

## CAMPUS LEADERS' CHECKLIST: WHEN DIVISIVE INCIDENTS ARISE

*When first aware of a concern, conflict, or divisive incident, college and university leaders should consider working with others to take – roughly simultaneously – the following steps, all discussed in more detail in [this guide](#):*

**REACT EARLY:** *Become engaged right away, asking other campus leaders to do the same. Reach out to learn how each affected community on campus is responding. Augment resources as necessary to respond quickly and effectively. Support students, consult widely, and search for safe and effective avenues for students to pursue their goals.*

**FRAME:** *If this is a campus incident, issue a statement that “frames the matter” by summarizing what has occurred, recognizing the impact, describing issues, announcing decisions, acknowledging who has been consulted, identifying the processes and values that will be applied to address the issues – all with an authentic voice and delivered by a person whose message will be trusted by each identity group on campus.*

*If the incident occurred elsewhere but affects campus members intensely and divisively, consider whether issuing a statement would be productive. If not, counsel faculty and staff on how to reach out to students and each other on an individual basis to offer support.*

**TEACH AND CREATE OPTIONS:** *Capture the opportunity presented by divisive incidents and conflicts for students to learn to advocate, negotiate, facilitate, extend compassion and support for each other, and understand laws regarding freedom of expression. Offer students safe and effective options to meet their needs and goals. Be sensitive to optimal timing. If violence has occurred, for example, provide opportunities for community members to mourn and offer each other support, but wait until people are calm enough to take part in more formal group interactions.*

**COMMUNICATE:** *Develop communications plans and engage in constant messaging. Reinforce basic norms that are at risk in the situation (e.g., “In our anger for someone faraway, we do not target those nearby who share a religion or ethnicity with that person.” “This will affect some of us more than others, and we all want to support those students suffering most deeply.”).*

**LISTEN:** *Stay in touch with students, faculty, staff, and other key groups, using two-way communication channels, informal techniques, and mediators to reach affected communities.*

**DEVELOP PROTOCOLS:** *Create protocols with safety agencies, especially regarding disruptive activities that do not threaten safety, consider the common message that all will convey, and let the campus community know that this has occurred. Discuss how to keep polarizing groups apart if their joint presence might trigger violence.*

**HELP FACULTY AND STAFF:** *Prepare the faculty and staff for the ways that issues will play out in classrooms, how to acknowledge compassionately and nonjudgmentally that students may be feeling a variety of deep emotions regarding the event that has occurred and the availability of campus resources for them, and when to announce a willingness to change requirements to recite in class or modify assignment deadlines. See, e.g, [here](#) for resources.*

*Once volatile events cease, university leaders should organize staff, faculty, students, and other constituencies to take additional steps discussed in [this guide](#):*

**CONTINUE SOLVING PROBLEMS:** *Develop and implement solutions to both immediate concerns and longer-term problems.*

**CONTINUE TO COMMUNICATE:** *Issue regular reports to let these constituencies know how issues are being addressed.*

**LEARN:** *Capture lessons on how to respond more effectively next time through an after-incident analysis.*

**PLAN:** *Develop plans for responding to the next crisis, based on lessons learned.*

**RECONCILE:** *Work to improve relationships that were strained during the conflict.*