

FEMA Higher Education Newsletter

Quarterly: July 2024



Dr. Paula Buchanan; Amitai Zuckerman; Dr. Shirley Feldmann-Jensen, Dr. Carol Cwiak, Dr. Andrea Adams, Dr. Sandy Smith; Dr. Xiaojun Yuan, Tafa Tupuola; Frank Eliptico; Amie Fuller; Brendie Hawkins, Logan Lane; Matthew Van, Dr. Shirley Feldmann-Jensen; Haley Nelson; Dr. Jamie Stacy; Monica Sanders. Photos by Mike Beaty.

Table of Contents

Highlighting Success: The 26th Annual Emergency Management Higher Education Symposium 2

 Symposium Feedback Insights 3

 What Stood Out? 4

 Quotes from Symposium Participants 4

 Awardees 5

 FEMA Fellows and Student Volunteers 8

 Regional Panel 8

 2024 State of the Community 9

 Student Meet and Greet 9

Higher Education Community Webinars 9

The FEMA Higher Education College List 10

FEMA Higher Education Program Research Awards 11

 Research Award Impact 11

FEMA Higher Education SIG Announcements 11

External Higher Education Events and Resources 13



FEMA's National Training and Education Division (NTED) manages the Higher Education Program to serve the needs of the Emergency Management community, including faculty, students, staff at institutions of higher education and professional organizations, and practitioners who are dedicated to advancing the field of Emergency Management.

The mission of the Higher Education Program is to engage Emergency Management academia, professional organizations, and practitioners to work together to foster a culture of continuous learning and innovation through education and research to meet the challenges that confront the Nation.

Since its inception in 1994, the FEMA Higher Education Program has been instrumental in cultivating academic excellence within the field of Emergency Management at colleges and universities nationwide. Originally established at the Emergency Management Institute (EMI), the program transitioned to FEMA's National Training and Education Division (NTED) headquarters in 2017. The program continues to operate physically from the National Emergency Training Center (NETC) campus in Emmitsburg, ensuring continuity and fostering collaboration between academia and Emergency Management practitioners.

Learn more at the [FEMA Higher Education Program website](#).

Highlighting Success: The 26th Annual Emergency Management Higher Education Symposium

We are happy to announce the success of the **26th Annual Emergency Management Higher Education Symposium**, which took place June 3–5, 2024, under the theme “Pioneering Ideas and Practices in Emergency Management Higher Education: Building More Resilient Communities.” This 3-day event not only celebrated the 30th anniversary of FEMA's Higher Education Program but also underscored its commitment to fostering innovation, education, and community resilience.

The Symposium convened an impressive array of researchers, multi-disciplinary faculty, and Emergency Management practitioners, students, and esteemed personnel from FEMA and DHS. Together, they engaged in presentations, workshops, and panel discussions aimed at advancing knowledge and collaboration within the field.

It is clear from the event evaluations that the academics, practitioners, and students in attendance successfully leveraged this occasion as an opportunity to forge connections, unify, and draw inspiration from the insights shared.

While it is impossible to capture every remarkable session and highlight in this brief update, we extend our heartfelt appreciation to EVERYONE who contributed to the Symposium's success. Thank you for your unwavering support and commitment to advancing Emergency Management education and research.



Kay Goss and Barbara Johnson.
Photo by Mike Beaty.



The Symposium [Agenda](#) and detailed [Program](#) are available online at the [FEMA Higher Education Program website](#). Presentation slides from the sessions are being converted into accessible PDFs and will soon be available online. View Mike Beaty's Higher Education Symposium photos: [Day 1](#), [Day 2](#), [Day 3](#).

Symposium Feedback Insights

We extend our gratitude to the Center for Homeland Defense and Security (CHDS) team for providing invaluable survey tools that enabled us to gather feedback on the recent Symposium. Some highlights from the overall Symposium survey are captured below. Please note that we deeply value all feedback received, including constructive criticism, which will be carefully considered as we plan for future Symposia. Your insights help us continually improve and adapt to better serve the Emergency Management community.

