Hazing Awareness and Prevention (Faculty & Staff)

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Introduction

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Course Overview

The content in this course was designed with care and sensitivity; however, some may find certain topics personally upsetting [especially for survivors of sexual abuse or assault]. If you feel the need to talk with someone, please contact your institution's counseling and health services department or a related resource in your community.

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Course Overview con’t

As a faculty or staff member on a college campus, chances are you’ve heard a lot about hazing. You might have some preconceived notions about what it looks like and where it happens, and often those ideas are shaped by the way the media portrays it in popular movies and television shows.

Unfortunately, not everything we learn on TV is correct. Hazing is far more common than you might believe, and it doesn’t just happen in fraternities and sororities. Some of the people who experience hazing think they’re having fun, and many times the rituals are considered normal parts of belonging to a community. However, hazing isn’t a benign part of belonging. It can have devastating, even deadly, consequences.

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Goals

In this course, we'll show you some examples of hazing, the theories behind who is involved and why, its potential to escalate, and how to combat this dangerous tradition within your institution.

By the end of this course, you will be able to:

- Identify the key components in the definition of hazing.
- Describe the nature of the continuum of hazing.
- Recognize who is involved in hazing and why they exhibit certain behaviors.
- Recognize signs and examples of hazing.
- Identify the risks associated with hazing. (and)
- Identify what administrators and faculty can do to prevent hazing and support victims.

Later, you'll be able to test your learning with a short quiz. So, if you're ready, let's begin.

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Understanding Hazing

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Definition of Hazing

So, what *is* hazing? Currently there is no standard definition for hazing. While not every state has an anti-hazing law, hazing does occur in every state and so it becomes problematic when trying to have a consistent and standardized definition of hazing behaviors.

When there is no one single definition, and the state laws and school Codes of Conduct vary considerably, it can be confusing. To make it even more confusing, many associations have a completely different definition of what they consider hazing. For example, the NCAA may define hazing differently than a fraternity, sorority, band or club. To make it even more complicated, those who have conducted research may have had a completely different definition of hazing. Today, we'll breakdown a definition provided by Alfred University's national survey on hazing that you can use and understand.

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Definition of Hazing con’t

Some will define hazing as harassment, intimidation, and assault. Others will define hazing as pranks, fun, or as a rite of passage. It has even been compared to bullying.

The same intimidation factors and power differences exist with bullying, and some may see hazing as a type of bullying. But it’s important to keep in mind one of the differences between hazing and bullying is that bullying is about EXCLUSION while hazing is about INCLUSION. The individual that is being hazed **wants** to join the group, **has been selected** to be a participant in the group and ideally that relationship will continue after the individual is accepted into the group. Wherea s the bully truly doesn't want anything **but** to abuse the target, and there is no desire for a continued relationship.

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Definition of Hazing con't

The following definition is probably the best and easiest to interpret, "hazing is any activity expected of someone joining or participating in a group that humiliates, degrades, abuses or endangers them regardless of the person's willingness to participate."

There are three parts to that definition.

The first part is "any activity expected of someone joining or participating in a group." When researchers first began studying hazing, they assumed that it was solely those who are **joining** a group, team or club organization – essentially a "newbie," pledge or a rookie. However, there are more and more incidents of hazing happening to **active, participating** members within a group whose status or role has changed. For example, maybe they've been promoted to a captain, president, or band leader.

The second part defines the purpose of hazing activities, which are intended to be "humiliating, degrading, abusive, or [one that] endangers" the participants.

Last, but not least, is the third part, "regardless of the person's willingness to participate." Researchers found there were many students who were knowingly hazed - who wanted to be hazed - and who felt like they volunteered to be hazed.

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Definition of Hazing con’t

This “compliance” makes prevention challenging. An example of this is when students under the age of 21 say they willingly consumed alcohol or drugs, say they enjoyed it, say they felt like it was beneficial to “bond” with their friends, and felt they fully consented to getting drunk or high. Even so, **the behavior** is still a violation of an institution’s code of conduct, as well as state law. So, their willingness to participate **does not** excuse the behavior. As said earlier, state laws differ greatly, and most states currently have an anti-hazing criminal or educational law on the books.

