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BREAKOUT SESSION: DISASTER/EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT CORE
FUNCTIONS AND COMPETENCIES—GRADUATE LEVEL
Wednesday, June 9, 2004

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Panel Organization

Panel attendees were randomly assigned to six project groups. They were asked to focus on graduate level programming in emergency management in responding to the following questions:

1. What must emergency managers know to be effective? (Knowledge Core)
2. What must emergency managers do to be effective? (Skill Core)

The groups were given approximately one hour to develop a prioritized list of ten items in each category. After completing the group exercise, the remainder of the session was given over to a discussion of two questions:

1. What problems, issues, or frustrations did your group encounter in developing the prioritized lists?
2. How do the knowledge and skills lists developed by each group differ in terms of both content and priority?

Summary of Knowledge Core

Listed below is a summary and consolidation of the items produced by the six groups in response to the question: What must an emergency manager know to be effective?

1. Research Methods
(research design, quantitative & qualitative methods)
2. Analytical Methods
(needs assessment, public policy analysis, program evaluation, risk assessment, hazard analysis)
3. Dimensions of emergency management practice
(historical, phases of emergency management, international & comparative, types of hazards or threats)
4. Political context of emergency management
(political culture, stakeholders, political theory, government organization, political process)
5. Legal and regulatory aspects of emergency management
(public law, administrative law, public policy making process, regulatory process)

6. Technology and its application
(computers, geographic information systems, telecommunication systems, systems inter-operability)
7. Planning Theory
(land use planning, urban planning, program development & implementation)
8. Organization Theory
(leadership, inter-organization relations, inter-agency dynamics, decision making, community relations)
9. Communication Theory
(media relations, intra- & inter-organizational)
10. Management Theory
(management techniques, ethics, financial management, human resource management, data & information, grants)

Summary of Skill Core

Listed below is a summary and consolidation of the items produced by the six groups in response to the question: What must an emergency manager do to be effective?

1. Analytical
(creative & critical thinking, problem solving, decision making)
2. Research
(problem identification, design, method selection, data analysis)
3. Application of Technology
(computer hardware & software, geographic information systems, communication)
4. Communication
(written & verbal)
5. Human Resource Management
(personnel administration)
6. Leadership
7. Fiscal Resource Management
(budgeting systems)
8. General Management
(project, intra- & inter-organizational coordination, work flow, meeting)
9. Planning
(project, strategic)
10. Human Relations
(interpersonal, negotiation & conflict resolution, diplomacy)

Issues Related to the Development of Core Competencies

The following issues were articulated by panel attendees in response to the question: What problems, issues, or frustrations did your group encounter in developing the prioritized lists?

1. No category was provided for dispositions or attitudes of effective emergency managers. Items such as self-motivation and passion were included in some group skill lists. Some participants argued that in addition to knowledge and skills, the core competency framework should include dispositions as a third category. Other participants argued that disposition items could be included under topics in the skills category. And others argued that dispositions should not

- be treated as a core competency category. Difficulty in measuring dispositions and the danger of adopting a doctrinaire approach were mentioned as some of the reasons.
2. Programs should include a strong component or theme across a competency that emphasizes application of knowledge and skills to actual situations. Use of case studies, internships, and similar methods help bridge the gap between theory and practice.
 3. The method used to identify competencies affects the types of competencies identified. An unstructured, inductive approach was used in the panel session. The approach may result in competencies that are not relevant or of the same degree of importance to practicing emergency managers. On the other hand, reliance upon a more structured, deductive approach that draws upon past research and practice may result in conservative, outdated, or only incremental changes in traditional competencies that are not adequate for new developments in the field. There is a need for the development of research based competencies that represents an on-going effort to critically evaluate current competencies and to keep them relevant to developments in the field.
 4. How should graduate programs differ from programs in other tiers of the higher education system? It is important to coordinate the development of emergency management programs at the graduate, baccalaureate, and community college level, including certification, credit, and non-credit programs. It is important to integrate and coordinate the programs in the various types of higher education institutions in order to minimize articulation problems for students and maximize resources available to the institutions.
 5. The development of a set of core competencies should not preclude or hinder the development of niche or specialized higher education programs for emergency managers. Higher education institutions need to be responsive to the needs of the profession and be in a position to capitalize on unique institutional strengths and opportunities. The competencies should be general enough to allow for the development of specialized programs but not so general that emergency management programs cannot be differentiated from other types of professional degree programs.

Prepared and submitted by Dr. Anthony Brown, Panel Facilitator
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