Those who completed the overall evaluation survey self-identified as one or more of the categories below:

- Academic: 71.43%
- Practitioner/Emergency Manager: 34.69%
- Researcher: 32.65%
- Federal/State/Local/Tribal Employee: 22.45%
- College Student: 18.37%
- Private Sector: 8.16%

It was encouraging to note that 37% of respondents reported being in their current position for **3 years or less**, indicating a significant portion of new professionals in attendance. Additionally, 54% of evaluated attendees were **first-time** participants at the Symposium.



NTED Team: Michael Belfer, Partick Cowhey, Minji Bryan, Jay Wilkes, Christine Spangler, David Rivera-Polanco.

Photos by Mike Beaty.



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What Stood Out?

Select Survey Responses		
“The diversity of opinion was what stood out most to me. It was great to see the differences in approaches, beliefs, research methods, and research interpretations to the profession of Emergency Management.”	“The exceptional afternoon smaller group sessions and expert presentations on relevant topics across the spectrum of higher education. Each presenter was a professional who really cared about their program(s).”	“Diversity of attendees, sex, race, location, political beliefs. A diversity of ideas, solutions in this environment allows for a type of AAR that allows thought and associated experiences to assist in proactive planning and research.”
“What stood out to me the most was the passion and enthusiasm that the researchers and practitioners had for the field, their topics, and each other.”	“The amount of workshops and presentations packed into a couple of days. Very impressed how the whole conference was pretty seamless, and all starting times were respected.”	“The ability to socialize and the approachability of presenters. This helped make it a welcoming environment for a first-timer and student.”
“The level of organization was second-to-none. This is the one opportunity that I have each year to gather with EM academics and program directors – true kindred spirits who share the same joys and struggles as I do. I’m grateful for this opportunity.”	<p>“Amazing presenters, relevant, helpful information presented.”</p> <p>“Very welcoming environment, very well organized.”</p> <p>“I look forward to my tenth HiEd Symposium - 2025!”</p>	“My role changed to include oversight of our program's internships. It was very enlightening to hear the same trends that I did with EMs during site visits and additional ideas, practices, and insights from other academic programs.”

Quotes from Symposium Participants

- “The FEMA Higher Education Symposium is an absolute must-attend event for Emergency Management practitioners, educators, and thought leaders.”

– *University of Colorado, Colorado Springs*
- “The FEMA Higher Education Symposium is the one place I can learn, grow, and be inspired by seasoned EM pracademic leaders and new up and coming researchers.”

– *The University of Akron*
- “The ability to exchange ideas with individuals from all areas of Emergency Management, as well as from all areas of the country and its holdings, provided me with ideas for course expansions and curriculum review. Ultimately my students will benefit from the information exchanged with my peers.” – *NC Central University*



Symposium breakout session.



Awardees



Elliot Smith, Joshua McDuffie, Dr. Harvey McMurry, Brittany Giles-Jones, Meldon Hollis, Marcus Coleman, Tony Russell, Dr. Kesley Richardson.

The Meldon Hollis Jr. Award was established this year to honor leaders who significantly advance the field of Emergency Management at Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs). The award was named after Meldon Hollis, an esteemed advocate for HBCUs, and the award is sponsored by Texas Southern University.

Mr. Hollis served as the first Executive Director of the White House Initiative on HBCUs under the Carter Administration, championed Federal support, and established 10 Emergency Management programs at HBCUs as of 2023. His leadership also launched the first FEMA Higher Education Special Interest Group (SIG) originally titled Race, Ethnicity and Economic Disparity and is now the HBCU SIG.

The award celebrates HBCUs' dedication to Emergency Management education, preparedness, and response, and acknowledges the profound impact of HBCU talent in enhancing disaster resilience and emergency preparedness within their institutions and the communities they serve.

