Gill Introduces Campus Continuity

Introduction

Educational institutions ranging from research universities to high schools are increasingly being required to put together business continuity plans (BCP or BCM) to satisfy more stringent rules of insurance underwriters, and legislators. There is a wide array of risks that can adversely affect campus operations; if one of these events imposes downtime (particularly on critical operations), the impact could be substantial. At its core, BCM is an exercise in risk management; if deployed properly it can yield the institution substantial benefits. As BCM gains momentum, decision makers are being asked to put together such plans.

The Risk Environment on Campus

Until the terrorist attacks of 2001, BCM programming was mostly an IT-oriented field. Since then it has become an enterprise-wide concern for an ever-widening number of industries. The first adopters to expanded BCM standards were governments and the financial services industry (FSI). Although a campus setting was not an initial focus, security experts, insurers and BCM programmers began identifying them as potential "soft targets" for terrorism, not to mention places that are becoming more susceptible to a spate of naturally-occurring phenomena.

The campus is unique and therefore, for a BCM plan to be effective, it must be grounded in addressing vulnerabilities that compromise the fundamental mission of the institution. Disruptive events have the potential to disrupt teaching, research, fundraising, and even competitive standing, therefore educational institutions should develop programs that are specifically tailored to their needs.

Existing Solutions

Thus far, the solutions available for educational institutions might be considered limited. Consider the following:

- Business continuity solutions are generally offered by consultants who specialize in a few targeted areas, without incorporating elements from all risk areas within the enterprise
- Business continuity providers tend to offer generic solutions that are modified to the nuances of a particular industry
- Educational institutions (primarily research universities, colleges, community colleges and some campus-oriented secondary schools) have generally not considered themselves as an appropriate setting for comprehensive risk management programs, yet this should be reconsidered, as they are generally exposed to the same types of risks as those that more risk-savvy industries plan against on a daily basis

The Business Case

a) Primary Impact

Initiating on-campus BCM makes good business sense, as it not only ensures the institution's mission can be fulfilled, but more importantly - it minimizes downtime, save lives, and better manages the institution's risk profile. The impact of disruptive events cannot be minimized as they can:

- Interrupt the continuity of student instruction
- Disrupt the provision of services
- Substantially delay valuable research projects that are conducted at large universities
- Damage physical assets including buildings, artifacts, laboratories, and computer systems

Byproducts or secondary ripple effects of event-related disruptions can occur too. These might include an impact on computer systems (tied to student and alumni records, as well new applicant/student information), supply chain partners, food services and productivity.

b) Financial Impact

The financial impact imposed by disruptive events can be substantial. Clearly, institutions invest millions in upgrading facilities and amenities - large-scale events can destroy them in a moment. Regardless of size disasters impact the institution's bottom line and this can result in

- Large monetary losses
- Legal liability
- Loss of confidence of campus stakeholders
- and, in some cases, compromise the 'brand' integrity of the institution that may have taken years to develop

The Targeted Solution

In order to recover from such incidents campus officials must identify, categorize and maintain the integrity of all critical campus assets. This includes facilities, IT systems, research projects, business applications, and people. To do this properly, a methodical approach is a must.

The Gill program provides such an approach as it breaks down the BCM model into core components, analyzes their fundamental characteristics, and recommends strategies to aligning them into a common platform. Some of the specific strategies for success include:

1) ***Conducting a Business Impact Analysis (BIA)*:** A BIA enumerates assets and determines how operational objectives on a campus would be met if those assets were disabled. A BIA shapes the direction of a BCM program, as it recommends strategies that allow the institution to recover from a disabling of those key assets.

2) ***Creating a Team Approach to Emergency Preparedness***: A key success factor is assigning all campus stakeholders responsibilities in anticipation of a potentially disruptive event. This ranges from the roles of event managers of large mobilization teams, to students who must be aware of the appropriate procedures to follow should such an event occur. Our program suggests a framework for action.

3) ***Communication*:** All campus stakeholders must know procedures associated with a disruptive event. If proper channels/technologies are set up in advance, lives are saved, property is spared and the campus can get back to its core mission.

4) ***Checklist***: Project management practices can be implemented to increase plan efficiency. This requires constructing lists that are carefully maintained and made according to available resources. Central administrators can insure that plans remain up to date by periodically maintaining:

   i. Emergency Response protocols
   ii. Evacuation plans for on-campus buildings (dormitories, laboratories, recreational facilities, etc.)
   iii. Lab security plans (making sure they are continually assessed and updated)
   iv. Relationships well established with all government agencies

5) ***Consolidation***: when plans are completed for all the subject areas, they are aligned together to form a master business continuity plan. A finished program consists of many components that address pre-preparation, crisis management procedures and post-event strategy (this would include business resumption plans)

Benefits

The Gill program provides the framework and upfront knowledge required to build this type of plan. It empowers decision makers with the ability to control the planning process and decide what components need to be outsourced to consultants and what can be handled internally. In the end, control becomes the key factor in ensuring the plan that is being built addresses all the issues required to satisfy the looming requirements of government and the insurance industry. It can substantially reduce an institution's BCM costs arising from excessive consulting fees as well as lower insurance premiums.

Some of the Other Benefits of the Gill program include:

- Provides a logical framework to measure how well client institutions have addressed risk management issues
- Provides the ability to leverage expertise and proprietary Gill risk management/loss mitigation techniques and quantitative expected loss assessment tools to improve their ability to comply with new legislation mandating risk management programs and insurance regulations

Benefits to Insured Parties:

- Potentially lower premiums
- Better ability to secure certain types of insurance coverage that otherwise may be unattainable
- Enhanced disaster preparedness
- Loss avoidance

For more information, contact Gill at:
+1 905 940 5399 Phone
+1 905 940 1909 Fax

campuscontinuity@gillinc.com
www.campuscontinuity.com