

Statement of the Emergency Management Doctoral Degree Holder/Seeker Focus Group

October 2015

Introduction

We are a group of 10 emergency management scholars who have earned or are about to earn our doctoral degree in emergency management.

Our group represents doctoral degree seekers/holders from the four programs offering doctoral degrees in this field including Jacksonville State University, Oklahoma State University, North Dakota State University, and the University of Delaware. These programs from which we come differ in age of the program, faculty composition, curriculum requirements, approach to teaching, and, to some extent, audience for the degree. One might reasonably expect differences of opinion to be evidenced among us regarding what emergency management is as an emerging academic discipline as a result of the differences between our programs and our experiences in them. Yet, we found there is consensus among us on a wide range of points during our discussions with one another over two days at the Emergency Management Institute in September 2015.

The points about which we agree have been suggested in a number of FEMA Higher Education Program focus group reports—points about which each set of focus group participants agreed (Jensen, 2012a; Jensen, 2012b; Jensen, 2013a; Jensen, 2013b) as well as much of the wider emergency management higher education community (Jensen, 2014a; Jensen, 2014b). The points of consensus are related to emergency management's disciplinary identity and responsibilities as a discipline, the role of emergency management higher education programs, the relationship of higher education to professional development, the skills higher education must help students build, and the research standards to be used in recognizing contributions of new knowledge to the discipline.

We believe our consensus as doctoral degree holders/seekers in this emerging discipline is significant. It fuses us together as a community of scholars in this field. It binds us across the organizations and institutions from which we come and the organizations and institutions for which we do/will work in the future. Beyond our small group, it connects us with the focus groups, survey participants, and countless others who have come before us to carefully consider emergency management's disciplinarity, its disciplinary identity, and how the emerging discipline relates to education and professional development. We, and those who have come before us to consider these issues, have identified a set of ideas within which the academic discipline shall be grounded and upon which it will continue to be built into the future.

We believe that the promulgation of this document marks a significant moment in the development of emergency management as an academic discipline. Our consensus behind the ideas within it coupled with the consensus around these ideas preceding our group suggest that the word “emerging” will not long need to be coupled with emergency management when referring to its disciplinary status. Foshay (1962) describes a discipline as “a domain, an area of human experience, or an area of phenomena for which the person in the discipline takes

responsibility, second, as a set of rules that has to do with how truth is established and how truth is conceived as stated within the discipline, and third, as having a history that may be described and presumably, ought to be known” (p. 5). And Davis and Devlin (2007) suggest a similar definition arguing that an academic discipline is defined by the existence of “a community of scholars; a tradition or history of inquiry; a mode of inquiry that defines how data is collected and interpreted; defining the requirements for what constitutes new knowledge; [and] the existence of a communications network” (p. 1).

No matter the particular definition of discipline one relies upon—the ideas reflected in this document and those it builds upon provide clear evidence that emergency management will soon be an academic discipline in its own right. This fact is remarkable considering it was only eleven years ago that the first emergency management doctoral students began their doctoral programs of study and only four years ago that Jensen (2011) remarked, “Emergency management has the presence of a community of scholars from a variety of academic disciplines working in different academic departments that house EM Hi Ed programs. Looking into the very near future, emergency management will also have its own ‘home-grown’ community of scholars...the existing community of scholars and the new, upcoming cadre of doctoral degree holders in emergency management are capable of guiding emergency management as a discipline” (p. 38). Four years later there is a community of pre-existing and home grown scholars and, as the following suggests, there is not only consensus among us but we, “the home grown”, have also agreed to promote our consensus in our teaching, research, service, and practice.

In the following section, we state our points of consensus. These points are followed by how we each agree to promote the ideas in common. Each of us have added our names to this document as a symbol of our commitment and to mark this moment in emergency management’s development as a discipline. It is our hope that over time additional doctoral degree holders and seekers and others who self-identify as emergency management scholars will join as signatories who will, with us, continue to build emergency management as a discipline.

The Points of Our Consensus

There is consensus among us that the academic discipline of emergency management is “The scientific study of how humans and their institutions interact and cope with hazards and vulnerabilities and resulting events and consequences” (Jensen, 2013b). We believe, as was stated in Jensen (2012a), that the discipline of emergency management has the following responsibilities:

- Avoid monolithic representations of emergency management as practiced only by government which may limit the ways in which students understand the field and view their career options;
- Educate future emergency management professionals in a manner that will benefit them wherever they enter the broad profession;
- Educate those throughout society who perform tasks and activities related to emergency management outside of the profession;

- Educate students based on the integration and synthesis of hazards and disaster scholarship and research;
- Collect, analyze, integrate, synthesize literature related to hazards, vulnerabilities, and resulting events;
- Generate new knowledge through original research and critical assessment of existing hazards and disaster literature;
- Promote the dissemination, application, and utilization of the results of original research;
- Seek to foster the utilization of research findings and to the extent possible foster practical application of research findings;
- Make the results of our research available and accessible in form, format, and forum to multiple audiences;
- Collaborate with those working in the profession so that theory shapes practice and practice shapes theory;
- Seek to influence policy;
- Advocate for a culture of shared responsibility; and,
- Foster the legitimacy and development of the academic discipline and profession of emergency management.

