

National Intercollegiate Mutual Aid Agreement (NIMAA)

Factsheet – October 2015

What Is It?

The National Intercollegiate Mutual Aid Agreement (NIMAA) is a system for providing and/or receiving assistance between Institutions of Higher Education (IHE) during a time of emergency or other situation. Examples of situations that could require assistance include: local/regional events (fires, floods, major storms), disease outbreaks, tragic events (shootings, building collapses), etc. Assistance could include people, expertise, equipment, supplies or even facilities.

During a crisis, colleges and universities must determine what resources they need and evaluate the options available to obtain those resources. This may include multiple assistance mechanisms such as: the institution's own resources, contracts and vendors, government assistance and other formal systems such as mutual aid agreements. All of these assistance "tools" should be included in the Institution's "toolbox".

Usually, mutual aid is provided when an important resource shortfall exists during a crisis or emergency. No IHE can be expected to provide all the resources for every type of emergency or event, which could take place in their community. Additionally, government support may be overwhelmed during the crisis and/or not have optimal skills for a higher education environment. During these times, another IHE may be able to provide the "surge" assets needed to address shortfalls during emergencies and events. External assistance is an important element of the safety, security, recovery and restoration on college campuses across the country.

The NIMAA was developed specifically for the needs of the higher education community that is complementary to other mutual aid agreements / programs, and works in cooperation with other plans. Many IHEs cannot close and must maintain core operations due to responsibilities such as resident populations and protecting key research.

Extensive research, reviews and incorporation of existing mutual aid systems, IHEs, lessons learned and best practices have been put into the development of the NIMAA over the past two years. It has been reviewed by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), Department of Homeland Security and Department of Education to ensure it complies with federal laws and regulations.

Governing Principles

The NIMAA provides for mutual cooperation among participating institutions in conducting disaster related exercises, testing or other training activities in addition to actual emergency periods. The Agreement defines financial obligations of the requesting institution as well as those that provide assistance. Insurance coverage and liability protection are key elements addressed in the NIMAA.

By adopting the NIMAA approach to mutual aid and assistance, colleges/universities are able to sign a single agreement covering issues such as: scope of service, insurance, indemnification, liability, workers' compensation, operational control and reimbursement. The Agreement allows IHEs to share equipment, personnel and other resources. Institutions participating in the NIMAA may be eligible for FEMA assistance / reimbursement and are not precluded from participation in other mutual aid agreements / programs.

The Agreement is open to any college/university that is willing to sign on and follow the tenants of what is spelled out in the NIMAA. It is owned and managed by the participating IHEs.

Advantages of this agreement are it allows for rapid access to IHE resources locally, regionally and/or nationally that have specific knowledge about the unique operations and challenges of a higher education setting.

Participation in the Agreement is completely voluntary, however, colleges and universities who chose not to participate may be at a disadvantage and potential risk during a larger scale crisis or emergency because of the lack of an organized system of seeking, requesting and receiving aid in a rapid and efficient manner.

Next Steps

Institutions of Higher Education need to evaluate the merits of its involvement with the NIMAA. If they choose to move forward, they should have legal counsel conduct a review and if they concur, have the President, Chancellor or other Senior Executive with the appropriate institutional authority sign the Agreement.

There is no membership cost to participate in the Agreement and it does not commit the college or university to any action unless they decide to request assistance or provide assistance. Even during this time, the Agreement is completely voluntary and institutions are not obligated to send resources unless they agree to do so.

The National Intercollegiate Mutual Aid Agreement is "win-win" for higher education. Participating in the NIMAA provides IHEs with flexibility when evaluating the most effective and efficient means of obtaining resources during an emergency.