The exercise
The Provost and the Executive Vice President request that all Penn Schools and Centers conduct a tabletop exercise (TTX) according to a scenario that will be provided, to test their Mission Continuity plans.

Help
A team has been formed to help you conduct your TTX. The Mission Continuity Program is keeping a central calendar of tabletop exercises; once you have signed up for a specific date, we recommend that you select an observer. To sign up for a date when you will conduct your TTX, for which an outside facilitator will be assigned, please send a message to askmc@lists.upenn.edu or to hallgood@upenn.edu. Facilitators will be from external organizations that are Penn risk management service providers.

Definition
What is a tabletop exercise (TTX)? A tabletop exercise is a simulation in a stress-free environment of a disruption to normal operations and a test of how critical processes and functions would be continued under those circumstances. The participants, who are usually decision-making level personnel, gather around a table to discuss general problems and procedures in the context of an outage scenario. The focus is on training; discussion of appropriate roles, procedures or responsibilities; and testing the adequacy of plans that are in place.

Guidelines for conducting this TTX
- A specific scenario will be provided to use for the TTX.
- Participants are testing how well their Mission Continuity plans allow them to respond to the scenario specified below; participants themselves are not being tested.
- A TTX should be structured as a discussion.
- The discussion will be led by a facilitator. Ben Evans, Executive Director of Risk Management for the University, has arranged for professionals from several of our service providers in risk management and insurance to serve as facilitators.
- This TTX is to be conducted prior to December 19, 2014.
- One or more observers may attend the TTX and offer constructive feedback about the Mission Continuity Program and plan, the TTX and/or the plans being tested (see Participants below for a description of the role of observers).
- If phone calls are indicated in your plan (such as contacting ISC when technology goes down), actual calls should NOT be made during the TTX, unless the person being called has agreed to participate in the TTX.

Goals of this TTX
Try to obtain answers to the following questions:
- Is the plan accurate and up-to-date? Does it have correct information about how your organization will be able to continue operations?
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• Is this plan complete? Does it include, for example:
  o Information about loss of building, equipment, technology, human resources and third-party vendor or partners?
  o Identification of key personnel and call lists for reaching them?
  o A communication plan.
  o Identification of critical assets and plans for protecting, recovering or replacing them as this scenario unfolds.
• Are there gaps in this plan? How can it be improved?
• What best practices can be identified as a result of this exercise, to be shared across the University?
• Are there ways in which the Mission Continuity Program as a whole should be improved or expanded?
• NOTE: let the participants know: this is NOT a test of the users, only the plan.

Participants
Who should attend the TTX? Make sure that everyone responsible for one or more steps in your plans is invited to the TTX and is available in person or by phone. In general, no more than 20 people should attend (although there may be as few as 3). It may be helpful to assume that one or more key players are out of the office, on vacation or for other reasons, at the time the scenario occurs. This will simulate a realistic situation, in which key personnel may often not be available when needed.

People to fulfill the following roles should attend the TTX:
• A facilitator, who will direct the action (see above re: facilitators).
• A facilitator’s assistant, to keep an eye on the time (to be provided by the School or Center conducting the TTX).
• A note-taker, whose role is to record: 1) timing of responses to the scenario, 2) decisions that are made, and 3) gaps and modifications to be made in the plan. NOTE: in the event of a real disruption to normal operations, it is good practice to keep track of when events occur and what responses are decided upon and implemented.
• You may have an observer for your exercise, to give constructive feedback after the exercise. Please share the plans with this observer in advance of the exercise. A set of questions for observers is provided to complement this document.

Logistics and preparation
• Go over and update your Shadow-Planner plans prior to running the TTX, so the exercise will use the most up-to-date and complete versions. Check to make sure the members of your call lists are correct.
• Make sure to include a communication strategy for the fictitious event, with both internal and external stakeholders (such as the Daily Pennsylvanian, which may wish to report on the event, or vendors).
• Think through likely risks should an outage or disruption to normal operations occur, and think of strategies to mitigate those risks. Include these in the plan.
• Determine who will be invited to the TTX (see Participants in this document).
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- Schedule the TTX. Schedule a conference room with a projector so powerpoint slides of the scenario can be projected; use a separate slide for each numbered item. Projecting the scenario one step at a time ensures that participants will not know at any given moment what is about to happen next.
- You may wish to have a preliminary meeting with some key participants, to go over what will happen in the actual exercise.
- Make paper copies of all of your Action Plans for all participants and distribute them at the beginning of the exercise. Be sure to include the appropriate call lists.

Facilitating the TTX
A facilitator will be assigned to you. Here are some of the things the facilitator will do.
- Opening:
  - Welcome the group and thank them for taking the time to participate in the exercise.
  - Do introductions if some participants do not know each other.
  - Ensure that everyone has copies of the plans.
  - Give a brief description of what a tabletop exercise is and why this is being done, i.e., explain that Mission Continuity plans are key to ensuring that the University can continue its critical operations and its mission in the event of an outage or disruption, and this is an opportunity to test the plans and make sure they work properly.
  - Explain the ground rules (see below).
- Introduce the scenario with an initial slide that gives an overview – they will not give away the actual numbered steps of what happens over the course of the fictitious days until later in the exercise.
- Throughout the exercise:
  - Try to involve all participants at some point in the discussion.
  - Encourage participants to develop solutions to problems, rather than telling them what should be done.
  - Acknowledge difficult problems.
  - Make sure the note-taker keeps track of suggestions for changing and updating the plans.
  - At the start of each item in the scenario, the facilitator should call a hard “reset.” This means that all actions from the previous item should be assumed to have been completed. For example, if evacuation is called for, at the start of the next item, evacuation is assumed to have been completed.

Ground rules for the TTX
Here are some recommended ground rules; feel free to revise as you see fit. Distribute these at the beginning of the TTX and go over them, so everyone understands.

- **Exercises of this nature have the greatest value when they are treated as real.** So, although it may feel strange, as much as possible we want you to behave just as if this is really happening.
- **Don’t actually call someone outside of this room during the exercise.** If you would normally contact someone who’s not there, tell the group what information you need and make a note that an outside party would normally be called at that point in the exercise.
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- **You can only use the information you have in this room.** If you need to call someone, for example, and that person’s phone number is not in the plan information and you do not have any other way to get it, then you need to think of what your plan B would be in that case.

- **Please try to avoid thinking out loud**, especially when you first receive the scenario. Remember that we are trying to simulate the (sometimes limited) flow of information in an emergency. If you have a clarification question, you can ask the facilitator.

- **Sometimes things will be unclear – this can happen in real life.** You can seek clarification the same way you would in an actual situation.

- **Nobody is being graded or evaluated** on their performance here. The purpose of this exercise is to practice, and to evaluate the plans for their effectiveness and completeness.

- **Use the plan as a guide, but not a rule book.** We are testing the completeness and effectiveness of the plans, so if at some point you decide it would make the most sense to do something different from what the plan says, then do that and make a note that the plan needs to be changed.

- **Don’t assume anything.** Verify information if necessary. All information provided by the facilitator is considered to be valid. However, as in real life, it may not be clearly communicated, and participants must deal with that.

After the TTX:
- Please complete the post-exercise report available along with these guidelines and send a copy to askmc@lists.upenn.edu.
- Discuss the effectiveness and completeness of your plans; think about what went well.
- Identify and document gaps and issues for corrective action.
- Ask for input from any observers.
- Follow up by changing the plan appropriately.
- Additional information for TTXs can be found on the mission continuity website: [http://www.upenn.edu/missioncontinuity/table_top_exercise.html](http://www.upenn.edu/missioncontinuity/table_top_exercise.html)