

Design Document

College Student Readiness: Model 1 (Email Blast)

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Monday, June 28, 2004

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Design Document

College Student Readiness: Model 1

(Email Blast)

Overview

Educational Context

The County of San Diego is home to over thirty college campuses, with an estimated student population of 200,000 students. Currently, college campuses are considered to be “soft targets” for terrorist attacks. However, few, if any efforts have been made to promote student awareness of and preparedness for terrorist incidents, as well as other emergency situations. The College Student Readiness program is an effort which attempts to fill this gap by educating college students on the steps they can take to be more prepared for disasters and emergencies.

The aim is to serve the entire college population in the most effective manner possible. It has therefore been necessary to develop two distinct models for reaching students on different campuses. This model addresses the needs and processes of large campuses, such as San Diego State University, that are equipped with network systems that can reach all or most of its students via email. A separate model, ‘Peer Distribution’, has been developed to address the needs of campuses that do not have such systems in place.

Instructional Objectives

The over-arching goal of the College Student Readiness project is to increase students’ awareness and preparedness regarding emergency situations, including terrorist incidents. The following three objectives and sub-objectives have been identified as the most critical aspects in building a safety and preparedness plan:

1. Students will demonstrate their awareness and understanding of **evacuation plans** by designating meeting places both outside of their homes and outside of their neighborhoods, where they can congregate with family members/loved ones in the event of an emergency.
2. Students will demonstrate their awareness and understanding of **emergency preparedness kits** by obtaining and maintaining a job aid that specifies items that belong in a kit, as well as where they can buy a ready-made one if they so chose.
3. Students will demonstrate their awareness and understanding of **communication plans** by creating and maintaining a communication plan, with the use of a job aid. The plan will contain personal contact information of family members/loved ones, as well as important emergency and medical contact information.

Needs Assessment

Audience

As San Diego State University and Grossmont Community College will be serving as the sites for the pilot implementation of the program, students at both of these campuses comprise the target audience. These student populations together represent 25% of the college students in San Diego.

Data Collection

Four focus group interview sessions were conducted with students of these campuses in order to gain further insight into the target audience's attitudes towards emergencies and disasters. Discussion was moderated to focus specifically on the students' present preparedness levels, as well as their knowledge and perceptions of issues relating to the three designated objectives. Questions were also raised that attempted to shed light on factors that may impact their motivation levels.

Results

Preparedness levels

Evacuation plan:

Less than half of the students interviewed expressed that they had an evacuation plan in place. Of those that did, most explained that they were familiar with various paths out of their homes in case they needed to escape. The majority of students did not have pre-determined destinations and multiple routes for meeting up with loved ones in the event of an emergency. Several stated that they were familiar enough with the roads and freeways in their area to find alternate routes out of town.

Emergency kit

The over half of the participants possessed a sufficient knowledge of what items belong in an emergency kit. However, the majority of students said that they did not have a kit in their home or car. Most expressed that while they did see the importance of having a kit on hand, they simply had not taken the time or spent the money to own one. At least half of the students said that they would rather buy a ready-made kit than put one together themselves, but that they would not want to spend more than \$20-30.

Communication plan

A large majority of the students interviewed stated that they had not created a communication plan, although they were aware of what belongs in one. Some said that they did have a pre-determined contact person in the event of an emergency, but many did not have contact information on hand for local medical and emergency facilities. In addition, more than half of the students were not aware that their campus had emergency hot lines which would allow them to access vital information in the event of an emergency.

Motivations and perceptions

Motivations/perceptions towards instructional approaches

The concept of 'terrorism' consistently failed to resonate with students as a likely threat to their safety. Most identified the recent San Diego wild fires as an event that had a strong impact on their lives. Almost all students indicated natural disasters, such as the fires, as the type of emergency/disaster that they would be most likely to encounter and need to reckon with during their lives.

Personal safety and safety of family members ranked high as a concern for most students. This seemed to provide a source of motivation to complete actions items related to completing a safety and awareness plan.

Students responded negatively to instructional approaches that attempt to invoke fear or shock as a means of getting their attention. They tended to respond more positively to campaign styles that used either humor or matter-of-fact statements, like statistics, to convey messages.

