



Center for Disaster Research & Education

**FEMA Higher Education Project  
Survey Results  
2004**

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## FEMA Higher Education Project Survey 2004

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### Overview of Our Survey Responses

**Who are we?** You are a 52 year old (median; range 36 to 69) Caucasian (97%) male (68%) who earns \$70,000 a year (median), and has earned a PhD (54%). You have been teaching emergency management related courses for 8 years (median; range 0 to 20) and have served as program coordinator for 3 years (median; range 1 to 28). There are 3 tenured or tenure track faculty (median; range 0 to 10) and 3 part-time faculty (median; range 0 to 48) teaching courses in your program. Two-thirds of you (68%) also teach courses other than those in this program. And, two-thirds of you (66%) are at a public institution—all of you are reportedly at regionally accredited institutions.

**What are our students like?** Their median age is 30. They tend to be Caucasian (85%, African-American, Latin@ follow in frequency) males (60-40 ratio), who are seeking either an associate, bachelor's or graduate degree (85%) rather than a certificate.

**What kind of programs do we offer?** We are most likely to offer a bachelor's degree in some emergency management affiliated area (35%) or a master's degree (29%)—these two options account for almost two-thirds of the programs offered by the respondents (65%). Most (80%) offer their programs for the purpose of both preparing their students for a career as well as for helping their students advance within their existing careers, rather than focusing on either alternative. Our programs have existed for 3 years (median; range 1 to 43 years), half of us (54%) offer our classes once a week for 3 hours—however, there is great variation ranging from several meetings week in classroom or online, evenings, weekends, monthly.

Two-thirds of us (65%) indicate that we offer at least some of our program courses online, primarily (80%) to make it possible for students in varied geographical locations to be able to participate without relocating to a distant campus. Even more of us (88%) plan to offer distance learning delivery in the future. Four of five (80%) of those who do use some form of distance learning for course delivery, prefer asynchronous communication (interaction via time delay). The technology employed by those using distance learning, includes, in descending order, computer software (e.g. Blackboard, WebCT), e-mail, internet links, telephone, CD/DVD, video tapes, streaming video, paper guides, and films. The most typical meeting time for distance learning courses is evenings (46%), followed by days and weekends. The typical program currently has 20 full time students enrolled (median; range from 2 to 134) along with 40 part time students (median; range 0 to 280). The direction of both enrollment and graduation of program students is going in one direction: up. Most of us report expecting a doubling or tripling of students in our programs over the next several years. The median class size for bricks-and-mortar as well as distance education classes is 18. Distance learning classes are more

likely to be offered in evenings and on weekends (meeting once a week), while bricks-and-mortar classes are more likely to be offered during the day (1-3 meetings a week).

**What do we emphasize in our programs?** Almost two-thirds (65%) of us report that we emphasize building disaster resistant communities in our programs. Less than half report emphasizing any of the following: disaster response preparation (48%), technical applications (42%), or citizen vulnerability reduction (36%). Most of you support the idea of having a national curriculum model for associate (75%) and bachelor degree programs (78%), but *not* for master's (47%) or PhD (18%) programs! An interesting pattern was observed in the responses: we tended to support establishing a national curriculum models for programs *that we don't teach!* In other words, if we offer an M.A. and a PhD, we are more likely to favor a national curriculum for associate and bachelor degree programs—but not M.A. or PhD, and vice versa.

While many of us (the third most complained about item on the list generated by an open-ended question) indicated that not having access to enough textbooks and other teaching resources was *the* major challenge we face, only 4 out of 10 of us reported using EMI Higher Education Project hand off courses as part of our program. Most respondents (84%) with an associate degree program reportedly *do not use* the EMI Training Study Courses. And, less than half (44%) of those respondents with a bachelor's degree program, reported using the EMI hand off courses as part of their program.

Those of us who do incorporate these EMI resources stated the reasons we like them is that they are well written and easily adaptable. We indicated the following rank-ordering list of what we use (percentages apply *only* those who use any EMI materials): social dimensions of disaster *and* sociology of disaster (each 70%), business and industry crisis management *and* political and policy basis *and* principles and practices of hazards management (each 60%), public administration and emergency management *and* EMI independent study courses (each 50%), building disaster resistant communities (40%--even though we report this as our number 1 program focus!), research and analysis methods *and* terrorism and emergency management (each 30%), individual and community disaster education *and* technology and emergency management *and* social vulnerability (each 20%), EM principles applies to tourism (10%).

**Our Concerns.** The number 1 concern we articulated (in response to an open-ended question, 40% identified it) is: **how will we find qualified faculty to meet the demand?** We also have several additional common concerns, in descending order: **lack of text books and other teaching resources, meeting student demand with courses, funding for program/student needs, and too much emphasis being placed on homeland security.**

A multitude of additional concerns were listed by one or two respondents for each of these:

Support and recognition by administrators, colleagues, etc.

