Student Activism on Campus: What Housing Professionals Should Know

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The Knowledge Domains

You Should Already Be Able To:

- Train and educate constituents on preventive techniques and strategies
- Inform constituents of expected behavior and actions during crisis/incident
- Promote the values of student leadership to constituents
- Create environments and programs which support student leadership
- Promote the values of social justice to constituents
- Educate constituents on behavioral codes, policies, and regulations
- Mediate or facilitate conversations between conflicting parties in a way that preserves individual dignity, protects individual and community rights, and fosters learning and development

Crisis Management Knowledge Domain

Resident Educational Services Knowledge Domain

Student Behavior Knowledge Domain
Learning Objectives

• Articulate a summary of the history of student activism in Higher Education
• Discuss current activism on college campuses
• Recognize and implement a range of responses to student activism on campus
• Acknowledge rise of activism on campus and implications for our work with students
What is Student Activism?

“Student Activism is the action taken by students to effect change in society, whether it be political, social, economic, or environmental change.”

History of Student Activism

Activism’s Storied History on Campus

**Significant Milestones**

**1960’s – 1970’s**
Civil rights and anti-war demonstrations sweep campuses across the U.S.

**2011**
Occupy Wall Street movement shifts to college campuses

**2012**
Quebec student protests against tuition increases

**Late 2015**
Swift upsurge of student activism sweeps across the U.S. and Canada
Institutions are Underprepared

- Outdated policies and protocols
- Lack of proactive engagement and education for students
- No Strategy to respond, leading to slow and reactionary responses
- No coordinated or trained first responders
- Senior campus leaders are surprised or frustrated by students’ demands.

1 in 10

36 %
“One-Size-DOES NOT -Fit-All”

We want our students to be more active.

We know it can happen at any time.

It is already happening here.
Consequences for Activism

• Social Media
  • Issues no longer isolated (peers organize with others across the globe)
  • Institutions/Student interactions are increasingly public
  • Immediate action is the new normal
  • Responses are immediately picked apart, praised, and criticized

• Enrollment Impacts
  • University of Missouri enrollment decreased 7.4 % for next year.

• Potential Legal Consequences

• Future Development Impacts

• Jobs are becoming at Risk
Student Activism Today

- ADD SLIDE SHOW
Responding to Student Activism

• Response will vary by...
  • Type of activism
  • Institution (public vs. private)
  • Location (traditional public, limited public, designated public forum)
  • Assessment of Time, Place and Manner
  • Professional Roles (General Council, Student Affairs, Emergency Management, Police, etc.)

• Areas of Impact to be Evaluated and Considered in every Response:
  • Health and Safety
  • Legal Issues
  • Human Resources
  • Politics
  • Diversity and Inclusion
  • Leadership and Assessment
Responding to an Incident

Every Institution:

• Needs insight and intel (is it a planned protest, a shared discontent, or are their external influences/organizations involved?)

• Needs to understand that activism affects more than those on involved in the protest (you have the rest of the student body, campus community, and external groups like alumni, parents, etc.)

• Needs to ensure that students understand institutional decision-making processes

• Needs to encourage students to focus their efforts most productively

• Needs committed administrators who will focus on actionable demands
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<th>Establish Guiding Principles</th>
<th>Refine Communications</th>
<th>Develop a Comprehensive Response Strategy</th>
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<td>• Determine your campus ‘threshold’ for activism</td>
<td>• Communicate early and often; provide guidance to students</td>
<td>• Define Roles who should be making decisions</td>
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<td>• Ensure that you have a common vision among senior leadership</td>
<td>• Ensure consistency of message throughout a single event &amp; across multiple events</td>
<td>• Use existing protocols &amp; expertise of your existing crisis response team</td>
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<td>• Let your college’s values guide your response</td>
<td>• Use multiple channels to disseminate information</td>
<td>• Treat a protest like any other crisis – constantly review your response</td>
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<td>• Share your guiding principles with the campus community</td>
<td>• Employ student-centered tone and inclusive language</td>
<td>• Context matters, so remain flexible throughout an event</td>
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<td>• Generate campus buy-in about the institution’s perspective on activism</td>
<td>• Don’t forget to talk to your internal and frontline staff</td>
<td>• Prioritize campus-wide recovery and follow-up</td>
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Freedom of Speech

U.S Bill of Rights First Amendment: Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.

United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights Article 19: Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers.
Traditional Public Forum

• Public areas such as streets, sidewalks, parks.

• Is the space for the use of the public?

• For institutions, the public streets and sidewalks which surround the campus but are not on the campus will generally meet the definition of a traditional public fora.

• From a legal perspective, if the area constitutes a traditional public fora, the legal test is “strict scrutiny”.
Designated Public Forum

• Government property that is not normally been regarded as a public space but has been “intentionally opened up for that purpose”.

• “Inaction” or merely “permitting discourse” on a government property (including public institutions) does not constitute a designated public fora.

• Any place that the university, by policy or longstanding practice, establishes as a forum for speech of any kind. (free speech areas such as open areas, amphitheaters, plazas, etc.)

• From a legal perspective, if the area constitutes a designated public fora, the legal test is “strict scrutiny”.

Limited Public Forum

• A limited public forum has been opened by the institution not generally, but rather to certain groups or dedicated solely to the discussion of certain subjects.

• From a legal perspective, if the area constitutes a limited public fora, the legal test is “reasonableness”.

• **Limited vs. Designated**
  • Designated space is defined as the University opens up a forum for **ALL PURPOSES**
  • Limited space is defined where the University opens up a forum for **LIMITED PURPOSES**
    • *Certain Groups and Certain Subjects*
Case Study