

# **Post-Crisis Leadership: Implications for Pursuing Change and Innovation in Higher Education**

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DAY OF TERROR: 35 PAGES OF COVERAGE INSIDE

# Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

ONE OF AMERICA'S GREAT NEWSPAPERS

50 CENTS

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- Bush puts government on war footing
- Intercepts apparently link bin Laden to attacks
- Thousands of fatalities predicted
- Nearly 300 N.Y. police, firefighters believed killed

## HORROR MOUNTS



It was a surreal scene in lower Manhattan yesterday, as firemen waded amid the wreckage that was the World Trade Center, destroyed in an attack that apparently was more deadly than Pearl Harbor.

By Michael Grunwald  
The Associated Press

**T**errorists unleashed an astonishing air assault on America's military and financial power centers yesterday morning, hijacking four commercial jets and then crashing them into the World Trade Center in New York, the Pentagon and the Pennsylvania countryside.

It was by far the most devastating terrorist operation in American history, killing at least hundreds and possibly thousands of people.

SEE TERROR, PAGE A2

**'TODAY,  
OUR  
NATION  
SAW EVIL'**  
— PRESIDENT BUSH

**NEW YORK**  
New York becomes city of carnage, as surreal scene unfolds.  
**PAGE A-10**

**WASHINGTON**  
Shocked politicians, D.C. residents vow to be strong, seek retribution.  
**PAGE A-22**

**PITTSBURGH**  
In rural Somerset County, a plane drops from the sky.  
**PAGE A-13**  
Pittsburgh watches, reacts, prays.  
**PAGE A-8**

MORE COVERAGE IN SPORTS, B-1 AND BUSINESS, C-1

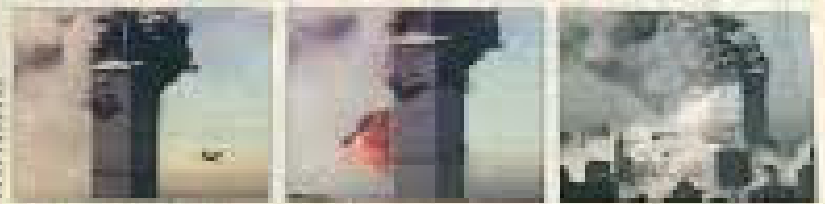
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post-gazette.com  
For updates and continuing coverage on yesterday's terror attacks, visit [www.post-gazette.com](http://www.post-gazette.com)

