ADVANCING PRACADEMIC EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AND HOMELAND SECURITY IN AN ERA OF CONVERGING RISKS: A SUMMIT REPORT

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ABSTRACT

The inaugural Pracademic Emergency Management and Homeland Security Summit addressed how research, education, and practice can be more effectively integrated to strengthen whole-community resilience. Hosted virtually by Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University in May 2025, it brought together 345 participants from more than 27 countries. The summit was designed as a pracademic forum linking scholarship, operational experience, and policy reflection. Contributions highlighted key themes including public-good emergency management, community engagement, technological innovation, workforce preparation, interdisciplinary education, and international perspectives on resilience and security. Across sessions, participants emphasized the need for adaptive curricula, applied research, inclusive planning, stronger collaboration, and better translation of evidence into practice. The summit affirmed pracademia as a dynamic space in which theory and practice enhance one another rather than stand in tension. The continued advancement of homeland security and emergency management depends on shared commitments to academic rigor, interdisciplinary engagement, and proactive workforce development.

Keywords: *whole-community resilience, pracademia, emergency management, homeland security, resilience education*

Welcoming 345 participants from over 27 countries, the inaugural Pracademic Emergency Management and Homeland Security Summit was hosted virtually on May 7 and 8, 2025, by the College of Arts & Sciences and Department of Emergency, Disaster and Global Security Studies at Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University's (ERAU's) Worldwide Campus, at a moment that, across national and international contexts, scholars and practitioners confront increasingly complex threat environments, in which natural hazards, technological failures, public health crises, geopolitical instability, and polarization interact in nonlinear and compounding ways (Cutter & Rubin, 2020; Lawson et al., 2020).

Designed around a comprehensive, all-hazards, whole-community approach, the summit united academics and practitioners to discuss research, teaching, and learning and to apply mission-space practices. Presentations were submitted in response to a broad call for papers and reviewed

by a pracademically experienced ERAU faculty committee. Accepted contributions were organized into thematic sections alongside keynote lectures. The summit was structured as a pracademic convening—a forum that integrates research, professional practice, and policy reflection. The event also provided an alternative venue during a year when the traditional Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Emergency Management Institute Higher Education Symposium was not held.

Although inspired by the *Pracademic Affairs* to bridge academic inquiry and practice (Homeland Security Affairs, n.d.), the summit was not premised on a divide between academia and the field. Rather, it reflected the long-standing integration of practitioners and scholars within homeland security and emergency management, including former practitioners who have transitioned into academia. Concurrently, emergency management and homeland security are maturing academic fields, as evidenced by increasing tenure-line faculty, doctoral research agendas, peer-reviewed scholarship, and sustained engagement with real-world mission spaces. This trajectory is further reflected in ongoing efforts to consolidate the theoretical foundations of homeland security as an evolving field of study (Comiskey et al., 2021). However, academic work in these fields cannot remain detached from operational realities. Conceptually, pracademia is not a compromise between theory and practice but a logic for integrating both. This aligns with Max Weber's (1948) argument that new scientific disciplines emerge when new problems are explored through new methods, thereby revealing previously unrecognized "meaningful aspects" of social reality.

The summit was further informed by the conceptualization of emergency management and homeland security as components of a broader civil security paradigm. This perspective situates both fields within a wider constellation of societal functions concerned with resilience, public value, and the protection of shared ways of life (Burgess, 2010; Dory, 2003; Masys, 2022; Rodríguez et al., 2018; Siedschlag & Jerković, 2022; Sylves, 2020). It underscores the need for interdisciplinary engagement, international collaboration, and the integration of various actors across public, private, and non-governmental sectors.

To reflect this breadth, the summit incorporated multiple formats, including keynote addresses, plenary sessions, panel discussions, research spotlight presentations, a special edition of the Embry-Riddle Worldwide College of Arts & Sciences "Resilience Reimagined" speaker series featuring doctoral research, interinstitutional degree program chairs' roundtable and assistant professors' sessions, and a virtual library hour. Together, these formats enabled a comprehensive exploration of homeland security and emergency management's evolution as symbiotic academic and professional fields in response to an increasingly complex and interconnected risk landscape. The following summary seeks to appreciate each contribution while identifying common threads and the outcomes of integrative discussion.