Meldon Hollis Award

Presented By: Texas Southern University

First Awardee and namesake: Meldon Hollis Jr., J.D.

Criteria:

- Meaningful contributions to the establishment or growth of Emergency Management programs at an HBCU.
- Actively mentoring students from HBCUs or Black-Identifying Students, or early career professionals.
- Pioneering work done to advance the Emergency Management body of knowledge.
- Advocate for equitable access in the field of Emergency Management for students, professionals, and the public.
- Overall embodiment of the values, mission, and legacy of Meldon Hollis.



Brittany Giles-Jones and Joshua McDuffie of the HBCU SIG presenting the award to Meldon Hollis.



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Kay C. Goss Innovation and Technology Award

Presented By: Arkansas Tech University

Awardee: Dr. Kevin Kupietz, Elizabeth City State University

Criteria:

- A record of regular participation in the Annual Higher Education Symposium.
- Outstanding teaching effectiveness both within and outside the classroom using emerging technologies.
- The ability to inspire, promote, and develop Emergency Management programs, professors, and students through innovative methods.
- Professional contributions to the field of Emergency Management.



Dr. Jamie Stacy and Kay Goss presented to awardee Dr. Kevin Kupietz.

2024 Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL) Award

Presented By: University of Central Florida

Awardee: Dr. Brittany Haupt, Virginia Commonwealth University

Criteria:

- Outstanding SoTL efforts and knowledge within the Emergency Management and Homeland Security disciplines.
- Value or impact of SoTL efforts within the discipline and to the teaching and learning community.
- Peer recognition of SoTL research and efforts in the Emergency Management and Homeland Security disciplines.
- Publication of SoTL research in the Emergency Management and Homeland Security disciplines.



Dr. Claire Connolly Knox presented to awardee Dr. Brittany Haupt.

Dr. B. Wayne Blanchard Award for Academic Excellence in Emergency Management Higher Education

Presented By: North Dakota State University

Awardee: Dr. Susan Cutter, University of South Carolina

Criteria:

- Significant contributions to the development and advancement of Emergency Management higher education.
- Furtherance of higher education initiatives.
- Significant shaping of the Emergency Management body of knowledge.
- Emergency Management higher education advocacy.
- Other contributions that have advanced Emergency Management higher education as a whole.



Dr. Caroline Hackerott announcing the Blanchard award.

Social Justice and Equity Award

Presented By: Jacksonville State University

Awardee: Dr. Oluponmile Olonilua, Texas Southern University

Criteria:

- Academics, activists, advocates, researchers, and graduate students are eligible to apply.
- Nomination letter from the dean, director, chair, or a colleague written specifically in reference to this award. Self-nominations are also accepted.
- Nomination letter addressing how the nominee meets the criteria along with some evidence (e.g., paper, report, etc.) of work in this area.
- The awardee's work should highlight innovative approaches to social/environmental justice, or bottom-up/community-based strategies that would help practitioners address inequitable access to disaster preparedness, response, mitigation, and recovery efforts.



Dr. David McEntire presented, and Brittany Giles-Jones accepted on behalf of Dr. Olonilua who was unable to attend.

Photo by Mike Beaty.

FEMA Fellows and Student Volunteers

Thank you to Rob Long, Sara Andresen, and Jacqueline Orban of the FEMA National Advisory Council (NAC) for their leadership of the FEMA Fellows volunteers, comprised of dedicated students from the University of Maryland whose support was instrumental in making this year's Symposium a success!



Student volunteer: Jennifer Classen. FEMA Fellow volunteers: Luke Farren, Clayton Steiner, Angelina Mussini, Ella Lepkowski. Student volunteer: Matthew Van. Not pictured: Anna Carpenter, Miriam Stolle, Victoria Boger.



Mark Strohoefer (Region 2), Danielle Cortes DeVito (Region 5), Sally Ziolkowski (Region 9), Daniel Green (Region 8), Dr. Jay Van Der Werff (Region 7). Photos by Mike Beaty.