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## DAY OF TERROR

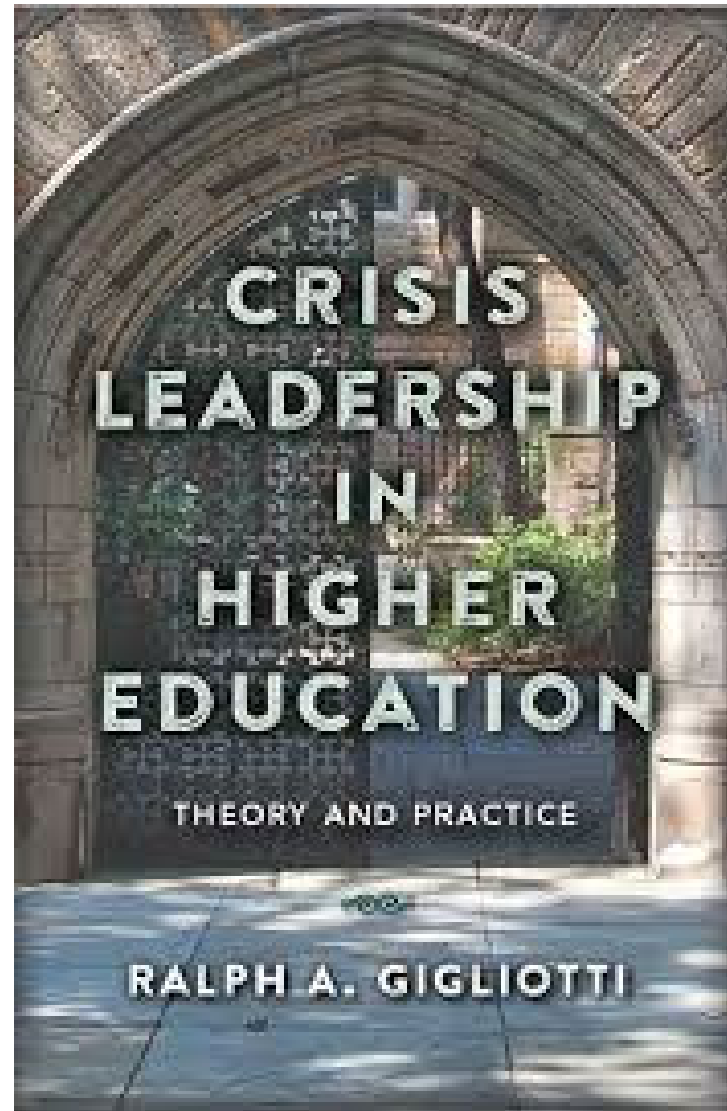


By Michael Grunwald  
The Associated Press



Image Source: <https://duq.edu/>





**CRISIS  
LEADERSHIP  
IN  
HIGHER  
EDUCATION**

**THEORY AND PRACTICE**

**RALPH A. GIGLIOTTI**

CORONAVIRUS

## America shuts down

From the Capitol to California, officials are taking aggressive new measures to limit social interactions.



Image Source:  
<https://www.politico.com/news/2020/03/12/coronavirus-shutdowns-across-country-127018>





RALPH A. GIGLIOTTI

**POST-  
CRISIS  
LEADERSHIP**

*Resilience,  
Renewal, and  
Reinvention in the  
Aftermath of Disruption*



## Session Goals

1

Introduce a framework for post-crisis leadership in higher education.

2

Explore strategies for demonstrating effective leadership in the aftermath of disruption.

3

Discuss how academic and administrative leaders can integrate these principles and practices into one's experiences.

## **Burnout of Administrative Staff Risks 'Destabilizing' Colleges**

Research study finds staff members are regularly overworked, resulting in unsustainable model.

## **Squeezed From Both Sides**

**Why is neither party happy with higher education?**

## **Helene's Aftermath: Classes Canceled, Students Relocated**

Colleges in western North Carolina have little cell service and are cut off from the rest of the state after historic flooding caused power outages and wiped out roads.

## **4 people shot at Virginia State University**

## **How Gaza Encampments Upended Higher Ed**

**Here's What to Know About Turnover Risks in Higher Ed's Work Force**

## **Report Finds Higher Ed Sector Shrank by 2 Percent**

Data from the National Center for Education Statistics shows that nearly 100 institutions closed between the 2022–23 and 2023–24 academic years.

**A Philadelphia arts school gave 7 days' notice it was closing. Now its students and faculty want answers.**

## Backdrop

- Crisis remains a ubiquitous condition for institutions of higher education
- Social construction of crisis: Perception of crisis; existence of crisis
- Numerous constituencies, many of whom have different, and at-times, competing views regarding mission, goals, and measures of success
- Crisis leadership—which takes account of leading before, during, and following these periods of disruption—is an imperative for leaders at all levels

## Perspectives on Crisis

- A specific, unexpected, and nonroutine, event or series of events that create **high levels of uncertainty** and simultaneously present an organization with both **opportunities for and threats to its high-priority goals** (Ulmer, Sellnow, & Seeger, 2018).
- A **turning point**, not necessarily laden with irreparable negativity but rather characterized by a certain degree of risk and uncertainty (Fink, 1986).
- A high impact event that often **strips an organization to its core values** (Seeger & Ulmer, 2011).