KEYNOTES

In her opening keynote, "Making the Invisible Visible: Emergency Management for the Public Good," Lori Peek, Director of the Natural Hazards Center and Professor of Sociology at the

University of Colorado Boulder, conceptualized emergency management as a vital public–good enterprise alongside education, healthcare, and defense. Peek emphasized the paradox that while emergency response activities are often publicly visible and celebrated, the foundational work of mitigation, preparedness, and planning remains largely unseen. She identified four pillars for making this work visible:

1. Investing in applied research that yields measurable public safety outcomes;
2. Strengthening collaborations to translate research into practice;
3. Communicating scientific knowledge in accessible and culturally relevant formats; and
4. Training and mentoring a pluralistic next generation of practitioners and scholars.

Peek urged the field to foreground emergency management's contributions to the public good, elevate the work of often-overlooked personnel and agencies, and disseminate evidence widely through trusted messengers.

Traci Ballard Silas framed her mid-summit keynote around the guiding question: "When an emergency happens, do you really know who's on your team?" Drawing on her leadership experience—including roles as Acting Executive Director of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Office of Academic Engagement and Director of the DHS Committee Management Office—Silas argued that resilient emergency management systems are built not only through planning and protocols but through relationships, trust, and a clear understanding of how individual talents and institutional resources are combined when it matters most. Silas underscored the importance of relationship building, cross-organizational partnerships, and proactive efforts to address capability gaps.

The concluding keynote featured a live Q&A discussion with Jessica Jensen, a distinguished disaster policy scholar currently affiliated with the RAND Corporation, moderated by Tanya Buhler Corbin (ERAU). The conversation centered on recent and prospective reforms within DHS and FEMA, highlighting their implications for emergency management capacity, intergovernmental coordination, and national readiness. Jensen addressed how administrative shifts influence responses to transboundary risks (e.g., pandemics and climate change), noting the increasing interconnectedness of global and domestic challenges. She emphasized the importance of adaptable curricula, evidence-based instruction, and pedagogical innovation in preparing students for evolving mission-space demands.

PLENARY SESSIONS

Emergency Management, Homeland Security, Higher Education, and Application

Moderated by Alex Rister (ERAU), this session examined how evolving operational demands are shaping curricula and pedagogy in homeland security and emergency management. Rister emphasized the need for higher education to respond to shifting practitioner requirements, community needs, and the profession's maturation.

- Cihan Aydiner (ERAU) discussed the online B.S. in homeland security program that he chairs, the first bachelor's program in the field accredited by CAEMHSE (Council for the Accreditation of Emergency Management and Homeland Security Education, n.d.). He highlighted scenario-based learning, strategic foresight, and critical threat analysis to build red teaming, anticipatory thinking, and agility as essential competencies for future practitioners.
- Robert Woitsch and Anna Sumereder (BOC Group, Austria) presented digitalized tabletop exercises that leverage knowledge modeling, artificial intelligence (AI)–supported decision tools, and graphical process mapping. Their framework advances institutional memory, replicability, and data-informed decision-making, illustrating how digital infrastructures strengthen organizational preparedness and learning.
- Andrea Davis (The Resiliency Initiative) concluded by centering community engagement as a core principle of sustainable emergency planning. Drawing on federal and non-governmental organization (NGO) experience, she argued that effective planning must be rooted in those closest to crisis: community organizations, caregivers, and local networks. Her remarks reinforced the importance of bottom-up approaches in cultivating equitable and resilient preparedness systems.

Technology and Emergency Management/Homeland Security

Moderated by Lee Gary (Strategic Management Services), this session explored the interplay between technology and security practice, with presenters contributing international and institutional perspectives.

- Hassan Abouseada (Egyptian Space Agency) emphasized the centrality of satellite communication, remote sensing, and coordination to contemporary emergency management systems. Abouseada highlighted the need for international standards to ensure global interoperability, noting that satellite services are indispensable infrastructure for crisis communication and early warning systems.
- Gordon Middleton (Patrick Henry College) examined vulnerabilities of telecommunications infrastructure and the importance of redundancy in emergency networks. Drawing on practice-based experience, he advocated transitioning from isolated technical solutions to mission-driven, integrated AI-supported systems. Middleton stressed aligning technological tools with operational requirements to enhance system resilience across civilian and defense contexts.

