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Educating Public Information Officers in Kentucky

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EDUCATING PUBIC INFORMATION OFFICERS IN KENTUCKY

by

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Abstract

This study researched the education and training of public information officers (PIO) within Kentucky. Even though training exists, the effectiveness of prior training and education of currently employed public information officers is unknown. As the formalization and importance of the role has evolved in recent years, it is more important to determine and possibly create proper training and post-secondary courses to prepare public information officers for their role. Interviews were conducted, utilizing standard questions with practicing public information officers throughout the state. Research found inconsistent experience and a lack of training by public information officers prior to obtaining their role. Interviewees also provided data regarding helpful training and behavioral qualities that can be taught prior to and during their career. As a result of the study the researcher created a syllabus for a public information post-secondary course.

Keywords: public information, crisis communications, risk communications, strategic communications, incident command, emergency management, joint information center, information officers, spokespersons, government spokespersons, public affairs officers and community affairs officer

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CHAPTER I:

Introduction

The role of the public information officer (PIO) has evolved since research began regarding the profession in the early 1900s (Prince, 1920). Media sources have "considerable responsibility and influence on how a community experiences and responds to a mass emergency, as the media is the crucial conduit through which information (news) is disseminated in a crisis" (Piotrowski, 1998, p. 343). The concept of public information began as an avenue to warn the public during disasters. Media outlets such as radio, newspaper, and later, television were used to advise citizens of impending emergencies.

Throughout the mid 20th century, the media began to not only serve as a warning source for citizens but also as a prominent source for news during disasters. This change created the need for a profession specializing in disseminating information on behalf of emergency response and governmental agencies during critical incidents. The new public information officer role was created to formalize communication conveyed to the public, focusing on the distribution of accurate, consistent messaging. Agencies such as fire departments, police departments, schools, health departments and local governments began employing PIOs. The federal government has standardized the role and integrated it into their Incident Command System (ICS), which is the organization used by response agencies during an incident requiring coordination of multiple organizations (Centers for Disease Control, 2006; U.S. Department of Homeland Security, 2007, 2008).

The Incident Command System and inclusion of the PIO position demonstrates the importance of the responsibilities the public information officer bears. The system has become a necessity given the complexity of disaster management, number of agencies involved and functions needed. ICS provides a single, standard system that can be used by all agencies (Stumpf, 1999).

The Incident Command System was created in the 1970s due to the complexity of wildfire responses in California. A multi-agency task force called FIRESCOPE (Fire Fighting Resources of Southern California Organized for Potential Emergencies) was created to design the standardized management system. The design process took many years of planning and testing. Solutions identified by FIRESCOPE during this project included: creating a flexible system that could be utilized at an incident of any type or size; using the system daily in routine situations; standardizing the system so that agencies from any area can work together; and ensuring the system is cost effective (Stumpf, 1999).

All participants within the system use the same terminology and organizational structure. A clear chain of command is determined with a single incident commander who is in charge of the overall response. In essence, all participating organizations become one responding organization under the Incident Command System. A common incident action plan is established for all agencies to work through during each incident to further standardize the response. A basic set of functions are established as part of the incident command structure including operations, planning, logistics and finance/administration. The public information officer most often reports directly to the incident commander (Stumpf, 1999).

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) is the primary source of training for public information officers. Six public information courses are currently offered by FEMA either online or in the classroom setting. In-person courses are held throughout the country with approval of sponsoring governmental agencies (National Incident, 2015). Courses range from introductory studies to advanced classes.

In recent years, many high-profile disasters have utilized public information officers to communicate to the public. Some PIO responses have been analyzed as successful case studies, while others have been classified as not effective. The lack of a PIO and use of untrained representatives to communicate during disasters has also been reviewed. For example, Rudolph (Rudy) Giuliani served as the mayor of New York City during the 9/11 attacks in 2001. The mayor assumed the role of spokesperson during the attacks for the incident in New York City. At the time, the public looked positively toward Giuliani and began calling him America's Mayor. He inspired and calmed the public while appearing among the rubble of the destroyed Twin Towers and became an example of exemplary leadership (Podair, 2008).

In contrast, the Connecticut Light and Power (CL&P) 2011 nor'easter response failed to provide accurate, timely information to the public. Hurricane Irene hit New England on August 28, 2011. This storm was quickly followed by an early snowstorm on October 29th. These incidents caused a mass power outage in over 800,000 structures. CL&P succeeded in assessing damage caused by the storm. They were able to successfully restore power, however, the company failed to properly educate and inform stakeholders of their efforts (Grantham, 2015).

Initially, CL&P assigned the spokesperson role to a technical public relations representative. Within days of the snowstorm, however, company president and chief executive officer (CEO) Jeffrey Butler assumed the role as spokesperson for the emergency due to his expertise in damage assessment and power restoration. The public quickly demanded answers to determine when power would be restored. Reports were only provided in daily press conferences with some information filtered through radio and newspapers. The majority of residents were dependent on battery-operated radios or radios available in their vehicles to hear updated news reports. Newspapers provided power coverage maps depicting restoration plans.

Social media sources and the CL&P website were not used to disseminate information (Grantham, 2015).

The State of Connecticut had a plan to inform stakeholders during the emergency, where state officials and CL&P would coordinate and distribute messages to the public through the state's emergency operations center. Immediately after the storm, government and company spokespersons were coordinating communication efforts, however, this quickly changed and the government separated themselves from all company messaging. Mismanagement of the incident by CL&P began to be perceived by the public, with the spokesperson, Jeffrey Butler in the forefront. A lack of information regarding ongoing damage assessments and the timeframe for restoring power created a lack of trust in the company. This was escalated on the fourth day of the storm by the governor's separation from CL&P at the daily press conferences. Soon thereafter, the governor began directly challenging CL&P's statements (Grantham, 2015).

After the event, an analysis was conducted to review the public's negative perception of CL&P and their response to the storm. The public had no prior experience with a storm of this magnitude. It was found that the lack of one voice speaking to the public on important issues contributed to the lack of confidence in CL&P messaging. Jeff Butler, the CL&P president, should have been performing his primary duties of damage assessment and restoration efforts instead of performing the role of PIO. Another representative should have been trained and assigned to perform this duty, as Butler was not specifically trained in this position. The failure of the government and CL&P to communicate with one voice was also a primary issue. This could have been mitigated by using the Incident Command System and an assigned PIO. Butler's messaging was not vetted for accuracy and in some cases had to be recanted, affecting his credibility with the public. Briefings and real-time information were also not provided frequently enough to keep the public properly informed (Grantham, 2015).

The company suffered a damaged reputation and underwent a governmental investigation. Even though the company was cleared of wrongdoing, it was determined that they did not communicate effectively during the storm. This could have been prevented with proper planning, training and use of a public information officer (Grantham, 2015).

Failed PIO Case Study: Hawaii Ballistic Missile Alert

Another example of a failed PIO incident occurred on January 13, 2018. On this date, a false ballistic missile alert was sent over television, radio and cell phones within the state of Hawaii stating, "BALLISTIC MISSILE THREAT INBOUND TO HAWAII. SEEK IMMEDIATE SHELTER. THIS IS NOT A DRILL" (Federal Communications Commission, 2018, p. 3). The alert was issued via the Emergency Alert System and the Commercial Mobile Alert System during a shift change on a Saturday morning at 8:07 a.m. local time by the Hawaii Emergency Management Agency (HEMA) state warning point (SWP). The false alert was intended to be a routine test but instead sent members of the public into a panic throughout the state, prompting residents and tourists to seek shelter, contact loved ones and attempt to ascertain more information. The public was unnerved, believing their lives were in danger. Other governmental agencies also reacted to the false alert. Some military bases activated their warning sirens upon receiving the notification (Federal Communications Commission, 2018).

At 8:20 a.m., the first official announcement was made over social media that the warning was false, leaving 13 minutes for panic to ensue. Not until 38 minutes later, at 8:45 a.m. was the alert officially cancelled (Federal Communications Commission, 2018). Upon investigation of the incident by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC), Centers for

Disease Control (CDC) and the state of Hawaii, errors were found that led to the false alert and delayed response, including human error and inadequate safeguards (Oliveira, 2018).

The intended test was conducted during a shift change, which led to confusion among shift supervisors and proper accountability. Upon initiation of the emergency alert notification, the message was misunderstood as an actual event instead of a test. The verbiage that was included in the message stating, “exercise, exercise, exercise,” was not perceived, but the words, “this is not a test,” were heard instead, prompting an employee to trigger the message stating an actual event, not a test. This was completed with both selection of the incorrect message in HEMA software, as well as confirmation by clicking “yes” within the software (Oliveria, 2018).

Almost immediately, employees within HEMA began alerting the state warning point that actual event alerts were being received. HEMA employees were receiving alerts on their personal cellular phones. Upon the realization that an actual missile alert had been sent, notifications from within state and federal government escalated. Even though the state warning point and other internal employees were aware of the false communication, the public was still not aware that the information was incorrect (Oliveria, 2018).

At 8:18 a.m., the HEMA public relations officer contacted an employee within the SWP to inquire about the message. The officer was notified that it was a false alert and was advised to post this information on social media. One minute later, Hawaii News Now pushed a notification through their smartphone application stating the emergency notification was a mistake and there was no ballistic missile threat. At 8:19 a.m., a message was sent on the HEMA Twitter account stating that, “There is no missile threat to Hawaii” (Oliveria, 2018). This was only seen by individuals who followed the HEMA Twitter account. Subsequently, other television stations throughout the state were notified as well. At 8:45 a.m., the message was officially cancelled over all media in which the initial alert originated, including television crawlers, radio and cellular phones (Oliveria, 2018).

Direct causes of the incorrect alert and the delayed reaction by authorities were later identified by the State of Hawaii and the FCC. Miscommunication by the state warning point employee who initiated the communication was the first breakdown in the intended exercise. Secondly, the shift change led to inadequate supervision over actions taken to conduct the drill. The lack of a two-person process contributed to one person activating the message without a confirmation check. This also contributed to the error. There was an absence of internal practices and identification of confusing verbiage. The HEMA procedural checklist used for the test lacked information on how to correct a false alert and training was deficient. Software utilized to activate the alert lacked precautionary measures that should have been in place to avoid a mistake (Federal Communications Commission, 2018).

Recommendations were made by the FCC and State of Hawaii as a result of timelines and subsequent findings. Items such as: upgrading the current emergency alert software; updating the internal confirmation message before an alert can be sent; adding a two-person confirmation procedure before an alert can be sent; revising the alert procedural checklist; conducting formal updates and reviews of relevant documents; incorporating appropriate disaster planners; ensuring training needs are met; and ensuring employees are performing, were all recommended by the State of Hawaii (Oliveria, 2018).

A study conducted by the Centers for Disease Control, found that social media played an integral role in communications during the timeframe that the alert miscommunication occurred. Two 38-minute periods were studied. One time period was reviewed earlier in the event period, 8:07-8:45 a.m., and one later, 8:46-9:24 a.m. Close to 6,000 tweets occurred in the early period, while 8,650 were sent during the late period. Themes emerged from the tweets including information processing and sharing; authentication; emotional reaction; insufficient knowledge; denunciation and mistrust of authority. Emotional reactions of fear, panic, terror and shock were also expressed in the tweets (Murthy et al., 2019).

The CDC study determined that themes identified in tweets should be considered by communications professionals when communicating with the public during incident response. Social media can also be effective and should be utilized when deemed appropriate. Social media outlets are used to gauge the public and their reactions in real-time (Murthy et al., 2019).

During the course of these errors and this event, the public was likely to be seeking shelter, searching for loved ones and scared by the prospect of a ballistic missile threat. This 38-minute lag in message correction caused undue stress on the public that could have been corrected if proper public information training and procedures had been in place. Several issues identified in this case study emphasize the importance of properly trained public information officers.

The procedural checklist for ballistic missile exercises did not have a task for contacting the HEMA public information officer. As noted, this individual contacted the agency himself when he became aware of the incorrect emergency notification (Oliveria, 2018). The PIO should be involved in all exercises and notified when they are going to occur. Message corrections were also not crafted in advance. This caused a delay in response. This could serve as a task of the PIO. Communications with local, state and federal agencies were also lacking, contributing to miscommunication and panic. This is a role that a properly trained PIO can fulfill. The importance of social media during a disaster was also studied and emphasized as lessons were learned from this incident. Not only can social media be used to communicate correct messaging in real-time but incorrect rumors can be monitored and corrected. Public reaction can be analyzed and steered correctly by a trained PIO (Murthy et al., 2019).

The Hawaii Emergency Management Agency communicated an incorrect, fearful message to its citizenry, leading to recommendations and lessons learned. Improper communications and use of the public information officer led to panic and mass distribution of misleading information. By pre-preparing messages; including the PIO in all exercises; developing and maintaining relationships with local, state and federal agencies; and properly utilizing social media, a PIO can prevent many issues from arising when a similar problem occurs. Training and practice are critical to ensure the PIO is prepared to respond to a major incident.

Successful PIO Case Study: California Measles Outbreak

On January 7, 2015, a measles outbreak was announced within the State of California. Even though measles was thought to be eradicated in 2000, seven new cases of the disease were confirmed within five areas of California (Centers for Disease Control, 2015). Six of the seven people infected reported visiting Disneyland in Orange County California, creating a public relations incident for The Walt Disney Company as well as the California Department for Public Health (CDPH). This worldwide incident created a two-pronged event involving a private and governmental organization who worked together to conduct a successful public information response (Rozbicki, 2016).

Measles is defined by the World Health Organization (WHO) as a highly contagious virus that is spread through the air and through direct contact. The measles can linger for up to two hours in the air after a person coughs or sneezes. The illness is especially dangerous for children under the age of five and adults over the age of 20. Worldwide vaccination using the measles, mumps and rubella (MMR) vaccine has been advocated to eliminate and reduce the disease, with the program beginning in the United States in 1963. Since the elimination of measles in 2000, five waves of the illness have occurred, with most relating to travelers coming in from outside the United States (Measles, 2019).

With recent waves relating to travelers entering the United States, this most recent outbreak proved challenging and was linked to the anti-vaccination movement. This movement began in 1998 when Andrew Wakefield, a British physician, published a study with 12 co-authors in the *Lancet*, a British medical journal (Wakefield et al., 1998). The article suggested that the MMR vaccine may contribute to autism in children. Even though the study was conducted with a very small sample size, (*n*=12), the article received very widespread media coverage. Vaccination rates began to fall even though studies were immediately conducted to refute claims made in Wakefield's article (Taylor et al., 1999). In February 2010, the *Lancet* completely retracted Wakefield's article with the authors being held accountable for ethical violations and scientific misrepresentation (Anonymous, 2010). Wakefield and his co-authors were later found guilty of deliberate fraud with multiple articles being published on the findings (Godlee, 2011).

On January 5, 2015, the CDPH was notified that an 11-year-old girl was hospitalized with symptoms comparable to measles. She was unvaccinated with her only travel history being a trip to Disneyland in California. On the same day, reports of four additional, suspected measles cases were reported to CDPH from California and Utah. These cases had also reported a visit to Disneyland during the timeframe of December 17 to 20, which was prior to the onset of their illness. A press release was issued on January 7 and other states' departments of public health were notified of a possible outbreak. By February 11, 125 measles cases had been identified throughout the United States in connection with the outbreak. The CDC quickly identified a lack of immunization was the cause of the outbreak (Zipprich, Winter, Hacker, Xia, Watt, & Harriman, 2015).

When examining the link between the lack of immunization and the recent outbreak, the effects of Wakefield's article and other factors were examined. A decline in vaccination rates and low compliance within the State of California were found to be contributors. California's personal belief exemption law allowed citizens to exempt their child from vaccines if they could show proof from their health care provider of vaccine-preventable illness as well as benefits and risks of vaccines. California Senate Bill 277 was passed in June 2015 removing personal belief as a reason for exemption from vaccines for entry into schools or daycare centers (Senate Bill, 2016). The result of celebrities, such as American actress Jenny McCarthy, advocating for the anti-vaccination movement, as well as a lack of trust in government advice, were factors in the decline in vaccination rates. The rise in the number of vaccines given and autism cases also contributed (Edwards & Hackell, 2016). An anti-vaccine subculture emerged due to these, as well as other factors.

As the CDPH began responding to the outbreak, their public information effort began providing updates on the spread of the measles. The Centers for Disease Control partnered with the California Department for Public Health on communication efforts and coordinated with public health leadership. Messaging centered on the spread of the illness within the United States and the importance of vaccination. Media releases and social media were most frequently utilized to distribute the message (Aylesworth-Spink, 2016).

The Walt Disney Company (Disney) chose to partner with the CDPH on press releases, relying on CDPH data and medical expertise (Foxhall, 2015). Disney played the role of a secondary player while the CDPH provided frequent updates and advice. Disney's normal methods of communication were not frequently utilized; however, social media was used to communicate. Disney created the hashtag "#Disneymeasles" on January 8 after the CDPH announced their park as the source of the outbreak. Throughout the incident, the company continued to utilize CDPH expert information for most of their communications.

The CDPH and Disney each strategized to employ their own public relations tactics. By partnering and keeping their individual goals in mind, they succeeded in accomplishing positive results. CDPH and Disney provided constant information on the growing number of cases due to individuals not being vaccinated, allowing the State of California to further their goal of debunking the anti-vaccination movement. This later led to California Senate Bill 277, which stated personal belief exemptions would no longer be accepted towards vaccination requirements for school attendance in the state of California (Vaccinate California, 2020). The Walt Disney Company helped to further this message by utilizing social media and partnering with the CDPH. They were seen as cooperative and dependent on CDPH health experts. Disney experienced positive results as their business results were not impacted. They were even able to raise their rates soon after the incident (Aylesworth-Spink, 2016). Both organizations were able to positively link themselves to the immunization effort due to their joint cooperation. Public information officers and public relations professionals created a positive response by working together.

COVID-19 Response

At the conclusion of this research study, the COVID-19 (Coronavirus 2019) outbreak occurred. This proved to, and continues to be, a global public health response, requiring PIOs throughout the world to communicate with the public. According to the Centers for Disease

Control, the first cases of COVID-19 were first detected in the United States in February 2020. By the middle of March, all 50 states had reported cases of the virus (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2020).

When conducting a simple internet search, multiple informational websites were found that were created by public information offices directly related to COVID-19. Agencies such as the California Department for Public Health; U.S. Department of Health and Human Services; multiple local governments; medical centers, as well as many others have responded quickly to the pandemic by releasing public information. The federal government, state and local governments have provided guidance to local agencies and citizens regarding the virus. Interviewees who participated in this study mentioned the pandemic and many were actively responding.

Kentucky Educational Case Study: Marshall County High School Shooting

On January 23, 2018, a shooting occurred at Marshall County High School located near Benton, Kentucky. The high school serves grades nine through 12 and has a total enrollment of 1,441 students (Best High Schools, 2017). At the time of the incident, students were gathering at the beginning of the school day in an open area known as the commons. At 7:57 a.m. Central Time, a 15-year-old student, began shooting students in the commons area (Yan, Stapleton & Murphy, 2018).

Two students were killed as a result of the shooting. Injuries were also inflicted upon 18 other students due to either the shooting or from injuries sustained during attempts to escape the school. The suspected shooter was a 15-year-old sophomore student. He was arrested by the Marshall County Sheriff at 8:55 a.m. in the weight room, located in a separate building on campus. The shooter was attempting to hide with other students at the time (Markgraf, 2018). It was ruled in Marshall County Circuit Court that the suspect would be tried as an adult and the trial would be moved to another western Kentucky county, with the trial set for June 1, 2020 (Wolfson, 2019).

After life-saving measures were undertaken and students were evacuated, a joint information plan was implemented. The schools had an already assigned public information officer who worked directly with other agency PIOs. Associated PIOs agreed to appoint the Kentucky State Police Post 1 public information officer as the lead spokesperson for the incident. The lead PIO was a full-time, employed PIO. This coordination and joint communication stream was critical in preventing conflicting messages and confusion among the public. Scheduled press conferences were held with appropriate agencies making themselves readily available to answer questions from the media. These were led by the Kentucky State Police assigned lead PIO.

Active shooter training had been conducted by the Kentucky State Police at Marshall County High School. This training is conducted by troopers to prepare school staff and selected students in the event of an active shooter incident. The training is conducted when school is out of session. It includes lectures and hands-on exercises. After the actual shooting, officials acknowledged that the training was effective and may have saved lives (McGlade & Glowicki, 2018). Local emergency response agencies had conducted emergency and active-shooter training with the school system for more than 20 years (King-Smith, 2018).

