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**Academic environment and dynamics in response to extreme events: Theory and Practice (Katrina Lessons)<sup>1</sup>**

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The possibility of a catastrophic event requires the department as a unit and the university as an organization to devise a comprehensive emergency response plan to minimize the impact and shorten the recovery stage. Does the academic organizational structure and environment possess key features for the possibility of successful response to extreme events? The post Hurricane Katrina experience of Louisiana universities offers data to address this theoretical question. It also emphasizes that the mitigation plan should include two aspects: preparing/protecting a university for/during a catastrophic event and assisting other academic institutions experiencing an extreme event. Short-term and longer-term statistics and other data pertain to the interaction of the University of Louisiana at Lafayette (as an assistance unit) with the universities in New Orleans (units in distress), including the dynamics of student population, faculty influx, course adjustments, and response and recovery actions are presented. An attempt is made to categorize the losses and to assess the recovery quality and time. Faculty and institutional administration interviews are summarized to assist in developing future proactive response plans. UL Lafayette and UNO research capabilities and intellectual resources for developing complex models simulating the multi-variable effects of catastrophic events and providing adaptability in the decision-making process are investigated.

<sup>1</sup>This work was done in collaboration with George E. Ioup and Juliette W. Ioup (Department of Physics, University of New Orleans).