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History of Hazing

The history of hazing goes back further than what we'll discuss, but in the United States the first criminal offense for hazing occured at the US Naval Academy back in 1874. It wasn't until 1901 that the first state, Illinois, passed an anti-hazing statute. In the late 1970s, the first reported civil case was brought forward from a plaintiff who sought recovery for injuries sustained during a hazing activity. Shortly after, there was a spike in hazing deaths, and then an increase in anti-hazing laws throughout the United States. Sadly, each of the laws are named for a college student who died as a result of hazing.

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History of Hazing con’t

In 2005, Florida passed the Chad Meredith Act making hazing a third degree felony in the event of bodily injury or death. In 2019, Andrew’s Law was passed, strengthening the Chad Meredith act, which holds those who plan the hazing activity responsible for their behavior, even if they are not actively involved in the actual hazing activity. In 2021, Ohio passed Collin's Law making hazing a felony in that state, but also requiring institutions to provide comprehensive reporting and training.

Most recently the END ALL Hazing Act has been introduced as an amendment to the Higher Education Act. This bill requires institutions of higher education that participate in federal student-aid programs to collect information and publicly report on hazing-related misconduct. Specifically, IHEs must prepare biannual reports and post the reports on their websites. The reports must include information on hazing-related misconduct committed by a student organization, including the name of the student organization that committed the violation, a description of the violation, and sanctions placed on the organization. Further, IHEs must report to campus police and law enforcement authorities within 72 hours of becoming aware of any allegation of hazing that involved serious bodily injury or a significant risk of serious bodily injury. The act has gained wide support from the fraternity and sorority national organizations, trade groups, as well as parents who have lost children due to hazing deaths. It's hopeful that this act will soon pass and be signed into law.

To find more information on your state’s hazing laws, please see the Resources section of this course for a link.

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Examples of Hazing

There are a wide range of activities that can be considered hazing, such as:

- Sleep-deprivation
- Substance abuse
- Sexual assault and simulations
- Socially isolating new members
- Water intoxication
- Abduction and kidnapping
- “Lock-ups” and confinement
- Physical exercises
- Demeaning skits with degrading or humiliating acts
- “Swirlies”
- Non-sanctioned scavenger hunts
- Ingestion of vile substances
- “Drop-offs”
- Personal servitude
- “Line-ups”
- Rookie duties
- Defacement of property
- Stealing and other illegal activities
- Threats or implied threats
- Drinking games
- Assigning demerits
- Silence periods with implied threats for violation
- Demeaning names
- Expecting certain items to always be in one’s possession
- Verbal abuse
- Asking new members to wear embarrassing attire
- Forced consumption of alcohol or drugs
- Beating, paddling, whipping, branding or other forms of assault

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Examples of Hazing con’t

There can be subtle types of verbal and psychological hazing that when viewed by an outsider, may not seem that big of a deal. Subtle hazing can be in the form of demeaning names or being required to always carry certain items on their person. You may wonder why members of this group are required to carry around a teddy bear, or why they're all dressed alike. Why can't they associate with other students or why are the rookies having to clean up after the football team gets done with practice? It may come to your attention, but because it's so subtle, you may wonder if it's actually considered hazing.

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Examples of Hazing con’t

Well, it is. Seemingly innocuous “rituals” like ostracizing students, requiring the performance of undesirable duties, or deprivation of privileges are acts of harassing and humiliating behavior. This may be requiring rookies to stand on the cafeteria tables and sing the national anthem or having to wear embarrassing attire. Bystanders look at this and may laugh, they may cringe, but will do little to stop it. These actions have nothing to do with the player’s ability to perform on the field, right? Sadly, it’s embarrassing, the resulting shame can have lasting effects on certain individuals.

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Examples of Hazing con’t

If you see this type of behavior in public, it’s likely they're doing the dangerous hazing behavior in private. The same can be said about skit nights, sexual simulations, verbal abuse, threats and sleep deprivation.