The Marshall County School system had an emergency management response plan in place, including a lockdown policy, at the time of the shooting. This is required by Kentucky law. The policy had been submitted to the state for verification (McGlade & Glowicki, 2018). School superintendent Trent Lovett stated that the plan was implemented. The Marshall County

Sheriff expressed the success of prior training exercises and relationship-building during the incident response (King-Smith, 2018). The school system also had a public information policy in place.

According to Marshall County schools superintendent Trent Lovett, changes in school security were made immediately, as well as in the months after the shooting. The school reopened on January 25 with a commemoration in the auditorium after the crime scene at the high school was released by investigators on January 24. Classes officially resumed the following Monday. Upon resuming classes, backpacks were secured and metal detector wands were used for each student. On-campus security was also increased. Mental health counselors were utilized for the benefit of students (Mayse, 2020).

Current, long-term changes were also made. The school district increased the number of school resources officers district-wide from one to seven. Mental health counselors were added to schools. Permanent metal-detectors were added to the high school and the two middle schools within the district. The number of entrances students are allowed to enter each morning were limited. Only clear bags were allowed for students attending elementary school (Mayse, 2020). The commons area, which was the open area where the shooting occurred, was redesigned and is now less of an open area. The new space contains an additional staircase leading to the second floor of the school. The student bank office is now located in the space. There is a small area with tables and chairs. The front office has also been walled off and no longer has a glass front looking out into the commons area. Relevant school system policies and procedures were also updated.

Two years later, news articles are still being written about the Marshall County school shooting. The community, along with local leaders have continued to work together to improve incident response plans and agency policies as a result of lessons learned from the shooting. Years of prior training and exercises were stated to be a benefit when responding to the incident by local leaders and responders. The existence of employed public information officers at involved agencies allowed for immediate planning to begin for the specific joint information plan during the incident. By holding previous exercises, relationships were already in place among PIOs and responders which greatly assisted in the success of media relations and incident response. Media releases and press conferences were organized, timely and coordinated.

Kentucky Educational Case Study: Murray State University Richmond Hall Explosion

On June 28, 2017 at 4:53 p.m., Richmond Hall, a residential dorm building at Murray State University (MSU) exploded due to a natural gas accident. The building was unoccupied at the time due to summer break, however, one employee, a groundskeeper at MSU, was injured as a result of the explosion. Two student camps were being held on campus at the time, however, all participants were uninjured. The building was built in 2009 to replace the former Richmond Hall, which was originally built in 1960.

The explosion destroyed two floors of the south wing of Richmond Hall. Nearby buildings were also damaged and vibrations from the explosion could be felt off campus. Multiple local and state emergency response agencies responded to the incident, including campus police; the Bureau for Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms; and local emergency management. Initially, the Murray Fire Department took control of the incident scene, with Kentucky State Police taking control the night of the incident. University emergency management is operated within the university police department on campus. Calloway County also has an emergency management director who assisted at the scene. The next day, control of the scene was transferred to the State Fire Marshal’s Office (MSU Open, 2017).

In the days following the incident, 45 volunteers worked over two days to collect students' possessions out of Richmond Hall. Dorm assignments had to be reassessed for students who resided in the building. Over 400 people in the nearby area were temporarily relocated due to the explosion. Counseling was offered to those affected by the incident. Roads near the campus were temporarily closed to traffic but were quickly reopened (Ruch, 2017).

Upon investigation of the explosion, it was determined that the accident was caused by a gas regulator being struck by a lawn mower by a groundskeeper early on the morning of June 28. This was reported and gas service was stopped around 10:40 a.m. The gas regulator was later replaced and gas service was restored at 12:15 p.m., after equipment was tested and declared to be safe. The explosion occurred later that afternoon at 4:53 p.m. and was found to be caused by a natural gas leak (Jaschen & Morris, 2017).

The University maintained multiple emergency procedure plans at the time of the incident. Plans included written procedures for: bomb threats, chemical spills, criminal activity, earthquakes, emergency phone numbers, evacuation of the physically impaired, fire safety, hazardous gas leaks, medical emergencies, toxic or infectious agents, tornados and utility failure. While a gas leak falls under the hazardous gas leak plan, an explosion is included in the fire safety plan (Emergency Procedures, 2016).

Murray State University immediately assigned University Advancement Vice President Adrienne King as their spokesperson. The Kentucky State Police public information officer led press conferences in conjunction with statements from King. This joint effort soon after the explosion informed the public on immediate information, lessoning panic on campus and within the community. Joint press releases were communicated as needed, and scheduled press conferences were held as new information was obtained. The president of the university also released statements to the press (Ruch, 2017).

Soon after the incident, University President Bob Davies released a letter expressing his gratitude and thanks to local first responders and the community for their cooperation during the incident response. He stated this effort was exceptional and demonstrated the strength of the university community. Even though the accident required logistical adjustments and coordination by university, state, local and federal agencies, the response was considered by leaders as a success (Ruch, 2017). By having plans in place, training and exercising as a community, and working together in a coordinated manner during the response, the media and responders were well informed and responded quickly.

Training Courses

The Federal Emergency Management Agency provides six courses specific to public information officers. These courses are online or in-person depending on the program. Various crisis communications and public information courses to provide public information training may also be found at post-secondary institutions throughout the United States. An inquiry into applicable courses offered in states outside of Kentucky for the 2019/2020 school year showed 15 PIO related courses, offered primarily within communications or emergency management departments. Course topics contained varying subjects including editorial writing in public affairs, social media in emergency management, marketing in emergency services and overall public information within emergency management.

A review was also conducted for similar post-secondary courses offered within state universities in Kentucky. Results showed six PIO related courses available during the 2019-

2020 school year. These courses focused on overall crisis communications, crime and the media, public affairs reporting and strategic communications.

Purpose of the Study

Currently, public information officers possess a wide array of training and education. Throughout the nation and State of Kentucky, college courses and certifications may or may not be required for practicing PIOs. Inconsistent levels of expertise exist among the first responder community. In some cases, PIOs enter the position with no previous experience.

Depending on the agency or organization, levels of training and education for a PIO may or may not be required. This is very inconsistent. According to one employment search tool, a recent employment posting for the City of Houston, Texas required a bachelor's degree in journalism, public relations, public administration or a closely related field, with five years experience in media or public relations (Job Opportunities, 2019). In contrast, the Orange County, California Fire Authority posted a PIO position that required: the ability to work under pressure; the completion of two certification courses within the first year of employment; the ability to work with social media platforms; the ability to work nights and weekends; and good to excellent presentation and public speaking skills. The position did not require a post-secondary education (Orange County, 2019).

An understanding is needed of what level of training currently exists among a sample of current public information officers throughout Kentucky. This will clarify current education levels and courses utilized to gain knowledge. Interviews will be conducted with current public information officers to garner this information. The amount of time spent working in their public information role and how this factors into their employment status will be analyzed. The effectiveness of completed training and education should also be reviewed. If a course is taken but does not prove helpful in practicality, this should be considered.

Additionally, behavioral qualities of successful public information officers should be identified. On-the-job training should be addressed to assess continual training opportunities. Trainings utilized to provide updated information and education to currently employed PIOs should be researched to prove utilization and effectiveness. Also, study participants' prior area of study will be researched. A discussion of how the role has evolved will also be conducted.

Research Questions

The research questions that are the foundation of this study are the following:

1. How does a public information officer's education level influence their effectiveness when performing job duties?
2. How does a public information officer's major of study influence their effectiveness when performing job duties?
3. How does the current level of training influence a public information officer's effectiveness when performing job duties?
4. How effective are completed courses/trainings when conducting the public information officer role?
5. How have employers incorporated continuing education or on-the-job training for employed public information officers in Kentucky?

Significance of the Study

This study will contribute to the limited research on the effectiveness of public information officer training and education, specifically within the state of Kentucky. The public information officer role has become more important over time partly due to the increase in natural and human-initiated disasters. A rise in population, the evolution of technologies, urbanization, terrorism, social unrest, global interdependence and the emergence of epidemics have all contributed to this increase (Lowrey et al., 2007). Most citizens receive information via the media following disasters such as the terrorist attacks on 9/11, Hurricane Katrina and the 2003 severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) epidemic (Lowrey et al., 2007). Even more recent incidents such as the COVID-19 pandemic and the social unrest during the summer of 2020 also emphasize the need for the role. The function of the public information officer is critical in distributing information to the public during critical incidents such as these.

Very little information exists regarding the effectiveness of PIO training, especially within Kentucky. This study will continue research and improve information on effective training and education. It will also provide information on training gaps and potential course opportunities.

Definition of Terms

The definitions contained within this section are included to ensure consistency and competency of terms. Definitions that do not contain a citation were created by the author.

Crisis Communications: The collection and processing of information for crisis team decision-making along with the creation and dissemination of crisis messages to people outside the team (Coombs, 2010, p.20).

Disaster: Event or series of events concentrated in time and space, in which a society or a relatively self-sufficient division of a society, undergoes severe danger, and incurs such losses to its members and physical appurtenances that the social structure is disrupted and the fulfillment of all or some of the essential functions of the society is prevented (Fritz, 1961, p. 655).

Incident Command System: A standardized system for responders to manage incident responses through a common concept of operations and multiple, set functions (Public Health Emergency, 2012).

Joint Information Center: A facility established as the central point of contact for news media and interested parties to coordinate incident information activities at the scene of the incident. Public information officials from all participating federal, state, and local agencies should collocate at the JIC (National Wildfire Coordinating Group, 2019).

Journalist: A private sector position focusing on multiple stories depending on deadlines and current issues, demonstrating a communicative model (White, 2012).

National Incident Management System: A comprehensive, national approach to incident management that is applicable at all jurisdictional levels and across functional disciplines (National Incident Management System, 2019)

Measles: A highly contagious virus that is spread through the air and through direct contact (Measles, 2019).

Public information officer: an individual who supports the Incident Commander and distributes accurate information to appropriate stakeholders in a timely fashion (Centers for Disease Control, 2006; U.S. Department of Homeland Security, 2007, 2008).

Public relations professional: A private sector position with a focus on fields such as marketing, advertising or journalism (White & Wingenbach, 2013).

Unified command system: A concept allowing all involved agencies to assign an incident commander to the unified command with a single, standardized set of incident objectives and strategies. Involves four basic components to the system including: policy objectives and strategy; organization; resources and operations (ICS 300, n.d.).

Abbreviations

The following explanations provided below are included to give information for abbreviations used within the study.

CDC: Centers for Disease Control

CEO: Chief Executive Officer

CDPH: California Department for Public Health

CL&P: Connecticut Light and Power

COVID-19: Coronavirus 2019

CSEPP: Chemical Stockpile Emergency Preparedness Program

Disney: The Walt Disney Company

DOCJT: Department of Criminal Justice Training

FCC: Federal Communication Commission

FEMA: Federal Emergency Management Agency

FIRESCOPE: Fire Fighting Resources of Southern California Organized for Potential Emergencies

HEMA: Hawaii Emergency Management Agency

HIPAA: Health Information Portability and Accountability Act

ICS: Incident Management System

IED: Improvised explosive device

JIC: Joint Information Center

KSP: Kentucky State Police

MMR: Measles, mumps, rubella

MSU: Murray State University

NIMS: National Incident Management System

NWS-TPC: National Weather Service-Tropical Prediction Center

PIO: Public information officer

PRP: Public relations professional

SARS: Severe acute respiratory syndrome

SPI: Southern Police Institute

SWAT: Special weapons and tactics team

SWP: State warning point

UCS: Unified Command System

WHO: World Health Organization

Summary

A review of the literature related to this topic was conducted as part of the study, including: the history of the public information officer, a definition of the role, the Incident Command System, the unified command system, roles and responsibilities of the PIO, prior research on the topic, job market projections for PIOs, a review of public information training and an explanation of the need for this study. Case studies demonstrating successful and failed public information responses will also be reviewed. The methodology used for this qualitative study was also reviewed with findings and analysis assessed. Finally, a review of conclusions brought forth from the study and a summary of work completed was provided. Comparisons to related research, discussion, limitations of the study and recommendations for more effective PIO training and education will be discussed.

CHAPTER II

Review of the Related Literature

History of the Public Information Officer

Definition of the public information officer role. Although most people have heard the message of a public information officer (PIO), many may not realize it. Public information officers are most often employed by a government agency or institution to fulfill a crucial messaging gap between a governmental agency and the public during an emergency or disaster. The PIO serves as the expert in coordinating internal communication and disseminating risk messages to the public during emergencies. They work for agencies such as police departments, fire departments, local governments, public health agencies and school districts (Public Health Emergency, 2012). The term *PIO* comes from the Incident Command System (ICS) and the National Incident Management System (NIMS) which are both used by response departments during an incident requiring coordination of multiple agencies. The federal government defines a PIO as an individual who supports the Incident Commander and distributes accurate information to appropriate stakeholders in a timely fashion (Centers for Disease Control, 2006; U.S. Department of Homeland Security, 2007, 2008).

The Incident Command System. The Incident Command System was created in the 1970s in California due to the complexity of wildfire responses. This project was undertaken by a local, state and federal initiative. A multi-agency task force called FIRESCOPE (Fire Fighting Resources of Southern California Organized for Potential Emergencies) was created to design the incident management system to standardize communications and an organizational structure during an emergency response. The design process took years of planning and practicing. Several issues were identified by FIRESCOPE that led to the design of the ICS system. These issues included: the large number of people answering to a single supervisor; use of multiple department organizational structures; distribution of unreliable information; use of inadequate communications; inability to coordinate between agencies; vague lines of authority; inconsistent terminology and lack of specific, clear objectives (Stumpf, 1999).

Four key concepts were determined by FIRESCOPE to create the Incident Command System based on the deficiencies identified. The group determined that the system must be flexible to allow for any size or type of emergency. ICS must also be usable on a daily basis. The system should be standard so that any agency, regardless of location or size can be easily integrated during an incident. Lastly, FIRESCOPE determined that ICS must be cost effective (Stumpf, 1999). The Incident Command System has been utilized in many circumstances including fires; hazardous materials incidents; search and rescue responses; public health epidemics and planned events, such as parades or special events.

The Incident Command System provides a standardized system for responders to manage incident responses through a common concept of operations and multiple, set functions. The system works from the top down with the incident commander filling the lead position. ICS maintains a formal, straight line supervisory structure with clear lines of authority. Each individual participating within the system has only one supervisor throughout the incident (ICS 300, n.d.). The public information officer works within the structure and most often operates directly under the incident commander (Public Health Emergency, 2012).

Depending on the size of the event, the incident commander may determine it necessary to appoint direct reports to fulfill command staff functions. Standardized functions within the command staff are the public information officer, safety officer, liaison officer and intelligence officer. Incident commanders may find it necessary to appoint a public information officer if the incident is highly visible or sensitive. If the effectiveness of the incident commander is being questioned, a PIO may also be required. Media partners often require information, increasing the need to fill the PIO role. This will help to reduce information being released from multiple sources. Lastly, there may be a need to warn the public or release instructions to citizens (ICS 300, n.d.).

All participants within the system use standardized terminology and a common organizational structure. A clear chain of command is established with a single person in charge of the overall response. Under the system, all participating organizations become one responding organization. A single incident action plan is established for all responders to implement. A basic set of functions are established as part of the incident command structure including operations, planning, logistics and finance/administration. The structure is flexible in that functions that are not needed do not have to be filled. On the contrary, the structure can also be expanded to add functions as necessary (ICS 300, n.d.).

There are two general instances in which ICS is most commonly used. These cases include pre-planning for an event or responding to an unplanned emergency. Examples of when ICS may be used for a pre-planned event are training exercises, concerts, parades, a prescribed fire or law enforcement sweep. Planning staff gather as much detail as possible regarding the upcoming event to implement the appropriate ICS structure in advance (ICS 300, n.d.).

For an unplanned incident, the first responding unit must determine the need for the Incident Command System. The long-term effects of these initial decisions may have large impacts depending on the size of the event. Situations may be unstable and could grow rapidly. Life and property may be threatened. Communications and information could be unstable at the onset of the incident and more experienced personnel may not be immediately available. Staff are assigned to the ICS structure based on the needs required of the incident, such as those described above (ICS 300, n.d.).

The unified command system. As the Incident Command System evolved, the need for a unified command system (UCS) was discovered. Incidents often covered multiple locations and agencies making it sometimes impossible to operate with one single incident commander, legally or politically. Although this complicated matters, it was still necessary to have one person making tactical decisions to prevent chaos on the incident scene. Due to these issues, two potential solutions were identified. The first solution involved dividing the incident into two separate geographic or functional incidents with each forming their own ICS structure. This option was not cost effective or efficient. The second proposed solution was to utilize the unified command concept, which would allow for a multi-jurisdictional, multi-agency response (ICS 300, n.d.).

The unified command concept allows all involved agencies to assign an incident commander to the unified command. A single, standardized set of incident objectives and strategies are determined. There are four basic components to the system including: policy objectives and strategy; organization; resources and operations. Policies are determined by jurisdictional and agency administrators, while participants within the unified command set incident objectives and strategies. The unified command organization involves all representatives involved in the incident who are operating within the unified command. Resources utilized during the incident may be supplied by the jurisdiction who is responsible or with whom the responsible jurisdiction has agreements. Resources are assigned by the operations section chief within the UCS structure. Lastly, the operations section chief approves tactical plans and directs operations to respond to the incident (ICS, n.d.).

There are six guidelines established to operate a unified command including:

1. Participants within the unified command system must have knowledge of the Incident Command System.
2. Agencies should co-locate functions instead of establishing separate facilities. A single incident command post should be formed to encourage communication and coordination among all responding agencies.
3. Participants should establish a unified command organization early in the incident timeline to implement joint planning and response.
4. Agencies should agree on who will serve as leaders within the unified command organizational structure.
5. A joint, single spokesperson should be assigned to represent the unified command to other unified command staff functions. This person does not make decisions on behalf of the unified command but communicates decisions to responders within the organizational structure throughout the incident.
6. Training exercises should be held often with those who would most likely be operating together during an incident. This would include agency PIOs (ICS 300, n.d.).

Roles and responsibilities of the Public Information Officer. The PIO most often relays information through the media and other avenues of mass media coverage. Messaging is communicated on behalf of the agency to relay what is believed to be in the public's best interest, often during critical incidents and emergencies. Furthermore, it has been stated that the goal of public information should be viewed as a high priority to the overall operation of an agency (Bolger, 1983). Public information officers may be termed as: information officers, spokespersons, government spokespersons, public affairs officers and community affairs officers (NIOA, n.d.).

Public information officers gather facts and distribute them to the media. Their role may include creating printed and video material about their agency for distribution to the public. A public information officer may also be responsible for organizing special events such as news conferences and awards ceremonies. They often prepare public education campaigns and respond to emergencies when necessary. Maintaining a social media presence is a new role placed on the public information officer. They may be required to work long hours on an irregular schedule, especially when publicized situations or incidents occur. Developing a positive, continuous relationship with media partners is critical for PIOs. Existing relationships promote positive communications when crises arise. The familiarity and existing relationship benefit both the journalist and the PIO (U.S. Department of Homeland Security, 2007).

The role of the public information officer is distinct from that of a public relations professional (PRP) in that the PRP is most often a private sector position with a focus on fields such as marketing, advertising or journalism (White & Wingenbach, 2013). The role of the PRP can also be distinguished from the role of a journalist, as the journalist most often focuses on multiple stories depending on deadlines and current issues (White, 2012). In contrast, the public information officer can be considered a responder to any incident as they remain on the scene to communicate needed information throughout the length of the incident, until the conclusion of the event. Interorganizational differences and environments are also differences in these roles.

The possession of certain qualities has been identified as increasing a public information officer’s effectiveness. These qualities include training and experience in media relations, credibility, someone who can think on their feet, someone who maintains a professional appearance, personability, good speaking skills, suitable characteristics to represent the organization and the ability to present technical information in easy to understand terms (Doorley & Garcia, 2015). The PIO should also possess the skills needed to identify what information should not be released. For example, in a police investigation or as part of a public health incident details may need to be withheld to prevent issues with an investigation or that may disclose personal confidentiality.

According to the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), PIOs should be trained continuously on public information basics such as incident command, writing media releases, conducting media interviews and the role of the joint information center. Exercises also provide opportunities for PIOs to practice what they have learned through training. Policies and plans may be validated during training and exercises. Exercises may also help to familiarize the PIO with their role in an on-scene event while working with partner agencies (Basic Guidance, 2007).

