Principles of Learning
Emergency Management Higher Education Focus Group
Based on the work of
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The purpose of this document is to provide guidance to academicians who have the responsibility of designing or maintaining collegiate emergency management programs.

Leadership and Team-Building
Academic programs must include a common thread of leadership throughout the curriculum. Leadership, not just an ability to provide a command presence, but the demonstration of vision, compassion, flexibility, imagination, resolve and courage, is essential. Without leadership, bureaucratic organizations and their personnel will tend to stay within more or less business as usual bureaucratic systems and methods of operation. It takes a leader to break down these barriers to expeditiously move people and resources to where they are needed.

Communication
The ability to effectively communicate at all levels of human contact in written and verbal form is critical. Stakeholders, including the private sector, government, EMS, military, law enforcement, medicine and others, must learn to develop networks both formal and informal.

Management
Any course or program must include management principles and applications. Leaders need also to be able to manage, or have mangers under them – people who have the ability to implement, to make happen.

Key management functions include:
- Risk Assessment – what are the hazards facing ones jurisdiction/organization, their scope and probability, and the demographics, capabilities and resources of ones jurisdiction or organization
- Planning – emergency operations, mitigation, tie in to comprehensive plan
- Training
- Exercising
- Emergency Operations Center Operations – setting up, equipping and managing
- Establishing interoperable communications within jurisdiction/organization
- Applying lesions learned and research findings to emergency management functions on an on-going basis
Political, Bureaucratic, and Social Contexts
Emergency management is situate and must operate within various constraining and enabling circumstances. Key among them are the political, bureaucratic (or organizational), and social contexts of a jurisdiction/organization and those of lower and higher jurisdictions. Thus there is a great need to instruct on forms of government and bureaucratic politics, but also a need to understand the social dimensions of a jurisdiction/organizations and the social dimensions of disaster (how people and organizations react to disaster).

Technical Systems and Standards
Students need to learn the tools of the trade, which today include such subjects as:
- National Incident Management System (NIMS)
- National Response Plan (NRP)
- NFPA 1600 (National Fire Protection Association “Stand for Disaster/Emergency Management and Business Continuity Programs”
- Certified Emergency Manager credential administered by the International Association of Emergency Managers
- Emergency Management Accreditation Program, National Emergency Management Association
- Geospatial and geographical information systems (GPS and GIS)
- Communications systems
- Warning systems
- Computers and hazard and emergency management related software packages

Social Vulnerability Reduction Approach
The social vulnerability perspective teaches practitioners to focus first and foremost on those most vulnerable to disasters in their communities, instead of the largest number of people, in recognition of the fact of life that most emergency management organizations have traditionally no had, and probably will not have in the future, the resources to do both things well, - to do their job adequately

Experience
The three keys to emergency management are education, training, and experience (preferably disaster experience). Successful disaster operations, for example, work best when standard bureaucratic methods of operating can be modified to act more expeditiously or outside of normal business as usual constraints. This is easier learned through experience than taught. There are many ways administrators of collegiate emergency management programs can assist their traditional (non-emergency management practitioner) students with he gaining of experience – such as through internships, service learning1, exercise participation, CERT2 Team training and membership, and registration with disaster response organizations (such as the American Red Cross or as a FEMA’s disaster reservist.

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