

Frequently Asked Questions about the National Intercollegiate Mutual Aid Agreement (NIMAA)

Q: What is NIMAA?

A: The National Intercollegiate Mutual Aid Agreement is a broad-spectrum memorandum of understanding between institutions of higher education to share institutional resources before, during and after emergencies or special events.

Q: Why mutual aid for higher education?

A: Over the years, numerous campus incidents have shown that affected institutions benefit greatly from receiving assistance and resources from other institutions that understand higher education culture and operations. For example, any law enforcement officer may work in some cases, but campus officers may have a better understanding of dealing with campus populations and issues. In other cases, resources are unique to higher education: where else will you find a Provost or Registrar?

Q: What types of emergencies could NIMAA be used for?

A: NIMAA could be used for just about any emergency a member institution may suffer. Recent examples where NIMAA could have been helpful were COVID 19, demonstrations/protests, hurricanes, tornadoes, floods, wildfires, earthquakes, Meningitis outbreaks, active shooter events, etc. For a map of recent higher education emergencies around the country, [click here](#).

Q: Can I seek assistance via NIMAA for preparedness activities?

A: Yes! The sharing of institutional resources via NIMAA is not limited to emergencies or disasters. It can help facilitate preparedness activities such as planning assistance, training, exercise controllers or evaluators, or support for major or unique special events.

Q: Is the NIMAA restricted to just “national” events or can it be used locally and/or regionally?

A: The Agreement is structured to be used by any two or more institutions; whether they are only down the street, across the state or across the country. We strongly encourage institutions to recruit local/regional peer institutions into the NIMAA as they are the more likely resource to be accessed for most situations, however, any institution can request assistance from any other participating institution to the Agreement.

Q: Who are current members?

A: Map of current signatories: [Click Here](#).

Q: Who developed the NIMAA?

A: The Agreement was developed by a group of institutions of higher education who saw a common need for a system to request and provide assistance to peer institutions during an emergency or some other situation. This was coordinated by the International Association of Emergency Managers (IAEM) Universities and Colleges Caucus (UCC).

Q: Who reviewed the NIMAA?

A: The Agreement was reviewed by legal counsel and emergency managers at several colleges and universities as well as by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), U.S. Department of Homeland Security and U.S. Department of Education.

Q: My institution is already signatory to other mutual aid agreements, why join NIMAA?

A: Most other mutual aid agreements have limitations. Many are restricted to public institutions only. Some are intrastate use only. NIMAA is designed to cross all boundaries and link all institutions of higher education, regardless of type, size or location.

Q: Does NIMAA preclude my institution from participating in other mutual aid agreements?

A: Nothing precludes you from having multiple mutual aid agreements. In fact, it is best practice to have multiple agreements you can rely on across a variety of scenarios. You simply implement the one that fits the situation best.

Q: Am I committing my institution to anything if we join the NIMAA?

A: No. Participation in the Agreement is completely voluntary and it does not commit the college or university to any action unless they decide to request assistance or provide assistance. Institutions are not obligated to send resources unless they agree to do so.

Q: Am I obligated to respond to assist if we join NIMAA?

A: No. You are under no obligation to respond or provide resources when requested. It is completely understandable that there are many reasons that you may not be able to assist in all cases. However, the strength of the Agreement is in the willingness for participating entities to answer the call when needed. If no one responds, the concept fails. Naturally, the more signatories, the greater the burden can be shared.

Q: What does NIMAA address?

A: The NIMMA addresses a whole range of issues before a request is made. This includes items such as liability protections, reimbursement, insurance requirements, asset control and several others.

Q: What about liability?

A: One of the important aspects to NIMAA is how liability is handled. Participating Institutions provide insurance and workers compensation protections for their own people regardless if they are working on their own campus or on a request at another institution.

Q: Does it cost anything?

A: There is no cost to join NIMAA. Any costs associated with providing assistance to a requesting institution is negotiated at the time of implementation between the two parties. In many cases, a responding institution may choose to donate their assistance. That's perfectly acceptable, but there is no expectation that assistance be provided pro bono.

Q: What about reimbursement?

A: The terms of providing assistance is negotiated between the requesting and assisting institutions at the time of activation. If there is a financial component to the exchange, it is exclusively between the two institutions and subject to the agreed upon terms.

Q: How does NIMAA reimbursement relate to FEMA or insurance reimbursement?

A: The financial terms agreed upon between the requesting and assisting institutions is entirely exclusive of and should not be contingent upon any potential reimbursement by third parties such as FEMA or insurance companies. Reimbursement of mutual aid resources by third party entities is subject to their eligibility requirements and are no way influenced by this Agreement. The NIMAA is structured to make sure it is compliant with FEMA Public Assistance Policies.

Q: What resources are available through the NIMAA?

A: Pretty much anything... people, equipment, supplies, technical support, advice, references to 3rd party resources and more. If one institution has a need of any kind, they can ask for assistance from another institution for a resource to meet that need.

