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Colorado Department of Higher Education partners with WICHE, DHS and FEMA on cybersecurity preparedness exercise

College and university leaders get up-close view of cyber threats and vulnerabilities

DENVER, Dec. 7, 2018 –The Colorado Department of Higher Education, Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education and U.S. Department of Homeland Security’s Campus Resilience Program, in partnership with the Federal Emergency Management Agency, convened a leadership tabletop cyber-exercise to prepare for emergency situations at institutions of higher education last week.

The half-day experience for campus leadership, which included campus presidents, provosts and others, highlighted their role in managing institutional risk during emergency incidents. Campus leadership, local, state and federal officials and industry subject matter experts worked together to simulate emergencies through tailored case studies on a range of threats. The Colorado event focused on a cyber data breach scenario, specifically impacting campus infrastructure.

“Each exercise is tailored to unique campus settings,” said Trent Frazier, executive director in Homeland Security’s Office of Academic Engagement. “These exercises have impacted more than 5 million people and more than 1,000 campuses and universities, and 96 percent of participating institutions nationally have identified a vulnerability and taken action on their campuses.”

The event brought together more than 100 participants representing 34 colleges and universities across Colorado. Participating colleges and universities worked through a moderated exercise scenario and discussed actionable approaches for institutional leadership to direct and bolster the resilience of their campus communities.

“Taking a few hours to reflect, prepare, practice and possibly prevent a crisis on campus may be the most important thing that you do as an institutional leader,” said Pierre Powell, chief operating officer for the Colorado Department of Higher Education.

Colorado is only the second state to participate in this state-specific series of exercises: the series inaugurated in February with an initial exercise in North Dakota and will expand to other states throughout and beyond 2019.

“Cyber threats in higher education are based on the fact that all institutions are now digital institutions,” said Mike Abbiatti, vice president for technology-enhanced education at WICHE, the Boulder-based Western-region higher education agency. “Technology development moves much faster than our ability to protect our personal data.”

[Learn more about the exercise and review previous event materials.](#)

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