P	ONE SENTENCE “HOW COULD THIS UNFOLD HERE?”
Cyber incident, ransomware, data breach				
Student death, violence, active threat				
Sexual misconduct case with public exposure				
Campus protest, encampment, disruption				
Athletics scandal or compliance failure				
Financial shock, rating downgrade, cash squeeze				
Program closure, layoffs, and union escalation				
Research misconduct or grant compliance breach				
Political intervention, legislative targeting				
Accreditation warning, sanction, public notice				
Public health outbreak or housing crisis				
Other:				

Select your top 3 “red zones” where Impact is high, and Preparedness is low:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Section 6: Your Crisis Team and Coverage Map

A. List your Crisis leadership core (names, not titles):

Incident Lead:

Legal:

Communications:

Student Affairs:

Human Resources:

IT/Security:

Police/Safety:

Academic Continuity:

Board Liaison:

Government Relations:

B. Single point of failure check:

If you lose one person (vacation, illness, resignation), where do you have no backup?

C. Trust and candor test:

Who is most likely to tell you the truth fast, even when it is ugly?

Who is most likely to soften the truth, and why?

Section 7: Communications and Reputation Readiness

A. Your institutional stance in crisis (choose the default posture):

- Silence until certainty (risk: vacuum)
- Speed first (risk: correction)
- Balanced: early acknowledgment plus updates (default recommended)

B. Draft your 3-line holding statement template (no specifics):

(What you must include in statements you will make. Including as examples individuals to thank, safety and support of students, faculty, and staff, etc.)

Line 1 acknowledgment:

Line 2 immediate action:

Line 3 next update time:

C. Your high-risk audiences (rank top 5 by urgency):

- Students Parents Faculty Staff Board Donors Regulators
- Media Community Alumni

Top 5:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

Section 8: Ethical, Legal, and Governance Triggers

Write the triggers that require immediate escalation.

A. When must legal counsel be in the room before you act? (list 5 triggers):

B. When must the board chair be notified? (list 5 triggers):

C. What decisions should never be made alone by the president?

Section 9: Your Preparedness Action Plan

Pick **10 actions**. Make them executable. Assign ownership and dates.

ACTION	OWNER	DUE DATE	EVIDENCE THAT IT IS DONE

My top 3 “first fixes” in the next 30 days:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Section 10: Practice, Accountability & Commitment

A. Tabletop exercises (commit now):

In the next 90 days, I will ensure tabletop exercises occur for:

- Cyber incident
- Student safety event
- Protest disruption
- Title IX exposure
- Financial shock
- Other: _____

B. How you will hold yourself accountable (choose two):

- Monthly 15-minute check-in with board chair
- Quarterly crisis readiness review with cabinet
- Annual external audit of crisis plans
- After-action review after every serious incident
- Other: _____

C. What will be different because you completed this worksheet?

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Notes Page



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