Regional Panel

Representatives from five FEMA Regions provided valuable updates and insights during a panel session at the Symposium. Attendees praised the discussion as “extremely helpful,” gaining valuable insights into the diverse activities and priorities across FEMA Regions.

Note that Symposium attendees from all 10 FEMA Regions were in attendance! Regional contacts can be found on page 33 of the [Symposium Program](#).



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2024 State of the Community

Dr. DeeDee Bennett Gayle, University at Albany, SUNY, presented the State of the Community 5-Year Trend Report (2019–2023) on June 5, 2024. The 5-year retrospective summary analyzed each of the four basic assessment questions of the State of the Community Survey for all domestic programs: (1) program curriculum, (2) student enrollment, (3) program support, and (4) use of FEMA Higher Education resources and services. The report will provide a trend analysis of the past survey results over the last 5 years and is available online for viewing at [FEMA Higher Education Program | State of the Community](#).



Dr. DeeDee Bennett Gayle delivering the State of the Community 5-Year Trend Analysis.
Photo by Mike Beaty.

Student Meet and Greet

A special thanks to Brittany Giles-Jones, Dr. Terry Cooper, Dr. Kesley Richardson, and Joshua McDuffie who coordinated and hosted an outstanding Student Meet and Greet!

Students who attended the event included past and present student volunteers, mentors, practitioners, and faculty members from institutions across the country. All had the opportunity to attend and connect with Symposium attendees before the official start of the Symposium. The informal event provided a space for natural networking and students and recent graduates to identify colleagues they could connect with throughout the week and will continue to grow with throughout their careers.

Higher Education Community Webinars

The FEMA Higher Education Program would like to reconstitute the program's monthly Community Webinars (formally Community Calls) this fall! The monthly Community Webinars will be held on the third Friday of each month and follow a structured format designed to maximize engagement and knowledge sharing within a 60-minute timeframe, including adequate time for Q&A discussion.

The purpose of monthly Community Webinar series is to provide a platform for researchers, academics, practitioners, and students to engage with and contribute to the advancement of Emergency Management topics. These webinars serve as a forum for discussing FEMA-sponsored research and special projects, ongoing or published research, sharing best practices, and fostering networking opportunities within the higher education community.

The monthly Community Webinars aim to promote collaboration, innovation, and knowledge sharing within the FEMA Higher Education Program, ultimately enhancing the capacity of higher education institutions to contribute to disaster preparedness, response, and resilience efforts.



If interested in presenting a Community Webinar, submit an email presentation request to fema-hied@fema.dhs.gov, including the presentation title, presenter name(s) and affiliations, brief description (no more than 150 words), and date preferences (choose at least two dates).

Proposed 2024 Monthly Community Webinars Schedule | 2–3 p.m. EST via Zoom

Date	Presentation Title	Presenter(s)
Friday, September 20, 2024	Living in a Waterworld: How Climate Change Intensifies Flooding of Atlantic Tropical Storms	Dr. Sara Belligoni, University of Central Florida
Friday, October 18, 2024	Incorporating the Resilience Analysis and Planning Tool into Emergency Management Courses	Dr. John Carr, Argonne National Laboratory; Benjamin Rance, Analysis and Capacity Division, Resilience Analysis Branch, FEMA
Friday, November 15, 2024	TBD	TBD
Friday, December 20, 2024	TBD	TBD
Friday, January 17, 2025	TBD	TBD
Friday, February 21, 2025	The Current Landscape of the Emergency Management Workforce	Dr. Rita Burke, University of Southern California; Lorraine Schneider, The Resiliency Initiative
Friday, March 21, 2025	TBD	TBD
Friday, April 18, 2025	TBD	TBD
Friday, May 16, 2025	TBD	TBD

A finalized 2024 Monthly Community Webinars Schedule will be posted on the [FEMA Higher Education Program website](#) by August 30, 2024.

