

Appendix C

Steering Committee

Interview Summary



To: *DRU Steering Committee and Stakeholders*
From: *ONHW*
RE: *Summary of DRU Stakeholder & Steering Committee Interviews*

This document summarizes the findings from interviews conducted with the Disaster Resistant University (DRU) Steering Committee members and stakeholders. Our group, a team of graduate students and staff with the Oregon Natural Hazards Workgroup (Andre LeDuc, Bethany Johnson, Krista Mitchell, Natalie Metzger, Han Young Go, and Vanessa Bekkouche), conducted all of the interviews presented in this summary.

BACKGROUND:

The intent of a natural hazard mitigation plan is to assist the University of Oregon in reducing its risk from natural hazards by identifying resources, information, and strategies for risk reduction. Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) defines hazard mitigation as: “Any sustained action taken to reduce or eliminate long-term risk to life and property from a hazard event. The primary purpose of mitigation planning is to systematically identify policies, actions, and tools that can be used to implement those actions. Mitigation planning has four steps: organizing resources, assessing risks, developing a mitigation plan, and implementing the plan and monitoring progress.” (FEMA How-To Document) The plan will help guide and coordinate mitigation activities on campus. The mitigation plan works in conjunction with other University plans and programs including the campus land planning, emergency response plan, and capital improvement plan. The plan will provide a set of goals, objectives, and actions to prepare for and reduce the risks posed by natural hazards through the development of partnerships, education and outreach programs, and implementation of risk reduction activities such as structural and non-structural projects.

As part of the planning process ONHW conducted interviews with both the members of the Disaster Resistant University (DRU) Steering Committee and stakeholders. Stakeholders, identified by the Steering Committee, include directors and staff of departments on campus that would be an asset to university risk reduction efforts. The purpose of the interviews was: (1) to identify areas of concern about natural disasters; (2) identify specific mitigation needs and challenges that departments and individuals have faced, and/or continue to face; and (3) establish current levels of preparedness and mitigation efforts among departments and offices. From the interviews, we have identified similarities and key areas of concern.



PARTICIPANTS

We interviewed 16 people from various University of Oregon departments, including:

Stakeholders:

Bob Beals	Assistant Director, Athletics
Laura Blake Jones	Director & Dean, Office of Student Life
Nancy Cameron	Associate Director, Campus Business Services
Carol Lenocker	Library Material Procurement/Conservation Specialist, UO Libraries
Dusty Miller	Director, Erb Memorial Union
Greta Pressman	Campus Relations Manager, Facilities
Tom Ryan	Director, University Health Center
Dale Smith	Director of Network Services, Computing Center
Mark Watson	Assistant University Librarian for Collections & Access, UO Libraries

Steering Committee:

Dave Barta	Manager, Telecom Services
Ron Bloom	Assistant Director/Operations Manager, Facilities
Kay Coots	Director, Environmental Health & Safety
Mike Eyster	Assistant VP Student Affairs; Director, Housing
Tom Hicks	Director, Public Safety
Chris Ramey	Director, Planning and Development
Joan Saylor	Administrative Lieutenant, Public Safety

SUMMARY

This section will detail the main themes of the stakeholder and Steering Committee interviews. We have organized the information gleaned from the interviews into three categories: **Part I - General Areas of Concern; Part II - Needs and Challenges; Part III - Current Levels of Preparedness.** Part I summarizes the big-picture concerns of departments when thinking about natural hazards. Part II highlights specific problems and requests that, if addressed, would help departments achieve mitigation goals. Part III summarizes what departments have done to increase preparedness and reduce risk to natural hazards.

What the reader will find is that all of these topics are intertwined: a challenge is also an opportunity; an area of concern exists because there is an unfulfilled need. While these themes do not represent everything discussed in the interviews, they are the concerns most commonly voiced.

PART I - GENERAL AREAS OF CONCERN

The main areas of concern regarding natural disasters among university departments and offices are the following:

- Vulnerability of Buildings, Structural and Non-Structural
- Lack of Coordination among Departments
- Unfamiliarity with Acceptable Risk



- Lack of Awareness of Mitigation Strategies and Available Resources
- Limited Funding and Staff

Each concern is discussed in more detail below.

Vulnerability of Buildings

One of the most common concerns that appeared as we spoke with stakeholders and Steering Committee members is the vulnerability of the buildings on campus to earthquakes, wind and winter storms, and floods. While the majority of interviewees understood the benefit of non-structural improvements, they focused on the structural integrity of the buildings. For instance, the Telecom and Computing Center have a large connectivity hub in the basement of Oregon Hall. The biggest threat to the equipment and the preservation of connectivity is the structural integrity of the building. A few interviewees were concerned that if the buildings don't remain standing during an earthquake, all other mitigation efforts (non-structural improvements) could be futile. Many interviewees felt that they have little control over improving the structural integrity of buildings because of lack of funding, historic building preservation codes, and the largeness of a building-retrofitting project.