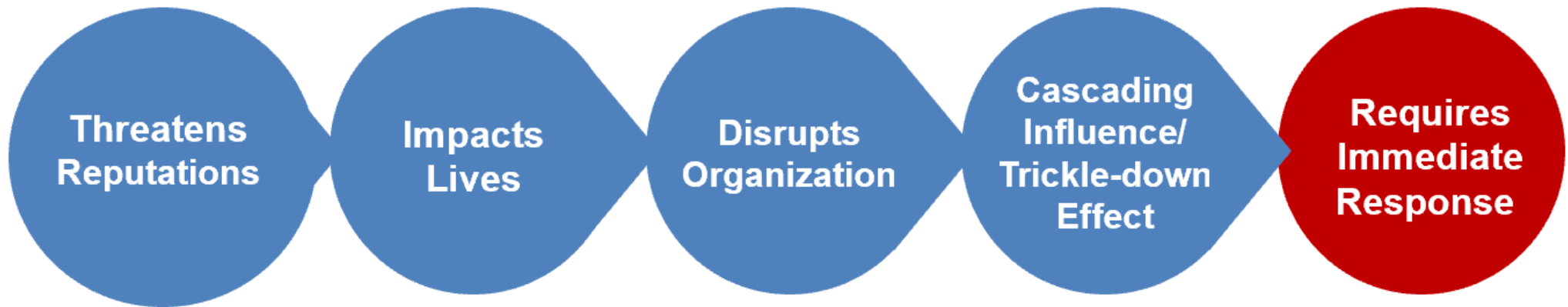
危機

**Danger + Opportunity**

## Crisis as Disruption

- In the depths of crisis, individuals and the organizations to which they belong experience some degree of disruption:
  - disruption from what we have come to expect and accept as normal
  - disruption of a shared set of principles or values
  - disruption of our safety, wellbeing, and sense of connection to others
- “These events shatter the fundamental sense of normalcy, stability, and predictability we all count on in living our daily lives. They are disruptive, confusing, shocking, and intense events, and making sense of them and reestablishing some new normal requires communication” (Sellnow & Seeger, 2020, p. 17).

## Working Definition of Crisis



Crises are events or situations of significant magnitude that threaten reputations, impact the lives of those involved in the institution, disrupt the ways in which the organization functions, have a cascading influence on leadership responsibilities and obligations across units/divisions, and require an immediate response from leaders (Gigliotti, 2019)

# Crisis Types in Higher Education

Crisis Type	Example
Academic crisis	Debate over tenure, widespread plagiarism or academic fraud, and significant violations of academic integrity.
Athletics crisis	Child abuse scandal and incidents of hazing
Clinical crisis	Physician malpractice in academic health center
Financial or business crisis	Significant decreases in state appropriations
Human resources crisis	Employee crimes and issues surrounding hiring and firing of employees
Leadership or governance crisis	Conflict between state legislature and university leadership
Natural disaster	Flood, tornado, or hurricane
Public health crisis	Pandemic or outbreak
Public safety crisis	Active shooter, sexual assault, suicide, or death
Racial or identity conflict	Campus unrest due to racial or identity tensions within the community and acts of intolerance by any campus stakeholder
Student affairs crisis	Mental health crisis, controversial speaker, or student code of conduct violations
Technological and facilities crisis	Water main break, chemical spill, widespread power outage, or damages to university infrastructure

Source: Gigliotti (2020)



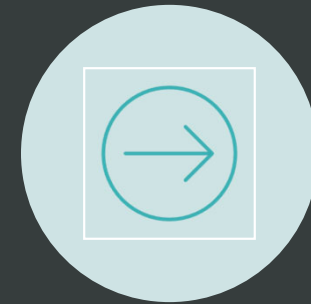
## Three Stages of a Crisis



PRE-CRISIS





CRISIS



POST-CRISIS

# Desired Crisis Leadership Competencies

- Active listening
- Adaptability/Flexibility
- Balance short and long-term priorities
- Calm under pressure
- Clear, concise, and ongoing communication
- Compassionate, and committed to the well-being of students, faculty, and staff
- Confidence
- Creative/Innovative
- Discipline
- Emotionally intelligent
- Empathy
- Fairness
- Familiarity with best practices
- Fast, but thoughtful decision making
- Holistic point of view
- Honesty/integrity
- Humility/vulnerability
- Level-headed
- Mindful
- Optimistic
- Present, engaged, and responsive
- Resilient
- Resourceful
- Share clear expectations
- Transparency

