An Inside Look at Risk Management in a Large Academic & Research Setting

Understanding How Complex Risks Are Identified, Assessed, and Mitigated

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The Nature of Risk in Higher Education

- Universities are small cities—each with unique challenges.
- Risks span student life, research, IT, facilities, and global programs.
- Includes strategic, operational, compliance, and hazard categories.

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The Risk Management Framework

- Identify → Assess → Mitigate → Monitor → Communicate

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Identifying Risks

- Sources: incident reports, audits, feedback, insurance claims.
- Early detection through open communication.
- Example: a leaky roof or outdated lab system discovered during inspection.

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Assessing Risks

- Evaluate likelihood vs. severity/impact.
- Factors: safety, financial, reputational, operational.
- Data and experience guide prioritization.

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Mitigating Risks

- Engineering, policy, training, and insurance strategies.
- Collaboration across departments is key.
- Example: retrofitting labs or developing contractor protocols.

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Research Risk Focus

- Research introduces biosafety, data, and compliance issues.
- Partnerships with EHS (Environmental Health and Safety) and Sponsored Programs ensure alignment.
- Export control, data privacy, and lab safety are ongoing priorities.

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Crisis and Incident Response

- Preparedness through continuity and emergency plans.
- Coordination across police, fire, IT, and leadership.
- Post-incident reviews drive improvement.

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Communication and Culture

- Transparency and shared ownership of risk.
- Reporting builds trust and proactive engagement.
- Culture of ‘see something, say something.’

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Looking Ahead

- Emerging risks: AI ethics, cybersecurity, climate change.
- The goal is proactive—not reactive—management.
- Risk management enables progress, not fear.

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Questions & Discussion

Questions?

Story sharing?

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Top 3 Immerging Risks in Higher Ed

- ❑ AI Disruption & Academic Misuse
- ❑ Cybersecurity & Ransomware
- ❑ Enrollment & Financial Sustainability

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AI Risk

- What Is The Concern:
  - ❑ Rapid adoption, unregulated use, severe academic & compliance impacts
- Level Of Concern:
  - ❑ High but Manageable

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What We Have Done to Manage It

- Best Practices
  - Create a centralized AI governance structure
  - Build a university-approved safe AI platform
  - Adopt clear AI policies
  - Train campus leaders and faculty
  - Establish research-specific controls

  - Purdue leads the way:
  - Director of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Automation at Purdue: Kenny Wilson
  - Purdue AI policy website: https://it.purdue.edu/ai/ai-review-governance/

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Cybersecurity & Ransomware

- What Is The Concern:
  - Frequency and severity of ransomware attacks against universities continue to rise sharply

- Level Of Concern:
  - High but manageable

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What We Have Done to Manage It

- ❑ Centralize Identity & Access Management (IAM)
- ❑ Segment and Harden the Network
- ❑ Protect Research & High-Value Data
- ❑ Backup Strategy Resistant to Ransomware
- ❑ Email Security & Phishing Defense
- ❑ Endpoint Detection & Response (EDR)
- ❑ Incident Response & Crisis Preparedness
- ❑ Least-Privilege Administrative Access

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