

# Blind Spots & Tough Questions

These tough questions are divided into two sections. The first section, **Discovering Blind Spots**, includes questions that are meant to help you see where potential issues or concerns may arise during the year. By thinking through these questions now, you (along with your Leadership Team) can determine how you might respond to questions in these areas and/or begin discussing how to correct areas of concern. Sometimes our role as communicators is to say the quiet part out loud and get our entire Leadership Team comfortable talking about certain issues.

The second section, **Tough Questions for Crisis Preparedness**, provides reflective questions to evaluate your organization's crisis response. Different from a crisis debrief, these questions are not associated with a specific crisis and are meant to provoke thought and conversation on areas of improvement in your general crisis response.

## Discovering Blind Spots

### **What is our organization's main goal?**

Knowing your main goal helps to guide your work and maintain your focus during a crisis event. Do members of the crisis team know the main goal?

### **What is our reputation among our key stakeholder groups?**

Answer this question for each key stakeholder group – faculty, staff, students, parents, alumni, etc. Is this reputation accurate? Are policy changes, communication, and/or other initiatives needed?

### **What are our key data metrics and do we have a simple statement to support each metric?**

Graduation rate and enrollment trends are just a few of the data pieces that are readily available about your institution. How do you respond when asked about data points, especially those that aren't celebrated? Responses should be simple and support your organization's main goal.

### **Are crisis team members prepared for high-pressure, emotionally charged situations?**

Understanding the emotional toll that crisis events can take on your response team is the first step. Create a set of checks and balances to ensure the team can continue to function at high levels through multiple crisis events.

### **How do we ensure our messaging is culturally competent?**

Does your messaging resonate with stakeholders across cultural and socio-economic groups? What language do you need to re-evaluate?

## Tough Questions for Crisis Preparedness

### **How do we gauge success in a crisis event?**

It's easy to get caught up in immediate response and pressure. Does your organization know how you define success in a crisis?

### **What keeps our team members up at night?**

What crisis events are your team's biggest fears? You can't prepare for everything, but you can workshop potential action steps.

### **Does ego get in the way during crisis planning or response?**

Is it someone on our team? How can we balance that view? Ego gets in the way of meaningful connection and can prevent us from seeing all sides of an issue.

### **How do we define an issue versus a crisis?**

Is an angry Facebook post or an errant email activating our full crisis team? Do we have systems in place to monitor smaller issues, including events at other schools that may spill over to our campus?

### **Who is our issues management team?**

Different from our Crisis Team, our issues management team is a core team of leaders across campus that can quickly discuss, brainstorm and plan when issues arise so that you have a firm foundation if the issue grows into a crisis.

### **How do politics impact our crisis response?**

Are donors, legislators, unions, or other outside entities impacting your crisis response? How can you plan to hear feedback from these groups while still maintaining a focus on your goal (see question 1)?