There was a news report of a high school girls' gymnastic team where the first-year female rookies had to dress up as infants. They had to wear a bonnet, had to have a pacifier or baby bottle, and wear a diaper. They then had to parade into the local supermarket, stop, and sing “I'm a little teapot.” Spectators laughed as the girls were marched out the back door of the grocery store. What people didn't see, as the team of freshman girls were guided to the back parking lot, was a circle of cars, all illuminating the middle of the circle, as each of the girls had to go out separately, get on their knees and eat a banana that was protruding from the pants of a football player. Obviously, very degrading and humiliating, whereas the individuals that saw the behavior inside the grocery store thought it was funny, silly or nonsensical.

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Examples of Hazing con’t

Hazing can easily escalate to violent behavior, especially if new members are coerced or forced to consume alcohol or drugs. Often, these individuals feel that if they want to continue their membership and join the team, club or organization, it’s expected that they have to drink copious amounts of alcohol. In some groups they may be told it’s considered the “family drink” and it’s part of the tradition of their initiation. As chronicled too often in the news, the amount of alcohol consumed can have deadly consequences.

Other violent behaviors might include being beaten or paddled. Sadly, it might also include having to endure a deadly gauntlet as was part of the tradition of the FAM-U marching band. Other victims reported the ingestion of very vile substances that might be rancid, or mixtures of different spoiled foods that are intended to get the individual sick. Some have reported water intoxication, where the new members were expected to consume so much water that their electrolytes were significantly out of balance and put their life in peril; and we've even had deaths occur because of this type of hazing behavior. There have been other reported incidents of abductions, kidnappings and sexual assaults as part of the initiation process.

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Examples of Hazing con’t

This has only been a partial list of different activities that have been defined as hazing either in a criminal case, civil suit or a campus policy violation. College Students were held accountable for engaging in these types of activities toward new members that were joining or current members changing status within the group. As you can see, they vary greatly - some behaviors are obviously silly, nonsensical, or even stupid - but many are very concerning, dangerous and very alarming if they occur within your institution’s group, team, or club.

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A Continuum of Hazing Behavior

Hazing rarely occurs as one event on one night – it is usually a series of “initiation” activities spread over many days or weeks – getting progressively worse. For some, even though they don’t know when the hazing will end, they figure they have endured so much humiliation and degradation that they have to stick it out - and not quit.

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A Continuum of Hazing Behavior con’t

There are a wide range of hazing behaviors that can be defined as humiliating and degrading that can, over time, lead to abuse and become violent or potentially deadly.

For example, what may seem like innocent hazing for an athletic team would be to make new teammates clean out the seasoned teammates’ lockers (although this would not be required by a coach, nor does it have anything to do with the athletes’ abilities). The next day, they may be required to do something a little more humiliating, like wash the team’s underwear in buckets while wearing handmaids’ costumes.

Then, over time, someone may feel like that level of humiliation isn’t enough, let’s make it more degrading – teammates are then told to wash the team’s cars naked..

Breaking down individuals to this level of vulnerability can then expose new teammates to possible abuse. To ratchet up the humiliation and degradation, someone may make a video of the car washing and post it to social media.

Worse yet, violence has a chance to escalate as hazers, in an attempt to solidify their role as senior members, decide to whip their new teammates in the locker room after an away game.

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A Continuum of Hazing Behavior con’t

This type of behavior can escalate over a few days, a week, or as traditions progress through the years. We tend to hear about the violent and deadly behaviors in the news. Often those tragedies are motivation for change

such as arrests, expulsion from school, closing down a chapter or forfeiting games. Not all hazing results in a student’s death, but what is common is that typically that behavior has to do with some power imbalance between those who want to join versus those who are part of the group.

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How to Recognize Signs of Hazing

Keep in mind, hazing is usually done in private and in secret. It normally occurs off campus. Rarely does anyone see what is happening at three o'clock in the morning in an off-campus basement, for example. So, it's not reported and is far more pervasive and more severe than expected.

Besides the behaviors you might see in public; the most notable sign of hazing might be a change in the member trying to join the group. The Alfred University study found that 13% of those affected by hazing left the group because of being hazed.

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How to Recognize Signs of Hazing con’t

It's not uncommon for the hazing to include sleep deprivation, excessive drinking and extreme physical exertion. You need to be attentive to noticeable changes in your students. So, if you know a person who is in the process of joining a club, team, organization or group who is tired, moody, anxious, depressed, disheveled or their general presentation is out of character, it is important to ask them what is going on.

