

**APRU Campus Safety Workshop: Building Disaster Resistant Universities ~Is Your University Ready for the next Natural Disaster?~**

February 2-4, 2016 at Tohoku University in Japan

The International Research Institute of Disaster Science (IRIDeS) at Tohoku University and the Association of Pacific Rim Universities (APRU) held a “Building Disaster Resistant Universities ~Is Your University Ready for the next Natural Disaster?~” workshop February 2-4, 2016 at IRIDeS. Ms. Amy Aiken, Director of the Department of Emergency Management at Florida International University (FIU), was the invited trainer and facilitator, and more than 30 participants, including faculty, staff, and students from 16 universities in the United States, Australia, China, Chinese Taipei, Japan, Korea, Indonesia, Singapore, the Philippines, and Thailand attended.

The workshop discussed lessons learned from other universities, common challenges and issues, and tools to develop an effective emergency plan that introduces necessary improvements and enhances overall university preparedness. Representatives from Tohoku University in Japan, National University of Singapore, and the University of Philippines Diliman presented three case studies and shared their experiences, existing plans, and various challenges they encountered in the process of developing disaster preparedness/response plans and conducting simulation exercises.

These discussions suggested leadership is key and indispensable during emergencies in terms of making critical and prompt decisions and ensuring staff identify what needs to be done for immediate response and recovery. At the same time, during the preparedness stage, universities need to develop an adequate emergency management plan for recovering from any damage. This process requires gaining understanding and support from a policy group as well as obtaining adequate funding and human resources. To identify any current oversights or weaknesses, universities should also conduct simulation exercises using existing plans.

Universities should also consider providing training to staff and faculty responsible for safety and security on campus. **The key factors in campus safety are**

- 1) involving a policy team (decision-making body),**
- 2) developing an emergency management plan (preparedness/response plan, etc.),**
- 3) conducting an exercise, drill, or simulation using the existing plan to assess its efficacy, and**
- 4) reviewing the plan every few years to determine whether it can cope with emergencies and suits the current university structure.**

The discussion highlighted various strengths:

- 1) Universities in this region have similar management structures and therefore share common issues and concerns. Accordingly, they can learn from one another and adopt similar efforts.
- 2) They also share access to strong networks, such as the APRU, to exchange views and concerns and obtain feedback and suggestions. In this case, practical experience of what has worked well or did not work are especially valuable. Such networking also ensures a strong possibility of continuing this dialogue and initiative with additional workshops and training.
- 3) Likewise, universities in this region have experienced various disasters, making them experts on several types of disasters.

At the same time, several weaknesses were also identified:

- 1) A lack of permanent staff and managers in the safety and security office. Also, once senior managers of the university such as the safety director and president are replaced, interest and understanding on campus safety issues can become hard to sustain. Changes in staff leadership can often make it difficult to conduct regular drills and exercises.
- 2) University resources needed for emergency planning and preparedness must be shared with other objectives such as research, innovation, and experimentation, and the battle for resources can be very competitive. Consequently, campus safety projects tend to suffer from inadequate resources.

After a 2-day session, the workshop participants visited Natori and Sendai to observe the recovery efforts from the 2011 Great East Japan Earthquake and Tsunami. Natori adopted a multiple-defense approach in their recovery plan. In this case, the primary defense is for tsunamis that occur once every 10 to 100 years, and the secondary defense is for severe tsunamis that occur once every 1,000 years. For its reconstruction plan, Sendai opted to develop tsunami evacuation facilities. The participants visited one of these facilities: a tsunami evacuation tower that can accommodate nearly 300 people and houses various features such as solar power, emergency wireless, and stockpiled supplies. The local governments also introduced various disaster risk reduction and mitigation measures to avoid experiencing the same damage during future severe disasters and built resilient communities to protect local lives and assets.

At the end of the discussion, the participants requested the APRU to continue providing opportunities for discussion and learning on campus safety issues and to

address the importance of involvement by senior managers and leaders in a university policy group on this topic. This message will be conveyed to senior managers of the APRU member universities as well as other universities and research institutes in the APRU geographic area through regional and international conferences and discussions.