The PIO fulfills multiple roles during an incident. FEMA identifies these roles as: determining from the incident commander what not to release; developing material to be distributed to the media; obtaining approval of release from the incident commander; informing the media and conducting press briefings; arranging for interviews and tours as applicable; working within the Joint Information Center (JIC) as necessary; maintaining summaries and maps of the incident; providing status updates to assigned personnel as necessary; maintaining an activity log; managing media and public inquiries; monitoring media reporting for accuracy; ensuring that all documentation is completed before the incident concludes and debriefing with the incident commander. The task of keeping the public informed is ongoing throughout the incident and involves four steps. Information should be gathered, verified, coordinated and disseminated (Basic Guidance, 2007).

Depending on the size of the incident or disaster, PIOs from multiple agencies may coordinate to ensure consistent messaging is released. This is conducted through a JIC under the Incident Command System (U.S. Department of Homeland Security, 2007). Emergency response plans are written by local, state and federal agencies to prepare PIOs for Joint Information Center responses. Drills and disaster exercises are also conducted to practice plans and established procedures for the JIC. These exercises assist in fine-tuning response plans and realizing strengths and weaknesses that may be acted upon before an actual incident occurs.

The lead public information officer fulfills many functions within the Joint Information Center. The lead public information officer manages the JIC and advises the incident commander. They also communicate policy regarding the JIC and recommend a strategy for messaging. The lead PIO obtains approval from the incident commander before releasing information to the public and conducts briefings to ICS staff. The lead PIO coordinates with all involved agency PIOs and monitors the media for what is being reported regarding the incident. Providing web support and responding to public inquiries may also be required of the lead PIO (Basic Guidance, 2007).

During and at the conclusion of the incident, the PIO also provides support for recovery. It is important for information to reach the public regarding efforts to resolve the incident and to assist the public upon the conclusion of the emergency. A comprehensive review of the incident should be conducted with overall after-action reviews conducted by the incident command staff, to learn from the incident response (Basic Guidance, 2007).

Prior research. The first organized study to be conducted on the topic of disasters and the social sciences took place in 1920 by a doctoral student in London, England. The student, Samuel Prince, studied social consequences of a mass casualty incident due to an ammunition explosion that took place on a ship in Halifax, Canada (Prince, 1920). Few studies were conducted following the Prince research until after World War II, when several studies were conducted on behavior and disasters. Organizations such as the National Opinion Research Center; Committee on Disaster Studies and the Disaster Research Group; and the Disaster Research Center institutionalized the field of disaster research in the United States (Quarantelli, 1986). Early research was conducted showing the importance of media outlets in emergency response, with the earliest studies specifically reviewing the role of radio in alerting the public to disaster warnings. Examples of this include tsunami and tornado warnings that occurred in the 1960s. In the 1980s the number of studies greatly increased, which has continued into today (Ledingham & Masel-Walters, 1985).

As time progressed, the mass media became, not only a warning system for the public, but also, a prominent source of news regarding disasters. The transition changed journalists to a response role during disasters, forcing them into the responder organizational structure. Even though the media’s role was evolving, the validity of information was sometimes doubted by researchers and the public. For example, due to political and social upheaval during the 1960s, police agencies found a need for increased, more formalized communications with the public and media (The President's Commission on Law Enforcement and Administration of Justice, 1967). Subsequently, community relations and standards on public information were identified to describe PIO policies and to specify their role (Standards for Law Enforcement Agencies, 1999). The Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies was also formed in 1979, setting forth standards for public information. Since this time, efforts have continued to involve the public in police activities to encourage public support of police agencies. By improving their public image, police departments also hope to increase their municipal budgets and reduce citizen complaints. This will likely evolve in light of civil unrest that occurred in the summer of 2020.

Another series of events occurred in the early 1980s cementing the need for the PIO position. This was due to risks associated with nuclear power plants and related emergencies. During a nuclear accident at Three Mile Island in Middletown, Pennsylvania the effects of a radiation leak were downplayed to the public. Communications stating that the leak was non-existent or minimal were issued by the utility company. These messages were reversed after it became known that there was, in fact, a measurable radiation leak. This caused credibility issues with the public (Sandman, 1993). A more catastrophic nuclear incident occurred at the Chernobyl nuclear plant in the Ukraine in 1986, also contributing to public distrust of the government and the need for effective public information. Communication during this incident incorrectly deemphasized health effects and the impact of the massive radiation leak (Hill, Hille, Paschke, Schneider & Uray, 1997).

More recently, the public health public information officer has become a prominent figure due to the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001. During this incident, health departments were unexpectedly asked to participate in response and recovery. This has since become commonplace with health departments playing a prominent role in disaster preparedness and response to protect the public's health during a crisis situation, particularly the recent COVID-19 pandemic response.

Crisis Response in Education

As the number of crises continue to grow, educational institutions must be prepared to respond and manage unexpected events. In the past, universities in particular were more susceptible to crises that affected a particular department, and even these were rare events. When these incidents did occur, in most cases the university's communications department tended to handle risk communications on behalf of the institution. This has quickly changed due to the increase in number and magnitude of incidents (Gigliotti, 2020). While institutions may experience long periods of time without a critical event, it is crucial that all levels of the educational P-20 continuum be prepared. Crises can create challenges for victims and may prove disorienting for institutional leaders in education, while also derailing student learning (Pepper, London, Dishmand & Lewis, 2010). In these times of challenge, leaders often emerge and demonstrate their skills while remaining visible to communities and those most affected by the event. Effective leadership during an emergency incident usually involves communication with individuals, units and organizations (Gigliotti, 2020). While school violence is one type of crisis in education, there are many other crises that should be researched and prepared for by educational leaders.

The service sector has been found to be particularly susceptible to crises. According to researcher Denis Smith, this is due to several factors including the cultural and organizational dynamics of stakeholders; the intensity of labor involved in these organizations; continuous engagement with consumers; and the continual increase in scale of operations over time (Smith, 2005). Human resources have proven to be a major factor in school management with high expectations from those they serve. Education is not based on a baseline orientation of how education should be conducted, often leading to disagreement among stakeholders. This lack of a common vision can often lead to an increase in the likelihood of a crisis. The complicated, multi-layered governance structure of schools also adds to the complexity of crises in an educational environment. This can lead to an unclear chain of command and strained relationships. Political sensitivities may also occur (Pepper et al,. 2010).

As crises continue to occur in the educational setting, plans and preparedness efforts should be implemented and are often mandated by state governments. These plans are fluid and evolve based on themes and lessons learned from prior events. Many facilities have instituted communications alert systems to communicate with students and employees in the event of an emergency. A crisis event may occur in many ways, depending on multiple response actions. Fink (1986) compares a crisis to a medical illness in determining his four phases of a crisis. They are:

1. Prodromal: Clues or hints of a potential crisis begin to emerge.
2. Crisis breakout or acute: A triggering event occurs along with the attendant damage.
3. Chronic: The effects of the crisis linger as efforts to handle it progress.
4. Resolution: The conclusion of the crisis, with some clear signal that the crisis is no longer a concern to stakeholders.

Mitroff's model (1994) uses similar phases which include: signal detection; probing and prevention; damage containment; recovery and learning. Crises are unpredictable; however, models can provide a construct to allow leaders to prepare.

Definition of an educational institution crisis. A specific definition of the word,"crisis" pertaining to education was created by Pepper, London, Dishmand and Lewis (2010). Their definition focuses on K-12 education and is based on a three-part, unified theory. The definition states:

> A school crisis is an event or series of events that threaten a school's core values or foundational practices, is obvious in its manifestation, but born from complex and often unclear or uncontainable circumstances and necessitates urgent decision-making. (p. 6)

The first point, emphasizing core values, is meant to prevent every problem from being considered as an actual crisis. Everyday events should not be considered a crisis, but rather those that interfere with the core function and foundation of the school. The second part of the definition, which identifies manifestation and complexity, recognizes that multiple sources may create the incident. These sources may not be identified until after the conclusion of the incident response. Circumstances causing the event may include community needs, political, external pressures or politics. Lastly, the third factor of the definition includes the importance of decision-making necessary to respond to the crisis. Quick and decisive leadership is critical in responding to a crisis (Pepper et al,. 2010).

There are varying, wide-ranging views of what constitutes a crisis among educational administrators. Gigliotti (2020), defines an educational crisis as, "an event, series of events, or situation that presents reputational risk to the institution and requires immediate attention on behalf of its leaders" (p. 11). He also specifies that a crisis is socially constructed, often subjective and a communicative event. Communication is a key element of his definition. Gigliotti states that incidents occur through communication and must also be resolved utilizing it (Gigliotti, 2020). Matt Seeger shares this view stating that communication is necessary to create meaning during an uncertain event. He also emphasized that it is a crucial part of risk and crisis management functions (Seeger, 2018).

Communication can be used as a tool with stakeholders performing a critical function of the leadership role. This may be implemented by either formal or informal leaders and can take place through verbal or non-verbal communication. It can become a way for meaning to form when communicated by the leader, perhaps through the media. The ways in which incidents are framed, and the terms that are used, become increasingly important when considering the criticality of verbiage used by leaders when communicating to the public through various mediums. This consideration will affect the public's perception throughout the crisis. Consistency, clarity, trust and transparency are all critical tenants to leading well before, during and after a crisis (Gigliotti, 2020).

In today's society, education is under public scrutiny and can be prevalent in the media in some situations. Education is a human services function with many stakeholders, often who hold competing perceptions of its functions. The cost of higher education is also a factor to the judgement placed on universities. They are sometimes placed in high regard and are trusted to ensure students are taken care of. While there is a general, universal method that leaders tend to be aware of when communicating during crises, specific tools are incomplete. Ideals such as responding quickly and with simple information are well-known, however, specific strategies to manage crises should be less focused on reputation management and more aligned with the issues at hand for the specific incident. A system should be in place and practiced prior to an unexpected crisis (Gigliotti, 2020).

According to Pepper, London, Dishman and Lewis (2010), there are six primary principles of leadership that should be utilized during a crisis in education. These include responding to a crisis before it becomes one; identifying truly immediate priorities; letting time, efforts and resources flow in proportion to your prioritization; communicating; and being flexible and not personally succumbing to the event (Pepper et al., 2010). In 2012, the American Council on Education convened a roundtable of leaders to identify why crisis management should be a top priority for post-secondary leaders. This was deemed important due to the dramatic impact on stakeholders; the influence on university finances; the negative influence on the university's reputation; and the diversion from the educational mission of the institution. Even though crises in the educational setting can prove stressful, they can also provide an opportunity for leaders and organizations to learn and develop their skills (Gigliotti, 2020).

There are many models that have been identified by experts that can be referenced to identify a crisis in an educational setting. This allows organizations to prepare and take preventative measures when available. Types of events identified include natural disasters, technical breakdowns, workplace violence, confrontation and management misconduct (Gigliotti, 2020). Zdarsky, Roll and Dunkel created a conceptual model for leaders in higher education to utilize when assessing crises. The matrix contains three levels including critical incident, campus emergency and disaster. The matrix also identifies the type of crisis and perceived intentionality of the crisis (Zdarsky Rollo and Dunkel, 2007). This tool is used by many in higher education.

Educational Case Studies and Research

Past scholarly research in the area of educational crisis is scarce. The need exists for education and practical learning for educational leaders who lead during critical times, particularly due to the consequences if poor leadership is present (Gigliotti, 2020; Pepper et al,.

2010). There are many case studies, however, to learn positive actions and consequences to real-life responses to crises in education. Two examples follow.

Loyola University during Hurricane Katrina. Loyola University in New Orleans, Louisiana is a private, co-educational, Jesuit university. The school focuses on liberal arts and sciences but also offers various degree programs, including a law school. Loyola was founded in 1912 and is only one of 28 Jesuit colleges and universities in the nation. The school had a total enrollment of 3,836 students as of 2007 (History of Loyola, 2020). At the time of Hurricane Katrina, the law school maintained enrollment of 818 students (Huddleston, 2007).

Classes began on August 22, 2005 for all 818 students with the full university starting classes the next week. Orientation for the law school at the university had been held for first-year students on August 15. Meanwhile, Hurricane Katrina was forming over the Bahamas southeast of Miami becoming a Category 1 storm by the next day. By Friday, August 26, the predicted path of the storm had shifted to the west, taking it 30 miles east of New Orleans. The National Weather Service Tropical Prevention Center (NWS-TPC) predicted the storm to increase to a Category 4 or Category 5 storm (Huddleston, 2007). Students all over campus were moving into their dormitories and parents were on campus assisting with the effort. Freshmen were preparing for orientation which was to be held over the weekend (Wessinger, 2006).

On Saturday, August 27, the hurricane was a Category 3 storm, and was picking up speed. The hurricane was predicted to make landfall by early Monday. Mayor Ray Nagen had only called for a voluntary evacuation on Saturday afternoon throughout the city, while discussing the legal implications of ordering a mandatory evacuation (Huddleston, 2007). Some students proceeded to leave town if transportation was available to them. Shelters were also set up for those who were not able to evacuate themselves (Wessinger, 2006). Some New Orleans residents had become acclimated to the threat of a storm and thought that short-term evacuation and preparation would be sufficient. Their previous experience with hurricanes had allowed them to return within a few days, with the last major hurricane occurring in 1965 with Hurricane Betsy, a Category 3 storm (Scott, 2017). Two previous hurricanes had also caused perceived false alarms to the public due to the storms missing New Orleans after fear that the city would take a hit. Hurricane Georges in 1998 and Hurricane Ivan in 2004 both missed the city after large-scale evacuations were ordered (McCarraher, n.d.).

Loyola University closed the school at 5:00 p.m. on Saturday, August 27 and implemented its hurricane emergency plan. This plan was already written and in place and included procedures for evacuating students who did not have their own mode of transportation. The school made preliminary plans to reopen on Wednesday, August 31 (Huddleston, 2007). The next morning, on August 28 the hurricane was upgraded to a Category 5 with winds of 127 m.p.h. The eye of the storm made landfall in Mississippi after weakening to a Category 3 hurricane with storm surges of up to 23 feet and winds of 120 m.p.h. Major damage to homes and businesses was reported. The storm strengthened throughout the day reaching a Category 5 (National Weather, 2015).

By Sunday, August 28, New Orleans feared Katrina would hit the city as a Category 4 or 5 storm. The city was at sea level of the Mississippi River and Lake Pontchartrain. Mayor Nagen ordered a mandatory evacuation for the first time in the city's history that morning and stated that 1,500 national guard troops were ready for deployment (Hauserand & Lueck, 2005). Most law school students, faculty and staff evacuated, with many residents evacuating for Houston, Atlanta and Memphis. By the end of the day, over one million residents had evacuated the city, however, many had stayed behind (Huddleston, 2007).

On the morning of August 29, water was rising along the Industrial Canal in New Orleans. A flash flood warning was also issued for Orleans and St. Bernard Parishes due to a threatening levee breach at the canal. A warning was issued for the public to escape to higher ground and the Governor ordered school buses to become available to evacuate survivors who were unable to transport themselves. Wind damage was extensive throughout the city; however, the perception was that the city had escaped the worst (National Weather, 2015).

The next morning, it became evident that water was rising in New Orleans. Widespread media coverage broadcast citizens being rescued from rooftops, particularly in the lower 9th ward, which had experienced extensive flooding. Citizens gathered at the SuperDome to shelter (Wessinger, 2006). Additional levees had given way with 80% of the city under water varying from inches to over 10 feet deep (Extent and Depth, n.d.). Loyola University had not announced closure; however, it was becoming evident to students that the semester may be over, as email, cell phones and web servers were out of service. Professors begin to indicate their evacuation plans and that information would resume as soon as possible. Schools throughout the country began to offer assistance to students and faculty to ensure educational services were not halted due to the hurricane (Huddleston, 2007).

On August 31, the storm was downgraded to a tropical depression, however, 85% of the city was underwater. The federal government was involved in disaster response, particularly United States Coast Guard rescues, and looting was rampant in New Orleans. Work began to repair the broken levees. Students were contacting other schools to research options to continue their education (Wessinger, 2006). In the following days, students began contacting faculty to seek out information on Loyola’s plans. Partnering schools offered to take in law students without normally required documentation and tuition was waived. The University of Houston

Law Center served as a base of operations for the semester for Loyola law students (Majority of Students, 2005).

During the first week of September, the city was fully evacuated. Basic utility services would not be restored for months. Loyola University cancelled classes for the fall 2005 semester, however, following cleanup, classes began in the spring of 2006. A second spring semester was offered to assist in the loss of the fall semester. The campus had avoided major damage, experiencing minimal wind damage and broken windows. A large percentage of students returned, even though some resided in FEMA trailers. The school was the first New Orleans university to hold graduation ceremonies after Hurricane Katrina (Majority of Students, 2005). Multiple students volunteered throughout the city to assist in disaster recovery upon returning to school (Wessinger, 2006).

Loyola University and the City of New Orleans suffered a catastrophic natural disaster with the destruction of Hurricane Katrina. Partly due to past storms that had missed the area after evacuations were ordered, many chose to remain in the city, and organizations failed to prepare appropriately. Negative media coverage occurred during the event, with government deficiencies highlighted. Some citizens who did not evacuate were sheltered for a long period of time without sufficient resources (Wessinger, 2006).

The semester had recently started at the university with communications coming to a halt at the onset of the storm. It was difficult to pass information from faculty to students to inform them of future plans for the remainder of the semester. Once the mandatory evacuation was ordered, some students chose to attend other universities with stipulations provided. After damage was assessed and students were able to return, the university was successful in retaining 91% of their students for the semester after the storm. Staff and faculty were advised as soon as possible that they would be paid for the fall semester, even for classes that were not in session due to Katrina. The school surveyed students and assisted where possible with housing needs (Huddleston, 2007).

In spite of positive news, layoffs were announced in December 2005 at Loyola. In April, a restructuring plan was proposed, announcing a deficit, with several degree programs eliminated. The plan was approved by the University Board of Trustees in May. In fall 2006, the first new class since Hurricane Katrina was admitted with 555 new students. This was in-line with the growth needed to resume pre-Katrina admission numbers showing a successful recovery from the major disaster (Freshmen Commitments, 2008).

Columbine school shooting. On April 20, 1999, Dylan Klebold and Eric Harris instigated the most high-profile, largest school shooting in higher-education at the time. The incident occurred at Columbine High School in Littleton, Colorado, a 40,000 person community in Jefferson County. At the time, the high school was known for many things, including its impressive building, 92% on-time graduation rate and high rate of students earning scholarships. The school had a positive reputation overall (Schildkraut, Muschert & DeAngelis, 2019).

Klebold and Harris arrived at the school on an otherwise normal day around 11:00 a.m. Upon entering the school, the two students left 20-pound propane tank bombs concealed in duffle bags in the school cafeteria. Additional bombs and improvised explosive devices (IEDs) were also placed around the campus and in the perpetrators' cars. Even though the explosives did not detonate as planned, Klebold and Harris proceeded to move forward with an alternate plan. At 11:19 a.m. they grabbed shotguns contained within duffle bags and shot their first two victims near the cafeteria exits. They entered the cafeteria as they continued shooting students and throwing IED devices (Schildkraut et al., 2019).

As the two shooters reached the west entrance of the school, around 11:25 a.m., the school resource officer arrived and the first 911 call was being made. Other Jefferson County deputies began to arrive, as the shooters began shooting students in the school library and nearby hallway. Klebod and Harris continued to roam the hallways, cafeteria and science wing of the school, attempting to detonate explosive devices and exchanging gunfire with first responders (Schildkraut et al., 2019).

At 12:06 p.m. a special weapons and tactics team (SWAT) arrived and entered the school. They immediately began clearing each room of the school. Two minutes later, Klebold and Harris went into the library and committed suicide by shooting themselves in the head (Schildkraut et al., 2019).

Throughout the incident, students fled the school where possible, however, many students were still sheltered within the building. Law enforcement cleared the building and evacuated students who were then transported to a nearby elementary school for reunification with their parents. At 4:45 p.m. the law enforcement sweep of the school was complete. Upon conclusion of the event, 13 people were killed and 24 were injured (Schildkraut et al., 2019).

The top media stories of 1999 were the Columbine shooting and the Bill Clinton impeachment trial (Levinson, 1999). The Pew Research Center found that 68% of Americans followed the incident very closely and that it was the third most closely followed incident of the 1990s (Columbine Shooting, 1999). Nine out of 10 Americans stated they followed news of the shooting very or fairly closely.

