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**Abstract**

Over the past decade, increased attention has been paid to crisis management in higher education with the research often focusing on the assessment of the handling of such crises. However, what academic leaders need are more case studies and practical examples of how they can best prepare for a crisis in advance. This preparation should include careful crisis planning and the creation of strategic democratic partnerships with key community stakeholders. In this article, a framework is presented that focuses on how to prepare for a crisis as well as how engaging key constituents in the creation of a clear mission, vision and strategic direction for an institution can be invaluable to an academic leader if a crisis strikes. The primary case study is based on Widener University and its work in one of the most distressed cities in the United States ? Chester, Pennsylvania. (HRK / Abstract übernommen)