Motivations/perceptions towards preparedness objectives

Most students responded positively to a credit card sized job aid on which they would be able to write down important numbers and keep on their person. More than half said that if they were provided with such a tool they would feel compelled to fill it in, and would put in at least a minimal effort to obtain the suggested phone numbers and contact information.

A large majority of students stated that they relied heavily on their cell phones for storing and accessing important phone numbers. Many did not seem to take into consideration the possibility that their cell phones may not function properly in an emergency situation where networks are down or there is no electricity.

Recommendations

Based on the findings above, the following recommendations were formulated for implementation into the design model:

1. The instruction should take a broad based approach to readiness, in that it should address emergency preparedness as a whole, rather than focusing on terrorism.
2. Family and personal safety should be emphasized in the instructional message.
3. Job aid support will be incorporated for each of the three preparedness objectives (evacuation plan, emergency kit, and communication plan).
4. The wallet card format will be adapted for use as both instructional and job aid support.
5. The importance of creating a communication plan will be emphasized as it relates to the issue of over-relying on one's cell phone.

Model Design

Delivery Method

The 'Email Blast' model will make use of blended learning techniques by utilizing campus network email systems, in addition to paper based materials. Face-to-face peer distribution and feedback may also be incorporated into the model if feasible.

Components

Email Blasts

There will be a total of three email blasts that reach students during the instructional process. The first will serve as a very brief orientation to the campaign and as motivator to seek more information and/or obtain 'The Card'. The card is the centerpiece of the instruction, and the email message will alert students to its distribution and availability. It will be sent out at the beginning of the roll-out process, so many of the message recipients will not yet have seen or obtained the card.

The second email blast will reinforce the message of obtaining and filling out the card. It will also provide specific emergency-related phone numbers and contact information for them to add to their communication plans. The third email blast will notify students of the extrinsic reward that they are eligible to receive when they complete the communication plan portion of their card.

Posters

Posters will be used as a promotional tool for the campaign, and will provide multiple exposures to the theme. They will be displayed around the campuses, and will encourage students to obtain and read 'The Card'. The posters will provide minimal information on the nature of the campaign, but will not serve as an instructional tool.

Wallet Card

The wallet-sized card will serve as both the instructional material and the job aid support for the program. It will address the three instructional objectives, and will provide brief explanations of the steps to take to meet each:

- Evacuation Plan – The card will describe both small and large scale evacuation plans, and will provide fields for filling in destinations and contact information.
- Emergency Kit – The card will list the items that should be included in an emergency kit. It will also inform students that ready-made kits can be purchased if they so choose.
- Communication plan – The card will provide fields for students to fill in phone numbers for their communication plan. It will also prompt them to be aware of campus-related emergency resources.

The card will also contain educational messages as to the importance of achieving these objectives in regards to personal and family safety, as well as how their lives may be impacted in the event they lose access to electricity.

Extrinsic Reward/Motivator

Students that complete their card will be able to receive a free flashlight/whistle keychain. These will be distributed at a convenient location on campus.

Instructional Process

As described above, students will be exposed to the theme of the campaign multiple times before obtaining the card. They will receive the first email message, which will alert them of the availability of the card, and they will also be exposed to the posters around campus, which will be displayed in various locations (including restrooms).

Distribution methods for the card may be varied, and have not been entirely determined. The following techniques are possibilities:

- Standard mail (with orientation materials)
- In class, from faculty members
- At bookstore, with purchases
- From peers, at designated locations on campus

Once the card is obtained, students will be further encouraged to fill it out by the second email blast. This message will also assist with the task by providing relevant information to include in their communication plan. A third message will serve as a reminder of the free extrinsic reward that is available to them upon completion.

Students will be able to pick up their reward at a predetermined location on campus (the bookstore, most likely) by showing their completed card.

Evaluation

The pilot implementation of the program will take place from September 10 to October 1, 2004. During that time, program administrators will track the number of cards that are distributed. They will also track the number of extrinsic rewards that are given out. These two figures will be used to estimate the success rate of participating students meeting the instructional objectives.