There may be signs of physical harm like exhaustion, burns, bruises, injuries and most concerning, alcohol poisoning, If they are reluctant to explain the noticeable changes (remember hazing usually occurs in seclusion and new members often must vow secrecy) then you might want to ask them about hazing and tell them you’re concerned.

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Initiations That Involve Alcohol

If alcohol is part of the initiation or tradition of a team, group or club, this is a “red flag.” The greatest risk are those hazing initiations that involve alcohol. When we hear the news reports about hazing deaths, according to consultant Dave Westol, it will typically take place on one of three nights within Greek culture:

- Bid Night
- Big Brother or Sister Night, (or)
- Pre-Initiation

The idea of having nights designated for specific hazing traditions is not unique to fraternities and sororities. Many different groups have a “tradition” of the “family drink” where a particular brand of alcohol is expected to be consumed by the new member. The new members drink with their “Big Brother” or “Big Sister” and other members of that “Family” to the point that the entire bottle is consumed. This type of “tradition” can have deadly consequences. It’s been reported that most hazing related accidents and deaths are due to alcohol and binge drinking.

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Why Groups Haze

What purpose does it serve to abuse the very members you want to be part of your group, club or team?

Dr. Timothy Marchell , at Cornell University, listed over eighteen different theoretical explanations for hazing and some of these include theories such as:

- Shared coping
- Rites of passage
- Groupthink
- Misperceived norms
- Cycles of abuse (and)
- Sociopathy

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Why Groups Haze con’t

Some may see hazing behavior necessary to bond, or for group cohesion. The belief is that the group of new members will go through this struggle together (this arduous task; this “shared coping”) and it will be a bonding experience.

In reality though, those who are going through the hazing experience may feel the group cohesion, but they won’t necessarily feel the bond with the entire group, especially to those that hazed them.

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Why Groups Haze con’t

For others, the hazing initiation feels like a rite of passage. The members are wanting to give special significance to their organizations, groups or teams. Being part of the group is critically important to them; it helps form their identity and they want to give that identity meaning. As a result, they will frequently create a rite of passage or initiation to prove the value of that organization and the worthiness of the group.

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Why Groups Haze con’t

Keep in mind, their initiation is not sanctioned by college or national affiliation. They design the hazing activities themselves, thinking that it will give meaning to being part of the group. Since they don't have someone with wisdom on how to develop a true rite of passage, they create their own, and it’s usually around those issues of humiliation, harassment and unfortunately dangerous activities. The pressure of unanimity mixed with degrading acts creates the phenomenon of “groupthink,” where dysfunctional decision-making is presented, and moral objections are suppressed.

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Why Groups Haze con’t

Since hazing can start as early as middle or high school and continue through college, the idea can feel “normal” – like “a tradition” – and can seem to provide value to a student’s experience.

Some students have misperceived norms, believing that “everyone hazes, and this is what college life is about.”

Interestingly, when they talk about the hazing activities – especially the dangerous behaviors – as a “tradition,” researchers have asked former members and alumni groups, teams or clubs if they experienced the same hazing, they would say “No, we never did anything like that - we may have done some other stuff, but we didn't do anything nearly to that extent.”

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Why Groups Haze con’t

Research can also explain the behavior in terms of members experiencing cycles of abuse. Individuals who have been abused may have a propensity for abusing others.

In research conducted by Alfred University, a significant percentage of those hazed wanted revenge as a result of what they endured. The individual who was hazed the previous year may have an opportunity to become the hazer. Frequently, the hazer will say, “this is what I went through the year before, so you have to do it too.”

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Why Groups Haze con’t

Unfortunately, within a group, sociopathy may exist. This is a small subset of individuals that lack remorse and have a disregard for humankind (sociopaths). These types of individuals may ratchet the hazing up a notch, or they may change it a bit, making it more humiliating, degrading, abusive or violent. And this is how hazing could escalate from being silly and nonsensical to dangerous or deadly over a few short years.