Lack of autonomy

Large class sizes

How to develop effective courses

Scheduling of courses to meet needs of students and teachers

Enrollment: usually how to handle explosion of it, sometimes to maintain it

## Program Assessment

Quality control of programs/common national curriculum  
Embedding emergency management within university curriculum  
Keeping up to date with info and techno changes  
Developing a solid research & knowledge base  
Placement of students

**What do we expect the future to hold?** We first and foremost expect **enrollments to increase**. Optimists that we are, we expect to **hire more faculty members** to meet this demand. Several expect to **move their programs from bricks-and-mortar to a virtual classroom**. In addition, each of the following were identified by one respondent:

- Reduce class size
- Offer more new courses
- Increase student involvement in all programs
- Add more degree programs, e.g., associate and bachelor degrees
- Add terrorism course
- Develop more graduate programs
- Integrate assessment into program
- Develop international disaster management certificate and master's program

## **What do we like about EMI courses & what would we like to see improved?**

We listed three types of responses in answer to **what we like**. They are rank-ordered as most to least frequent: **they are well developed and easily adaptable, they are good resources for both teacher and student, and they are complete.**

The **top two recommendations for improvement** include: (1) **create DVD/video/AV of prominent disaster educators giving mini-lectures on their specialties as well as exciting materials of this type that grab student attention in demonstrating emergency management principles, etc.** (2) **provide more EMI courses.**

**How else can the FEMA Higher Education Project help us?** The **two most frequent answers** were: **create textbooks** and **develop DVDs, streaming video, video, audio, pictures to provide illustrations** (e.g., emergency management principles, disaster educator expertise, hazards types and impact, mitigation models, disaster myths and other social dimension of disaster issues). Additional recommendations included:

- ID core skills of an emergency manager
- Help lobby support for programs at universities
- Create case study illustrations from real world
- Provide resource lists (hard copy published items and internet links)
- Actively fund students in our programs
- Training in distance learning for faculty

### **Methodological Issues**

The research plan was based upon several assumptions. (1) We assumed respondents would prefer the ease of an email response to a pdf file. (2) We assumed, as an alternative plan, respondents would prefer faxing a survey off print. (3) We assumed email signatures would be universally employed enabling us to identify who did and did not respond. And, (4) we assumed that those faxed to us would include a cover page which would identify the sender. We were wrong on all four assumptions, thus the low response rate of only 35%. Conference participants who offer an emergency management (or related) **program** will be asked to complete a survey. Final results will be tabulated and shared on the FEMA Higher Education web site.

### **Cautionary Comments**

With such a low response rate (approximately 35%), we cannot be certain that these findings are representative of the whole. Therefore, an amended version of the “survey” is recommended for the future. An annual telephone census of programs, designed to obtain basic information that is unthreatening to the respondent is probably a better approach. The FEMA web site can then publish the “census” information for the schools from which the information is obtained.

**APPENDIX A: TABLES**

**TABLE 1: PROGRAM COORDINATORS**

**Gender**

Female	32%
Male	68%

**Age**

Range	36-69
Median	52

**Race**

Caucasian	97%
Non-Caucasian	3%

**Income**

Range	\$25-100,000
Median	\$70,000

**Education**

BD – Master’s Degree	46%
PhD	54%

**Years in Current Position**

Range	1-28 years
Median	3 years

**Years Teaching Emergency Management Courses**

Range	0-20 years
Median	8 years

**TABLE 2: STUDENTS IN PROGRAM**

**Gender**

Female	32%
Male	68%

**Age**

Median	30 years of age
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**Race**

Caucasian	85%
Non-Caucasian	15%

**Objective – Program Goal**

Obtain Degree	83%
Obtain Certificate	17%

**TABLE 3: PROGRAM DESCRIPTION**

<b>Program Type</b>	
Bachelor's Degree Program	35%
Master's Degree Program	29%
All Other Options	36%
<b>Program Career Preparation Goal</b>	
Entry Level	5%
Advanced Level	15%
Both	80%
<b>Any Distance Learning Components?</b>	
Some	65%
None	35%
<b>Reported Emphasis of Program</b>	
Creating Disaster Resistant Communities	65%
All Other Options (listed)	35%
<b>Do You Want a National Degree Model?</b>	
Associate Degree	75%
Bachelor Degree	78%
Masters Degree	47%
PhD	18%
<b>Do You Use EMI Courses in Your Program?</b>	
Yes	40%
No	60%
<b>Comparison of Degree Type with EMI Use</b>	
AD	18%
BA/BS	42%
<b>Which Curriculum Materials Do You Use?</b>	
Social Dimensions of Disaster	70%
Sociology of Disaster	70%
Each of the other Options	<50%

## APPENDIX B: LIST OF ANECDOTAL INFORMATION

### **Degree Types**

PhD: Environmental Sciences, Engineering Management & Systems Engineering  
Masters: Public Admin, Public Safety, Engineering Man & Sys Eng, EM  
Graduate Certificate: Crisis & Emergency Management  
Bachelors: Rural Public Safety, Emergency Management  
Certificate: Emergency Management  
Minor: Environment Hazards & Emergency Management  
Associates

### **Challenges**

Shortage of Faculty  
Lack of Textbooks  
Large Classes  
Too Much Emphasis on Homeland Security  
Courses: enough, how to develop, quality control, scheduling them  
Funding students, program  
Maintaining Enrollment

### **Anticipated in Future**

Hire More Faculty  
Distance Learning Delivery  
Dramatic Increase in Students  
Offer More Courses  
Reduce Class Size

### **Distance Learning:**

#### **Techniques Employed**

Software: Black Board or Web CT  
Email, Links, Telephone

#### **Primary Reason for Using DL Techniques**

Counter Geographic Limitations

#### **When EM Classes Meet?**

DL Classes Meet Evenings & Weekends  
Non-DL Classes Meet Weekdays & Evenings

### **What We Like About EMI Courses**

Good resources for instructors and students  
Easily adaptable and well written

### **What Other Help We Would Like From FEMA**

Textbooks  
Exciting Multi-Media Illustrations: streaming video, DVD/CD, mini-lectures  
from experts in EM education, etc.