AuditCon

by ACUA

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ACUA

Adapting with Confidence: A Risk Assessment Approach for Campus Footprint Changes

-158[1]

Net change in Title IV institutions since 2022-23

IPEDS shows changes in Title IV institutions from 2022-23, 2023-24 and 2024-25.

521[2]

Institutional combination events from Jan. 2000 to Aug. 2025

State Higher Education Executive Officers Association (SHEEO) tracked 446 consolidations and 75 absorptions during this period.

31% vs. 12%[3]

Private vs. public presidents reporting institutional combination discussions

Among institutions considering combinations, 58% cited ensuring financial stability, 55% cited optimizing resources, and 8% cited imminent closure.

Total Title IV institutions in the US each year



2022-23 → 5,918

2023-24 → 5,819

2024-25 → 5,760

1 NCES, 2024-25 IPEDS Fall Provisional Data Release, Appendix B; NCES/IES 2023-24 release.
2 SHEEO, College Mergers, Consolidations, and Acquisitions, Sept. 2025, using Federal Student Aid Weekly School File through Aug. 2025.
3 Inside Higher Ed, The Key Podcast: Why Match Matters in M&A, Apr. 30, 2026, citing IHE/Hanover 2026 presidents survey.

Welcome and Learning Objectives



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- Identify key risk categories associated with campus footprint changes.
- Understand how risk priorities evolve throughout the different phases of a campus change effort.
- Apply a practical risk assessment playbook, that can be adapted to support campus change efforts.
- Clarify responsibilities, ownership, and escalation pathways across stakeholders and workstreams.

Campus Changes: Audience Activity

Instructions: Individual Bingo Activity Throughout

1. Fill in your Bingo sheet using the bolded words on the upcoming slides.
2. At the end of the session, we will randomly select four (4) words.
3. If your words are selected four times in a row, should BINGO and win a prize!

Campus Changes: Audience Participation

Instructions: Group Activity

Scenario	Your president announces a new campus, satellite location, combination, or other footprint change.
Question	What are the first risks you think about related to campus changes?

QR

Insert poll QR code

Campus Changes at Vanderbilt

Why Internal Audit became involved in a strategic initiative like this?

Forward-looking

- Advisory work designed to support planning, a **proactive** review.

Decision support

- Leadership wanted a structured view of priority risks and mitigation strategies.

Operational readiness

- The review linked risks to **accountability**, controls, escalation, and sustainability.

Repeatability

- The work was intended to create a **playbook** for future footprint changes.

Risk Assessment Collaboration

Vanderbilt Leadership	Internal Audit
• Institutional context	• Risk advisory methodology
• Leadership access	• **Benchmarking** perspective
• Internal credibility	• Facilitation and synthesis
• **Knowledge** of the expansion	• Repeatable playbook design

Engagement Outcomes and Approach

Outcomes	Approach
Comprehensive Risk Inventory	**Validate** the priority risk areas
Prioritized Risk Register	Consider processes and controls to **manage** high-priority risk areas
Risk Assessment Playbook	Understand processes for accepting and **escalating** risks

Example Risk Inventory

This is an illustrative risk inventory, not intended to be comprehensive. A more detailed inventory can be used to prompt discussions, and support prioritization during the risk assessment process.

Student	Academic	Financial	Operational	External
• Accessibility & Disability Accommodations • Campus Life & Culture • **Health & Wellness Services** • Safety & Emergency Support	• Academic Support • Curriculum Offerings • Faculty Recruitment • Learning Resources • Research Infrastructure & Compliance	• Auxiliary Revenue • Capital Projects & Deferred Maintenance • Enrollment • Financial Planning & Budgeting	• Business Continuity • Campus Safety & Security • Cybersecurity • **Staffing & Workforce Capacity** • Third-Party Service Providers	• Accreditation & Authorization • Economic & Market Demands • Political Environment • Regulatory & Legal Compliance

Campus Change Risk Assessment Checklist

1

Define

What could affect successful day one operations or long-term operations?

2

Manage

What is in place today, and what is still being developed?

3

Own

Is it clear who owns the risk and who is **responsible** for action?

4

Assess

Are current plans, processes, and controls sufficient?

5

Monitor

What should be **monitored**, and what conditions require leadership attention?

6

Reassess

Do priorities, ownership, or mitigation needs change during phase transitions?

