CLEVELAND STATE COMMUNITY COLLEGE
Cleveland, Tennessee

PROPOSAL FOR THE FORMATION OF A

Campus Preparedness Committee

Establishing a Campus Community Emergency Response Team (Campus-CERT)

Submitted in Alignment with:

CSCC Defining Our Tomorrow Strategic Plan 2025–2030
CSCC Standing Committee Formation Procedures
FEMA Campus CERT National Framework

Academic Year 2025–2026
Draft for Senior Administration Review

I. Executive Overview

Cleveland State Community College (CSCC) occupies a unique and vital position in the Bradley County community. As an anchor institution in Cleveland, Tennessee, CSCC serves not only students pursuing academic and career goals, but also the broader community that depends on the college as an economic driver, workforce pipeline, and trusted civic partner. This proposal argues that forming a Campus Preparedness Committee—with the explicit charge of developing and sustaining a Campus Community Emergency Response Team (Campus-CERT)—is both a strategic imperative and a timely opportunity for the institution.

This document addresses three interconnected questions:

- Why should CSCC form a Campus Preparedness Committee?
- How does such a committee align with CSCC's Defining Our Tomorrow Strategic Plan 2025–2030?
- How does the proposed committee satisfy the requirements of CSCC's own Standing Committee Formation Procedures?

Campus-CERT programs are federally supported through FEMA and represent a nationally proven model for building institutional resilience, student engagement, and community preparedness. Establishing one at CSCC positions the college as a leader in safety, preparedness, and civic responsibility in the greater Cleveland, TN region.

II. What Is a Campus-CERT?

The Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) program is a FEMA-administered national initiative that trains community members in basic disaster preparedness and emergency response. Introduced nationally in 1993 and adapted for college campuses (Campus-CERT), the program equips faculty, staff, and students to respond confidently and competently in emergencies before professional first responders arrive.

Core Training Areas

- Unit 1 – Disaster Preparedness: community hazards, home/workplace preparedness, and mitigation
- Unit 2 – CERT Organization: Incident Command System (ICS), CERT mobilization, and documentation
- Units 3 & 4 – Disaster Medical Operations (Parts 1 & 2): treating life-threatening conditions, basic first aid, mass casualty triage, head-to-toe assessment, and public health considerations
- Unit 5 – Disaster Psychology: disaster reactions, self-care and team well-being, and working with survivors' emotional responses
- Unit 6 – Fire Safety and Utility Controls: fire chemistry, size-up, firefighting resources, suppression safety, and utility shutoff procedures

- Unit 7 – Light Search and Rescue Operations: safety, interior/exterior search, debris removal, survivor extrication, and rescuer safety
- Unit 8 – CERT and Terrorism: current terrorism trends, Hazmat and CBRNE (chemical, biological, radiological, nuclear, and explosive) awareness, and safety measures for CERT volunteers during potential terrorism incidents
- Unit 9 – Course Review, Final Exam, and Disaster Simulation: a hands-on, multi-station practical exercise covering fire suppression, medical treatment, and survivor extrication, followed by a written final exam

The 2019 updated CERT Basic Training is organized across these nine units and combines classroom instruction with hands-on practical exercises, culminating in a multi-station disaster simulation and final exam. The program is provided at no cost to sponsoring institutions through FEMA's national network and is coordinated locally with emergency management agencies and fire and police departments. FEMA also recommends supplemental continuing education including CPR, Standard First Aid (American Red Cross), and independent study courses IS-100 (Introduction to ICS), IS-200 (ICS for Single Resources), and IS-700 (NIMS Introduction) available free at training.fema.gov.

> *In 95% of emergencies, bystanders or victims themselves are the first to provide assistance. It can take up to 72 hours for outside help to reach a community following a large-scale disaster. A trained Campus-CERT bridges that critical gap.*

III. Rationale: Why CSCC Needs This Committee

Below are six evidence-based rationales for forming the Campus Preparedness Committee and launching a Campus-CERT at Cleveland State Community College, each grounded in CSCC's institutional context, strategic priorities, and national best practices.