- Yungnane Yang (National Cheng Kung University, Taiwan) presented on AI and disaster prevention policy, evaluating the integration of digital surveillance and smart-governance tools within democratic institutions, emphasizing the need for public trust, transparency, and accountability. He argued that technological advancements must reinforce—not replace—democratic values in public safety contexts.
- Steve Recca (Center for Homeland Defense and Security, Naval Postgraduate School) concluded the session by highlighting free educational and leadership resources offered by the Center, including digital libraries, self-study courses, and a peer-reviewed journal (Center for Homeland Defense and Security, n.d.). He emphasized the Center's role in cultivating analytically capable, policy-literate homeland security professionals.

PANELS

Best Practices in Homeland Security/Emergency Management (First Session)

The first session of this panel, chaired by Logan Gerber-Chávez (ERAU), examined diverse applied approaches to strengthening preparedness, response capabilities, and cross-cultural resilience strategies.

- George Yao (National Cheng Kuo University, Taiwan) analyzed earthquake readiness in Taiwan, emphasizing the pedagogical and operational importance of seismic events as stress tests for emergency systems by offering the recent Dapu earthquake of 6.4 magnitude as a case study for examining system strengths and vulnerabilities. Districts Nansi and Yujing highlighted the need for robust data use, improved early-warning mechanisms, and strengthened community-based planning.
- Roni Fraser (Arizona State University) examined the psychological impacts of disaster volunteering, drawing on interviews and psychological assessments. Her research underscored that volunteers—particularly those exposed to high stress or trauma-laden environments—experience heightened risks of burnout, anxiety, and posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Fraser emphasized the need for institutional mental health support, structured training, and peer-based coping mechanisms, noting that volunteer well-being is foundational to emergency response capacity.
- Wei Kang Hung (National Taiwan Normal University) offered insights into international emergency management capacity building across Asia and its relevance for global contexts. Her analysis highlighted the value of cross-border knowledge exchange, community outreach, adaptive policy design, and scenario-based training frameworks. Wei emphasized culturally grounded communication strategies and public trust for effective disaster governance.

Best Practices in Homeland Security/Emergency Management (Second Session)

Chaired by Cihan Aydiner (ERAU), the second session examined contemporary challenges in preparedness, resilience, and instructional innovation across emergency management and

homeland security domains. Panelists stressed the need to engage marginalized and vulnerable populations in preparedness strategies, integrating community-specific needs to ensure culturally responsive and just emergency policies.

- Iulia Hoban and Alex Rister (ERAU) discussed innovative approaches to course development and teaching, emphasizing the need for curricula that remain responsive to rapidly evolving global risks. They highlighted how factors such as natural disasters, pandemics, and geopolitical instability necessitate adaptive instructional strategies that prepare learners for complex, dynamic operational environments.
- Arthur Simental (Simental Industries) presented disaster wargaming as a transformative tool for emergency management training. He underscored how structured simulations and scenario-based exercises enhance critical thinking and decision-making. Wargaming, he argued, provides a pedagogical and operational bridge between theory and applied mission-space problem-solving, enabling practitioners and students to engage with realistic crisis dynamics.

Training and Education

Chaired by Joel Billings (ERAU), this panel examined innovative strategies for developing professional capacity in emergency management, homeland security, and related fields. The session highlighted flexible educational pathways, workforce-aligned curriculum design, and instructional models that integrate authentic, practice-based learning.

- Christopher Shultz and Ann Prime Monaghan (Thomas Edison State University) presented on bridging professional training and higher education through pathways for credit recognition in emergency management and homeland security. Their presentation emphasized several key components of adult-centric academic design, such as flexible program architecture, including online modalities suited for working professionals; assessment strategies grounded in applied problem-solving and scenarios; and recognition of prior learning and professional experience, to support learner-driven pathways in preparing practitioners for an increasingly complex risk landscape.
- Birgit Bortoluzzi and Cesare Bortoluzzi (Vienna School of Economics, Austria), examined the role of resilience education and strategic foresight in shaping the civil security workforce. Their analysis highlighted the need to align training content with evolving policy priorities and operational realities. They emphasized authentic simulations that mirror real-world complexity; cross-sector collaboration, since emergency management capacity is distributed across public, private, and non-governmental actors; and community engagement to cultivate adaptive reasoning and practical skills. Their approach demonstrates how future-oriented, interdisciplinary education can strengthen resilience by preparing professionals to anticipate and respond to emerging threats.