Additional Tools and Tips

Project Management Tools

- Centralized **Project Management** Platform with Integrated Gantt Chart/Critical Path
- Document Repository
- Responsible, Accountable, Consultative, Informed (RACI) Matrix
- Stakeholder Directory
- Risks, Assumptions, Issues, Decisions Log
- **Communications** Plan
- Workstream Charters and Templates

Risk Assessment & Oversight Practices

- Involve stakeholders early
- Benchmark external or peer risks
- **Prioritize risks** during each phase
- Align on risk rating criteria (impact, likelihood, effectiveness of processes and controls)
- Define escalation protocols
- Communicate decision-making responsibilities and accountability structures (RACI matrix)
- Encourage **collaborative** use of the risk assessment playbook

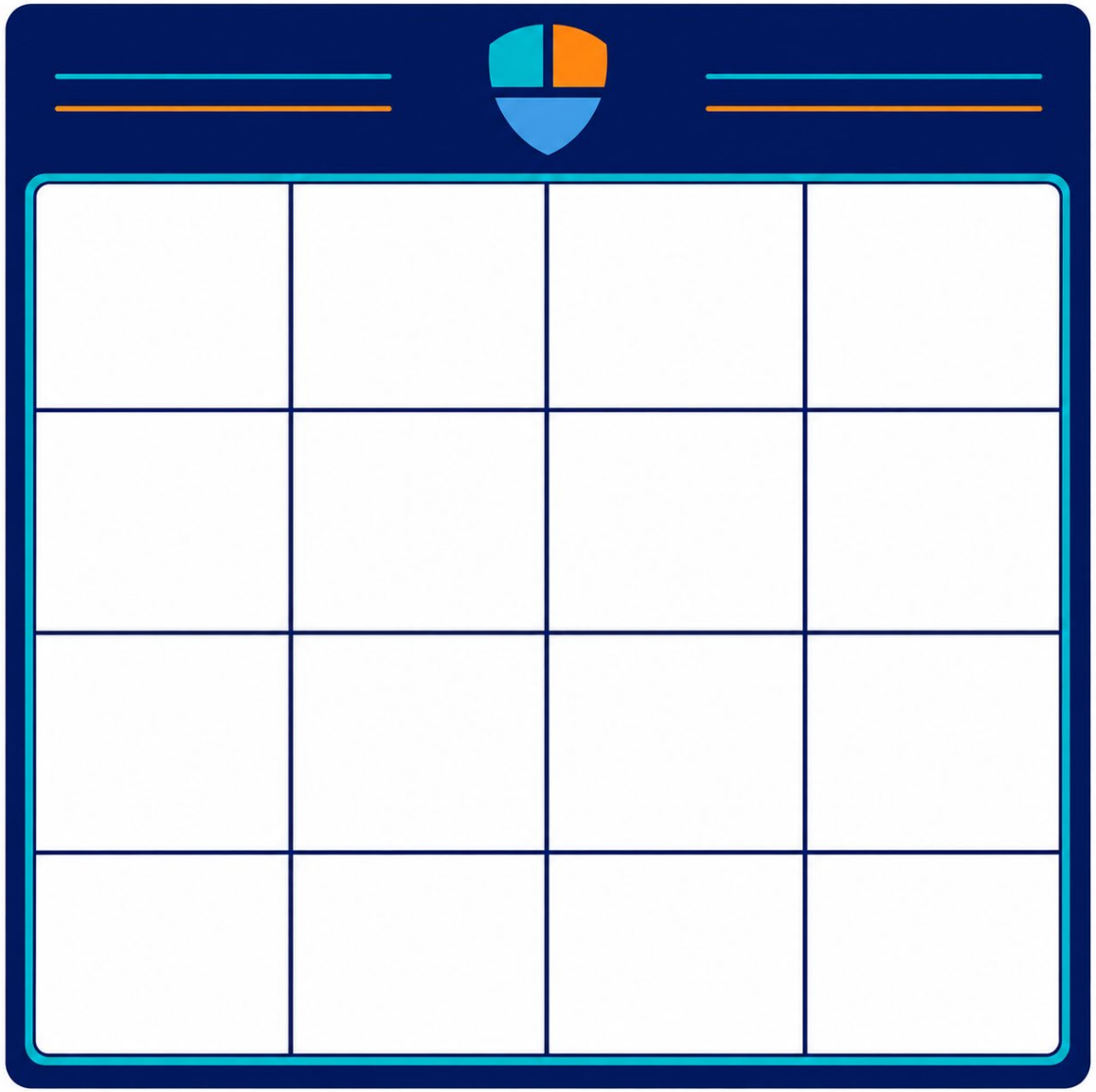
Recap and Open Discussion

In your opinion, what is one thing institutions cannot afford to overlook during a campus footprint change?

QR

Insert poll QR code

Bingo Check!



Thank you!



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