Rationale 1: CSCC Serves a Geographically Vulnerable Region

Cleveland, Tennessee and its surrounding counties are situated in a region susceptible to a range of natural hazards, including severe thunderstorms, tornadoes, flash flooding, and occasional winter ice events. The city also sits within reasonable proximity to industrial corridors in the Tennessee River valley, creating non-zero hazmat risk. CSCC's campuses host hundreds of students, faculty, staff, and visitors daily—all of whom depend on the institution to have plans and people in place if an emergency occurs.

Research in the Community College Journal of Research and Practice (2012) found that community college public safety departments are typically efficient in ordinary times, but their capabilities are significantly stretched in the early stages of a widespread disaster. A Campus-CERT provides trained surge capacity that reduces pressure on public safety and reduces harm to campus occupants.

> *A Campus-CERT does not replace campus public safety—it multiplies the college's effective response capacity and ensures that trained help is never more than steps away.*

Rationale 2: Direct Alignment with the Defining Our Tomorrow Strategic Plan 2025–2030

CSCC's Defining Our Tomorrow Strategic Plan 2025–2030 articulates clear goals around student success, workforce development, community engagement, and institutional vitality. The Campus Preparedness Committee directly supports multiple pillars of that plan:

Strategic Priority	How Campus Preparedness Committee / Campus-CERT Advances It
Student Success & Completion	A safe, prepared campus is a campus where students can focus on learning. Emergency disruptions cost students time, credits, and academic momentum. Preparedness planning protects student success.
Workforce Development	CERT training equips students with nationally recognized emergency response credentials, directly employable in public safety, healthcare, EMS, industrial safety, and homeland security careers—key growth sectors in East Tennessee.
Community Engagement & Partnerships	Campus-CERT programs are designed to coordinate with local fire departments, EMA, and law enforcement. CSCC's Campus-CERT would deepen the college's civic partnerships and amplify its role as a community anchor.
Institutional Vitality & Sustainability	Accrediting bodies (SACSCOC) and governing entities (TBR, THEC) increasingly emphasize continuity planning. A standing committee dedicated to preparedness supports compliance, reduces institutional liability, and signals a healthy, well-governed institution.
Equity & Belonging	Emergencies disproportionately harm vulnerable populations. A preparedness committee ensures that emergency plans are equitable, accessible, and inclusive, particularly for students with disabilities, non-traditional students, and those with limited English proficiency.

Rationale 3: Participatory Governance Is Already the Framework

CSCC's Standing Committee Modification Procedures define the purpose of standing committees as implementing and ensuring alignment of the college's work with the college mission and strategic plan, efficient operations, and participatory governance. Campus safety and preparedness is precisely the kind of cross-cutting, mission-critical issue that benefits from a structured, standing committee with representation across faculty, staff, students, and administration.

Rather than leaving preparedness planning fragmented across individual departments, a Campus Preparedness Committee creates:

- Coordinated oversight with clear accountability
- Consistent institutional memory across personnel changes
- An inclusive, representative decision-making structure
- Regular reporting and transparency to the college community

Per CSCC procedures, active participation in committee work is considered part of the responsibility of all members of the institution. A preparedness committee gives that principle life-saving purpose.

Rationale 4: Campus-CERT Creates Real Workforce & Resume Value for Students

One of CSCC's most important functions is preparing students for careers. Campus-CERT training maps directly onto high-demand career pathways in Bradley County and the greater East Tennessee region:

- Emergency Medical Services (EMS) and fire service programs
- Industrial and manufacturing safety roles (a major local employer sector)
- Hospital, clinic, and healthcare support roles
- Homeland Security and public administration programs
- Criminal justice and law enforcement pipelines

FEMA CERT certification is nationally recognized and can be documented on a resume, adding measurable value to CSCC graduates. Institutions with Campus-CERT programs have reported increased student engagement, stronger connections to workforce partners, and improved retention among students who participate in co-curricular safety programming.

