

# CRISIS MANAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP

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Oklahoma State Board of Regents

Presented by Dr. Thomas C. Meredith

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## **CRISIS LEADERSHIP**

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- **A crisis is a disruption to the stature, reputation, operations and competitive position of a college, university or system.**
- **Crises often ignite public scorn and call into question leaders' competence and integrity due to failures to anticipate, address and lead through the crisis to a more positive outcome.**

## CRISIS LEADERSHIP

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**IF YOU HAVEN'T ALREADY HAD ONE,  
YOU WILL**

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# CRISIS LEADERSHIP

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- **Most Issues Can Turn Into a Crisis Even if They Shouldn't**

- **Why?**

**Society is more critical now**

**Effort to place blame**

**Social Media-Bad news at warp speed**

**Good news- not so much**

**Media- More about editorializing than reporting**

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- **H.E. Enjoyed a Long Tenure With Little Criticism**

**Ivory Tower**

**Good Things**

**Alumni**

**Athletics**

## **CRISIS LEADERSHIP**

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- **Then Came A Loss of Confidence**
- **Fewer Jobs for Graduates**
- **Extraordinary Tuition Increases**
- **A New Level of Student Debt**
- **Loss of Trust**
- **Etc.**

## **CRISIS LEADERSHIP**

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- **RESOURCES:**

**Terry McTaggart, AGB Senior Fellow**

**Crisis Leadership for Boards and Presidents- Book and  
Trusteeship Articles**

**Janice Abraham**

**Addressing Crises in Trusteeship April 2019**

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# CRISIS LEADERSHIP

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- **Let's Try to Answer Four Questions:**

- 1. What Should We Be Doing Before A Crisis?**
- 2. What Do We Do When We First Learn About It?**
- 3. How Do We Handle A Crisis?**
- 4. It is Over. Now What?**

## CRISIS LEADERSHIP

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- Before the Crisis

- Create a Crisis Team- Meet regularly, Practice “What Ifs”,

- Diverse Members

- ID High Risk Areas- Fiduciary Duty

- Anticipate Crises and Plan For Them- Shooters,

- Pandemic, Fire, Fiscal Declines, Embezzlements,

- Research Fraud, Cyber Attack(Ransom), Explosion

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## **CRISIS LEADERSHIP**

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- **Stay Informed About Other Institutions and States**  
**Research Funds, State Funds, Admissions, Ecards**
- **“Optimism Bias”- Don’t Change, It Will Pass and We Can Get Back to Normal**
- **“Problem Blindness”- Don’t Deny Impending Problems or Unpleasant Realities**
- **Presidents Be Honest With Your Boards**

# CRISIS LEADERSHIP

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## Crisis Hits- What Do We Do?

**-Reporters Will Ask These Four Questions**

- 1. What Do you Know?**
- 2. When Did You Know About It?**
- 3. What Are You Doing About It?**
- 4. What Are You Doing To Make Sure It Doesn't  
Happen Again?**

## **CRISIS LEADERSHIP**

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- **“Some Things Are Okay Until They Are Not”**
- **Board and The President Take Ownership**
- **Be as Transparent as Possible – Don’t hide, Tell the Truth**
- **COMMUNICATE**
- **Initial Reports are Seldom Accurate. Things Are Seldom  
As They Seem**

## CRISIS LEADERSHIP

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- **Gather the Facts Before You Say Too Much**
- **Clarify Inaccuracies Reported in the Media**

# **CRISIS LEADERSHIP**

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## **How Do We Handle The Crisis**

- Board Chair and the President are the Only Spokespersons**
- Gather Information as Quickly as Possible**
- Use Outside Auditors or Investigators**
- Utilize Legal Authorities Where Required**
- Understand the Social and Political Context**
- Give Updates as Necessary**

## CRISIS LEADERSHIP

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- **Craft Meaningful Remedies and Put Them in Place**
- **Do Not Play the Blame Game**
- **Board Member is the Cause? Board Handles- Not Pres.**
- **Always Have Talking Points. Don't Wing It.**
- **Stick to Your Talking Points No Matter the Question**
- **Tell You What I am Going to Tell You, Tell You, Then Tell**

**You What I Have Already Told you.**

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# CRISIS LEADERSHIP

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## Now What?

- **Rebuild TRUST**
- **Rebuild Reputation**
- **Debrief on What Happened and How it Happened**
- **President and Board Chair Demonstrate Their Partnership**
- **Make Sure Measures are in Place to Prevent Reoccurrence**

## **CRISIS LEADERSHIP**

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**- Obtain Outside Views of How the Crisis was Handled  
and What Should Be Done Next**

**- Make Sure the Crisis Team is Still at Work**

**“It can take twenty years to build a reputation and it can  
be lost in five minutes. If you think about that, you will do  
things differently.” Warren Buffet**

# CRISIS LEADERSHIP

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## QUESTIONS?

**Tom Meredith- AGB Senior Fellow**

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