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Who is at Risk of Being Hazed

In understanding the scope of the problem, it's important to discern through the research that it's not just a “Greek thing.” Most articles that you may have read online or seen on TV cover hazing incidents that have occurred in fraternities or sororities. Because their hazing initiations have involved alcohol, the overwhelming number of hazing deaths have occurred in Greek Letter Organizations. But no organization is immune.

A national study, done by Doctors Allan and Madden at the University of Maine, found hazing prevalent in any group, team or club college students join.

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Who is at Risk of Being Hazed con’t

Athletics had the highest percentage, followed by fraternity and sorority, club sports and all the way down to Honor Society. Other groups as indicated in the graph would be religiously affiliated organizations; culture clubs and similar organizations; and student government.

The high percentage of individuals who said that they belong to a group where at least one hazing behavior was part of the initiation process, is very concerning. Fifty-five percent of students reported being hazed. Whether it be an honor group, choir, band, religious-affiliated group, team, or a fraternity or sorority - all students who join groups are at risk of being hazed.

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Who is at Risk of Being Hazed con’t

Additionally, hazing is not just a guy thing. Men, women and non-binary students engage in hazing behaviors. Young men tend to engage in risky behaviors which then can lead to dangerous outcomes, whereas women tend to use alcohol and humiliation when they haze. These are generalities and not entirely exclusive, but what is consistently true is that all genders participate in hazing.

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Why Some Individuals Agree to be Hazed

You may be wondering why some students submit to hazing. “Why are some willing to accept a group's authority by obediently engaging in acts that they normally would not perform?”

Often in our culture, the idea of going through an initiation – albeit, even if it includes hazing - fulfills a basic need, and individuals seeking inclusivity are sometimes willing to do it regardless of the consequences. Some view hazing as being “no big deal,” that it's just pranks or it's just good-natured fun.

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Why Some Individuals Agree to be Hazed con’t

For some, they know there will be some hazing and they are willing to go along with it in order to be part of the group, so they consent. But because the initiation is secret, new members don't know when the hazing will end, they don't know all the different hazing activities that will be expected of them, and they don’t know the potential dangers of the hazing. Because of this, they can’t truly give informed consent, so it becomes more of a “coerced consent,” or “consent under pressure”. Or, there may be a diminished capacity to consent due to the influence of alcohol which can wash away inhibitions and the ability to make clear judgements.

Additionally, they may perceive that if they don’t participate “voluntarily” that it might affect their membership in the club, team, or group. The group may instill a fear of punishment for non-compliance. For example, hazing severity may increase for themselves or other initiates, or they may be ostracized. By going along with being hazed, they show their willingness to accept the group's authority.

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Why Some Individuals Agree to be Hazed con’t

Another reason is the symbolic separation from their old lives. Some experience the initiation as a rite of passage. They are moving into different relationships, they're in college, they've grown up and out of their high school identity, and it gives meaning to obtain membership in the new group. They may view themselves now as an adult and may view it as proof that they are worthy of belonging to this group. It may feel transformational and they're wanting to experience the idea of “this is who I am now and I’m different than who I was before joining this group, team, or club.”

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The Student Perspective on Hazing

Unlike many issues college administrators respond to, the student's perspective is significantly different than a lot of other concerning behaviors.

Students recognize hazing as part of the campus culture.

- 47% of students come to college having experienced hazing.
- 69% of students who belonged to a student activity reported they were aware of hazing activities occurring in student organizations other than their own.
- 48% talk with their peers and 26% (twenty-six percent) disclose to family about their hazing experiences.

Yet, in 95% of the cases where students identified their experience as hazing, they did not report the events to campus officials.

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Allan, E. J. (2009). Hazing in view: college students at risk: initial findings from the National Study of Student Hazing. Diane Publishing.

The Student Perspective on Hazing con’t

For many who have been hazed there isn’t an urgent need to come forward. They do not necessarily feel as though they are a victim and often worry that they would get in trouble too. They do not see a positive outcome by taking any action against the team, group or club. Researchers believe the need to belong and be accepted by the group is so powerful that victims are reluctant to come forward.

Because of either a sense of loyalty or a vow of secrecy, they won’t want to risk losing friendships they’ve made in the group by getting anyone in trouble. Additionally, they may have a fear of retaliation.