The FEMA Higher Education College List

The **College List** is a self-reported listing of Emergency Management and related programs at universities both nationally and internationally. The resource includes information about Associates, Bachelor's, Master's, Doctoral, and Certificate programs. [The College List](#) is one of the only comprehensive listings for Emergency Management and related programs and is hosted on FEMA's Higher Education Program website. If you have a new or updated program(s) to include, email fema-emi-collegelist@fema.dhs.gov.



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Latest program additions:

- Edward Waters University – [Bachelor of Arts in Criminal Justice with an Emergency Management Concentration](#)
- Elizabeth City State University – [Certificate in Emergency Management Athletic Facilities](#)
- John Brown University – [Bachelor of Science with a Major in Humanitarian and Disaster Relief](#)

FEMA Higher Education Program Research Awards

Overview: The FEMA Higher Education Program seeks to support initiatives that narrow the gap between research and practice in Emergency Management. Through the solicitation of multidisciplinary and applied research proposals, this program aims to address complex challenges and offer actionable recommendations to advance the discipline and profession of Emergency Management. Projects are intended to delve into intricate challenges within the field of Emergency Management, offering actionable insights and recommendations for advancement, and will align closely with FEMA's Strategic Plan to ensure congruence with the Agency's overarching objectives.

FY24 Call for Proposals closed July 5, and the submissions are currently under peer review. Award notices will be made no later than August 15, 2024.

Research Award Impact

FEMA Higher Education Program research projects can evolve into significantly funded research awards as they often provide preliminary data and proof of concept, build research capacity, attract collaboration and attention, address reviewer feedback, demonstrate potential impact, facilitate incremental progress, and align with funding Agency priorities. These factors collectively strengthen subsequent funding applications and support the scaling up of research efforts.

Congratulations to Drs. DeeDee Bennett Gayle and Jenny Yuan for leveraging their FEMA FY23 research award into a National Science Foundation (NSF) award (# 2425223) to expand their research. The NSF award, "[Preparing Older Adults: Communicating Threat Risk in Virtual Environments \(PRO-ACTIVE\)](#)," builds on their original FEMA-funded project on Emergency Preparedness and Technology.

The FEMA Higher Education Program project, **Emergency Preparedness and Technology**, surveyed U.S. adults to assess disaster preparedness levels, disaster experience, and willingness to use broadband wireless devices for preparedness. Specifically, it compared disaster preparedness and technology usage among older adults (aged 65 and older) and younger adults (aged 18–64). The final report will be accessible on the FEMA Higher Education Program website in early fall.

FEMA Higher Education SIG Announcements

[Special Interest Groups \(SIGs\)](#) support the exchange of knowledge in specific areas and applications of Emergency Management higher education. SIG members can potentially become involved in co-authoring research, mentoring



students, and advising practitioners. FEMA does not endorse or manage these groups but encourages their formation around common areas of interest.

Experiential Learning and Leadership SIG

The [Experiential Learning and Leadership SIG](#) recently published “Decision-Making Drivers for Pandemic Response for Institutions of Higher Education”. *Journal of Emergency Management*, vol. 22, no. 3, May 2024, pp. 311–26, doi:10.5055/jem.0823. Brenner, R. M., D. L. Eiseman, and E. A. Dunn.

The purpose of this research is to identify how decision-makers within anchor institutions, using the context of higher education, determine the course of action in response to an improbable disaster event, such as the recent coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic. A survey was conducted among higher education decision-makers during spring 2020 at the moment they were adapting to COVID-19. The survey aimed to identify policies and planning measures that may help Institutions of Higher Education learn from this experience to maintain continuity of operations should similar or unanticipated events occur in the future. With this knowledge, both assets and detriments contributing to community vulnerability can be better balanced to inform decision-making. The outcomes of the analysis and shared reflections inform the development of future policy and strengthen existing processes for preparedness and mitigation planning for unexpected events.

Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) SIG

Within the first year of existence, the HBCU SIG has conducted monthly meetings for more than 30 active members and supported the creation and work of the Community Engagement, Workforce, and Scholarship subcommittees, which individually strategize to support targeted areas of Emergency and Disaster Management education and opportunities throughout HBCUs. Individually SIG members are involved with the Symposium on a variety of levels from the planning committee, panelists, breakout session moderators and speakers, and award recipients, including the recipient of the 2024 Social Justice and Equity Award, SIG Lead Dr. Oluponmile Olonilua. While the SIG consistently aims to find pathways and resources for the next generation, we actively honor the past with the creation of the Professor Meldon Hollis J.D. Award, with Professor Hollis being the Inaugural Recipient. The HBCU SIG is always accepting new members interested in partnerships with HBCUs, and the advancement and expansion of Emergency and Disaster Management education to underserved student populations, particularly at HBCUs. If you are interested in joining, visit the [HBCU SIG website](#).

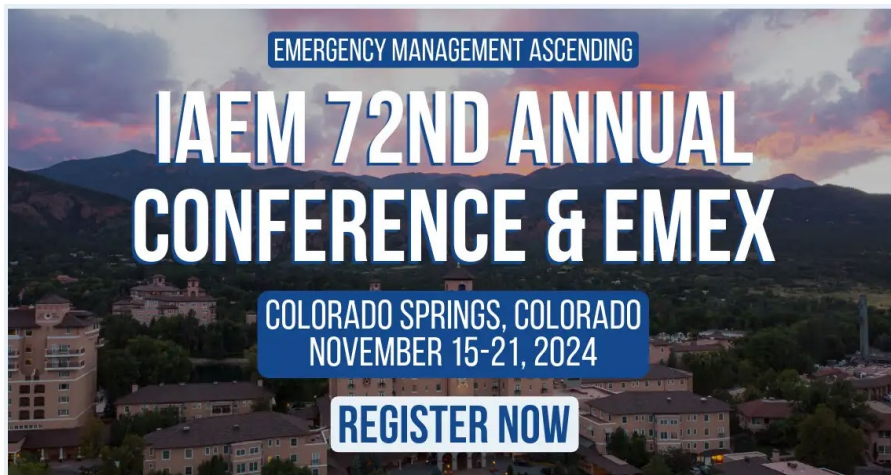
New! West-Pac Consortium SIG

The West-Pac Consortium is a collaborative community from Regions 8 and 9, representing states and territories. The vision of West-Pac Consortium is to strengthen Emergency and Disaster Management education within the unique contexts of the territories, tribes, and states of the American West and Pacific. This SIG was formed and solidified during the FEMA Higher Education Symposiums. Website with more details coming soon.



External Higher Education Events and Resources

IAEM Conference Registration Now Open



IAEM is bringing the [72nd Annual Conference & EMEX](#) to The Broadmoor in Colorado Springs, Colorado, from November 15–21, 2024. This year's theme is "Emergency Management Ascending." Join more than 2,000 members of the global Emergency Management community for a week of expert education and training, networking, and professional development. Registration is open, and the early bird deadline is October 11. Register today to lock in discounted rates.

[Sign up via our free e-mail subscription service](#) to receive notifications and information updates.

FEMA's mission is helping people before, during, and after disasters.

Download the [FEMA App](#) to receive weather alerts from the NWS for up to five different locations anywhere in the United States.

The Higher Education newsletter is published periodically. We'd like to include information useful to the community. What would you like to see more of? We want to hear from you. Send an email to: fema-hied@fema.dhs.gov.

The resources in this newsletter are compiled from a variety of sources to support education and research efforts. The links are provided as a convenience. They do not constitute any endorsement or approval by FEMA or the Higher Education Program. FEMA and the Higher Education Program does not endorse any non-government websites, companies, or applications.



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