	<h1>5</h1> <h2>Phases of a Crisis</h2>	<b>Early Warning Signal Detection</b>	<b>Preparation and Prevention</b>			<b>Damage Containment</b>		<b>Recovery</b>	<b>Learning and Reflection</b>	
	<h1>9</h1> <h2>Supporting Skills</h2>	Sense-making	Perspective Taking	Influence	Organizational Agility	Creativity	Communicating Effectively	Risk Taking	Promoting Resilience	Individual and Systemic Learning

Source: James and Wooten (2022)

# Supporting Literature

- Growing emphasis on disaster collectivism (Solnit, 2010) and resilience studies in disaster research (Fritz, 1996; Quarentelli, 1998; Perry & Quarantelli, 2005), communication studies (Buzzanell, 2010; Doerfel, Chewning, & Lai, 2013), and psychology (Bonanno, 2004; Bonanno et al, 2010; Fletcher & Sarkar, 2013; Richardson, 2002).
- Values-based crisis leadership (Gigliotti, 2019, 2022; Stern, 2009)
  - What core values are at stake in this situation?
  - What are the key uncertainties associated with the situation and how can we reduce them?
  - How much time do we have or can we 'buy' ourselves? (Stern, 2009, p. 191)



## Guiding Questions

1. How can leaders distinguish the crisis from the post-crisis, and what does this evolution mean for the practice of leadership?
2. In what ways can leaders contribute to the conditions associated with organizational learning, healing, and renewal in the aftermath of crisis?
3. How does the pursuit of strategy and reinvention help the organization to move forward with purpose and clarity, and what risks come into play if these efforts are perceived by others to be hurried?
4. How might those engaged in leadership and followership collectively encounter and co-create meaning and growth in the collective transition from crisis to post-crisis?