Government and Policy

Chaired by Michelle Protas (ERAU), this session explored intersections of science, professional practice, and policy development within public-serving sectors, emphasizing the importance of interdisciplinary collaboration, data-driven decision-making, and bottom-up policy innovation.

- Yuting Liao (WeatherRisk Corporation, Taiwan) examined meteorological forecasting as an applied emergency management tool in New Taipei City, where summer thunderstorms constitute a consistent hazard. Liao highlighted the operational value of hyperlocal data and real-time communication tools, developed in partnership with emergency operations centers, to support nuanced risk assessment, improve situational awareness, and facilitate rapid response to severe weather events.
- Michael Prasad and Jennifer Russell (Center of Emergency Management Intelligence Research) explored the interplay between clinical practice, public health, and grassroots policy development. Russell's work in neonatal care provided a case example. Lacking evidence-based standards for lactation and neonatal intensive-care-unit support, she and colleagues initiated a policy change, beginning with basic documentation practices. These efforts expanded into institutional protocols and eventually influenced broader public health campaigns and state-level discussions. Their model demonstrates how practitioner-driven innovation can shape policy environments, even where formal research infrastructure is limited. Effective policy development can emerge from lived experience, peer-to-peer knowledge sharing, and creative documentation, especially within under-resourced or rapidly evolving domains of public health and emergency management.

Case Studies

Chaired by David Higgins (ERAU), this panel featured presentations examining innovation, professional development, and operational response in emergency management through practical and global lenses.

- David McEntire (Utah Valley University) presented "Emergency Management Lessons from Eddie Van Halen," employing the legendary guitarist's creative experimentation as an analytic metaphor for innovation in preparedness. McEntire argued that emergency management professionals must adopt similar integrative and adaptive approaches—combining tools, methods, and interdisciplinary insights—to confront the complexity of modern hazards. Cultural reference served as a heuristic model highlighting the value of creativity in fostering flexible, nonlinear problem-solving in emergency management.
- Shirley Feldmann-Jensen (California State University Long Beach) examined the ongoing professionalization of emergency management, calling for formalizing competencies, aligning curricula with emergent risk landscapes, and incorporating established public health frameworks into emergency management education. She suggested building policy structures that recognize emergency management as a distinct profession with codified standards, pathways, and expectations as necessary to strengthen academic legitimacy and operational performance.

- Chaim Rafalowski (Magen David Adom, Israel) detailed an operational case study of the emergency medical services (EMS) response to the 2023 Hamas attacks. He provided a sobering account of field response during mass casualty events marked by volatility and active threats. Magen David Adom's centralized NGO-driven structure enabled rapid scaling of resources, high-pressure triage operations, volunteer integration, and field intelligence coordination under fire. Rafalowski's analysis underscored the importance of scenario-based training, robust communication protocols, and flexible mobilization strategies.

International Emergency Management

Moderated by Iuliia Hoban (ERAU), this panel showcased comparative and cross-national approaches to emergency management, foregrounding student-driven research, regionally specific strategies, and the role of academic institutions in advancing global resilience.

- Jacob Pritchard, an ERAU student and U.S. Marine Corps veteran, presented research comparing centralized and decentralized emergency management systems. Using examples such as the United Nations Mission in Western Sahara (MINURSO), he demonstrated the value of hybrid frameworks that integrate global best practices with local adaptability. Pritchard emphasized the need to incorporate NGOs and community actors into preparedness structures and highlighted cross-sector coordination as a critical area for strengthening system performance.
- Yung-Fang Chen (Coventry University, U.K.) traced the evolution of emergency response training and simulation methodologies in the United Kingdom. She described a progression from traditional tabletop exercises to hybrid digital platforms designed to increase realism and engagement in flood preparedness and other hazard scenarios. Her analysis underscored that high-fidelity, technology-enabled training environments support deeper learning and more robust decision-making among responders.
- Hsiao Wen Wang (National Cheng Kung University, Taiwan) discussed the importance of academic institutions in shaping Taiwan's national resilience. Through the Disaster Prevention Research Center's activities, academic research informs public policy, capacity-building, and risk-management education. Wang highlighted Taiwan's exposure to natural hazards as a catalyst for interdisciplinary innovation, stressing that policy must evolve at the pace of emerging risks, capturing the urgency shaping modern emergency management.