Q: What type of institution is eligible to participate in the NIMAA?

A: Participating institutions may be any US-based institution of higher education that is listed in the U.S. Department of Education National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES) College Navigator database at <https://nces.ed.gov/collegenavigator/> who grants one or more Associate or higher degrees. This does not include institutions who grant certificates and/or certifications only.

Q: Is NIMAA available to Canadian or other non-US institutions?

A: Not yet. While there is precedent for transnational mutual aid agreements, NIMAA has not been vetted and approved for international use at this time. With sufficient demand, it may be a future goal for expansion.

Q: Can NIMAA be used for assistance to an American institution's overseas campus or program?

A: Nothing limits the type or location of assistance provided between NIMAA signatories. However, international response has not been specifically vetted or addressed. There may be unforeseen complications not covered by the Agreement. Additional terms and conditions between the requesting and assisting institutions may be required at the time of implementation. We strongly recommend you seek legal counsel and Department of State guidance, as needed.

Q: How does NIMAA work with EMAC?

A: The Emergency Management Assistance Compact (EMAC) is an agreement between states, not institutions. While that avenue may benefit some institutions, it does have its limitations, including but not limited to: 1.) Your Governor needs to declare a State of Emergency; 2.) You need to have a legal pathway to request / receive state assistance; 3.) EMAC is not accustomed to processing higher education related resources. NIMAA is independent of EMAC and does not require an emergency declaration.

Q: Who within my institution should review the Agreement?

A: We certainly encourage you to properly vet the NIMAA Agreement with all appropriate individuals within your institution as you would getting any other legal or contractual document signed. This typically includes the General Counsel or Legal office, Procurement / Purchasing and others in the emergency management supervisory chain.

Q: Can we make changes to the Agreement?

A: No. The Agreement has been well vetted by numerous parties over a nearly two year period. Any changes to the Agreement must be agreed to in writing by all prior signatories. As the number of signatories increases, this clearly becomes a more difficult task. As such, we ask that any requested changes be limited to only “show stopper” or “deal-breaker” substantive issues. If there are any specific changes needed, please contact the NIMAA Committee with a written request.

Q: If we have multiple campuses, do we need a signed agreement for each?

A: The NIMAA Agreement can be signed by the highest level of administration with the authority to commit / secure resources on behalf of all subordinate entities. In other words, if there is someone with signature authority for all subordinate campuses, then yes, they can sign the Agreement once for all inclusive campuses. Conceivably, this may include college or university systems (e.g. UMass, Cal State, et al) provided the explicit authority is there.

Q: Who should sign the Agreement?

A: That really depends on your institution’s governance policies. NIMAA does not specify who needs to sign, but it does require them to have the explicit authority to do so. For some institutions, this may be delegated down to the Director, Chief, Assistant / Associate Vice President / Chancellor or other commensurate middle-management level. For others, they may require President / Chancellor or even Board of Trustees approval. Only your institution can define that.

Q: Who oversees/manages the NIMAA?

A: The NIMAA is governed by the Participating Institutions to the Agreement. A NIMAA Committee provides oversight to the operation of the NIMAA, including updates to the Agreement and operating procedures.

Q: How does my institution get involved in the NIMAA?

A: Review the Agreement with appropriate parties at your institution (ie: Legal Counsel, Senior Administrators, etc). If they concur with joining, have a Senior Administrator sign the Agreement as is (no edits please) and send back to the NIMAA Committee.

Q: Where can I find out more information about the NIMAA?

A: For further information on the NIMAA please complete the [NIMAA Request for Information Form](#). A member of the NIMAA Committee will get back in touch with you shortly. You can also visit the International Association of Emergency Managers (IAEM) Universities and Colleges Caucus website at: www.iaem.com/ucc

Q: Does NIMAA require a declaration of emergency to use?

A: NIMAA does not require a declaration of emergency to request assistance. In fact, NIMAA can be used for non-emergency situations such as planned events, drills, exercises, training and other preparedness activities.

Q: Are there limitations as to what the NIMAA can be used for?

A: Currently NIMAA can be used by any institution across the nation. It has not been vetted for international use at this time. Limitations to its use are governed by the terms of the Agreement and what Participating and Assisting Institutions agree to in writing.

Q: Can licensed personnel (e.g. law enforcement) be activated through NIMAA?

A: Theoretically any resource could be activated through the NIMMA, but there are limitations to resources that have professional certifications and legal requirements such as medical professionals, trade personnel and engineers. Law enforcement personnel who are expected to perform full police powers (arrest, investigation, enforcement of law, carry firearms, etc) need to be duly authorized by the jurisdiction they are being requested to operate within. Many campus law enforcement agencies derive their authority from specifically limited law in the state they operate. It is vitally important to check with your own legal authority and law enforcement legal authority in the jurisdiction you will be operating in before deploying. Check with your own legal counsel and human resources as well as the requesting institution on any requirements/restrictions.