Rationale 5: The Cost Is Low; the Risk of Inaction Is High

FEMA provides the Campus-CERT curriculum, training materials, and national network support at no cost to the institution. The primary institutional investment is staff time, training coordination, and modest supplies. Compared to the reputational, legal, financial, and human costs of an inadequately prepared emergency response, this investment is minimal.

Furthermore, CSCC's own standing committee procedures explicitly recognize that resource allocation is justified when it supports direct correlation to college operational and strategic outcomes—and preparedness clearly meets that standard. Accreditation requirements from SACSCOC and regulatory directives from TBR and THEC provide additional institutional justification for dedicating resources to this committee.

Rationale 6: CSCC Has a Civic Duty as a Community Anchor

Community colleges are often among the most trusted and most-used public institutions in their regions. When disaster strikes Bradley, McMinn, Polk, Monroe, or Meigs Counties, CSCC campus facilities, personnel, and resources will inevitably play a role in community response and recovery—whether formally planned or improvised. A Campus Preparedness Committee ensures that CSCC's contribution is planned, skilled, and coordinated rather than ad hoc and potentially harmful.

FEMA explicitly recognizes that Campus-CERT programs may support community CERT activities at the invitation of local emergency management agencies. By building institutional capacity now, CSCC positions itself as a genuine resilience hub for the greater Cleveland, TN area, as well as its service counties—amplifying its community engagement mission in the most meaningful possible way.

IV. Alignment with CSCC Committee Formation Requirements

The following section directly addresses the questions posed in the CSCC Committee Formation Questions document and satisfies the requirements of the Committee Modification Application.

Committee Modification Application — Key Fields

Proposed Committee Name	Campus Preparedness Committee
Proposed Chairperson	TBD — Recommended: Director of Campus Safety or VP-level designee
Date of Application	Academic Year 2026–2027
Oversight Division	Student Affairs / Operations (or as designated by President)
Committee Type	Standing Committee — Advisory

Purpose of the Committee

The Campus Preparedness Committee exists to plan, develop, implement, sustain, and continuously improve CSCC's emergency preparedness capabilities, with the primary deliverable being the establishment and ongoing oversight of a Campus Community Emergency Response Team (Campus-CERT). The committee ensures that CSCC's emergency operations planning is coordinated, equitable, compliant with governing body requirements, and integrated into the college's strategic mission.

Committee Objectives

- Develop and submit a formal Campus-CERT Program Plan to senior administration
- Coordinate with campus service area County Emergency Management Agencies, Fire Department, and Police Department to align CSCC preparedness with community systems
- Recruit, certify, and support CERT-trained volunteers from faculty, staff, and student populations
- Design and conduct at minimum one campus-wide preparedness exercise per academic year
- Maintain and update CSCC's Emergency Operations Plan (EOP) in compliance with TBR and SACSCOC requirements
- Produce and distribute preparedness communications to the campus community
- Submit an Annual Report per CSCC standing committee requirements

Value-Add to Cleveland State Community College

- Reduces vulnerability and liability exposure for the institution
- Strengthens SACSCOC and TBR compliance posture
- Provides concrete, credentialed workforce skills to students at no cost
- Deepens CSCC's partnerships with local government and emergency services
- Creates a culture of preparedness and shared responsibility across the college community
- Positions CSCC as a resilience anchor for Bradley, McMinn, Polk, Monroe & Meigs Counties

Proposed Membership Composition

Per CSCC procedures, committee membership should reflect equitable representation of college constituency groups and should be work-function based. The following composition is recommended:

Role / Constituency	Expertise / Function	Selection Method
Campus Safety Director (Chair)	Emergency operations lead, CERT program manager	Appointment by President
VP of Student Affairs (or designee)	Student welfare, continuity planning	Appointment by President
Faculty Representative (2)	Curriculum integration, CERT instruction	Faculty Senate nomination
Staff Representative (2)	Operations, facilities, communications	Staff Senate nomination
Student Representative (2)	Student body engagement, CERT volunteer coordination	SGA / volunteer
IT / Communications Rep.	Alert systems, mass notification, data management	Appointment
External Partner (3)	TEMA, Bradley, McMinn, Monroe EMA or Fire Dept. liaison	Partnership agreement
Health Services Rep.	Medical triage coordination; liaison for supplemental CPR/AED continuing education per 2019 CERT guidance	Appointment