We believe that an academic discipline of emergency management may contribute to the following outcomes, as was also stated in Jensen (2012a):

- Safer, less vulnerable world with increased capacity to cope with hazards and disasters;
- Reduction in the frequency and impacts of events;
- Increased engagement in hazards and disaster research area across all academic disciplines;
- Improved quality of the hazards and disaster research being done by other disciplines;
- Introduction of a discipline that is perceived as both legitimate and credible across academic disciplines and academic institutions of higher education;
- Emergency management policy based on empirical research findings;

- Improved emergency management practice and programs through bridging the theory to practice divide;
- Shape a new generation of professional emergency managers;
- Clearer communication of our identity and needs within our departments, colleges, and individual institutions;
- Clearer communication of the education we have to offer students at various degree levels and how such an education relates to various possible career paths;
- Appeal to a broader base of students. Some students will go on to seek employment as a professional emergency manager but most will seek careers outside of the emergency management profession. This broader base increases program visibility and sustainability within higher education generally, and our individual institutions specifically, (e.g., increased numbers of students in EM classes) without further increasing the pressure on programs to have their students employed as EM professionals upon graduation; and,
- Increased quality of EMHIED curriculums by grounding our coursework in the body of knowledge available.

We concur with the statement "Students deserve a comprehensive education that prepares them for the realities associated with their jobs, the contexts in which they will operate, and the science that explains emergency management phenomena, and the field needs students educated in such a manner" in Jensen (2013b). We understand education of students to be the primary responsibility of emergency management programs. There is consensus among us regarding the role of emergency management higher education *vis a vis* professional development. Our consensus is reflected in the following statements from Jensen (2013b):

- There are four major areas where an emergency management career can be pursued including government, humanitarian assistance, domestic nonprofits, and businesses.
- Students must pursue professional development opportunities (e.g., training, certification) and opportunities to gain direct, hands-on management experience to be competitive in attaining emergency management jobs.
- The professional development and experience students would ideally pursue to complement their emergency management education varies depending on whether the student desires a career in a domestic nonprofit, business, government, or international humanitarian assistance.
- Emergency management programs would be wise to sensitize their students who desire an emergency management career to the importance of professional development and the opportunities for different career areas.

- Higher education programs are not alone responsible for the professional development of their emergency management students.
- Programs ought to inform students of the responsibility they bear for their professional development.
- Emergency management programs should not conceive of themselves solely as professional preparatory programs.
- It would not be possible for degree programs to address each of the professional development needs related to the range of emergency management careers within the auspices of a single higher education program at any level.
- Professional development may be part of higher education program curricula to varying degrees and manifest in different ways, related to different career areas.
- There is an opportunity and need for increased partnerships between higher education programs in emergency management and organizations offering emergency management training.
- Higher education programs owe students the opportunity to learn about the significant, substantive, and topically varied body of scholarship and research that would benefit them in all emergency management career paths.

We concur with the idea that assisting students in building the following skills is obligatory on the part of higher education programs: verbal communications, written communications, interpersonal communication, group communication, network building and stakeholder engagement, analytical thinking, application of research in practice, problem solving, decision making, and leadership from Jensen (2013b).

We support the *DRAFT Research Standards for the Academic Discipline of Emergency Management*, updated as of October 2015. We believe that having a set of emergency management research standards is valuable for developing our discipline and will be helpful in facilitating high quality research by those who use the standards.

Promoting the Emerging Discipline Together

We agree to promote these aforementioned points of consensus through written and oral presentations in academic and practical settings. Further, we agree to promote the discipline overall, through our teaching, and through our research with the purpose of fostering the legitimacy and development of the academic discipline and profession of emergency management.

We will promote the discipline overall by

1. Actively building a community of emergency management doctoral degree seekers/holders and participating in it through exchanging ideas, informing each other of opportunities, and providing feedback on each other's work, particularly that which relates to disciplinary issues.
2. Seeking a high standard of quality in our courses and own research and, where the opportunity presents, in our programs and higher education overall.
3. Participating in dialogues related to emerging academic and professional standards and promoting those standards as they gain consensus.
4. Engaging in activities that help build emergency management as an academic discipline.

We will promote the discipline through research by

1. Conducting research in accordance with the *Draft Research Standards for the Academic Discipline of Emergency Management*.
2. Exploring research questions that are important to emergency management practice, broadly defined.
3. Including practitioners and key stakeholders on our research teams where appropriate.
4. Increasing the depth and breadth of our understanding of emergency management research.
5. Being active in shaping the body of knowledge and how it is understood.
6. Incorporating students into our research processes and promoting their involvement in research within our departments.

We will promote the discipline through teaching by

1. Presenting and defining emergency management as a profession and an academic discipline when setting the theoretical framework for our courses.

2. Grounding the courses we teach in the integration and synthesis of scholarship stemming from multiple disciplines.
3. Promoting student involvement in every setting in which we work.
4. Building course content around scholarship and using doctrine and policy as complements or supplements.
5. Engaging practitioners and key stakeholders in our courses.
6. Exploring the pedagogical and curricular uniqueness of our discipline particularly as related to building verbal communications, written communications, interpersonal communication, group communication, network building and stakeholder engagement, analytical thinking, application of research in practice, problem solving, decision making, and leadership skills.
7. Reflecting on and exploring disciplinary implications derived from educating both students in, or seeking careers in, emergency management and students who do not intend a career in emergency management.
8. Introducing the students with whom we work to the role of training and education and differences between the two.
9. Sensitizing the students with whom we work to their personal role in their own professional development.

Emergency management doctoral degree holder/seeker signatories:

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