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#### **Building Real-World Skills: Insights from the DMAN 7200 Skills Day Exercise**

The DMAN 7200 Skills Day Exercise offers a dynamic experiential learning opportunity for graduate students studying Disaster Management at the University of Georgia. Designed to bridge the gap between theory and practice, the exercise builds on classroom concepts and immerses students in a simulated disaster that challenges their ability to think critically, communicate effectively, and lead under pressure.

Over two semesters, students explore key principles of emergency management, including incident command, triage, mass casualty management, crisis communication, and exercise design. The Skills Day Exercise serves as the culminating experience, allowing students to apply these concepts in a controlled, realistic environment. Grounded in HSEEP principles, the exercise connects academic learning with practical application, focusing on real-time decision-making, teamwork, and operational coordination.

This poster will showcase how Skills Day Exercise reinforces instruction, strengthens applied competencies, and enhances workforce readiness for future emergency management professionals. In addition, the poster will explore lessons learned and opportunities for growth, including expanding

student involvement in exercise planning, refining operational roles, and incorporating structured feedback mechanisms. These insights aim to support the continued evolution of Skills Day as a model for experiential education within the disaster management curriculum.

**Presentation Theme:** Experiential learning in emergency management education - bridging theory and practice through simulation-based training and applied competency development.

**Collaborators, Advisor(s) and Department(s) that assisted with this research:** Makayla Peebles, Morgan Taylor, Curt Harris.