Homeland Security and Emergency Management Learning and Practice

Moderated by Michelle Protas (ERAU), this panel examined academic preparation, practitioner expectations, and evolving workforce demands across emergency management and homeland security fields. Presentations incorporated comparative international perspectives, institutional pedagogical innovations, and insights into career readiness for students entering increasingly hybrid professional environments.

- Yung Fang Chen (Coventry University, U.K.) outlined the structure of emergency and disaster management education within the United Kingdom. The U.K. distinguishes yet interrelates emergency and disaster management as educational domains, with sector pathways often supported through degree apprenticeships, and increasing emphasis on interdisciplinary integration across fields such as international development and disaster management. She emphasized regional variation in educational delivery models.
- Katy-Jan Bobseine (ERAU) presented collaborative international research for event security and risk analysis, discussing the challenge of balancing academic rigor with cultivating practical skills for intelligence and security careers. She highlighted a pracademic initiative integrating intelligence education, applied research, and cross-border collaboration through an open-source security assessment framework. ERAU students partnered with peer universities in Mexico and Canada to conduct open-source intelligence (OSINT) assessments of host cities for the 2026 FIFA World Cup, evaluating security risks.
- Lorraine Schneider, an emergency management practitioner with roles spanning local government (City of Los Angeles), higher education (University of California, Los Angeles), and the private sector (Disney), provided a practitioner-centered perspective on employer expectations. Schneider underscored the importance of adaptability, emotional intelligence, and cross-sector fluency, observing that contemporary emergency management increasingly involves collaboration among governmental, nonprofit, and private-sector domains. Noting that academic programs often overemphasize government-centric doctrine despite disaster response and recovery capacity frequently residing in the private sector, she identified demand for competencies in intelligence analysis, risk communication, business continuity, cyber and supply chain resilience, regulatory navigation, and sector-specific risk expertise.

Emergency Management and Homeland Security Rethink

This panel, moderated by Yungnane Yang (National Cheng Kung University, Taiwan), addressed the intersection of politics, pedagogy, and professional identity within emergency management and homeland security education. The panel invited critical reflections on academic resilience, programmatic adaptability, and broader implications of political change for the integrity and future of the field. Yang situated the discussion within a shared sense of uncertainty and concern about the politicization of emergency management structures.

- Jack L. Rozdilsky (York University, Canada) examined the cancellation of FEMA's Higher Education Symposium within a broader pattern of U.S. policy shifts affecting science, education, and disaster governance. He cautioned that these trends pose "existential threats" to the accessibility and credibility of emergency management scholarship, advocating academic resilience, including open-access dissemination and international partnerships, for safeguarding the field's future.
- Lee Gary (Strategic Management Services) discussed the programmatic level, reflecting on how macro-level political and societal trends manifest in emergency management

curricula, learning outcomes, and workforce expectations. He emphasized the need for programs to cultivate institutional agility by regularly revisiting pedagogy, curricula, and target audience. He underscored the necessity of adaptive curriculum design aligned with a rapidly evolving threat environment.

- Christopher Stitt (Crisis Lead, LLC) foregrounded the importance of trust, empathy, and transparency in teaching amid rising political polarization. Critical thinking with practical relevance remains essential for preparing students to navigate contentious or fragmented institutional contexts. Stitt positioned intentional cultivation of student engagement and open dialogue as a prerequisite for sustainable learning environments in emergency management education.

RESEARCH FLASHLIGHTS

The Research Flashlights session, moderated by Alexander Siedschlag (ERAU), highlighted emerging research and applied scholarship across the fields of emergency management, homeland security, and resilience studies.