The shooting started at Columbine High School at 11:19 a.m. The Jefferson County Sheriff’s Office public information officer, Jeff Davis, was called to the scene at 11:32 a.m. Upon arrival at the school, Davis found several news organizations already on scene. Live coverage began by CNN around noon and continued for six hours. Ratings for CNN increased three times above normal the day of the shooting. At 1:30 p.m. Davis gave his first live press conference, with updates continuing every hour. The Incident Command System was utilized and Davis gathered updates from the incident command post, which was staged at the Columbine Public Library. Over two days, the PIO conducted over 135 on-camera interviews (Schildkraut et al., 2019).

Live, unedited video of students evacuating the school and emergency responders reacting to the event were broadcast across the nation. Eyewitnesses, including students, were interviewed for information by the media. At the height of the incident, it was estimated that 500 news reporters were on the scene of the shooting reporting the incident (Schildkraut et al., 2019). As time passed, live coverage changed to break-ins when updates were available. Daily briefings by the sheriff's department PIO ceased three weeks after the shooting. Even though live coverage waned, news stories continued months after the shooting (Schildkraut et al., 2019).

In a study conducted by Chyi and McCombs (2004) framing of the Columbine story in the media was researched. It was found that societal impact was a media focus with a time focus on the present. This analysis of where and when were found to be the most important dimensions of news stories during Columbine. They emphasize who is affected and when the news story takes place (Chyi & McCombs, 2004). The Columbine tragedy gave a model to media outlets of how to report a crisis. The incident also provided the media with lessons learned regarding media coverage (Schildkraut et al., 2019).

Due to Columbine and future school shootings such as the Marshall County High School shooting, many changes were made in schools across the nation. Policies and procedures were implemented, focusing on school safety. School resource officers, more secure school entry points, metal detectors, surveillance cameras, improved locks and lockdown drills have all been implemented to improve school security since Columbine. Active shooter training has been implemented by police departments, instead of a SWAT response. This reduces the delay in response in waiting for the SWAT team to arrive and allows for immediate action by local officers (Schildkraut et al., 2019). As a result of this change, whereas the Columbine shooters had control of the school for 50 minutes, the majority of subsequent shooters have maintained control for only five minutes or less (Blair & Schweiz, 2014).

Threat assessment and other incident planning practices have also been implemented by school systems across the country. Efforts continue to prevent incidents from occurring as well as improving responses since the Columbine shooting. Training for law enforcement is a continual process that must keep up with the evolution of potential perpetrators. School security will also improve as time goes on and additional advancements are found. Improvements in the psychological health of students is also a focus of school officials that will continue to evolve.

The way the media covers events such as Columbine will continue to change. An effort to decrease the spotlight on the perpetrators of school shootings has become a priority. Myths that are broadcast in an effort to get immediate headlines on the air due to live coverage are now avoided by the media in an effort to get the story correct. The public becoming desensitized to mass shootings as events are more commonplace is a consequence of mass media coverage and ongoing school shootings. It will take multi-disciplinary, complex solutions to reduce school shootings in America (Schildkraut et al., 2019).

PIO Job Market Projections

Qualifications and prerequisites for public information officers vary by agency depending on job descriptions and policies. This variance contributes to the purpose of this study.

Education levels vary from high-level degrees, certifications or no experience at all. A bachelor's degree may be required, most likely in communications, journalism or public relations. English or business degrees may also be accepted. Internships following post-secondary education can provide experience for students working toward a career as a public information officer (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2019).

According to the United States Bureau of Labor Statistics (2019), the rate of growth for public information officer positions will be at six percent from 2018 through 2028. This rate of growth is in line with all jobs during the same time frame. The Bureau also states that there is strong competition for public information positions as community outreach, breaking news developments and social media will continue to be important to the public (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2019). The Labour Force Survey of Canada states that job projections in their country are "fair" within the next three years, depending on the province. From 2014 to 2016 in Canada, employment for public relations professionals rose at a higher rate than average for all professions. As in the United States, most PIOs in Canada work full-time. Required education in Canada proves very similar to that in the United States (Government of Canada, 2019).

The median salary for public information officers in 2018 within the United States was $64,530, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2019). Those who earned the lowest 10 percent within the salary range earned less than $33,690. Those earning within the highest 10 percent earned more than $112,310. Most PIOs work a full-time schedule with the majority working overtime and weekends on occasion, due to the unpredictability of emergency incidents. In 2018, Kentucky reported 2,200 public relations specialists; however, this does not specify those who work as public information officers within this category. The annual mean wage for public relations specialists in Kentucky in 2018 was

$50,580. Considering that public information officers may work for schools, hospitals, public health departments and many first response agencies, it is difficult to analyze exact numbers employed and specific salary data. Categories of employment are not broken down according to specific public information categories; however, generalizations can be identified as stated above (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2019).

Chapter III:

Methodology

Research Design

The literature available for review specific to public information officer training is extremely limited. In fact, no studies were found relating directly to this topic. Research and document analysis was found and studied regarding mass media, disasters and the social sciences. Information was also found on specific public information officer courses and case studies. Available studies were noted. Current courses were also reviewed both nationally and within Kentucky. Case studies were highlighted to prove the importance of the PIO position in actual incidents. Past scholarly research specific to educational crises was available but limited. There are many case studies, however, that were utilized in this research study to analyze the importance of the public information officer during a crisis incident. Relevant course syllabi were also obtained where available to review and compare to the literature and interview answers.

A qualitative research method was chosen for this project as one source of data was not necessary for the study. An interview guide and standardized open-ended questions were used to gather information. Qualitative research changes depend on study type, purpose and quality. There are no standardized tests, and study methods are often adapted during the course of the research. The validity of a qualitative study is determined by the participants, study purpose and processes involved. This type of research studies that which cannot be determined by measurements, such as social descriptors, qualities and personal stories (Winter, 2000).

Semi-structured interviews were conducted for this study. This type of interview is the most commonly used for qualitative studies. Semi-structured interviews are often the single data source for a qualitative research project. They are scheduled in advance, at a designated time and location. Established questions are asked to each participant, although additional questions may emerge from the discussion. The interview usually takes between 30 minutes to hours to complete (Dicicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006). The researcher asked pre-prepared, open-ended questions during the interview while allowing flexibility for time to further discuss responses.

Interview responses were analyzed using open coding. Open coding is the analytical process in which concepts are applied to observed data during a qualitative research study. This method aims to attach observations and thoughts garnered from the interviews by assigning codes and categories (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). This process was selected for this study so that concepts could be reviewed and compared for commonalities, similarities and differences.

Purpose of the Study

The qualitative study researched the current level of training and experience among public information officers in Kentucky. The study also reviewed current trainings and courses while assessing the need for a standardized course or training for public information officers. Current training requirements and the number of courses available to PIOs are inconsistent. Even though trainings or post-secondary courses may be available, they vary in content. The effectiveness of trainings for practicing PIOs is unknown, especially in Kentucky. Baseline education and continuing education were examined.

Experience level, on-the-job training and job-related behavioral qualities were also studied. Training or educational gaps among public information officers in Kentucky were identified based on how well courses prepared PIOs for their position. Courses that participants identified as most useful were reviewed. As educational gaps were found, best practices were utilized to develop a post-secondary course syllabus to fulfill the need for a standardized public information elective.

Research Questions

The research questions for this study were as follows:

1. How does a public information officer's education level influence their effectiveness when performing job duties?
2. How does a public information officer's major of study influence their effectiveness when performing job duties?
3. How does the current level of training influence a public information officer's effectiveness when performing job duties?
4. How effective are completed courses/trainings when conducting the public information officer role?
5. How have employers incorporated continuing education or on-the-job training for employed public information officers in Kentucky?

Description of Population and Sampling Procedures

Purposive and snowball sampling were used in the study. According to Maxwell (2013), this strategy is often used in interview studies in order to generalize the population being researched. Questions were framed to prevent inappropriate generalization. Purposive sampling involves purposefully selecting participants. Interviewees in this type of sample possess a quality the researcher is interested in. Participants must be available and willing to be interviewed in an effective manner. Purposive sampling is a non-random approach that does not require a predetermined theory (Etikan, Musa & Alkassim, 2016). Snowball sampling occurs when interview participants refer others to participate in the study (Biernacki & Waldorf, 1981). This method was used to find additional participants.

Participants were current, practicing public information officers within Kentucky. A variety of relevant agencies were selected to prevent one type of agency being studied. A representation of organizations such as police departments, fire departments, hospitals and emergency management agencies were contacted to interview their agency's public information officer.

Description of Risk, Voluntary Participation, Confidentiality, and Anonymity

The Institutional Review Board (IRB) at Murray State University approved this study on December 16, 2019. The interviews posed the potential to cause emotional discomfort due to the chance of recalling disaster responses. An informed consent form was distributed to all participants (see Appendix A) that displayed the purpose of the study; procedures and duration; risks and discomforts; benefits; confidentiality; and the withdrawal process. Interview participants were required to complete a consent form prior to participating in the study.

Interview participants' names were not used in the methodology portion of the study. Resulting publications from the research did not include participants' names. Documents and research records will be kept on file for three years upon completion of the study on the author's computer. The faculty advisor and author will have access to all records.

Description of Research Instruments

Currently-employed public information officers within Kentucky were interviewed for this study. Due to a lack of funds for travel, interviews were conducted via telephone. Interviews were scheduled based on the convenience of participants, between March 23 and

April 10, 2020, anytime between 7 a.m. and 10 p.m. Central Standard Time. Interviews were conducted in one-hour time periods.

Fourteen standardized questions were drafted, with time allowed for follow-up questions as needed. Demographics such as PIO name, title and employer were asked at the onset of the interview. This information was only used for analysis with the participant's consent. An exhaustive list of questions is provided in Appendix B, however, a sample of questions asked included:

1. Did you receive PIO training or take relevant post-secondary courses prior to covering the traumatic event?
2. What level of education did you possess prior to becoming a public information officer?
3. Did the training prepare you to effectively do your job?
4. Have you received any on-the-job training or continuing education specifically related to your PIO role while serving in your current position?
5. What behavioral qualities do you think a successful PIO should possess?

Questions asked during the interview were crafted to answer research questions.

Analysis of the answers to these questions, along with other information researched in this study, provided information to identify gaps in training currently available to public information officers in Kentucky. A review of the courses available, a review of prior research, combined with information obtained in the interviews was utilized to identify how prepared current PIOs were when starting their job. This also helped to analyze the effectiveness of their prior baseline education. By comparing this information with courses that are currently available within Kentucky, the researcher was able to identify gaps and areas of potential training.

Behavioral qualities of public information officers were also questioned and researched. Previous research has found that training and experience in media relations, credibility, someone who can think on their feet, maintaining a professional appearance, personability, good speaking skills, possessing suitable characteristics to represent the organization and the ability to present technical information in easy to understand terms are all important when performing the role of the PIO (Doorley & Garcia, 2015). This was considered when analyzing the results of the related interview question.

Procedures for Data Collection

After potential interview participants were identified by the researcher. Participation was requested via an email to potential interview participants (Appendix C). Appointments were then scheduled with those who positively responded to the request. The interview guide was utilized as the basis for all interviews.

The researcher used an interview guide (Appendix B) with a standardized open-ended interview for the study. Open-ended interviews are conducted to elicit a detailed, thorough response from participants. These questions encouraged answers based on participants' past experiences and opinions (Mack, Woodsong, MacQueen, Guest & Namey, 2005). This was particularly useful for this study due to the nature of the incidents discussed and inconsistency of education addressed by each interviewee.

The interview guide was prepared in advance by the researcher to structure interview questions. This information was later manually coded to analyze data. The researcher utilized a voice recorder during interviews with public information officers. A review of current, available PIO-related courses both nationwide and within Kentucky was also conducted via a through internet search of all courses available and searchable online. This information was utilized to analyze interview responses with training opportunities that are currently available

(Appendix D). This information was also used to formulate a new post-secondary course that will fill gaps identified (Appendix E).

Procedures for Data Analysis

This study utilized answers from interview questions to identify training or educational gaps among public information officers in Kentucky. Interview answers were triangulated with literature review research and research from existing courses to ensure common themes emerged which identified gaps and commonalities in PIO training and education. As research was conducted, common themes became obvious and are specifically identified in chapter six. Courses that study participants identified as most useful were identified and reviewed. As educational gaps were discovered, best practices were utilized to develop a post-secondary course to fill the need for a standardized public information elective. Reviews of existing, relevant courses were utilized for comparison.

After interviews were completed, the author manually coded all data. Open coding was used to analyze data. When using open coding, the researcher assigned names to concepts or ideas so that they could be analyzed and communicated. Concepts that were identified by the researcher as significant were grouped and analyzed to better understand data garnered from the research instrument. The goal of open source coding was to identify concepts that arose from raw data found during research so that it could be grouped into conceptual categories (Khandkar, 2009). The process helped to ensure study validity while also developing a framework for future analysis if needed (Khandkar, 2009).

Once categories were determined through open coding, axial coding was utilized. This method relates codes to one another, creating a framework for identified concepts. By using axial coding, relationships are found among open codes. The method involves comparing discovered themes within the data set to make theoretical claims found within interviews. Concepts such as behaviors, activities, meanings and relationships can be coded using this method (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). This enabled the researcher to better understand the availability of public information officer training, course effectiveness, training gaps and desired PIO behaviors.

Chapter IV:

Findings and Analysis

Public Information Officer Training

The purpose of this study was to understand training available to public information officers in Kentucky. Public information officers across Kentucky have completed a wide array of training and education. Throughout the nation and State of Kentucky, post-secondary courses and available PIO certification requirements vary for practicing PIOs. Inconsistent levels of expertise are also prevalent. In some cases, PIOs enter the position with little to no previous experience. Depending on the organization, specified training and education for a PIO may not be required. This is inconsistent. An understanding was needed of what level of training currently exists among a sample of current public information officers throughout Kentucky. This helped to clarify current education levels and courses utilized to gain knowledge in performing PIO tasks.

Effectiveness of completed training and education were discussed with interview participants. The usefulness of courses when performing job functions was studied. Behavioral qualities of successful public information officers was also discussed. Training available to PIOs by their employers was addressed to determine on-the-job training available to acting public information officers.

Interviews as well as document analysis were used to answer research questions. The research questions that are the foundation of this study are the following:

1. How does a public information officer's education level influence their effectiveness when performing job duties?

2. How does a public information officer's major of study influence their effectiveness when performing job duties?
3. How does the current level of training influence a public information officer's effectiveness when performing job duties?
4. How effective are completed courses/trainings when conducting the public information officer role?
5. How have employers incorporated continuing education or on-the-job training for employed public information officers in Kentucky?

Semi-structured interviews were conducted for this study. Scheduled, telephone interviews were administered. Pre-written, open-ended questions were asked to each participant, with interviews taking from 30 minutes to one hour. Interview responses were analyzed using open coding. This method was selected so that concepts could be reviewed and compared for commonalities, similarities and differences. Themes were identified based on responses. These themes were also triangulated with previously researched literature and case studies. Purposive and snowball sampling were used in the study.

After potential interview participants were identified by the researcher via internet research, emails were sent to request participation (Appendix C). An appointment was then scheduled with those who positively responded to the request. An interview guide was utilized as the basis for all interviews. PIOs from various agency disciplines were interviewed throughout the state of Kentucky. Agencies included sheriff's departments, the Kentucky State Police (KSP), city police departments, fire departments, emergency management and hospitals. The participant with the least tenure in their PIO position had two years of experience. The participants with the most time in their PIO role had been employed for 15 years. The average years of experience among participants was 6.22 years.

Trainings, as well as post-secondary courses inside and outside Kentucky were thoroughly researched as a part of this study. The primary source of PIO trainings are provided through FEMA. The majority of post-secondary courses outside of Kentucky were placed within emergency management majors, with three taught in the communications department. For similar courses found within universities in Kentucky, classes were available but were not specific to emergency response (Kentucky State Universities, 2015). Courses were related to communications, public relations and journalism, and were more general in content.

Questions were asked of interview participants based on research questions. Demographics were gathered including interviewee name and the length of time the PIO has served in their current position. Participants were also asked about the largest responses they had worked during their time as a PIO. Due to the cross section of agencies interviewed for this study, the results of this question were varied. Answers given included:

1. Mass shooting
2. Drowning
3. COVID-19
4. Police officer drowning
5. Severe weather
6. Explosion
7. HAZMAT incident
8. Major gas leak
9. Opioid crisis

10. Hepatitis A outbreak

11. Homicides

12. High-profile vehicle collisions

This study was conducted to better understand what level of training currently exists among a sample of current public information officers throughout Kentucky and training effectiveness. When reviewing interview responses, four prominent themes emerged. These themes were: varying education levels among PIOs, past college course effectiveness, common behavior qualities for PIOs and gaps in agency PIO training requirements. These themes were identified when analyzing interview data, existing literature and in reviewing available courses and syllabi.

The first theme identified examined current post-secondary education levels among PIOs who participated in this study. The next theme reviewed college courses taken by participants and their effectiveness, specifically ineffectiveness of courses and how this can be improved. Behavioral qualities among effective PIOs was also discussed. A theme emerged among behavioral qualities that interviewees felt were important. The last theme identified was post-secondary course topics and trainings that should be available or required of practicing PIOs.

Theme one: Varying education levels among PIOs. Most participants stated they had no prior training prior to becoming a public information officer. Education levels ranged from training certifications to master's degrees. Several universities were noted including Boston University, Marymount University and Campbellsville University. Training certifications that were discussed when asking this question were from the Southern Police Institute (SPI), which partners with the University of Louisville, and PIO courses provided through the Department of Criminal Justice Training (DOCJT). Degrees obtained included journalism, fire science, criminal justice, political science, safety, emergency management, communications, business administration and psychology.

When discussing the influence of a public information officer's education level on their work performance, responses were varied. No past research was found specific to Kentucky. The vast majority of respondents had no specific PIO training prior to working in the role, with many stating they were selected for the position because their superior felt they were the best employee for the job. One respondent said, "People select people they feel are ready for the job." Another interviewee stated, "My supervisor selected who they thought would be best for the position." A third person said they were a protégé to the former PIO, while yet another said, "I picked up experience from the former PIO."

Theme two: Effectiveness of college courses in PIO role. Most interviewees stated that none of their college courses helped them in their professional career as a PIO. Input was provided by select interviewees. When asked what trainings assisted a respondent during incidents, one interview participant said, "None. I learned through hands-on work."

Another participant stated,

> A PIO should be a lifelong learner due to the evolution of the media. If someone is not willing to do this, they will be a PIO stuck in time, releasing press releases. This may not be effective. The state of public affairs in Kentucky is pitiful.

Another participant said that adjunct professors had more to offer when participating in post-secondary courses because they were often in the media and provided hands-on examples. English, writing and public speaking courses were identified as a theme among interviewees as courses that assisted them in their PIO role. It was stated that PIOs learn as they work, with no trainings that prepared them for a major response.

When asked what post-secondary course they felt would assist an upcoming PIO, respondents recommended several courses based on their experience. The most prevalent answer was public speaking. Respondents stated that practice and education in public speaking was helpful once placed in a PIO position. One participant said,

> It is important to fine-tune your speaking skills. You don't have to answer every question right then. Take a few seconds if needed to think the question through before answering it.

Interviewees also said that a writing course would be helpful. Respondents commented that learning proper grammar and proper writing skills is critical for an effective PIO. A respondent said, "I have not received formal training on how to write a press release to this day. I have learned by doing." Improving writing skills should be a continuous process according to participants. An interviewee stated to, "Hone your writing skills. If you need to take a class do so." People who work as PIOs and line supervisors stated that this can be an issue if public information officers do not have proper education in English or practice in writing press releases. Some also said that a general communications or journalism course would be helpful. Lastly, English, business, social media and debate courses were all mentioned during interviews.

Participants cited several trainings that they felt assisted them on major responses. The Kentucky State Police requires in-service training each year for their employees. Public affairs training is made available for public information officers. These trainings were quoted as helpful in a response. You must be an employee of KSP to participate in these courses. FEMA courses were also cited as an integral part of incident preparedness. Both basic and advanced classes were provided as answers.