Meeting Structure

- Frequency: Monthly during fall and spring semesters; as needed over summer
- Duration: 60–90 minutes per meeting
- Format: In-person with hybrid option; structured agenda with action items
- Minutes: Posted publicly within one (1) week per CSCC standing committee procedures

Expected Outcomes & Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)

- Campus-CERT Program Plan submitted and approved within Year 1
- Minimum 25 trained and certified CERT volunteers in Year 1, scaling to 75+ in Year 3
- At least 1 campus-wide preparedness drill conducted per academic year
- Updated Emergency Operations Plan submitted to TBR/SACSCOC
- Annual preparedness awareness campaign reaching 100% of campus community
- Formal partnership agreement signed with Bradley, McMinn, Polk, Monroe & Meigs County's EMA and/or Fire Depts.

V. Addressing CSCC's Committee Formation Questions

The CSCC Committee Formation Questions document provides a framework for evaluating proposed committees. Each question is addressed below:

1. What are the primary objectives and how do they align with the college mission and strategic plan?

The committee's primary objective is to establish and sustain a Campus-CERT program. This directly advances CSCC's mission to serve students and the community by ensuring a safe, resilient learning environment. It aligns with the Defining Our Tomorrow Strategic Plan through student success (safe learning), workforce development (CERT credentialing), community engagement (Bradley, McMinn, Polk, Monroe & Meigs County partnerships), and institutional vitality (compliance, accreditation).

2. What specific issues or challenges is the committee addressing?

CSCC currently lacks a formalized, standing structure for campus emergency preparedness planning or a trained volunteer response corps. This gap creates vulnerability in the event of a natural disaster, active threat, or other campus emergency, particularly in the critical first minutes before professional first responders arrive. Additionally, the college has not yet activated the Campus-CERT model despite its availability as a free federal program with proven results at peer community colleges nationally.

3. What are the desired outcomes and how will success be measured?

Success will be measured through CERT enrollment numbers, number of trained volunteers, frequency and quality of drills, completion and approval of the Emergency Operations Plan, accreditation compliance, and community partnership depth. An annual report will be submitted per CSCC standing committee requirements.

4. Who are the key stakeholders and how will they be engaged?

Stakeholders include all students, faculty, staff, and administrative personnel on campus, as well as the surrounding Bradley, McMinn, Polk, Monroe & Meigs County communities. Engagement occurs through: committee membership representation of all constituency groups; campus-wide communications campaigns; CERT training open to all interested community members; and public posting of meeting minutes.

5. What resources are needed?

- Time: Committee member meeting time; CERT Basic Training spans nine units of classroom and hands-on instruction, concluding with a multi-station disaster simulation and final exam (duration varies by cohort size and local agency schedule)
- People: Designated CERT Program Manager (existing or reassigned staff); trained volunteer pool
- Funding: FEMA provides curriculum and materials at no charge; modest budget needed for supplies, equipment, and drills (~$2,000–$5,000 annually as a benchmark from peer institutions)
- Space: Training rooms for CERT certification; outdoor space for drills

6. How will the committee communicate its findings?

The committee will communicate via: publicly posted meeting minutes within one week of each meeting; an annual report to senior administration; a campus-wide preparedness awareness campaign; and regular updates through CSCC institutional communication channels.