## Central Idea

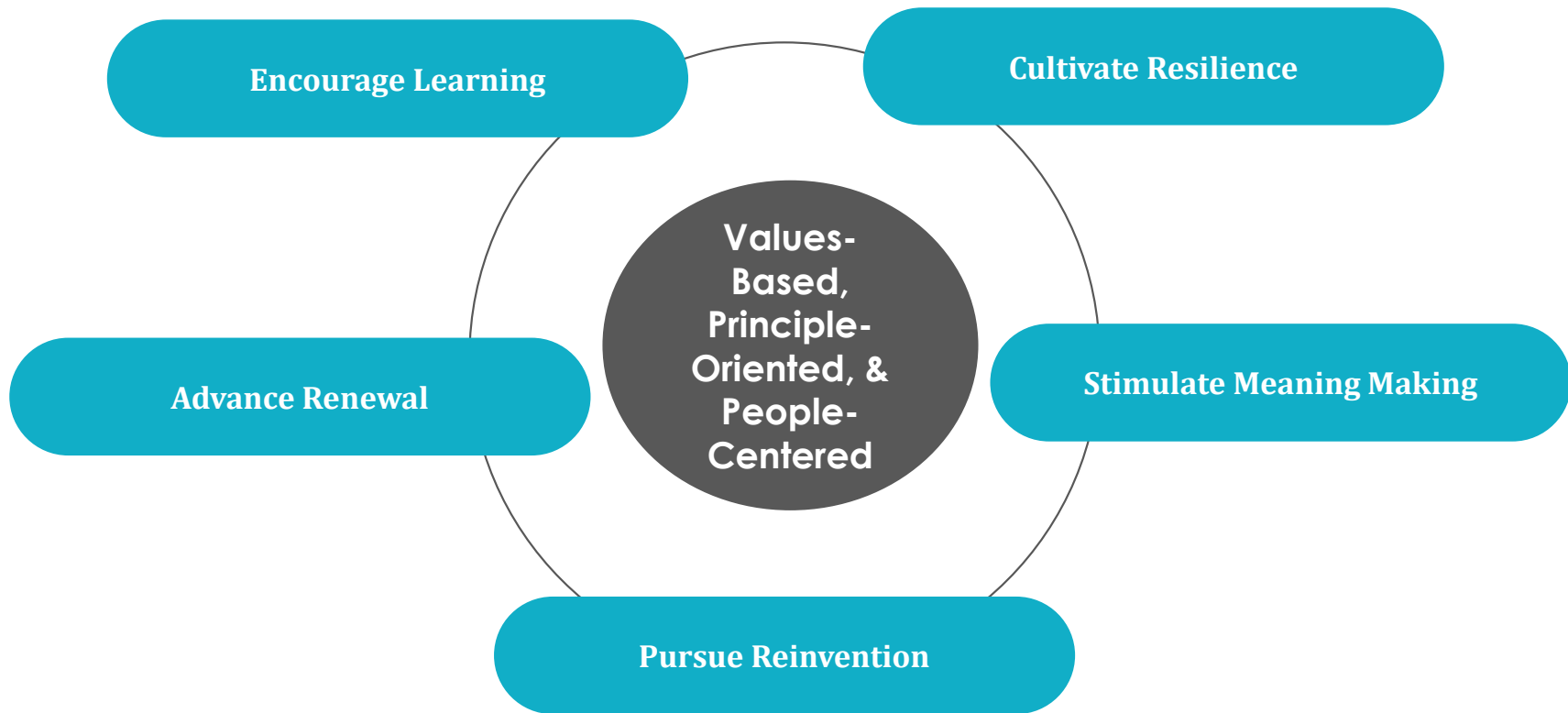
It is in the darkness and chaos of crisis where values-based leadership becomes most critical, most visible, and most desired (Gigliotti, 2019).

And by extending values-based leadership as a guide during this transition from crisis to post-crisis, learning, healing, growth, and transformation become possible.

## Key Principles

- The **fatigue, frustration, and even trauma** present in times of crisis have the potential to stall the healing and recovery that could result post-crisis.
- An **investment in post-crisis leadership development**—along with an investment in organizational recovery and learning during this period—serves both short-term and long-term interests, all the while helping to build capacity in responding to the inevitable crises that might lie ahead.
- Internal and external stakeholders impacted by crises crave hope, compassion, and trust—and engaging these audiences in co-creating a path forward can cultivate resilience and renewal, focusing on both a **return to what was and a pivot to what might have never been.**

# Post-Crisis Leadership (Gigliotti, 2024)



<b>Post-Crisis Leadership Practice</b>	<b>Description</b>
<b>Encourage Learning</b>	The ability to create mechanisms for learning in the aftermath of crisis, to ensure broad participation in post-incident review processes, and to integrate lessons learned as a way of building individual and collective capacity.
<b>Cultivate Resilience</b>	The ability to support others as they bounce back or reintegrate with confidence and conviction, to lean on others for support and strength, and support the unique pathways for individual and collective growth.
<b>Stimulate Meaning Making</b>	The ability to adopt effective communication practices that support individual and collective meaning making in the aftermath of disruption and to invoke hope and optimism as individuals seek to make sense of often senseless incidents.
<b>Pursue Reinvention</b>	The ability to co-construct opportunities for individual and collective reinvention that might be made possible from crisis and to engage in continuous improvement or transformation efforts that are responsive to the unique needs of the community.
<b>Advance Renewal</b>	The ability to create opportunities for physical, social, emotional, and spiritual healing in ways that seem most appropriate given the scale of the crisis, the impact on institutional stakeholders, and the institutional setting.

