



Leadership and Values in Times of Crisis

2024 Carnegie Conference
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Let's start with a look back.

What Higher Ed Leaders Face Each Day

- Higher education continues to serve as a political lightning rod at the local, state, and federal levels for DEI, and responses to Gaza
- SCOTUS is hearing and ruling on cases that directly impact our institutions
- There are a significant number of leadership transitions across the industry
 - ACE's president survey results are startling
 - Not yet out of the great resignation, and not yet to a great return
 - There is a continued desire for work-from-home options
- Questions abound about the value of higher education
- Concerns about physical, mental, and social safety
- There is a proliferation of social media platforms and “media” outlets, with outrage as a common content thread
- Did I mention there's a demographic *cliff* on the horizon?
- Exhaustion

For many, a picture says a thousand words.

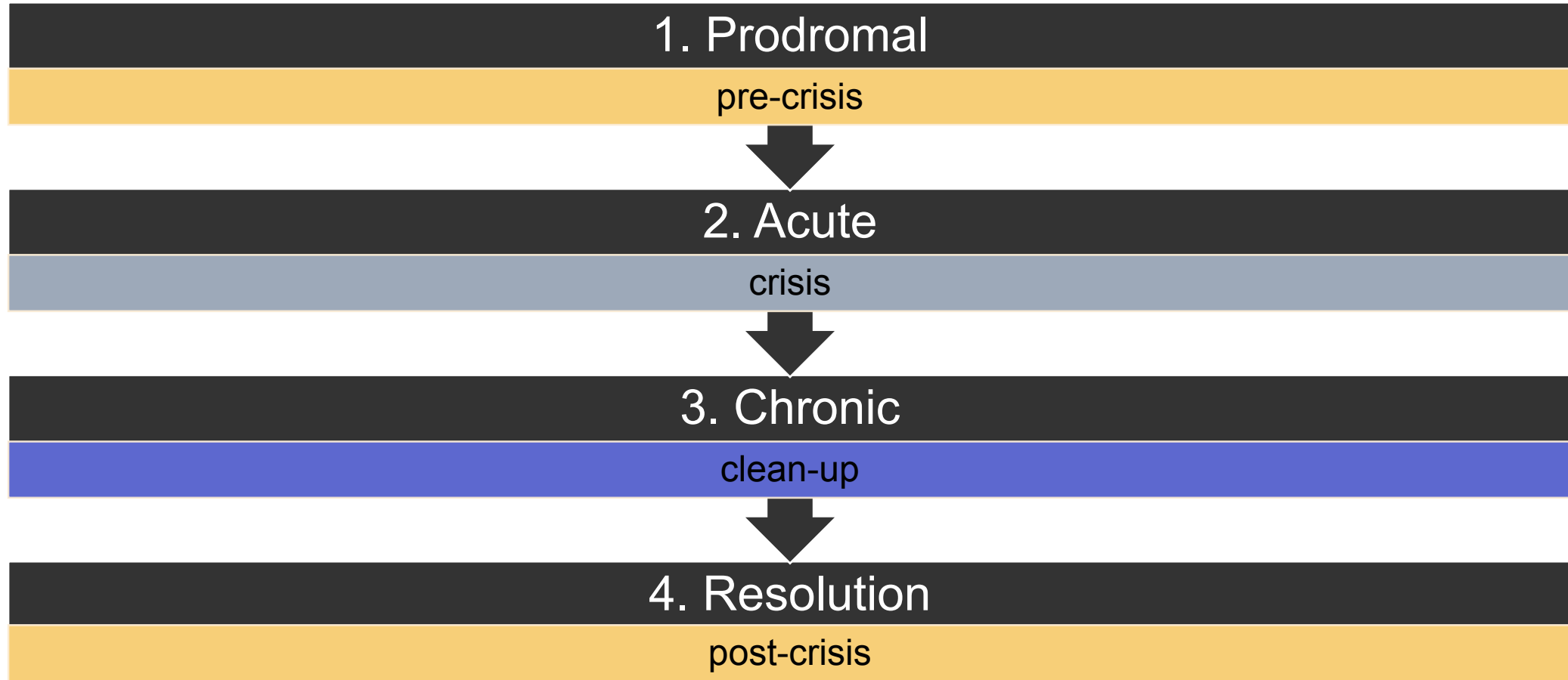


We have to move away from treating everything like a crisis.

Defining a Crisis

- Is this a crisis, or just a tough day?
- If the institution or its leadership is called out or upset, that does not mean the institution is in crisis.
 - However, your response to that tough day can lead to a crisis situation.
- A crisis includes significant:
 - Harm to people or property
 - Inability to conduct business as usual
 - Damage to your reputation

Four Stages of a Crisis



What's at Stake?

In the court of law

- Legal settlements and additional lawsuits
- Insurance claims and limitations

In the court of public opinion:

- Decreased image and reputation
- Leadership transitions
- And then, failed administrator and faculty searches
- Decreased # of applications and enrollments
- Decreased retention and matriculation
- Decreased donation rates and amounts
- Donor pledge defaults
- Decreased state appropriations
- Loss of public trust
- Fewer positive media citations

In an era of constant crises,
you must build credibility in
advance and be a leader.

The Intersection of Communications and Leadership

Articulate your vision (what) and leadership approach (how).
Incorporate both into your communications.

Every public, private, formal, informal, internal and external communication matters. Your credibility as a communicator directly reflects how you are viewed as a leader.

Quick Tips to Remember

Your audiences will compare what you say with how you lead and hold you accountable for differences.

Your leadership voice must be preserved, which means not everything needs to come from you or be addressed by you.

Delegation is a form of leadership.

Aligning Expectations and Communications

Empower your team to be a part of your vision and strategy– and arm them with the tools they need for success.

- Set examples of and expectations for timeliness of decision-making and solid communications roles.
- Make “no surprises” your team approach.
- Be clear about who is accountable and what that means.
- Acknowledge success and strive for continuous improvement.
 - Your community isn’t shy and will provide you with feedback for new team goals.

Your confidence in a crisis is determined by your trust in your own leadership and your team.



Creating a Framework for Crisis Management

Do Any of These Leadership Responses Sound Familiar?

- “Let’s issue a statement.”
- “I’m hearing from [fill in the blank audience] that we need to speak up.”
- “If you don’t say/do something, who will?”

It is your job to ask *why me, why now?*

It is our responsibility to be the
leaders and the voice of
reason.

Test the Values Associated with the Situation



Weigh in if it ties to your mission, impacts students or has a direct bearing on the short- or long-term health of your institution or community.

Don't make strategy changes based on limited feedback. Ask for data. Sample size and connection to the institution matter.

Prioritize internal audiences and consider- up front- if parents make the cut and then personalize your comments appropriately.

Take the time now to determine your values, your limits and your priorities. Think about how those align with your institution's expectations.

Sometimes, it is our
responsibility to be the one to
say “no.”

You cannot communicate your way out of a leadership void.

Here's What Works

Making decisions in a timely manner even if it means you need to live an **appropriate amount** of vulnerability.

What Do We Say?

- The TRUTH!
- Something that reflects a leadership stance
- Consider the average person's perspective
- Monitor how it is being received and act accordingly

Consider the Bigger Picture

Here's what matters:

- Community
- Context
- History
- Language
- Emotion
- Data
- Image/reputation

Here's what doesn't:

- Ego

Let's talk.

Thank You

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