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Abstract

In recent years, technology has made it possible, and in some ways critical, for college and university presidents to increase campus?wide communication. Following the 2016 US presidential election, many college presidents across the country sent campus?wide communications in response to the election, while others chose not to respond. The resulting reactions from campus and community stakeholders to these communications, or the lack of communication, from presidents was mixed due to the contentious nature of the election. In an effort to better understand a president's decision to communicate, this study utilised coded interviews with 12 US flagship institution presidents or vice?presidents for communication, providing insight into why presidents generally respond to contentious events and, more specifically, why presidents chose to respond to the 2016 election of Donald Trump. Four motivations that generally influenced presidential communications were identified (i.e., responsibility to campus stakeholders, pressure to respond, emphasise university values and the role of a public university), and subsequent sub?themes were identified while

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analysing why presidents responded to the 2016 election specifically. This study concludes by offering implications for presidential communication and directions for future research on presidential engagement with contentious events.(HRK / Abstract übernommen)