# 1: Encourage Learning



Image Source:  
<https://montgomerycountypolicereporter.com>



Image Source: <https://www.history.com/this-day-in-history/massacre-at-virginia-tech-leaves-32-dead>



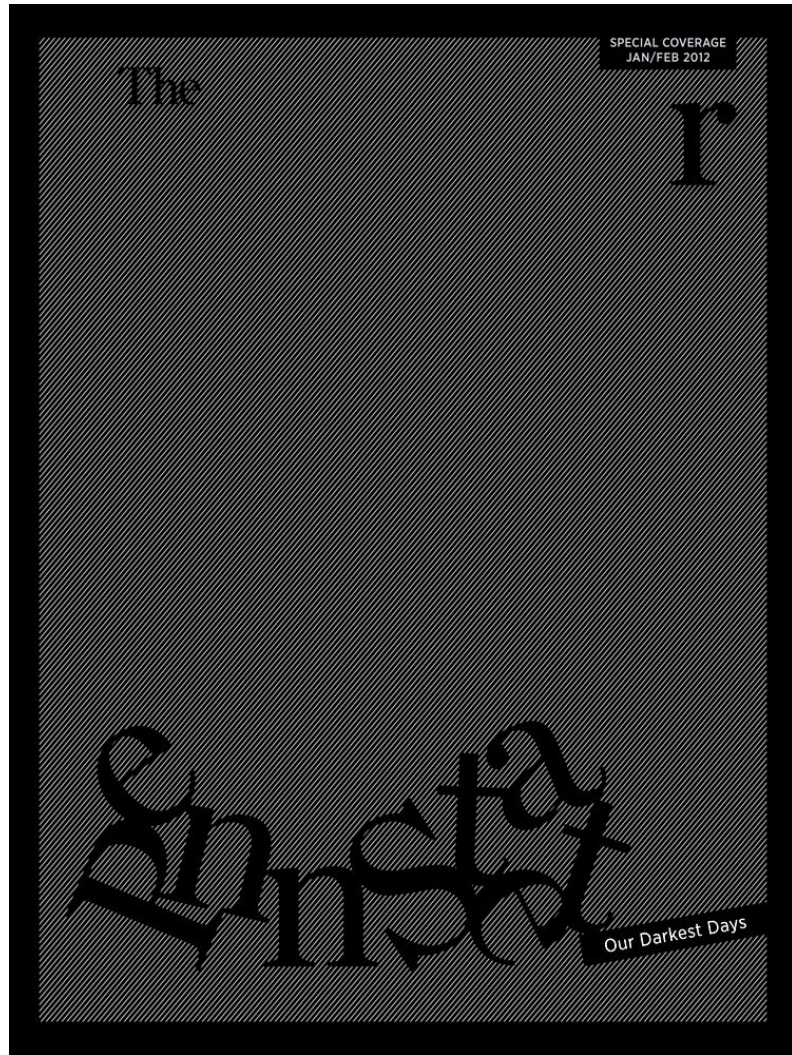
## Recommended Practices

- Ensure broad participation from diverse stakeholders on post-incident review committees.
- Provide formal and informal opportunities to analyze, debrief, and learn from the experiences of past crises.
- Solicit feedback from across the organization as part of the postmortem process and meaningfully integrate this input into the after-action review.
- Pose questions to stimulate both single-loop and double-loop learning in the aftermath of crisis.
- Design opportunities to learn from exemplary crisis leadership practices based on the experiences of others from across disciplines, institutions, and sectors.
- Encourage employees throughout the organization to create a learning organization mindset through a continual and systematic review of the organizational culture, established structures and policies, and leadership behaviors that might either encourage or hinder organizational learning.