Participants who were eligible for the chemical stockpile emergency preparedness program training (CSEPP), stated that the Argonne National Laboratory PIO training that was made available to them was helpful for responses. CSEPP is a partnership between the Federal Emergency Management Agency and the U.S. Department of the Army. This organization provides training and other assistance to local communities near the Army's chemical warfare agent stockpiles, one of which is in Kentucky (Argonne, 2020). The Argonne National Laboratory assists in providing the CSEPP Public Affairs Academy in local communities including those in Kentucky. Participants also cited other courses that were offered through CSEPP as beneficial. FEMA courses were also cited as an integral part of incident preparedness. Both basic and advanced classes were provided as answers. An interviewee said he was not required by his agency to receive PIO training but put himself through courses to, "make myself more relevant."

The Southern Police Institute (SPI), "Managing the Media in Law Enforcement" course was also mentioned as a valuable training for major responses. According to interviewees, this training is provided through the University of Louisville and includes hands-on, on-camera practice which was stated to be invaluable. Participants stated that on-camera practice was integral to learning the PIO role.

Other trainings were also mentioned by respondents. The Kentucky Office of Homeland Security PIO training, the Department of Criminal Justice PIO training, Kentucky League of Cities training , Public Relations Society, training and Centers for Disease Control each held a course that helped PIOs. Lastly, is was stated that PIOs learn as they work, with no trainings that prepare them for a major response. It was also stated within discussions that nothing was helpful.

When asked what trainings current PIOs think new PIOs should receive, several responses were mentioned. Social media was stated the most when answering this question. A respondent said,

> Social media is a different dynamic that doesn't require me to necessarily be in the field but requires me to respond. It initiates real-time information that may not come from me but from user questions.

On-camera training with practice was also a theme that emerged as an important training for PIOs. Participants stated that this is important, with this being mentioned many times when answering multiple questions. A respondent said, "This type of training can help clarify things that you can while satisfying your duty and what you need the public to know without comprising the incident." Training with the media made this even more effective, according to interviewees. An interviewee said, "Find someone in the media you can trust and bounce ideas off of them."

Knowing what you can and cannot say is also integral as a PIO, according to interviewees. The Health Information Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) has made this more important in recent years. An interview participant stated, "What goes into a press release is all public record. Do not put anything in the release that could compromise an incident."

When discussing trainings for PIOs, Several people suggested public speaking as a necessary course. This theme was prevalent when discussing participants most valued skill, as well as skills new PIOs should possess. One participant said, "It is important to have the ability to take specific detailed information and turn it into normal everyday language that anyone can understand." This interviewee also stated,

> It is important to be able to take specific information and be able to generalize it if necessary. It is also important to be down to earth, trustworthy and to not always come across as polished. It can be good to show your humanity. Be hyper-aware of what is said and how it comes across. Maintain the ability to communicate with all kinds of people and correct yourself when necessary.

Another respondent noted the importance of good writing skills. He said, “Learning how to write is important. Putting a cohesive sentence together is critical. I deal with this issue with line employees.”

Theme three: Behavioral qualities PIOs should possess. Many different behavioral qualities were noted when this topic was discussed. The most prevalent quality mentioned was that the PIO should come across as friendly. Many respondents noted this as an important behavioral quality they possess. Interviewees felt this was important in relating to the community they serve. Trust was also mentioned. One interviewee said, “It is important to come across the same way on and off the camera.” Participants felt if trust was not present their role as a PIO was not effective. Another participant said, “It is critical to be somebody others can trust on or off camera.”

Additional qualities that were discussed included calmness and being articulate. Becoming anxious or excitable can create fear in other first responders or the public, according to PIOs interviewed. Other behavioral qualities mentioned were patience, reliability, public speaking ability and objectivity. Other topics mentioned included, sincerity, caring, team orientation, dedication, hardworking, detail-oriented, good writing skills, adaptive to change, confidence and a positive appearance.

Theme four: Gaps in agency PIO training requirements. Most respondents stated that their current agency does not require training or continued education. In spite of this, most have taken it upon themselves to take PIO-related courses. The most popular courses were the PIO classes provided by FEMA (Appendix D). Social media classes were also taken by interviewees. The following were also discussed:

1. Incident Command System
2. Police Required In-Service
3. Center for Domestic Preparedness Training
4. Severe Weather Preparedness Training

When asked what current PIOs wish they had known prior to becoming a PIO, two major themes resulted. The first involved being as prepared as possible for what the media will ask during an incident. Multiple participants also mentioned being prepared in some way for general media questions and "curve-ball" questions. Individuals stated that this can be achieved through hands-on training, or checklists that can be prepared prior to an incident. Interviewees discussed how helpful it was to train with actual media professionals.

> In one training, the instructor brought in a camera and interviewed us. They put a microphone in our face and asked questions for a pre-planned scenario. This was recorded and played back in front of the entire class for constructive criticism and was very helpful.

Several interviewees discussed how helpful it was to train with actual media professionals.
It was also mentioned that being organized is an important part of preparing to be a PIO. Other items mentioned by interviewees were assuming nothing is off the record, learning as much as you can, working with others when needed and learning to manage your emotions.

Other relevant comments mentioned by interviewees included that it is important to remember that the media has a job to do and the PIO role is not for everyone. It was also said that it is important to introduce yourself to media outlets before an incident occurs. An interviewee said, “I take pride in my relationship with the media.” Taking pride in the PIO role was also an ongoing theme. The importance of relationship-building with the media and other PIOs within the community was also stressed.

Available Education and Training

In researching PIO training and education, available trainings and post-secondary courses were studied. These classes were researched and reviewed for location and course description. Many courses were mentioned in interviews by study participants. This effort also identified if the need existed for additional PIO courses outside or within Kentucky.

Federal Emergency Management Agency certifications. The primary source of training for public information officers is through the Federal Emergency Management Agency. These trainings can either be conducted online or through organized, in-person training courses sponsored by approved agencies. Basic incident command is required as a prerequisite of all FEMA courses (National Incident, 2015). Course descriptions also outline prerequisites required of each individual course. FEMA public information officer-related training officer courses are:

1. IS-29 Public Information Officer Awareness: “Provides an orientation to the public information function and the role of the public information officer (PIO) in the public safety/emergency management environment” (FEMA, 2019).
2. IS-42 Social Media in Emergency Management: “Provides participants with best practices including tools, techniques and a basic roadmap to build capabilities in the use

of social media technologies in their own organizations in order to further their emergency response missions" (FEMA, 2019).

3. G0289 Public Information Officer Awareness Training: "Introduces participants to the public information function and the role of the PIO in the public safety/emergency management environment" (FEMA, 2019).
4. G0290 Basic Public Information Officer Course: "Considers the value of communication before, during and after an incident. Helps PIOs identify critical audiences, both internal and external" (FEMA, 2019).
5. E0388 Advanced Public Information Officer: "This advanced level course teaches participants additional skills for use during escalating incidents, including strategic communications and incident action planning as it relates to Joint Information Center (JIC) operations" (FEMA, 2019).
6. E0393 Master Public Information Officer: "Prepares public information officers for an expanded role in delivering public information and warning using a strategic whole community approach" (FEMA, 2019).

Post-Secondary Courses outside of Kentucky. Post-secondary courses directly related to public information officers are available outside of Kentucky. The vast majority of these courses are found within emergency management majors, with three identified as belonging in the communications department. When researching elective courses on the topic, most universities diverted the author to the public relations department of the related university. Fifteen courses were found directly related to public information during the 2019/2020 academic year with some commonalities in course descriptions. These similarities included themes such as: social media, emergency management processes when communicating with the media, communicating with the public during a disaster and basic PIO functions.

Universities offering courses specific to public information included California State University, Jacksonville State University, Bellevue University, Colorado Technical University, Utah Valley University, American Public University System, Crown College, Drury University, Northwest Missouri State University, Pennsylvania College of Technology, Pikes Peak Community College and Western Carolina University. Of the courses identified, three specified public health, emergency management and homeland security as a topic of discussion. Courses fell into three different departments as follows: three in communications, 11 in emergency management and one in homeland security. A full course listing may be referenced in Appendix D. Sample syllabi for these courses may be found in Appendix E.

Post-Secondary Courses inside of Kentucky. When researching public information related courses provided within Kentucky universities during the 2019/2020 school year, six relevant courses were found but were not tied to an emergency response curriculum (Kentucky State Universities, 2015). Universities providing related courses are the University of Kentucky, Eastern Kentucky University, Kentucky State University, Murray State University and Western Kentucky University. Examples of these courses include classes in risk and crisis communication; crime and the media and strategic communications. These courses tended to be more general in nature with less specific content related to public information and the PIO role. Two courses were taught within the communications department, one in criminal justice, one in public relations and two in journalism. A full course listing may be referenced in Appendix D, with selected syllabi in Appendix E.

Course syllabi. When researching PIO training and education an effort was made to obtain course syllabi from post-secondary courses that related to public information officer courses. Emails were sent to all available instructors of courses outlined in Appendix D in an effort to gather course syllabi to review course content. As part of this effort, four syllabi were obtained from various post-secondary instructors. Participating universities included: Utah Valley University, Eastern Kentucky University, Bellevue University and the University of Kentucky. This provided examples from Kentucky universities, as well as school outside of the state.

The course syllabus provided by Utah Valley University was for a class titled, “Customer Service and Marketing in the Emergency Services”. The class is taught within the school’s Department of Emergency Services. This course focuses on customer service within the emergency services field. The course examines the growing value of marketing public services and looks at research methods for all jurisdictional levels of customer service. The course is taught online. Even though the textbook for the course is more general in nature, additional readings focus on fire service and media relations. Online class discussions and readings are assigned weekly with a critical reflection and marketing plan assignment concluding the course. Upon reviewing the course syllabus, it is found to be customer service oriented but not specific to spokesperson or PIO activities.

The next syllabus was obtained by Eastern Kentucky University. The course is titled, “Public Relations Crisis” and is taught as a public relations elective. The course looks at relaying relevant messages during crises. This class also examines social media, the avoidance of miscommunication and the proper audience to communicate to during an emergency event. Case studies are reviewed as part of this class. The class is held in-person with a lecture style format with concepts applied to case studies. The assigned textbook focuses on crisis communication with reading assignments from the book expected each week. Case studies, guest speakers, group presentations and a relevant field trip are also assignments expected of the class. This course appears to be more relevant to PIOs.

Bellevue University also provided a course syllabus for their “Emergency Communications” class. The class is taught within the emergency management department of the university. This course looks at the role of communications during an emergency event. The class examines how an emergency manager should work with the media to communicate effectively with public and private entities. Topics addressed throughout the class include communications as a function, disaster communications, successful communications strategies, communications in the phases of emergency management, disaster communications capabilities and working with the media. This course addresses working the media but also addresses general communications functions. The specific role of the PIO does not appear to be addressed.

The last syllabus obtained was from the University of Kentucky. This course is taught within the communications department of the university and is an in-person class. Course content examines risk communications as a whole with an emphasis on crisis planning, the media, maintaining a positive image, positive responses and learning effectively as an organization. A textbook focusing on crisis communication is utilized with additional readings focusing on the same. Students are expected to present current event summaries as well as write crisis communication plans. This course is also more general in nature and is focused on crisis communications without being specific to the role of the PIO.

When reviewing available courses, training and syllabi insight was gained into the limited number of educational opportunities specific to public information officers. Not only is professional support not required, but quality courses are not widely accessible. This is not only true within Kentucky but appears to also be the case throughout the nation. Interview participants also expressed this perspective.

Chapter V:

Conclusions and Discussions

The purpose of this study was to understand training available to public information officers in Kentucky. The effectiveness of training was also researched. Education levels and training courses completed by public information officers were reviewed. Telephone interviews were conducted with nine current public information officers within Kentucky. These PIOs were employed by agencies from multiple disciplines including a major hospital system, city police departments, sheriff's departments, local emergency management, city fire departments and the Kentucky State Police.

Behavioral qualities of successful public information officers was also discussed. On-the-job training was addressed to identify future training opportunities. Trainings utilized to provide updated information and education to PIOs was researched to prove effectiveness as the role continues to evolve. Also, study participants' prior area of study was researched.

Prior research was conducted on case studies regarding the role of the public information officer and crisis communications. The first study was documented in the 1920s after an ammunition explosion in Canada. As time elapsed, the role of the PIO became less of an element of the warning system and more of an element of the news source. Studies regarding the importance of public information increased into the 1980s when the PIO became integrated into the incident command structure (Ledingham & Masel-Walters, 1985).

This transition was due to many factors including the importance of the public image of agencies and the increase in emergency incidents. Specific emergencies at nuclear power plants, public health events and school shootings also contributed to the increased need for an assigned public information officer. Case studies provided examples of how the lack of, or presence of, an effective PIO can prove to be key during an incident. These include the California measles incident in 2015; the false Hawaii missile alert; the Loyola University flooding incident during Hurricane Katrina; as well as local incidents such as the Marshall County High School shooting and the Murray State University dorm explosion (Lowrey et al., 2007).

Research has been conducted on courses available to potential or acting PIOs. FEMA certifications, as well as post-secondary courses have been thoroughly studied. Interview questions were also asked of participants to assess effectiveness of training and course availability. Information on training completed prior to obtaining a position as a PIO and while performing the role was obtained.

P-20 Implications

When researching the education and training of public information officers in Kentucky, the connection to the P-20 continuum was considered throughout. The necessity for public information officers both inside and outside of Kentucky is demonstrated through past research and case studies. Connections through multiple agencies and the community are integral, as shown in this study and past research in order for the ICS and PIO structure to work effectively. This pertains specifically to P-20 educational institutions including schools and universities who experience emergencies and disaster situations.

The importance and lack of training and education for public information officers within Kentucky is also an issue within P-20 education. Specific, PIO courses with elements recommended by practicing PIOs are not currently prevalent within the state. By working with community agencies, experienced universities and PIOs, a curriculum outline has been developed to provide national certifications and effective training. This can be shared through P-

20 committees as an elective, core course or through emergency services committees throughout the state or nation.

Conclusions

1. How does a public information officer's education level influence their effectiveness when performing job duties?

Data collected from acting public information officers within Kentucky demonstrated that the majority of study participants who have obtained a post-secondary education were not influenced by college courses. Those who stated that their college courses were beneficial said that public speaking, writing and English courses were effective. Ethics and literature were also mentioned. This implies that almost half of survey participants garnered no benefits from their college degree towards their PIO career. Courses that proved helpful were general in nature and not specific to public information officers. Although classes were found both outside of Kentucky and within Kentucky that are more specific to PIOs, they were not taken by interview participants. In fact, several participants stated that they had gained knowledge from the prior PIO who had held their position.

2. How does a public information officer's major of study influence their effectiveness when performing job duties?

According to interview results, respondents had certifications, associate's, bachelor's and master's degrees. Journalism, fire science, criminal justice, political science, safety, emergency management, communications, business administration and psychology were noted as areas of study by interviewees. These results demonstrate the variety of degrees and education levels earned by practicing PIOs in Kentucky.

3. How does the current level of training influence a public information officer's effectiveness when performing job duties?

Out of all interview respondents, the majority stated that they had no specific PIO training prior to obtaining their public information job. Interview respondents stated they either learned as they responded to incidents or from their predecessors. This demonstrates a lack of training at the post-secondary level both inside and outside the state of Kentucky. This may also demonstrate a lack of participation or knowledge of the field itself. Of those who stated they had prior training, some stated training was in their post-secondary program and was not specific to public information, but was journalism focused. Some also said knowledge was gained through SPI and DOCJT trainings.

4. How effective are completed courses/trainings when conducting the public information officer role?

Participants noted multiple trainings that they felt assisted them on major incident responses. The Kentucky State Police requires in-service training each year for their employees. Respondents quoted this training as helpful during an incident, however, you must be an employee of the Kentucky State Police to participate in these courses. FEMA courses were also cited as an integral part of incident preparedness. Both basic and advanced classes were provided as answers.

Interview participants who were eligible for the chemical stockpile emergency preparedness program training (CSEPP), mentioned affiliated public information officer training. Participants also cited other miscellaneous courses that were offered through CSEPP. The Southern Police Institute, "Managing the Media in Law Enforcement" course was also noted by participants as a valuable training when responding to incidents. This training is helpful in that it includes hands-on, on-camera practice, according to interviewees. On-camera practice was integral to learning the PIO role according to respondents.

Social media was also mentioned multiple times by respondents. The next topic that was mentioned the most was that of on-camera training with practice. Training with the media made this even more effective, according to multiple interviewees. Knowing what you can and cannot say is integral as a PIO, as noted by participants. Continually learning the skill of writing, public speaking and interviewing were also skills emphasized by participants.

Specific post-secondary courses that participants felt should be garnered by PIOs were analyzed. The most mentioned answer was that of public speaking. Multiple people said that practice is integral in mastering this skill. Writing courses were also stated as helpful, along with general communications and journalism courses. Lastly, English, business, social media and debate courses all received mentions during interviews.

5. How have employers incorporated continuing education or on-the-job training for employed public information officers in Kentucky?

Of all respondents, most stated that their current agency does not require training or continuing education. This raises concern in the evolution of continuing education among practicing PIOs. Despite this, many interviewees have chosen to take PIO-related courses. FEMA courses, social media classes, ICS, police in-service, and other courses have been attended for furthering education.

Themes Determined from Interviews

Basic themes determined from interviews conducted in this study were evident. The levels of education among acting PIOs in Kentucky is wide-spread from master's degrees to no experience. Almost half of the PIOs within the state had no prior experience, while some stated they held the qualities necessary to hold the job or had learned from the previous PIO. Some PIOs hold degrees from universities, however many stated none of their post-secondary courses helped them in their current position. In researching existing courses both inside and outside of Kentucky, it was found that there are very few post-secondary courses specific to public information officers.

FEMA courses and in-service training for police officers were found to be important. the Southern Police Institute was said to be effective. Most said that any advanced training that involved hands-on, on-camera role playing is critical. Getting to know other PIOs within the community and the local media is also important. Social media was noted as becoming more and more important as public information evolves. This was also found in document analysis. Staying current on technology and mass communication is critical to remaining effective as a PIO. The importance of public speaking training and practice was also emphasized.

Recommendations

The desired purpose of this study was to understand training available to public information officers in Kentucky and to improve availability of needed training based on research outcomes. Post-secondary education, training courses and behavioral qualities were accessed. Existing training courses and post-secondary classes were researched for access purposes. After analyzing data, it has been determined that a post-secondary course is needed for public information officers. This course should be made available for college students, as well as practicing PIOs for continuing education purposes. This is due to the lack of training prior to becoming a PIO, as well as the number of PIOs currently in the workforce who lack formal training.

Elements identified in study interviews, prior research and document analysis that should be included in the course are:

1. Public speaking
2. On-camera techniques
3. Writing press releases
4. Media basics
5. FEMA certifications (ICS and PIO)
6. Getting to know your local community media/PIOs
7. Social media
8. What you can and cannot say. (HIPPA)

The syllabus outline will be made available in Appendix E and should be made available as a course elective as well as a core course. Recommendations for departments in which a core course or elective would be useful include journalism, criminal justice, communications, public relations, crisis communications, emergency management, fire science, health care administration, public health, risk communications, emergency medical services, homeland security, education and political science. It is also recommended that college credit hours and emergency responder/health care worker hours be awarded upon course completion if possible.

Study Limitations

There were limitations to the study, although research questions were answered. Due to the limited number of employed public information officers within the state of Kentucky, the sample size was small. The limitation of schedules and the willingness of PIOs to participate was also a limitation. The coronavirus incident occurred during the research study, which may have prevented some PIOs from participating due to lack of time. The ability to find contact information for employed PIOs was also a challenge. Although there were multiple local and national case studies to review regarding the importance of PIOs, research studies were limited specific to PIO training. Studies are prevalent on the general topic of crisis communications and public relations but are limited in regard to public information officers.

Recommendations for Future Research

This research study provided information on relevant training and education for public information officers within Kentucky. The overall work demonstrated inconsistent experience and a lack of training prior to becoming a PIO. Interviewees also provided data regarding helpful training and behavioral qualities that can be taught prior to and during their PIO career. While speaking with research participants, several expressed enthusiasm and a willingness to assist with future training. Their commitment to work with members of the media, educators and other PIOs was frequently communicated.

With the increase in natural disasters and man-made incidents the need for public information officers within organizations is becoming more and more necessary. This is applicable both inside and outside of Kentucky. This may be especially relevant due to the recent COVID-19 outbreak and civil unrest. Studies regarding these PIO responses are recommended.