- Jacob Pritchard (ERAU), student and U.S. Marine Corps veteran, presented a comparative analysis of emergency management systems. His study examined how organizational structures shape preparedness, coordination, and community-level outcomes. Pritchard advocated hybridized models that combine international and locally adaptive approaches, noting effective national preparedness requires whole-community engagement, particularly through meaningful integration of non-governmental partners into emergency planning.
- Lilia Cunningham (Strategic Management Service) examined how disasters exacerbate pre-existing vulnerabilities, particularly among young people. Her research illuminated social and relational disruptions that disasters intensify, foregrounding the need for youth-informed emergency planning. Preparedness efforts must address physical safety of vulnerable populations and the social ecosystems that shape long-term well-being. She proposed vulnerability mapping as a tool for proactive, pre-disaster planning.
- Jeffrey Pellegrino and Arlene Magoon (University of Akron) presented findings from a longitudinal pracademic initiative integrating higher education, applied research, and community-engaged learning. Students conducted hazard analyses and preparedness assessments across twelve counties, revealing persistent household preparedness gaps. Leveraging FEMA's research tools, they embedded preparedness activities within scouting programs, from Cub Scouts to Teen Community Emergency Response Team (CERT), aligning badge pathways with progressive emergency readiness milestones.
- Anna Sumereder and Robert Woitsch (BOC Group and University of Vienna, Austria) co-presented a digital solution for resilience modeling grounded in organizational informatics. By digitizing emergency exercises, their framework supports objective evaluation, enhances comparability across training events, and incorporates AI-supported

assessment tools. Results demonstrated how digital infrastructure strengthens operational learning and organizational resilience.

"RESILIENCE REIMAGINED" SPECIAL EDITION FEATURING PH.D. STUDENT RESEARCH

Host Alexander Siedschlag (ERAU) opened this special edition of the *Resilience Reimagined* speaker series (Embry-Riddle Worldwide College of Arts & Sciences, 2026) by encouraging participants to think beyond static definitions of resilience, imagining new frameworks and models through critical thinking rather than rationalization of prevailing mission-space practices. Ph.D. research presentations underscored the role of emerging scholars in shaping tomorrow's homeland security and emergency management policies, strategies, and educational priorities—resilience, truly reimagined.

- Anthony Orsino (Case Western Reserve University) presented "Examining Rural and Border Emergency Management Infrastructure: An East Palestine, Ohio, Case Study." Orsino examined the limitations of aggregated social vulnerability indices used in emergency preparedness, advocating for granular, community-informed metrics that better capture intersecting vulnerabilities and community experiences, resulting in resilience planning that transcends static mapping tools to acknowledge the people behind the data.
- Ayesha Islam (University at Albany, SUNY) presented "Rebuild or Relocate: Where Will the Wildfire Survivors Find Their Homes?" Islam explored how wildfire survivors navigate decisions to rebuild or relocate. She highlighted the multidimensional nature of these choices, shaped by risk, identity, community cohesion, memory, and place attachment. The results underscore the need for post-disaster housing policies sensitive to the emotional and social contexts of displaced populations.
- Frank Friend (Oklahoma State University) discussed "The Challenge of Island Disasters: Understanding the Cumulative Impacts of Hurricanes Maria and Fiona on Puerto Rico." He examined how repeated disasters shape infrastructure degradation, health outcomes, and long-term displacement. Friend argued for frameworks addressing disaster fatigue and recurring shocks in geographically isolated areas. He described resilience not as a singular event but as a continuous cycle of survival, recovery, and anticipation.
- John Ludden (St. John's University) presented "Renewable Energy Penetration in San Diego's Electrical Grid: Homeland Security Perspectives on Resilience, Reliability, and Vulnerability Impacts." He identified persistent gaps in local emergency management coordination, including inter-agency trust, communication flow, and collaborative response capacity. Ludden stressed that effective coordination relies as much on relationships as on formal structures—requiring trust, timing, and shared understanding across agencies.
- Daryl Schaffer (University of Alaska Fairbanks) presented, "Extratropical Post-Typhoon Merbok Impact on Geographically Isolated Western Alaska and Sustainable Recovery

Process for Vulnerable Populations." Drawing on over 40 years of practitioner experience, Schaffer argued for strengthened standardization and interoperability in emergency response capability assessments, noting that capability assessments are only as effective as the standards and collaborative frameworks that underpin them.

EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AND HOMELAND SECURITY DEGREE PROGRAM CHAIRS' ROUNDTABLE

Moderated by Joel Billings (ERAU), this discussion included academic leaders from institutions across the United States and Canada. They discussed curricular design, applied learning integration, technology, and balancing academic and practitioner-centered priorities. Panelists addressed strategic and operational challenges inherent in programs within a field that continues to evolve in its disciplinary identity, workforce expectations, and educational standards.