## #2 Cultivate Resilience

Image Source:  
<http://thematadorsports.com/blog/wp-content/uploads/2012/01/pennstater.jpg>



# Recommended Practices

- Pay attention to the dynamic process of resilience and the ways in which members of one's unit, department, or organization can bounce back or reintegrate with confidence and conviction.
- Be mindful of the often-disproportionate impact of crises on individuals and units and the ways in which you can best support and nurture the resilience of those adversely affected by the crisis.
- Be aware of your resilience narrative. Engage in communication that reinforces the resilience of the community and that highlights the areas of strength, distinction, and hope that are made manifest during times of crisis.
- Lean on colleagues throughout the institution and across other organizations for support and strength.
- Be wary of compassion fatigue and prioritize your own self-care.
- Accept the inherent vulnerability associated with loss or trauma—and forge a path forward that is grounded in optimism that can help to transcend this vulnerability.
- Do not underestimate the value of adopting positive emotions.
- Model transformational leadership behaviors that align with your authentic style and that best meet the moment.
- Support the process of posttraumatic growth.
- Engage in reflective practice and facilitate recovery in the aftermath of traumatic events

## #3 Stimulate Meaning Making



Image Source: <https://time.com/6148706/college-covid-19-policies/>

# Recommended Practices

- Know your audience.
- Communicate and behave with intentionality and purpose, recognizing that words and actions communicate intended and unintended messages with multiple possibilities for interpretation and misinterpretation.
- Identify and connect with the values, norms, and principles of mutual interest for you and the members of your unit, department, or institution.
- Crises disrupt existing meaning systems, and leaders serve an important role in helping to provide potential explanations for the disruption in ways that require trust.
- The co-construction of meaning relies less on knowing all answers and more on posing questions and possibilities that allow for a shared construction of the situation.
- Invoke hope and optimism in ways that invite individuals to find some sense of meaning in response to tragedy.
- Listen with sincerity, grace, and a willingness to learn.
- Recognize the distinct ways in which individuals will personally move through the sensemaking process, and acknowledge that there is no one shared timeline that governs this process.
- Encourage storytelling and reflection in response to trauma.



## #4: Pursue Reinvention



Image Source: <https://www.facultyfocus.com/articles/online-education/online-course-delivery-and-instruction/simulating-the-classroom-experience-with-zoom/>

## Recommended Practices

- Engage in the co-construction of reinvention efforts that draw upon the input, feedback, and buy-in of members of the community.
- Develop a cadence for the reinvention effort that meets the moment, taking account of the impact of the crisis on the emotional state of various stakeholders, the waves of change that may have preceded the crisis, and the history with organizational change and transformation that might influence how new strategic directions are perceived by others.
- Recall that organizational reinvention does not have to be radical.
- The reinvention of processes, systems, structures, and organizational identities must not lose sight of the individuals who are impacted by these planned changes.

## #5 Advance Renewal



Image Source: <https://www.diverseeducation.com/social-justice/article/15678570/campus-racial-issues-four-years-after-george-floyds-death>



# Recommended Practices

- Demonstrate trauma-informed leadership behaviors in ways that build trust, including respect for the individual, active listening, presence, and empathy.
- Encourage renewal in one-on-one settings and in settings involving groups, teams, and the broader community.
- Respond in ways that demonstrate an understanding of the often-disproportionate impact of crises on members of a community.
- Respect the need for individual and collective healing, and the ways in which this effort occurs in both private and public settings.
- Create opportunities for physical, social, emotional, and spiritual healing in ways that seem most appropriate given the scale of the crisis, the impact on institutional stakeholders, and the institutional setting.
- Participate in memorial rituals and vigils, along with celebrations of key milestones, in order to facilitate individual and collective healing.
- Forge linkages between renewal activities and the organization's ethos, mission, and values.

## Conclusion

1. Prepare. Crisis leadership—and post-crisis leadership—is an imperative for leaders across higher education.
2. Recognize the centrality of communication in the work of higher education leadership.
3. Consider principles, process, and people as you navigate the complexities of contemporary leadership in higher education.

# Thank you!

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