Although some classes exist, the subject matter is not generally taught or emphasized within applicable majors. Courses also do not exist locally, except on an infrequent basis or online. With implementation of the course outline provided in Appendix E, future research could be conducted five years after implementation of the first course to study course effectiveness. This could be separated among new students and existing professionals. Studies could also continue every five years to measure course improvements and effectiveness. Popularity of the course and sustainability would also be important to measure.

Additional studies should be conducted in other states on public information training and education. Even though this study is focused on Kentucky, it is likely that other areas are also lacking information. The proposed course outline could be used if applicable.

The goal of this study was to prepare the critically important public information officer before a critical incident occurs. By researching data, studies and documents, a curriculum has been developed to provide training. Further work will be completed to implement this curriculum.

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Appendix A:

Informed Consent Form

Research Participation

Study Title: Educating Public Information Officers in Kentucky

Primary Investigator: Lori Kent and Dr. Teresa Clark, College of Education and Human Services

Faculty Sponsor Contact: Dr. Teresa Clark, 270-809-6956, tclark24@murraystate.edu

You are being invited to participate in a research study conducted through Murray State University. This form contains information you will need to help you decide whether to be in this research study or not. Please read the form carefully and ask the study team member(s) questions about anything that is not clear. You will be given a copy of this form to keep.

1. Nature and Purpose of Project: The purpose of this study seeks to determine the current level of training and experience among public information officers in Kentucky. The study will also review current trainings and courses available and assess the need for a standardized course or training for public information officers.

   The goal of the study is to identify training or educational gaps among public information officers in Kentucky and to identify how well courses prepare PIOs for their position. Courses that are identified as most useful by study participants will be reviewed. As curriculum gaps are identified, an effort will be made to develop a course to fill the need for a standardized public information post-secondary elective.

   The study is being conducted as part of a doctoral dissertation and completion of the Ed.D program for Lori Kent.

2. Participant Selection: You are being asked to participate because you are a practicing public information officer within Kentucky.

3. Explanation of Procedures: This interview is part of a research project. A standardized open-ended interview will be used. Open-ended interviews will be asked. These types of questions will be asked to encourage answers based on past experiences and opinions

4. The study activity includes telephone interviews.

5. Study duration: One-hour long interviews will be conducted in early 2020.

6. Recordings/Photographs: Recording will be utilized to document answers if consent is given below. Recordings will be used only by the researcher to confirm information used in research analysis.

7.
______ I agree to be audio recorded.
Initials

______ I do not agree to be audio recorded.
Initials

8. Discomforts and Risks: The possible risks and/or discomforts associated with participating in the study include discomfort due to recalling previous incident responses.

9. Benefits: You may benefit from courses resulting from this research study. Research participation is not a benefit.

10. Confidentiality: Your identity will be known to the researchers, but the information you provide will be kept confidential. We will share your responses with researchers at other universities and relevant professionals, but we will not include your name. Discussion related to participation in certain disaster responses may inadvertently allow others to decipher your identity.

11. Refusal/Withdrawal: Your participation is strictly voluntary and you are free to withdraw/stop participating at any time with absolutely no penalty. You are free to skip any questions that you would prefer not to answer.

12. Contact Information: Any questions about the procedures or conduct of this research should be brought to the attention of Dr. Teresa Clark at 270-809-6956, tclark24@murraystate.edu. If you would like to know the results of this study, please contact Dr. Teresa Clark at 270-809-6956, tclark24@murraystate.edu.

Your signature below indicates that this study has been explained to you, that your questions have been answered, and that you agree to take part in this study.

The dated approval stamp on this document indicates that this project has been reviewed and approved by the Murray State University Institutional Review Board (IRB) for the Protection of Human Subjects. If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant, you should contact the MSU IRB Coordinator at (270) 809-2916 or msu.irb@murraystate.edu.

Participant's Name (printed): ____

______________________________________ ____________________________
(Signature of Participant) (Date)

______________________________________ ____________________________
(Signature of Person Obtaining Consent) (Date)

Appendix B:

Interview Questions

Questions for One-on-One interviews with public information officers

**It should be noted that these questions are the basis for the interview. The researcher allowed for follow-up questions.

Do you mind if I record this interview?

1. What is your name?
2. How long have you been in your current position?
3. Have you responded to incidents within your time as PIO?
4. Did you receive PIO training or take relevant post-secondary courses prior to covering the traumatic event?
5. If so, who provided that training?
6. What did the training entail?
7. What level of education did you possess prior to becoming a public information officer?
8. Did the training prepare you to effectively do your job?
9. What training do you think public information officers should receive as part of their studies?
10. What should that training include?
11. Have you received any on-the-job training or continuing education specifically related to your PIO role while serving in your current position?
12. What behavioral qualities do you think a successful PIO should possess?
13. What do you wish you had known before covering an emergency incident?
14. Anything else you feel would be beneficial to the outcome of this study?

Appendix C:

Sample Recruitment Email

Recruitment for public information officers:

Research Participants Wanted: I am conducting a research study on the effectiveness of training and education for public information officers within Kentucky. I am searching for public information officers within Kentucky (only) who are actively serving in a PIO role. A public information officer for the purposes of this study is defined as someone who relays information through the media and other avenues of mass media coverage on behalf of an agency to relay what is believed to be in the public's best interest, often during critical incidents and emergencies. Please consider participating in this study by agreeing to a one-on-one telephone interview. Interviews will be conducted from March 23, 2020 to April 10, 2020. Interviews will be scheduled at the convenience of the public information officer. For questions, comments, or to schedule your interview please contact me at lori.knt@gmail.com or (270) 206-5088. Informed consent forms will be emailed to the PIO prior to the scheduling of the interview.

This study is not open to participants affiliated with Murray State University.

Appendix D:

Courses and Trainings

Post-Secondary Courses Outside of Kentucky

1. California State University COM 360 Public Affairs and Editorial Writing: "Reporting, writing and editorial interpretation of public affairs events and issues, including on-site coverage of local governments, civic affairs, schools, police and courts. Utilization of public documents, enhancement of interviewing techniques, with emphasis on accuracy, clarity and social responsibility. Two hours of lecture and two hours activity per week" (Communications, 2019).
2. Jacksonville State University EM 365 Public Information in Emergency Management: "A review of the skills needed to effectively deal with the public and media before, during, and after an emergency event" (School of Human Resources, 2019).
3. Jacksonville State University EM 366 Social Media in Emergency Management: "Overview of the history and evolution in social media in emergency management. Provides an understanding of social media and its uses in all aspects of emergency management" (School of Human Resources, 2019).
4. Bellevue University EMGT 340 Emergency Communications: "This course examines the key role of communications during a disaster. Students learn how an emergency manager will work with the media for clear communications with both the private and public sectors" (Course Listing, 2019).
5. Colorado Technical University HLS 263 Emergency Management and Communication in Disasters: "Focuses on the role of various response and healthcare agencies in mass casualty incidents as well as the role of public communication in disasters. Looks at the principles of emergency management, risk analysis and hazard mitigation. Assesses the

psychological impact of disasters on the public and a range of crisis communication strategies for minimizing panic and fostering resilience within communities affected by disasters” (HLS623, 2019).

6. Utah Valley University ESMG 4200 Disaster Response and the Public: “Prepares emergency services students to respond effectively to public information needs in both day-to-day emergencies as well as in more extreme disaster conditions. Explores theory and develops skills to effectively respond in crisis situations. Presents case studies in crisis response that demonstrate how information can help the public prepare, respond, and recover from disasters” (Course descriptions, 2019).

7. Utah Valley University ESMG 4500 Customer Service and Marketing for the Emergency Services: “Explores the principles and importance of customer-oriented service delivery within the emergency services. Looks at current practices and delves into emerging needs and solutions for marketing and public relations. Includes research and critical thinking strategies for local, national, and global perspectives on customer service” (Course descriptions, 2019).

8. American Public University System EDMG 321 Social Media Application to Emergency and Disaster Management: “Explores social media and other forms of communication and their value, and limitations in today’s environment, and cross-functional employment in support of emergency management, homeland security and public health emergency operations. In addition, the course evaluates the contributions of the internet and social media within a larger media/public relations context, as a stand-alone mass notification/information sharing platform, and as part of a communications strategy for disaster response” (Emergency Management, 2019).

9. American Public University System EDMG 498 Risk Communications: “Examines media management during local/national disasters and/or events. It will also address the media and all levels of governmental response. The focus will be on actual operations and on-site issues. This course provides the student an arsenal of tools and techniques that are universally prescriptive and can be implemented in nearly every risk-associated situation, from public health to accidents to terrorist attacks and even to challenges to corporate reputation management” (Emergency Management EDMB, 2019).
10. Crown College DEM 3512 Crisis and Risk Communications: “Examines communications that seek to inform different audiences of particular hazards to which they are exposed and the source of their vulnerability, as well as the methods for identifying and communicating appropriate solutions to the target audience. Addresses the various interactions that may be required between emergency management officials and a full spectrum of relevant stakeholders. This course is also considered a communications elective” (Disaster and Emergency Management, 2019).
11. Drury University EMMT 405 Public Information Management: “A review of the skills needed to effectively deal with the public and media before, during, and after an emergency event. Topics will include understanding the roles and responsibilities of the public information officer, understanding the roles and responsibilities of the media, conducting awareness campaigns, writing news releases, public speaking, granting interviews, media management, and dealing with high-profile incidents” (Evening and Online Programs, 2019).
12. Northwest Missouri State University COM 29420 Crisis Communications: “Prepare students to navigate the unique challenges communicators face during a crisis situation

through the study of basic communication theory and practice, media relations, relevant laws and ethics, cross-cultural communication, international crisis communication, and communication coordination practices” (Emergency and Disaster Management Major, 2019).

13. Pennsylvania College of Technology BEM 221 Crisis Communication: “Introduction to the theories, principles, and hands-on best practices associated with crisis communication with an emphasis on planning and conveying public communication before, during, and after natural and manmade crises” (Emergency Management Technology Courses, 2019).

14. Pikes Peak Community College ESA 310 Emergency Public Information and Media Training: “Provides training on communicating emergency public information. Covers communication technologies, relationships among methods of delivery, effective skills of an effective PIO, and effective communication tools given situations and audiences” (Emergency Service Administration, 2019).

15. Western Carolina University COM 400 Crisis Communications: “Developing, following and evaluating a crisis communication plan, serving as crisis spokesperson, and communicating with the media and other publics during a crisis” (Emergency and Disaster Management BS, 2019).

Post-Secondary Courses Inside of Kentucky

1. University of Kentucky COM 535 Risk and Crisis Communication: "Examines strategic risk and crisis communication research, theory, and practices. Special emphasis is placed on crisis planning, media relationships, image restoration, ethical responses, and organizational learning" (Communication Course Offerings, 2019).
2. Eastern Kentucky University CRJ 340 Crime and the Media: "Critiques images of crime, criminals and punishment in American popular culture. Examines news media, film and television as sites of cultural production and consumption" (Eastern Kentucky University, 2019)
3. Eastern Kentucky University PUB 425 Crisis and Risk Communication: "Communicates the correct messages through proper methods and channels before, during, and after a crisis. Exploration of social media in crises. Identification and management of appropriate publics for crisis communication. Emphasis of avoiding miscommunication during crises, emphasis on follow-up after crises" (Eastern Kentucky University, 2019).
4. Kentucky State University JOU 365 Advanced Public Affairs Reporting: "Intense study of and reporting about public agencies, specifically local, state, and federal governmental agencies" (Kentucky State University, 2019).
5. Murray State University JMC 620 Strategic Communications: "Course is designed to explore strategic communication strategies for businesses and other organizations which must communicate with the public. The course addresses the media, methods and ethics of institutions' interactions with a variety of publics" (Murray State University, 2019).
6. Western Kentucky University COM 364 Crisis Communication: "Examines communicative pre-crisis preparation and post-crisis response strategies" (WKU Course Descriptions, 2019).

Federal Emergency Management PIO Certifications

7. IS-29 Public Information Officer Awareness: "Provides an orientation to the public information function and the role of the Public Information Officer (PIO) in the public safety/emergency management environment" (FEMA, 2019).
8. IS-42 Social Media in Emergency Management: "Provides participants with best practices including tools, techniques and a basic roadmap to build capabilities in the use of social media technologies in their own organizations in order to further their emergency response missions" (FEMA, 2019).
9. G0289 Public Information Officer Awareness Training: "Introduces participants to the public information function and the role of the PIO in the public safety/emergency management environment" (FEMA, 2019).
10. G0290 Basic Public Information Officer Course: "Considers the value of communication before, during and after an incident. Helps PIOs identify critical audiences, both internal and external" (FEMA, 2019).
11. E0388 Advanced Public Information Officer: "This advanced level course teaches participants additional skills for use during escalating incidents, including strategic communications and incident action planning as it relates to Joint Information Center (JIC) operations" (FEMA, 2019).
12. E0393 Master Public Information Officer: "Prepares public information officers for an expanded role in delivering public information and warning using a strategic whole community approach" (FEMA, 2019)

Appendix E:

Proposed PIO Course Syllabus

COURSE DESCRIPTION AND PREREQUISITE(S):

The course is designed to equip new public information officers with hands-on training, expected certifications and professional guidance for the purpose of developing skills needed to function effectively in the role. Students explore required structures and requirements used during emergency incidents and gain practical experience, while learning from current leaders in the field. Topics include the Incident Command System, press release guidance, the joint information system, social media during emergency incidents and on-camera speaking. There are no prerequisites for this course.

Time	**Topic**	**Reading**	**Assignment**
Week 1	The Incident Command System	*Basic Guidance for Public Information Officers:* Chapter 1: The Incident Command System, Chapter 2: Preparedness	Panel: Local incident commanders/first responders
Week 2	The Incident Command System	Take ICS 100 online course. Introduction to the Incident Command System. (Will obtain certification.) https://training.fema.gov/is/courseoverview.aspx?code=IS-100.c Take ICS 200 online course. Basic Incident Command System for initial response. (Will obtain certification). https://training.fema.gov/is/courseoverview.aspx?code=IS-200.c	Panel: Local or state EM director (Discuss ICS organizational structure.)

Week 3	Public information officers	*Basic Guidance for Public Information Officers:* Chapter 3: Disaster/Emergency Response Take IS 29 online course: Public information officer awareness. (Will obtain certification.) https://training.fema.gov/is/courseoverview.aspx?code=IS-29.a	
Week 4	Press releases		How to write a press release (lecture) Written press release exercise/practice Getting to know your local media partners (lecture/exercise)
Week 5	The Incident Command System/Public information officers/ Recovery	Take ICS 700 online course: An introduction to the incident management system. (Will obtain certification). https://training.fema.gov/is/courseoverview.aspx?code=IS-700.b Take ICS 800 online course: National response framework, an	

		introduction. (Will obtain certification). https://training.fema.gov/is/courseoverview.aspx?code=is-800.c *Basic Guidance for Public Information Officers:* Chapter 5: Recovery	
Week 6	Joint information system	*Basic Guidance for Public Information Officers:* Chapter 4: Joint Information System and Joint Information Center	Take G291: Joint information system, joint information center planning for tribal, state and local PIOs. (1 day on-site course, requested through state emergency management.)
Week 7	Social media in emergency management	Take IS 42 online course: Social media in emergency management. (Will obtain certification.) https://training.fema.gov/is/courseoverview.aspx?code=IS-42	Panel: Experienced public information officer
Week 8	Public speaking	Case study reading: Aylesworth-Spink, S. (2016). Protecting the herd: An analysis of the public relations responses to the 2015 measles outbreak originating at Disneyland and	Basic public speaking (lecture) Public speaking exercise/practice

		Disneyland California Adventure Park. *Case Studies in Strategic Communication, 5. 191-219.*	
Week 9	On-camera speaking		On-camera interviews (lecture) On-camera speaking exercise/practice with local media Panel: Learning what you can and cannot say (multi-disciplinary PIO panel)
Week 10	On-camera speaking/social media	Case study reading: Hughes, A.L. & Palen, L., (2012). The evolving role of the public information officer: An examination of social media in emergency management. *Journal of Homeland Security and Emergency Management. 9:1.*	On-camera speaking exercise
Week 11	Working with the media		Tour of local media facilities

Week 12	HIPPA, Press releases	Case study discussion: Hawaii false missile alert	HIPPA 101 (lecture) Press release exercise
Week 13	ICS, Emergency Emergency Operations Center		ICS refresher On-camera speaking exercise Emergency operations center tour
Week 14	Emergency exercises		Emergency exercises 101 (lecture) Table-top exercise (in-class exercise)
Week 15	Full-scale exercise		Full-scale exercise
Week 16	Final exam		Final exam

Appendix F:

Example Course Syllabi

Course Syllabus
Jump to Today
Syllabus
Course Info

ESMG 4500: Customer Service and Marketing in the Emergency Services

Delivery: Online

PLEASE READ THE ENTIRE SYLLABUS AS THERE IS VITAL INFORMATION ABOUT YOUR SUCCESS!!

Instructor Info
Dr. R. Jeffery Maxfield, Professor
Department of Emergency Services
Utah Valley University
3131 Mike Jense Pkwy.
Provo, UT 84601
Phone 801 863 7736
Cell 801 201 2591
E-Mail: jmaxfield@uvu.edu
Office Hours: By Appointment
About your instructor:
Error! Filename not specified.

Dr. Jeff Maxfield is a professor in the Department of Emergency Services at Utah Valley University. Prior to joining UVU, Dr. Maxfield worked for 24 years at Salt Lake County Fire Department (now the Unified Fire Authority) where he retired as Assistant Chief/Chief Operations Officer (COO) for the department. He also worked as an international consultant specializing in leadership, organizational development, and personal development. Dr. Maxfield has an A.A.S. degree in Fire Science from Utah Valley University, a B.S. degree in Business Administration from the University of Phoenix, a Master of Public Administration degree from Brigham Young University, and Doctor of Education degree from Utah State University. His principle areas of research are leadership and adult education.

Course Description
Explores the principles and importance of customer-oriented service delivery within the emergency services. Looks at current practices and investigates emerging needs and solutions for marketing public services. Includes research and critical thinking strategies for local, national, and global perspectives on customer service.
Course Objectives

1. Demonstrate the value of customer relations and marketing to the community.
2. Apply principles of marketing to the public sector.
3. Show how customer service enhances service capabilities and effectiveness.
4. Develop a marketing strategy for an emergency services organization.
5. Analyze audience needs and create a marketing plan that meets one or more audience needs.
6. Evaluate how well the marketing plan meets audience needs.

Course Format and Delivery

This is an on-line course. All assignments should be submitted online. You may correspond with the instructor through the course webpages, by phone (801 201-2591) or by email (jmaxfield@uvu.edu).

Text

Kotler, P. and Lee, N. (2006) *Marketing in the Public Sector*. Wharton School Publishing, New Jersey.

E-Reading

Additional readings (optional):

- Birr, T. (1999) *Public and Media Relations for the Fire Service. Fire Engineering*, New Jersey.
- Brunacini, A. (1996) *Essentials of Fire Department Customer Service*. Library of Congress, Washington D.C.
- Graham, G. (2006) *Creating Loyal Customers:* A Three Step Approach to Success. Affairs of Government Presentation 2006.
- Lucas, R.W. (2005) *Customer Service*. McGraw Hill Erwin. Boston, MA.
- Performance Research Associates (PRA). (2007) *Delivering Knock Your Socks Off Service*. 4th Ed. AMACOM. New York.

Grading

**Late assignments will not be accepted unless prior arrangements with the instructor have been made—no exceptions!!

Grades will be based on:
13 weekly reading summaries 10 points each
13 weekly discussions 10 points each
Written assignment 20 points
Marketing plan 50 points
Critical reflection 20 points

Assignment	Points	Percent
13 Reading summaries 10 points each	130	35%
13 Discussion questions 10 points each	130	35%
Midterm paper	20	10%
Final marketing plan	50	15%
Critical reflection	20	5%
TOTAL	350	100%

Grading Scale:

Letter Grade	Percentage	Points
A	94-100%	94-100
A-	90-94%	90-94
B+	86-89%	86-89
B	83-85%	83-85
B-	80-82%	80-82
C+	77-79%	77-79
C	73-76%	73-76
C-	70-72%	70-72
D+	67-69%	67-69
D	63-66%	63-66
D-	60-62%	60-62
F	< 60%	< 60

Weekly Reading Summaries
Each student will be required to submit a reading summary for each week's readings. In addition to summarizing the reading, students will relate the week's reading to an outside reading and apply it to the emergency services. Then, after posting individual summaries and outside readings, students will read the summary postings of other students and engage in conversation with at least two other students.