- Shirley Feldmann-Jensen (California State University Long Beach) emphasized integrating professional standards into graduate curricula and advancing equity-conscious program design, noting that degree programs must support inclusive student pathways and anticipate emerging risks, rather than simply reacting to recent crises. Feldmann-Jensen cautioned that academic programs bear responsibility for protecting the field from disruption by external events by designing resilient and forward-looking programs.
- Jennifer Osetek (Penn State) described the evolution of the online Penn State World Campus homeland security master's program. She highlighted the program's interdisciplinary structure, which includes tracks in agricultural biosecurity and food defense, counterterrorism, cyber threat analytics and prevention, intelligence and geospatial analysis, and public health preparedness. Osetek noted her own trajectory from student to program leader as an illustration of the value of practitioner-informed academic leadership.
- Jack Rozdilsky (York University, Toronto) discussed efforts to bridge liberal arts and professional studies within York University's graduate program in disaster and emergency management. He highlighted challenges in fostering meaningful student engagement at a large urban research university and identified international collaboration and comparative emergency management as key areas for future growth.
- Ann Prime Monaghan (Thomas Edison State University) presented a flexible, learner-centered education model fusing stackable credentials, custom areas of study, and degree structures designed to support mid-career professionals balancing academic study with ongoing public service roles. She emphasized that academic programs should "meet learners where they are," recognizing the varied professional backgrounds that characterize the student population.
- Laura Siebeneck (University of North Texas) discussed her university's undergraduate and graduate programs, emphasizing the integration of community resilience and disaster science. She highlighted the importance of experiential learning opportunities, including

hazard labs and disaster field studies, as critical components of effective emergency management education.

- Suleyman Ozeren (American University) outlined his institution's dual academic programs in terrorism policy and cyber management, noting their reliance on experiential learning and hybrid delivery models. He emphasized the integration of policy literacy into technical curricula to ensure graduates are prepared for success within governmental and public-sector environments.

EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AND HOMELAND SECURITY ASSISTANT PROFESSORS' SESSION: ACADEMIC CAREER EXPERIENCE IN EVOLVING NEW FIELDS

Moderated by Alexander Siedschlag (ERAU), this session included early-career faculty who reflected on challenges and opportunities associated with academic career formation in evolving, interdisciplinary fields.

- Caroline Hackerott (North Dakota State University) described the value of accessible, grassroots scholarly initiatives, particularly in fields that lack long-established disciplinary boundaries. She advised early-career faculty to seize nontraditional venues, cultivate collaboration, and advocate for inclusive academic spaces capable of sustaining intellectual momentum despite institutional uncertainty.
- Cihan Aydiner (ERAU) reflected on his transition from a senior military role in counterterrorism to a tenure-track academic position. He emphasized that practitioners entering academia bring critical operational insight but must adapt by translating experiential knowledge into rigorous scholarship and evidence-informed teaching. Aydiner stressed the importance of developing a scholarly voice, cultivating publication habits, and connecting theory with real-world complexity.
- Brent Maguire (Vincennes University) discussed his entry into the academic workforce, noting that his broader teaching background shaped his approach to homeland security education. He underscored the importance of grounding curricula in workforce relevance, ensuring that program content aligns with evolving operational environments and the needs of future practitioners.
- Tony McAleavy (Oklahoma State University) offered a personal pracademic reflection, drawing connections between his early career as a professional athlete, work as a Coast Guard officer and emergency medical technician (EMT), and his transition into academia. Experience, practitioner insight, and mentorship can drive innovative teaching and research agendas; rigorous scholarship and policy development directly improve emergency management outcomes.
- Brian Simpkins (Eastern Kentucky University) provided a long-term perspective on academic identity formation. He recommended helping students understand the "why" behind doctrine, methods, and assignments, and highlighted efforts to strengthen student

employability through program-wide emphasis on soft skills. He discussed expanding global perspectives through a study abroad program in homeland security and encouraged assistant professors to build institutional memory and shape program identity, even in contexts where national standards remain underdeveloped.

