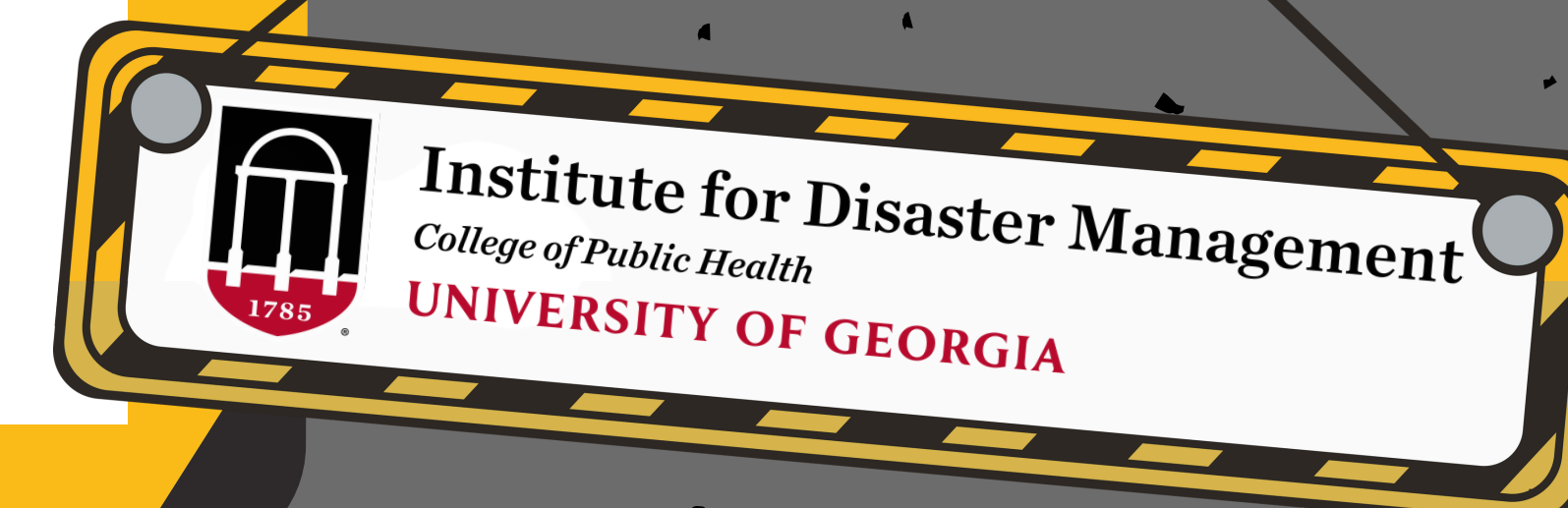# BUILDING REAL-WORLD SKILLS:
## INSIGHTS FROM THE DMAN 7200 SKILLS DAY EXERCISE

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## OBJECTIVE

Showcase how experiential learning through the DMAN 7200 Skills Day Exercise bridges theory and practice in disaster management education.

## BACKGROUND

The University of Georgia's Institute for Disaster Management offers one of the nation's few Master of Public Health programs with a concentration in disaster management. A key feature within one of the program's core courses is the DMAN 7200 Skills Day Exercise, a simulation-based learning experience that blends academic instruction with hands-on disaster response. This exercise challenges students to apply classroom knowledge while testing their critical thinking, communication, and leadership skills. Through collaboration with community partners, students also gain exposure to real-world perspectives and recognize the critical importance of building and maintaining strong interagency relationships.

Research supports the use of simulation as a valuable pedagogical tool, shown to improve confidence and practical skills in emergency response roles.[1,2] Simulation also fosters deeper student engagement and enhances knowledge retention by providing opportunities to bridge theoretical concepts with real-time decision-making and application.[3,4]

## EM SIGNIFICANCE

- Builds essential emergency management skills through hands-on simulation

- Ensures graduates enter the field with practical experience, contributing to a more prepared and capable workforce

## METHODS

Exercise play occurred across two (2) 75-minute class periods. During exercise play, students:

### DAY 1

- Received initial incident briefing
- Drafted Incident Action Plan
- Reviewed Exercise Plan and safety information

### DAY 2

- Divided into two teams
  - Incident Command
  - On-Scene Response
- Responded to simulated severe weather event in immersive environment
- Engaged with community partners
- Received real-time feedback from practitioners
- Participated in exercise hotwash

## RESULTS

Full student participation in exercise briefings and play

Improved communication flow and decision-making

Greater recognition of community partner engagement

Increased workforce readiness through practical experience



## STUDENT REACTIONS

"In the real world, things don't go according to plan so the exercises were a great way to troubleshoot while using the course content as a default plan."

"[Gave] me the opportunity to expand my understanding and skill set to use for future internship and job opportunities."

"[L]oved the active learning experiences - it really put the info into perspective."

## FUTURE DIRECTION

- **Student Planning Roles**
  - Add planning team opportunities to deepen engagement
- **Structured Feedback**
  - Develop formal feedback tools for peer and self-assessment
- **Operational Realism**
  - Incorporate more injects/scenario variations
- **Community Partner Involvement**
  - Further incorporate community partners into exercise

## CONCLUSION

DMAN 7200 Skills Day Exercise enhances workforce readiness by translating academic content into applied practice.

This exercise bridges academic theory and practical preparedness, aligning directly with emergency management workforce needs.

[1]Lateef, F. (2010). Simulation-based learning: Just like the real thing. Journal of Emergencies, Trauma and Shock, 3(4), 348–352. https://doi.org/10.4103/0974-2700.70743

[2]McGaghie, W. C., Issenberg, S. B., Petrusa, E. R., & Scalese, R. J. (2010). A critical review of simulation-based medical education research: 2003–2009. Medical Education, 44(1), 50–63. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1365-2923.2009.03547.x

[3]Gaba, D. M. (2004). The future vision of simulation in health care. Quality and Safety in Health Care, 13(suppl 1), i2–i10. https://doi.org/10.1136/qshc.2004.009878

[4]Nestel, D., & Tierney, T. (2007). Role-play for medical students learning about communication: Guidelines for maximising benefits. BMC Medical Education, 7(3). https://doi.org/10.1186/1472-6920-7-3