Lack of Coordination among Departments

A second common concern that quickly became apparent is that there is no individual or department that is 100% responsible for the university's natural hazard mitigation efforts. As there has been no overarching coordination effort, preparedness and mitigation (e.g. risk reduction) efforts have been on a department-by-department basis, each department relying on whatever expertise exists among their staff. There is little cross-dialogue and sharing of information that could facilitate the mitigation process.

Unfamiliarity with Acceptable Risk

One department succinctly expressed an idea that over half of the interviews touched on: the difficulty and uncertainty in determining the appropriate level of risk allowed. One interviewee wondered, "Do you plan for the absolute worst case scenario, or, due to cost or other factors, do you assume a certain level of destruction and target planning efforts to a few key areas? How do you determine what the acceptable level of risk is, and the acceptable level of mitigation?" There appears to be a need for guidance and education on gauging the appropriate level of mitigation in light of a limited budget and staff resources.

Lack of Awareness of Mitigation Strategies and Available Resources

Various departments stated that knowing what is available as a resource and how to use those resources is important. This aspect goes hand-in-hand with collaboration. If departments were aware of what mitigation components are already in place on campus and what mitigation projects are underway, a better, more effective and coordinated mitigation effort could occur.

Limited Funding and Staff

The last theme is one that was acknowledged as a problem and challenge in almost every interview: funding and staff resources. Almost all interviewees felt that given more money, more time and more staff, mitigation might become a higher priority. The more resources available, the better prepared they can be. While some departments felt that they were already at capacity



and were stretched to undertake mitigation, others have built it into their framework and it is part of their daily job. This issue will also be discussed in the challenges and needs section below.

PART II - NEEDS AND CHALLENGES

It is important for the university to identify, on university-wide, departmental and individual levels the needs and challenges the campus faces in its risk reduction efforts. Below are the most common needs and challenges expressed through the interviews. These needs and challenges provide a direct line of insight into the needed resources and challenging roadblocks each department or office has faced.

Needs

Organization, collaboration and communication were brought up in almost all of the interviews as a much needed resource that would help enable individuals and departments to increase their mitigation activities. Overall, there was no sense of structure or cohesiveness for the university's mitigation efforts. Suggestions for meeting this need included:

- Creating an organizational chart detailing chain of command (this is actually a response action)
- Developing broad goals for the university's mitigation efforts;
- Forming a permanent committee to continue the university's commitment to mitigation and ensure follow-through; and
- Facilitate and increase coordination between departments.

Second, funding was consistently cited as a need. It was mentioned that cuts in the budget make it difficult for departments to focus on mitigation as a priority, when their money is stretched tightly already.

Training was the third common need expressed during the interviews. Interviewees often stated that they did not feel educated enough to be able to mitigate properly, safely, or effectively.

Suggestions for trainings and materials included:

- A risk/cost/benefit scale that provides information about how much money and time should be invested to get a specific, desirable outcome by university standards;
- Mitigation trainings and discussions between departments to facilitate collaboration;
- "How-to" guides or checklists detailing what steps should be taken towards mitigation. Ideally, these would be specifically tailored to each department.
- Regular, periodic campus-wide drills simulating an earthquake or flood.

Challenges

The challenges that were brought up during the interviews correspond closely with some of the needs expressed. They also focused on the importance of educating the university community more about what mitigation is and how it benefits campus. For example, education and outreach can be used as a tool to overcome one of the most commonly identified challenges: a lack of interest and awareness about natural hazard mitigation. In addition, there is a lack of understanding about the role of mitigation and its importance. Getting people to see how important a speedy recovery is to the university, particularly from the business aspect, is a challenge.



Communication within and between departments and the university is a challenge as well as a need. The need for increased communication and collaboration was already discussed in the “Needs” section above.

The changing population of the university, specifically, the regular turnover of students presents a challenge to mitigation planning. Given student turnover as a constraint, creative solutions will need to be examined for effective mitigation planning.

Finally, the challenge of retrofitting buildings on the historic register was expressed through the interviews. These are buildings that are precious to the university, and thus it is a challenge to make these buildings safe while preserving their historic status.

PART III – CURRENT LEVELS OF PREPAREDNESS

One of the most common themes that appeared through the interviews is that there is a wide range of awareness and mitigation planning among university departments and offices. As pointed out in the previous section, interviewees felt that there is no central point of contact for current disaster mitigation efforts; departments and offices have worked, in most part, independently to achieve their current state of preparedness and undertake mitigation projects. Currently, the majority of risk reduction efforts are more response-focused than mitigation focused. Both are important to providing a safe and resilient campus; however, the focus of this plan is natural hazard mitigation. The Emergency Operations Plan deals with the response capabilities of the campus.