VIRTUAL LIBRARY HOUR: NEW HOMELAND SECURITY/EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT BOOKS

The Virtual Library Hour, moderated by Kristen Davis (ERAU Hunt Library), highlighted three recent publications, based on authors' submissions, which contribute to homeland security and emergency management education. Each book showcased in this session reflects a vital educational goal: to prepare homeland security and emergency management students not only to succeed in class, but to lead thoughtfully in the field.

- *Current and Emerging Trends in the Management of International Disasters*, coedited by Laura Phipps and David McEntire (Utah Valley University), represents a comprehensive open-access resource comprising contributions from 45 authors across 22 chapters. The text examines global risk management, transnational disaster coordination, and climate-related disruptions. McEntire emphasized the importance of cultivating international awareness in a field increasingly defined by transboundary hazards, while Phipps underscored their commitment to incorporating diverse voices and disaster experiences. Their goal was to address global disaster problems through multiple, internationally informed approaches.
- *Soft Skills and Professional Tips for Emergency Management: A Pocket Guide*, authored by Stephanie DeLorenzo (D.C. Homeland Security and Emergency Management Agency), focuses on the behavioral competencies that shape career success in emergency management. Drawing on her experience advising students and early-career practitioners, DeLorenzo developed a concise, portable guide to support learners transitioning into internships and professional roles after observing that many students have strong academic preparation but lack explicit training in workplace professionalism, including communication, teamwork, adaptability, and leadership behaviors.
- *Comparative Homeland Security: Global Lessons* (3rd ed.), by Nadav Morag (Sam Houston State University), provides a comparative analysis of homeland security systems worldwide, ranging from liberal democracies to authoritarian regimes. The updated edition includes expanded discussions on terrorism, cybersecurity, and migration, as well as new case studies and pedagogical tools. Morag emphasized comparative study as vital for cultivating critical thinking, enabling students to assess how different societies address similar security challenges through distinct political, cultural, and institutional lenses.

SUMMARY AND OUTLOOK

The inaugural Pracademic Summit provided a comprehensive reflection on the future of homeland security and emergency management as both academic and professional fields. It identified cross-cutting findings shaping the future of emergency management and homeland security:

- Emergency management is increasingly framed as a public good, requiring greater visibility of its preventive and societal value.
- Homeland security is an increasingly interconnected and transboundary domain, requiring integrated approaches that bridge domestic and international contexts, as well as public, private, and non-governmental actors.
- Resilience depends not only on technical systems but on local trust, inclusive planning, and community engagement.
- While technological innovation offers significant potential, it must remain accountable, mission-driven, and aligned with operational realities.
- Workforce preparation must be adaptive, interdisciplinary, and closely aligned with practice to meet evolving mission-space demands.

Overall, the fields are maturing institutionally but still face persistent structural barriers that complicate translating evidence into practice. Participants addressed key challenges, including inconsistent role definitions across jurisdictions, limited access to operational datasets for academic research, the continuing divide between universities and response agencies, and the difficulty of providing authentic experiential learning for students—particularly in online or asynchronous programs—without sustained field engagement.

Nevertheless, the summit revealed a growing readiness among scholars and practitioners to redefine the purpose and impact of academic programs. Rather than seeing homeland security and emergency management education as confined to disciplinary training, participants envisioned them as platforms for ethical leadership, real-world impact, and practitioner collaboration. The pracademic mindset was framed not as a compromise between theory and practice, but as a dynamic space in which each enhances the other. As homeland security and emergency management continue to mature, advancement depends on a shared commitment to academic rigor, interdisciplinary engagement, and proactive workforce development—hallmarks of the pracademic vision that grounded this inaugural event.

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Disclosure of Artificial Intelligence Use

A large language model (LLM), Chat GPT 4o, was used to summarize video transcripts based on the following prompt for each session: “Can you write a high-level (highlights) summary of the attached transcribed session? Please name the presenter(s) for each contribution and shoot for 300 words.” Where refinement or more information was necessary, a prompt was added to include additional information, or information was manually gathered from recording transcripts and available session materials as needed. Chat GPT output was manually checked against the transcripts to identify mismatches or oversight of essential content, which was then added based on manual review of the transcripts and organizers’ notes. The summary was then substantially rewritten by the organizers as it was integrated into the final manuscript.

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