Weekly Discussion Questions
**NOTE: Throughout the course you will be required to participate in online discussions with your class cohort. Each week there will be a topic(s) of discussion. These are supposed to be discussion based on the week's reading, topic, or other issues. Therefore, late discussion postings will not receive points. Students are required to post their own response to the topic(s) and then respond to two of the other student postings. This means that you will be responsible to respond at least three times to each discussion topic prior to or on the posting due date and time. Responses to discussion questions are due Thursday night. Comments on two other student responses are due Saturday night before midnight.
Written Assignments
Students will complete a written paper (20 points) and marketing plan for emergency services (50 points). Students should begin the assignments early so they can complete the assignments on time.
Paper Evaluation Criteria
Content: Addresses question, identifies concepts, applies theories and/or experience
Clarity: Clearly identifies points, uses proper syntax, flow, and organization
Writing: Spelling, grammar, sentence structure
Format: Utilizes proper citations, references, and structure for assignment
Critical Reflection

Students will reflect upon their learning experience in the course, by responding to the following questions: What did I learn? How did I learn it? Why is it important? What will I do differently because of it?

Due Dates

Assignments for each week will be due Saturday evening. Reading summaries and discussions are due Thursday night and comments to summaries and discussions are due Saturday night. Late assignments will not be accepted.

Technical Support

This course web site is hosted by UVU Office of Teaching and Learning. If you have any difficulty using the course website or its tools, please call the Office of Teaching and Learning Service Center for immediate support. The Office of Teaching and Learning Service Center is a one stop comprehensive support center.

Hours:

- Fall/Spring: M - F 8am - 8pm; Sat 10:30am-4:30pm; MST
- Summer: M - F 8 am - 7 pm; Sat 10:30am-4:30pm; MST

Live Chat: live chat (Links to an external site.)
Email: dehelp@uvu.edu
Telephone: 801.863.8255 (Utah County)
888.425.4412 (Toll Free)

Attention Students With Disabilities

"Students who need accommodations because of a disability may contact the UVU Accessibility Services Department (ASD), located on the Orem Campus in LC 312. To schedule an appointment or to speak with a counselor, call the ASD office at 801-863-8747. Deaf/Hard of Hearing individuals, email nicole.hemmingsen@uvu.edu or text 385-208-2677."

Equal Opportunity Statement

Utah Valley University is committed to the concept of equal opportunity, without regard to race, color, disability, religion, age sex, national origin or legally impermissible factors.

Religious Accommodations

At the beginning of each semester, you shall promptly review the course syllabus and class schedule and notify faculty to request an accommodation for sincerely held religious beliefs and practices using the Religious Accommodation Request Form

.

Dangerous Behavior

The faculty member has the right to demand and secure the immediate removal of any person from the classroom whenever the faculty member determines, to the best of his or her knowledge or belief, that the person's actions are threatening or dangerous to students or themselves. If the faculty member cannot resolve a disruptive situation, the faculty member may request that the disruptive person(s) leave the classroom. If the disruptive person(s) will not leave voluntarily, the faculty member may call University
Police for assistance. The incident shall be reported to the Dean of Students and to the Director of Judicial Affairs in accordance with Policy 541 Student Rights and Responsibilities Code.

Discriminatory, Exclusionary, or Disruptive Behavior

Faculty members observing discriminatory, exclusionary, or disruptive behavior follow procedures described in UVU Policy 541 Student Rights and Responsibilities Code 5.6

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Academic integrity is expected on all course assignments and activities. Plagiarism (which includes work or assignments previously submitted in other classes, even if they are your own work), cheating and/or fabrication or falsification of research on projects, papers or exams will absolutely not be tolerated and will be severely punished. The penalty for any offense will result in a failing grade for the course, as well as a formal report to the Department Chair and to Student Advising. Please read the complete " (Links to an external site.)Student Rights and Responsibilities" (Links to an external site.)Policy.

Course Withdrawal

The Department of Emergency Services at Utah Valley University adheres to the University's policy #503 on course Add/Drop/Withdrawals (Links to an external site.). As per the policy, the only exceptions for granting withdrawals after the withdrawal date are:

1. Students who are called to active duty in the armed forces/no-notice military deployments
2. Family of students who die during the semester
3. Long Term Medical Emergency affecting the student or an immediate family member (as per policy #507)

Disclaimer

This syllabus is a tentative schedule. There may be changes that will take priority over the scheduled assignments. I will try to forewarn you and explain the changes to the best of my ability.

Work ahead! DO NOT wait until the last minute to submit your assignments. The nature of technology is that the server will go down sometimes without notice and you will not be able to gain access to the course. LATE ASSIGNMENTS WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED unless PRIOR arrangements are made with the instructor. Your instructor will determine IF ANY OR HOW MUCH additional time will be allowed for handing in assignments. Points will be deducted for assignments that are late. Keep a copy of all written work in the event that an assignment is lost. UVU courses are NOT independent study and assignments must be completed by the due date and the course must be completed within the registered semester.

Course Summary:

Date	Details		
Sat Jan 11, 2020			
	Assignment	Discussion 1	due by 11:59pm

	Assignment	Reading Summary 1	due by 11:59pm
Sat Jan 18, 2020			
	Assignment	Discussion 2	due by 11:59pm
	Assignment	Reading Summary 2	due by 11:59pm
Sat Jan 25, 2020			
	Assignment	Discussion 3	due by 11:59pm
	Assignment	Reading Summary 3	due by 11:59pm
Sat Feb 1, 2020			
	Assignment	Discussion 4	due by 11:59pm
	Assignment	Reading Summary 4	due by 11:59pm
Sat Feb 8, 2020			
	Assignment	Discussion 5	due by 11:59pm
	Assignment	Reading Summary 5	due by 11:59pm
Sat Feb 15, 2020			
	Assignment	Mid-term paper	due by 11:59pm
Sat Feb 22, 2020			
	Assignment	Discussion 6	due by 11:59pm
	Assignment	Reading Summary 6	due by 11:59pm
Sat Feb 29, 2020			
	Assignment	Discussion 7	due by 11:59pm
	Assignment	Reading Summary 7	due by 11:59pm

Sat Mar 7, 2020

Assignment	Discussion 8	due by 11:59pm
Assignment	Reading Summary 8	due by 11:59pm

Sat Mar 14, 2020

Assignment	Discussion 9	due by 11:59pm
Assignment	Reading Summary 9	due by 11:59pm

Sat Mar 28, 2020

Assignment	Discussion 10	due by 11:59pm
Assignment	Discussion 11	due by 11:59pm
Assignment	Reading Summary 10	due by 11:59pm
Assignment	Reading Summary 11	due by 11:59pm

Sat Apr 4, 2020

Assignment	Discussion 12	due by 11:59pm
Assignment	Reading Summary 12	due by 11:59pm

Sat Apr 11, 2020

Assignment	Discussion 13	due by 11:59pm
Assignment	Reading Summary 13	due by 11:59pm

Sat Apr 18, 2020

Assignment	Critical Reflection	due by 11:59pm
Assignment	Marketing Plan	due by 11:59pm

May 2020
Calendar

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
26 Previous month	27 Previous month	28 Previous month	29 Previous month	30 Previous month	1	2

3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31 Today	1 Next month	2 Next month	3 Next month	4 Next month	5 Next month	6 Next month

Group	Weight
Assignments	0%
Reading Summaries	35%
Discussions	35%
Assignment	10%
Marketing plan	15%
Critical Reflection	5%
Total	100%

PUB 425: Public Relations Crisis
Fall 2019

Class	10:10 – 11:00 a.m.	MWF	Combs Building 307

Instructor: Dr. Kathy Previs Email: kathy.previs@eku.edu
Office: 320 Combs
Office Hours: In person: M,W:.8:00 -9:00 p.m., F: 11:00-2:00 p.m., Virtual: T,H 12:00-5:00 p.m., and by appointment.
Phone: 859-622-8936, but please avoid leaving messages on voicemail. Email messages will be answered much more promptly.

Course Description:

Public Relations Crisis (3 credit hours): Communicating the correct messages through proper methods and channels before, during, and after a crisis. Exploration of social media in crises. Identification of appropriate publics for crisis communication. Emphasis of avoiding miscommunication during crises, emphasis on follow-up after crises. Focus on case studies to illustrate proper and improper ways of handling crises.

Course Approach:

This is a lecture and seminar-style course, meaning I lecture, then we will apply concepts to a case study. You will read the assigned material and we will discuss it as a class on the day the assignment is due. Students are expected to be prepared for discussions and are expected to fully contribute to daily class discussions.

Course Objectives:

By the end of the semester, students will be able to:

- Define issues management and risk communication
- Explain crisis communication theory
- Discuss trends and issues in PR crises
- Understand tactics used to solve crises
- Analyze various communication strategies, strategic business plans, and media utilized in crisis resolution
- Describe how issues management and crisis communication fits in organizational structures
- Research, write and conduct oral communication and presentation skills critical to public relations practitioners.

Textbook:

Coombs, W. T. (2015). *Ongoing crisis communication: Planning, managing, and responding* (4th Ed.). Los Angeles: Sage.

Grading:

30% - Midterm Exam
20% - Final Exam
20% - Chapter 2-9 case studies* (must be present in class to receive credit; cannot be made up)
20% - Final Paper and Presentation
10% - Participation and professional demeanor

Deadlines:

Deadlines are strictly observed. Late assignments will be accepted or evaluated solely at the instructor's discretion, and student has one week to make arrangements with instructor. On time means at the beginning of the scheduled class period. If you know you will miss class, your work must be turned in prior to the date you expect to miss. If illness or other officially excused absence causes you to miss class, your absence must be documented and arrangements made individually.

Accuracy:

Errors in fact (spelling included) and style will result in a poor grade, even if the error is clearly typographical or the result of carelessness or failing to edit. Typically, assignment grades are lowered ten for each error in fact, grammar, style, or spelling. Proofing matters, especially in public relations!

Format:

All assignments must be typed and submitted on 8.5X11" paper, in black ink, on white or ivory paper, using 12-point Times New Roman font with one inch margins top, bottom, left and right. Papers not typed in this format will not be accepted.

Attendance policy:
Attendance is critical and expected. If you must miss class, you are responsible for all of the material covered in class that day. In keep with learning to be professional public relations practitioners, you are expected to arrive to class ON TIME and prepared.

Plagiarism: Copying, borrowing, or in any way representing others' work as your own is a serious academic offense and will result in a failing grade for this course. Please refer to the rules, regulations, and penalties for academic misconduct in your Student Handbook. Students are expected to do their own work at all times. Academic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to, cheating on an examination, quiz, or other written assignments, and plagiarism (borrowing another's ideas or words without proper documentation.) Other examples include "regurgitating" an assignment you have presented elsewhere before, using a presentation that someone gave in another class, "parroting" one or two sources for a presentation, fabricating evidence, or failing to give credit for a source. All students must properly acknowledge sources of information in writing. Violations will be reported to the Office of Academic Integrity. If you have any questions whatsoever of what constitutes plagiarism, please contact me BEFORE the assignment is due (i.e., ignorance is not an excuse).

Disability Accommodation Statement:
The University strives to make all learning experiences as accessible as possible. If you are registered with the EKU Center for Student Accessibility (CSA), please obtain your accommodation letters from the CSA, present them to the course instructor, and discuss the accommodations needed. If you believe you need an accommodation and are not registered with the CSA, please contact the office in 361 Whitlock Building by email at disserv@eku.edu or by telephone at (859) 622-2933. Upon individual request, this syllabus can be made available in an alternative format.
A student with a "disability" may be an individual with a physical or psychological impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities, to include, but not limited to: seeing, hearing, communicating, interacting with others, learning, thinking, concentrating, sitting, standing, lifting, performing manual tasks, working. Additionally, pregnancy accompanied by a medical condition(s), which causes a similar substantial limitation, may also be considered under the Americans with Disabilities Amendments Act (ADAAA).

Respect for Others: Because we want to create a classroom environment that is comfortable for all, you are asked to (1) pay attention and be fully engaged in classroom discussions and activities, (2) turn off and put away cell phones, pagers, beepers, and computers when in class; lab computers are to be used solely for assignments, not surfing the Web and doing other, non-class related activities; (3) display respect for your classmates and instructor by avoiding racist, sexist, or other negative verbal or nonverbal messages that may make others in our classroom community uncomfortable, (4) be willing to accept others' personalities and listen to their opinions, even if they are different from yours. Failure to abide by these rules will result in point deductions from your final grade.

<u>TENTATIVE WEEKLY CALENDAR (subject to change as needed):</u>

Week 1 – Aug. 19-23:	Introduction and course expectations
	Need for Crisis Knowledge, Read Ch. 1
Week 2 – Aug. 26-30:	Presentation of Ch. 1 case studies
	Effects of the Online World on Crises, Read Ch. 2
Week 3 – Sept. 2-6:	(No class Monday, Sept. 2: Labor Day)
	Presentation of Ch. 2 case studies
	Proactive Mgmt. Functions, Read Ch. 3
Week 4 – Sept. 9-13:	Presentation of Ch. 3 case studies
	Prevention Process, Read Ch. 4
Week 5 – Sept. 16-20:	Presentation of Ch. 4 case studies
	Crisis Prep I, Read Ch. 5
Week 6 – Sept. 23-27:	Presentation of Ch. 5 case studies
	Crisis Prep II, Read Ch. 6

Week 7 – Sept. 30- Oct. 4:	Presentation of Ch. 6 case studies Test 1* (Chs. 1-6)
Week 8 – Oct. 7-11:	Group work and Final Paper Assignments* Guest Speaker, Heath Covey, Director of Communication, City of Chesapeake, VA*
Week 9 – Oct. 14-18:	Fall Break: No classes Monday, Tuesday Toyota Field Trip
Week 10 – Oct. 21-25:	Presentation of Toyota reflection paper Crisis Recognition, Read Ch. 7
Week 11 – Oct. 28-Nov. 1:	Presentation of Ch. 7 case studies No class on Wednesday: Communication Dept. Advising
Week 12 – Nov. 4-8:	Group work* Crisis Response, Read Ch. 8
Week 13 – Nov. 11-15:	Presentation of Ch. 8 case studies

Post-crisis Concerns, Read Ch.9

Week 14 – Nov. 18-22: Presentation of Ch. 9 case studies

Outline of final paper due: work in class*

Week 15 – Nov. 25-29: Test 2* (Chs. 7-9)

Thanksgiving: No Class Wednesday-Friday

Week 16 – Dec. 2-6: Group presentations* (Groups 1, 2)

Group presentations* (Groups 3, 4)

Final Exam: TBA*

* Attendance is mandatory; student must provide university-approved excuse if absent

Note: Because many of your assignments will be to write outside the classroom, I encourage you to take advantage of EKU's Noel Studio for Academic Creativity. This is a free resource for the EKU community, including graduate and undergraduate students. At the Noel Studio, a trained consultant will work you or a small group on any piece of written or oral communication, at any stage in the process from brainstorming to finished product. Consultants can also help you develop effective research strategies. For more information, visit the Noel Studio website at http://www.studio.eku.edu/ or call 859-622-6229.

Student Success Center

The Student Success Center, located on the ground floor of the library, provides free assistance for all EKU students. Visit the Center for tutoring in more than 100 subjects. Services include mentoring, workshops, advising, studying, computer use, and any questions related to your college experience. Email successcenter@eku.edu.

BELLEVUE UNIVERSITY

Course Syllabus Part I
EMGT 340 Emergency Communications

4 Credit Hours

Course Description
This course examines the key role of communications during a disaster. Students will learn how an emergency manager will work with the media for clear communications with both the private and public sectors.

Course Prerequisites
Acceptance into the Emergency Management (EMGT) accelerated degree completion program

Course Objectives
Students who successfully complete this course should be able to:
1. Analyze the principles of effective communications through the four phases of Emergency Management.
2. Evaluate the impact of new media on disaster communication strategy.
3. Validate the five critical assumptions of a disaster communication strategy.
4. Assess emergency communication strategies.

Grading Scale

94 – 100% = A	87 – 89% = B+	77 – 79% = C+	67 – 69% = D+
90 – 93% = A-	84 – 86% = B	74 – 76% = C	64 – 66% = D
	80 – 83% = B-	70 – 73% = C-	60 – 63% = D-
			0 – 59% = F

Topic Outline
I. Communications, the Critical Function
   A. Leadership commitment
   B. Situational awareness
II. Disaster Communications in a Changing World
   A. Historical uses of media
   B. The evolution of new media use in disasters
III. Principles of a Successful Communications Strategy
   A. Focus on the needs
   B. Effective communications
IV. Application of Communications Principles to All Four Phases of EM
   A. Mitigation
   B. Preparedness
   C. Response
   D. Recovery
V. Disaster Communications Capabilities

BELLEVUE UNIVERSITY

A. Contribution
B. Partnerships

VI. Working with the Media
A. News operations
B. Building relationships

COM 535: Risk & Crisis Communication
MW, 8-9:15 a.m.
Patterson Hall 305

Professor: Dr. Shari Veil
Office: 263 Blazer Dining (859-218-0468)
Office Hours: Tuesdays & Wednesdays 11 a.m. – Noon
Email Address: shari.veil@uky.edu

Course Description: This course examines risk and crisis communication research, theory, and practices. Special emphasis is placed on crisis planning, media relationships, image restoration, ethical responses, and organizational learning.

Course Objectives

- To understand how communication can prevent, cause, accelerate, and assist in the recovery from a crisis event.
- To understand risk assessment and the crisis planning process.
- To introduce students to applicable theories and frameworks.
- To increase awareness of best practices in risk and crisis communication.
- To understand audience diversity and vulnerable populations in a crisis.
- To explain a crisis event through case study analysis.
- To examine the practical applications and ethical implications of crisis planning and response.

Required Textbooks

· Coombs, W. T. (2019). *Ongoing crisis communication: Planning, managing, and responding.* (5th ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Required Readings (Available on Canvas in assigned modules)

· Fearn-Banks, K. (2011). The crisis communications plan. In K. Fearn-Banks *Crisis communications: A casebook approach* (4th ed.), (pp. 301-339). New York: Routledge.
- Fink, S. (1986). Identifying the crisis. In S. Fink, *Crisis management* (pp. 71-79). New York: AMACOM.
- Veil, S. R. (2011). Mindful learning in crisis management. *Journal of Business Communication, 48*(2), 116-147.

ASSESSMENT
(approximately 400 POINTS)
Activities and Assignments (~50 POINTS)
Students will complete in-class activities, assignments, case discussions, and/or quizzes throughout the semester. If students are absent, late, or leave class early, they cannot earn points for these activities without an excused absence and a make-up assignment.

Reading Reflections (50 POINTS)
Students will respond to reading reflection questions online via Canvas by 8 a.m. the day readings are due.
Crisis of the Day (25 POINTS)
On the assigned day, students will deliver a 5-minute presentation to the class and turn in a 1-2 page summary of a current crisis in the headlines (no headline more than 6 months old). In both the presentation and summary, students will describe the crisis situation including organization(s)/ individual(s) involved, current status, key issues, and an assessment of the crisis communication response thus far. The summary must be based on at least three verifiable sources cited correctly using APA. If students are not able to present on the initial day chosen, they must secure a trade in presentation day and both parties must notify the professor a week before the first of the two presentations. No student can present a crisis that was presented on a previous day. Students who miss their presentation day cannot make-up the assignment without an excused absence. Attendance/activity points for the day and exam questions may be based on the crisis cases presented.

Exams (100 POINTS)
There will be two exams each covering half the term (50 points each).

Crisis Communication Plan Drafts (25 POINTS)
Student teams will submit drafts of their crisis communication plan throughout the semester. Each draft must correct the issues identified previously and extend the number of plan components included until complete.

Crisis Communication Plan Presentation (25 POINTS)
Student teams will present their crisis communication plan project to the class. Using PowerPoint as an AV tool, students will explain the background of the organization, the risk assessment process, and challenges and opportunities faced by the organization for crisis prevention, planning, response, and recovery.

Crisis Communication Plan (100 POINTS)
Students will work in teams to create a crisis communication plan for a client of their choosing that has at least 10 paid/invested organizational members. Clients must be pre-approved and organizational leadership must provide written verification that they understand the expectations of the project and consent to working with the student team. The plan will include the components outlined in the description and examples in chapter 5 and a minimum of 10 risk assessments for potential crises and strategies for responding to those crises in the appendix. The final plan must be submitted via email to the client, copying the professor.