7. What challenges might the committee face and how can they be mitigated?

- Volunteer recruitment fatigue: Mitigated by integrating CERT training into existing programs, student government partnerships, and offering academic credit or co-curricular recognition where possible
- Administrative bandwidth: Mitigated by leveraging the free FEMA framework rather than building from scratch
- Sustaining momentum across turnover: Mitigated by clear bylaws, defined terms, and an annual report cycle
- Coordination with local agencies: Mitigated by formal partnership agreements and a designated external liaison seat on the committee

8. What is the committee's timeline?

Milestone	Target Completion
Committee application submitted to senior administration	Summer Semester 2026
Committee approved; chairperson appointed	Fall 2026
Committee bylaws adopted; membership seated	Fall 2026 (Month 1–2)
Campus-CERT Program Plan drafted and submitted	Fall 2026 (Month 3–4)
First CERT training cohort certified (25 volunteers)	Spring 2027
First campus-wide preparedness drill conducted	Spring 2027
Emergency Operations Plan updated and submitted	Spring 2027
Annual Report Year 1 submitted	End of AY 2026–2027
Year 2: Scale to 75 trained volunteers; deepen community partnerships	AY 2027–2028

VI. Compliance with CSCC Standing Committee Procedures

This proposal has been designed to satisfy all requirements outlined in CSCC's Standing Committee Modification Procedures (effective February 27, 2026). The following checklist confirms compliance:

- Completed Committee Modification Application with all required fields addressed
- Committee bylaws will be drafted using the CSCC Committee By-Laws Template upon approval
- Membership composition reflects equitable representation of faculty, staff, students, and administration
- Chairperson to be appointed by President or designee
- Member terms will be two consecutive academic years per standing procedures
- Meeting minutes will be posted publicly within one week of each meeting
- Annual Report will be submitted to the responsible Senior Administration member and the Office of Institutional Research & Effectiveness
- Proposal submitted during a fall or spring semester as required (not summer)
- Committee purpose directly correlates to college operational and strategic outcomes, satisfying the resource allocation standard

This committee proposal is submitted in full accordance with CSCC's participatory governance framework. The formation of a Campus Preparedness Committee strengthens—rather than duplicates—existing institutional structures, and creates a permanent, accountable home for one of the most important functions any institution of higher education can perform.

VII. Conclusion & Recommendation

Cleveland State Community College has an opportunity to be a national model among Tennessee community colleges for campus safety, emergency preparedness, and community resilience. The formation of a Campus Preparedness Committee, charged with developing and sustaining a Campus-CERT, is the right next step—and the right time is now.

The case is clear on every dimension: the strategic plan calls for it, the governance framework enables it, the FEMA model makes it affordable, peer institutions demonstrate its success, and the students, employees, and community of Bradley, McMinn, Polk, Monroe & Meigs County's deserve it.

It is respectfully recommended that CSCC senior administration:

- Accept this proposal and initiate the Standing Committee formation process
- Designate a senior administration sponsor to shepherd the committee through formal approval
- Appoint an interim Campus-CERT Program Manager to begin outreach to TEMA and Bradley, McMinn, Polk, Monroe & Meigs County's EMA
- Include the Campus Preparedness Committee in the CSCC Standing Committee roster for AY 2026–2027

The greatest emergency preparedness investment CSCC can make is not equipment—it is trained, organized, empowered people. A Campus Preparedness Committee makes that investment in a structured, sustainable, and strategically aligned way.

References & Resources

CSCC Institutional Documents:

- CSCC Defining Our Tomorrow Strategic Plan 2025–2030
- CSCC Standing Committee Modification Procedures (Rev. 2/27/26)
- CSCC Committee Modification Application
- CSCC Committee By-Laws Template
- CSCC Annual Committee Report Template
- CSCC Committee Formation Questions

Federal & External Resources:

- FEMA Community Emergency Response Team Program — fema.gov/cert
- FEMA CERT Basic Training Participant Manual, 2019 Update (August 2019) — primary source for all CERT training unit descriptions, course objectives, and supplemental education recommendations in this proposal
- REMS Technical Assistance Center — Campus CERT Resource Page — rems.ed.gov
- TBR Policy 1.03.10.00 — Student & Faculty Participation in Development of Campus Policies & Programs
- TBR Policy 1.03.02.00 — Duties of the Institutional Presidents

Academic Research:

- Creating a Campus Based Community Emergency Response Team (CERT). Community College Journal of Research and Practice, Vol. 36, No. 6, 2012.