Team Expectations and Evaluation (25 POINTS)
Student teams will create and sign a contract that will outline the expectations for each team member and the penalties for not abiding by the team contract. At the end of the semester, each student will submit an evaluation of their team members based on the team expectations outlined at the beginning of the semester. Each contract will include a clause that clearly describes the process for firing a team member. Team members who are fired cannot earn the team

expectations and evaluation points and must complete an individual 20-25 page crisis case analysis paper and presentation for their final project, including abstract, introduction, literature review, data collection and analysis methods, case description, discussion, results, future research, limitations, and a reference list with at least 20 peer-reviewed sources cited in APA.

GRADING AND COMMUNICATION

All grades will be kept up to date in Canvas. Announcements and updates will also be communicated via Canvas. Additional electronic correspondence from the University, the College, the Department of Communication, your professors, and advisors will be sent to your official University Email Address (UEA), as defined in the UK Account Manager. It is your responsibility to regularly check this account or forward this address to an account that you will check regularly. Log-in to the account manager (http://ukam.uky.edu) using LinkBlue to confirm your University Email Address and delivery location.

Grading Scale
90 – 100%: A
80 – 89%: B
70 – 79%: C
60 – 69%: D
59% and below: E

Mid-term Grades: Mid-term grades will be posted in myUK by the deadline established in the Academic Calendar (http://www.uky.edu/Registrar/AcademicCalendar.htm)

Final Exam: There will be no final exam. Final projects are due via Canvas by 10:30 a.m. on Tuesday, May 5.

Disability Resources: If you have a documented disability that requires academic accommodations, please see me as soon as possible during scheduled office hours. In order to receive accommodations in this course, you must provide me with a Letter of Accommodation from the Disability Resource Center (DRC) at least one week before accommodations would need to be in place. The DRC coordinates campus disability services available to students with disabilities. It is located on the corner of Rose Street and Huguelet Drive in the Multidisciplinary Science Building, Suite 407. You can reach them via phone at (859) 257-2754 and via email at drc@uky.edu. Their web address is http://www.uky.edu/StudentAffairs/DisabilityResourceCenter/.

Grievance Procedure: If students have concerns regarding some aspect of the course or the evaluation of their work, they must wait 24 hours after receiving any grades specific to the concern before contacting the professor to schedule a meeting. This way students have time to fully review comments and assignment guidelines before scheduling a meeting. If the student and professor cannot reach a satisfactory resolution, a joint meeting will be scheduled with the Chair of the Department of Communication. However, since the professor of this class is the Chair of the Department of Communication, a joint meeting will instead be scheduled with the Dean of the College of Communication and Information.

ATTENDANCE AND PARTICIPATION

Federal regulation mandates that federal financial aid funds (Title IV) may only be disbursed to students who are actually enrolled and engaged in coursework. This regulation mandates that institutions provide evidence of engagement early in each semester. Failure to provide evidence includes sizeable fees and fines. To comply with this mandate, all instructors of undergraduate and graduate courses (including lab sections, online courses, internships, independent studies, and research credits) in the College of Communication and Information will be required to confirm student attendance or engagement in classes during the two-week period following the last day to add a class. If students have not attended and completed activities during this period they will be dropped from their courses.

Students will earn their participation grade through class attendance and engagement over the course of the semester. Class participation may include activities, quizzes, discussions, reflective writing, etc. These opportunities may or may not be announced in advance. Participation points can only be made up with documentation of a university-approved excused absence; therefore, students with unexcused absences cannot earn participation points for the day. Participation and attendance may be taken at the beginning, middle, or end of class, so if you are late or leave early, you risk not earning participation points for the day.

Technology & Outside Work: Students are expected to be engaged and limit distractions for themselves and others during class time. Unapproved use of technology (including checking cellphones/ listening to music) and outside work is prohibited during class time. All items must be put away and silenced when you enter class unless you have disability accommodations or technology is required for an activity. Violation of this policy will result in forfeiture of the class activity points for the day even if you were engaged during the activity.

Excused Absences & Verification: Students need to notify the Instructor of anticipated absences they wish to be considered excused prior to missing class when possible. For both anticipated and unanticipated absences – if the student wishes the absence to be considered as excused, proper and appropriate documentation verifying the legitimacy of the absence must be presented to the Instructor within one week of the student's return to class in order to be considered. If appropriate and proper documentation is not submitted within one week of the student's return, the absences will be considered unexcused: S.R. 5.2.4.2 defines the following as acceptable reasons for excused absences: (a) serious illness (medical documentation may be required, see below), (b) illness or death of family member (documentation may be required), (c) University-related trips (see below), (d) major religious holidays (see below), (e) interviews for graduate/professional school or full-time employment post-graduation, and (f) other circumstances found to fit "reasonable cause for nonattendance" by the Instructor. If you anticipate an absence that falls under "other circumstances" please check with the Instructor PRIOR to the absence and she or he will make the determination whether the absence is to be excused or not excused as per University policy (see below). University-related trips include those for members of student organizations sponsored by an educational unit, trips for University classes, and trips for participation in intercollegiate athletic events, including club sports registered with the university as well as varsity sports. For University trips, when possible, the student must notify the Instructor of Record prior to the occurrence of such absences, but in no case shall such notification occur more than one week after the student's return to class or the absence will be deemed unexcused. Instructors may request formal notification from appropriate university personnel to document the student's participation in such trips.

Excused Absence for Illness: According to University Senate Rule 5.2.4.2.A, a student's absence is excused when a student's illness is "significant." The Instructor has "the right to request appropriate verification" of the illness. University Health Services ("UHS") has prepared a statement about class attendance and student illnesses that is useful for students and faculty. That statement may be found at http://ukhealthcare.uky.edu/uhs/student-health/attendance/. The statement discusses the important public health and policy reasons why a student with a significant illness ought to be absent from class yet should not make a visit to UHS. UHS provides in this circumstance an "Explanatory Statement of Absence from Class" or a "Tier 1" excuse that students may complete and submit to the Instructor to document an absence from class. "Tier 2" and "Tier 3" documents are generated by UHS. The Tier 2 document is an email sent to the student, at the student's request. The email confirms that the student made a medical visit to UHS. In order to provide the Instructor with verification of an illness, the student will forward the email received from UHS to the Instructor, who may then email the original sender to verify the authenticity of the email sent to the student. The Tier 3 document is a form that UHS provides by email to the student. This form "states any applicable restrictions [on the student] based on illness or injury." Tier 1 statements are not acceptable as documentation justifying an absence for it to be excused. Tier 2 will be accepted as appropriate documentation for an absence to be considered excused when the student makes a medical visit to the UHS on the day and time of class. Tier 3 will be required for all other circumstances such as a major illness requiring missing more than one class period or has other extenuating circumstances. Health care providers' notes presented as verification from outside the University Health System will be expected to follow the same verification principles as the UHS Tier 2 and UHS Tier 3 documentation and will be evaluated accordingly.

Excused Absences Religious Holidays: Students anticipating an absence for a major religious holiday are responsible for notifying the professor in writing of anticipated absences due to their observance of such holidays no later than the last day of add/drop. Information regarding dates of major religious holidays may be obtained through the religious liaison, Dr. David Beach (859-257-2754).

Withdrawals and Incompletes: In situations where a student's total EXCUSED absences exceed 1/5 (or 20%) of the class periods scheduled for the semester, students are strongly encouraged to withdraw (take a "W") from the class as per university policy. If a student has excused absences in excess of one-fifth of the class contact hours for that course, the student shall have the right to receive a 'W', or the Instructor of Record may award an 'I' for the course. [US: 2/9/87; RC: 11/20/87]. Specifically, if a student has excused absences in excess of 20% or one-fifth of the class contact hours for that course, a student shall have the right to petition for a "W," and the Instructor may strongly encourage the student to petition for a "W." In the case where a significant number of excused absences (>20%) affect the course grade, the student may petition for an "I" (or Incomplete) in the course. To do so, the student will be required to make arrangements with the instructor to complete incomplete work, which accrued due to the number of excused absences. An "I" grade shall not be conferred when the student's reason for incompleteness is due to unexcused absences or found to be unsatisfactory to the Instructor of

Record. For each "I" grade request, the student and Instructor of Record shall complete an appropriate file record on a standard form provided by the Registrar, which shall include the following: (a) the name of the student; (b) the course number and hours of credit; (c) semester and year of enrollment; (d) signature of the Instructor of Record; (e) a brief statement of the reason(s) for recording the incomplete; (f) specific instructions on how alternate grades on the work to be completed will affect the final grade; (g) the specific time requirement (not to exceed 12 months) set by the Instructor of Record for removal of the "I" grade and consequences of not removing the "I" grade; and (h) signature of the student, if feasible. Failure to comply will result in the Instructor's assignment of a letter grade the course. In practical terms, this means that for classes that meet twice/week one cannot have more than 6 excused absences or students will be encouraged withdraw from the class as per University policy [US: 2/9/87; RC: 11/20/87].

Responsibility for Missed Information, Work and/or Exams: If you miss a class, you are responsible for obtaining information presented during that class session (this includes videos or notes). This is not the Instructor's responsibility. For excused absences the Instructor shall give the student an opportunity to make up the work and/or the exams missed due to an excused absence, and shall do so, if feasible, during the semester in which the absence occurred [US:11/10/85 and RC: 11/20/87]. The Instructor is under no obligation to provide the student an opportunity to make up the work and/or exams for unexcused absences.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Per University policy, students shall not plagiarize, cheat, or falsify or misuse academic records. Students are expected to adhere to University policy on cheating and plagiarism in all courses. The minimum penalty for a first offense is a zero on the assignment on which the offense occurred. If the offense is considered severe or the student has other academic offenses on their record, more serious penalties, up to suspension from the University may be imposed. See additional information for specific procedures for addressing academic offenses.

Plagiarism and cheating are serious breaches of academic conduct. Each student is advised to become familiar with the various forms of academic dishonesty as explained in the Code of Student Rights and Responsibilities. Complete information can be found at the following website: http://www.uky.edu/Ombud. A plea of ignorance is not acceptable as a defense against the charge of academic dishonesty. It is important that you review this information as all ideas borrowed from others need to be properly credited.

Senate Rules 6.3.1 (see http://www.uky.edu/Faculty/Senate/ for the current set of Senate Rules) states that all academic work, written or otherwise, submitted by students to their instructors or other academic supervisors, is expected to be the result of their own thought, research, or self-expression. In cases where students feel unsure about a question of plagiarism involving their work, they are obliged to consult their instructors on the matter before submission.

When students submit work purporting to be their own, but which in any way borrows ideas, organization, wording, or content from another source without appropriate acknowledgment of the fact, the students are guilty of plagiarism. Plagiarism includes reproducing someone else's work (including, but not limited to a published article, a book, a website, computer code, or a paper from a friend) without clear attribution. Plagiarism also includes the practice of employing or allowing another person to alter or revise the work, which a student submits as his/her own, whoever that other person may be. Students may discuss assignments among themselves or with an instructor or tutor, but when the actual work is done, it must be done by the student, and the student alone.

When a student's assignment involves research in outside sources or information, the student must carefully acknowledge exactly what, where and how he/she has employed them. If the words of someone else are used, the student must put quotation marks around the passage in question and add an appropriate indication of its origin. Making simple changes while leaving the organization, content, and phraseology intact is plagiaristic. However, nothing in these Rules shall apply to those ideas, which are so generally and freely circulated as to be a part of the public domain. Please note: Any assignment you turn in may be submitted to an electronic database to check for plagiarism.

Senate Rule 6.3.2: Cheating is defined by its general usage. It includes, but is not limited to, the wrongfully giving, taking, or presenting any information or material by a student with the intent of aiding himself/herself or another on any academic work which is considered in any way in the determination of the final grade. The fact that a student could not have benefited from an action is not by itself proof that the action does not constitute cheating. Any question of definition shall be referred to the University Appeals Board. The Department of Communication also considers presenting false documentation of an excused absence (e.g., a falsified note from a doctor) as cheating.

Procedures for addressing academic offenses: The Department of Communication will follow the procedures outlined by Senate Rules 6.3.0 and 6.4.0 to address academic offenses, summarized by the Ombud at http://www.uky.edu/Ombud/ForStudents_AcademicIntegrity.php First, the instructor and student should set up a meeting so both parties may explain and discuss concerns of cheating/plagiarism. Second, after the meeting, if the instructor deems that NO academic offense has occurred, no further action will be taken. However, if, after the meeting, the instructor deems an academic offense HAS occurred, the instructor will inquire about a student's prior record of academic offenses from the Registrar's Office. Third, depending on the student's prior record, the instructor will determine the penalty. The minimum penalty for a first offense is a zero on the assignment on which the offense occurred. If the offense relates to a student's attendance (e.g., in the case of falsified documentation of an excused absence), the minimum penalty is an unexcused absence and a zero on any missed assignments made up using the falsified excused absence. The student may also be reported for a violation of the Student Code of Conduct through the Office of Student Conduct. If the offense is considered severe or the student has other academic offenses on record, more serious penalties may be imposed, starting with an E in the course and ranging up to suspension/expulsion. Fourth, EVERY academic offense resulting in some penalty will be reported to the Ombud to be kept on the student's record with the Registrar's Office. The offense will be reported via a letter from the Director of Undergraduate Studies sent to the student's university email account (cc: instructor and Academic Ombud). The student has the right to appeal the department's determination by contacting the Academic Ombud within ten days. More information about this appeals process can be found at http://www.uky.edu/Ombud/ForStudents_AcademicIntegrity.php

If the department determines a student has committed an academic offense (and that offense is upheld by the university in the case of an appeal), the student may NOT withdraw from the course. If the student does withdraw, the Registrar will reinstate the student.

DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

The College of Communication and Information is committed to fostering a diverse, welcoming, empowering, and inclusive community. We believe that diversity and inclusion are drivers of excellence, collaboration, creativity, and success. We strongly support intellectual freedom and the right to hold diverse perspectives, while at the same time condemning all forms of hatred and oppression.

ADVISING INFORMATION

Upper-division students should stay in contact with their academic advisor to make sure they are on track for graduation. If you have 85 or more completed hours (not including current coursework), then you can schedule a degree progress review with Suanne Early, Director of Student Affairs, for Spring 2020. Appointments will be available beginning January 27, 2020. To schedule the appointment: 1) Start on the myInfo tab in myUK; 2) Click on the myAppointments link on the left side; 3) Choose Advising Department (College of Communication); 4) Choose Appointment Category (Degree Progress Review); 5) View the calendar and select an appointment time (options in BLUE). An email confirmation of your appointment will be sent to your UK email account. Failure to complete a degree progress review could result in delayed graduation. Please note that the advising office is located in Room 9 of Blazer Dining.

Degree applications: Students must apply for their degree. To be eligible to apply for the degree, a student must have completed 85 or more credit hours. This does not count any current coursework. To submit a degree application, go to the GPS Degree Audit in myUK and select “Graduation” on the left side. From there scroll down to the green “Apply for graduation” box. Degree application deadlines are March 20 for a May degree, July 1 for an August degree, and November 1 for a December degree. You are encouraged to apply early as there will be no extensions on these deadlines.

COM 535 DAILY SCHEDULE

Dates and assignments can and will change

Wednesday, January 15: Perceptions of Risk and Crisis

Introductions, Crisis of the Day Example

- In-Class Activity: Class expectations and concerns

Monday, January 20: MLK Day – No Class

Wednesday, January 22: Defining Crisis Management
Crisis of the Day 1 & 2

- Reading & Reflection: Coombs Ch. 1, Fink
    - In-Class Activity: Where is the crisis?

Monday, January 27: Crisis Management Models
Crisis of the Day 3 & 4

- Reading & Reflection: Veil
- In-Class Activity: *The Spill*

Wednesday, January 29: Risk Communication
Crisis of the Day 5 & 6

- Reading & Reflection: Coombs Ch. 2
- In-Class Activity: Risky Jenga

Monday, February 3: Issue Management
Crisis of the Day 7 & 8

- In-Class Activity: Identifying risks, issues, and stakeholders

Wednesday, February 5: Crisis Mitigation and Stakeholders
Crisis of the Day 9 & 10

- Reading & Reflection: Coombs Ch. 3
- In-Class Activity: Final project discussion, client proposals, and initial group formation

Monday, February 10: Team Workday

Wednesday, February 12: Crisis Types and Teams
Crisis of the Day 11 & 12

- Reading & Reflection: Coombs Ch. 4
- Due Today: Team Contract

Monday, February 17: Spokespersons
Crisis of the Day 13 & 14

- Due Today: Client name, contact information, and email verification that the client understands the expectations of the project
- In-Class Activity: The Game Part 1

Wednesday, February 19: Catch-up
Crisis of the Day 15 & 16

- In-Class Activity: The Game Part 2

- Exam Prep

Monday, February 24
- Exam 1

Wednesday, February 26: Crisis Planning 1
Crisis of the Day 17 & 18
- Reading & Reflection: Coombs Ch. 5
- In-Class Activity: Planning Meeting 1

Monday, March 2: Crisis Planning 2
Crisis of the Day 19 & 20
- Reading & Reflection: Fearn-Banks
- In-Class Activity: Planning Meeting 2

Wednesday, March 4: Information Processing Errors
Crisis of the Day 20 & 21
- Reading & Reflection: Coombs Ch. 6
- In-Class Activity: Planning Meeting 3

Monday, March 9: Team Work Day

Wednesday, March 11: "Arrogance and Hubris"
- In-Class Activity: *The Smartest Guys in the Room*
- Due Today: Draft 1

March 16 – 20: Spring Break – No Class

Monday, March 23: Crisis Response
Crisis of the Day 22 & 23
- Reading & Reflection: Coombs Ch. 7
- In-Class Activity: Draft Discussions

Wednesday, March 25: Reputation Management
Crisis of the Day 24 & 25
- In-Class Activity: Planning Meeting 4

Monday, March 30: Best Practices
- In-Class Activity: Planning Meeting 5

Wednesday, April 1: Strategy Development
- Due Today: Draft 2

Monday, April 6: Learning & Memorializing
- Reading & Reflection: Coombs Ch. 8
- In-Class Activity: Draft Discussions

Wednesday, April 8: Execution of a Plan
- In-Class Activity: It's Not a Game Anymore
- Exam Prep

Monday, April 13: Exam 2

Wednesday, April 15: Team Work Day

Monday, April 20: Team Work Day
- Due Today: Draft 3

Wednesday, April 22: Team Work Day
- In-Class Activity: Draft Discussions

Monday, April 27: Presentation Day 1

Wednesday, April 29: Presentation Day 2

Tuesday, May 5: Final Plans Submitted via Canvas by 10:30 a.m.

Appendix G:
IRB Approval

MURRAY STATE
UNIVERSITY

Institutional Review Board

328 Wells Hall
Murray, KY 42071-3318
270-809-2916• msu.irb@murraystate.edu

TO:	Teresa Clark, College of Education and Human Services
FROM:	Jonathan Baskin, IRB Coordinator JB
DATE:	12/16/2019
RE:	Human Subjects Protocol I.D. – IRB # 20-109

The IRB has completed its review of your student's Level 1 protocol entitled *Educating Public Information Officers in Kentucky*. After review and consideration, the IRB has determined that the research, as described in the protocol form, will be conducted in compliance with Murray State University guidelines for the protection of human participants.

The forms and materials that have been approved for use in this research study are attached to the email containing this letter. These are the forms and materials that must be presented to the subjects. Use of any process or forms other than those approved by the IRB will be considered misconduct in research as stated in the MSU IRB Procedures and Guidelines section 20.3.

Your stated data collection period is from 12/16/2019 to 12/15/2020.

If data collection extends beyond this period, please submit an Amendment to an Approved Protocol form detailing the new data collection period and the reason for the change.

This Level 1 approval is valid until 12/15/2020.

If data collection and analysis extends beyond this date, the research project must be reviewed as a continuation project by the IRB prior to the end of the approval period, 12/15/2020. You must reapply for IRB approval by submitting a Project Update and Closure form (available at murraystate.edu/irb). You must allow ample time for IRB processing and decision prior to your expiration date, or your research must stop until such time that IRB approval is received. If the research project is completed by the end of the approval period, then a Project Update and Closure form must be submitted for IRB review so that your protocol may be closed. It is your responsibility to submit the appropriate paperwork in a timely manner.

The protocol is approved. You may begin data collection now.

Opportunity *afforded*

murraystate.edu