Exposing humiliating or degrading acts to the public may bring feelings of embarrassment, shame or guilt. But leaving the group could threaten their very identity. They may have attended that college for the soul purpose of participating in that organization; they may feel like there’s no other group, team or organization they will be able to join; or they may feel they have to transfer out to escape judgement.

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Effects and Consequences of Hazing

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The Landscape of Mental Health

Before we get into the various physical and emotional effects of hazing, it's important to address the landscape of mental health on college campuses as the current state of college student mental health has serious implications for those who have been hazed.

More than 25% of college students have been diagnosed or treated by a professional for a mental illness.
73% of college students with mental health conditions have experienced, on campus, a mental health crisis.
25% of college students are taking some form of antidepressants, anti-anxiety and/or mood stabilizers, (and)
95% of college counselors report that mental health concern is growing on their campus.

Data collected from ActiveMinds.org

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Effects of Hazing

A key finding in the study by Doctors Allan and Madden was that, out of the fifty-five percent of college students that have experienced hazing activities, only five percent of students that were subjected to these activities actually labeled their experience as hazing. They may have said they were required to drink a significant amount of alcohol, eat vile substances, do line-ups or other common hazing behaviors as part of joining the team, club, or group – but they labeled it as an "initiation," "tradition" or even "fun."

Because of the strong need to belong and be part of a group, club or team, the effects of hazing are frequently rationalized as a rite of passage or initiation. Oftentimes, the effects of hazing are ignored or minimized because it seems as though everyone else was a willing participant so the impact must not be that big of a deal.

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Effects of Hazing con’t

Many victims will talk about the “positive” outcomes that resulting from their hazing experience. It can be very challenging for some to see the risks associated with hazing. Unfortunately, these individuals may be adamant about not reporting hazing if they saw it or experienced it themselves.

Even though a significant percentage of those who have been hazed saw it as positive, there are serious negative consequences reported by those who haze others. Even though they may describe the hazing as “fun” and beneficial, a large number of hazers also report feeling stress, guilty, depressed, and other negative results.

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Effects of Hazing con’t

Interestingly, surveys report that students don’t always distinguish between fun and hazing. Nine out of ten students who have experienced hazing behavior in college do not consider themselves to have been hazed. In more than half of the hazing incidents, a member of the group posted pictures on the internet. So long as no one was seriously hurt, they may view their experience as something that they wanted or something that they enjoyed. That’s why they may feel like it was a beneficial part of belonging to that club, group or team.

With the lack of intervention and the lack of communication, students often feel that adults and college administration condone hazing.

In Allan's national study of student hazing, "Hazing in View: College Students at Risk"

- 25% of the hazing behaviors occurred on campus, in public view;
- 25% of coaches or organization advisors were aware of the groups’ hazing behaviors; (and in)
- 25% of hazing experiences, alumni were present.

The student may engage in the silly type of hazing behavior that’s in public view, and because an adult doesn’t intervene, they have the perception that the lack of action equals approval. Since no one is viewing the behavior as a problem and no one got hurt, it must be okay.

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Effects of Hazing con’t

While there may be noticeable physical signs of harm, sometimes it’s difficult to know if the humiliation had consequences or hidden harm.

For example, a star – blue chip – women’s basketball recruit may quit the team because of being hazed. She may have been the player to lead the team to victory, who is now trying to figure out how to pay for college after she’s given up her scholarship. An honor student is having a hard time getting out of bed and attending classes due to the embarrassment of a hazing incident, driving her GPA down. Or the former band member who was hazed is preoccupied with planning revenge. The negative consequences of hazing can have a serious impact on the individual and campus community.

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Effects of Hazing con’t

Let’s get something straight, hazing is harmful, and its effects are not always visible. Research tells us that hazing can have a long-lasting emotional impact.

The sometimes-hidden harm may come out in psychological symptoms such as anxiety, anger, depression, shame and/or embarrassment. The effects of being hazed can last for a significant period and can really shape a person's identity.

Hazing teaches students about power, about control and how to impact others. What hazed students are then taught will influence how they treat others, how they interact with their colleagues in the workforce and in their relationships - all these things can be influenced because of the hazing experience that they had.

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Consequences of Hazing

There can be significant criminal, civil and academic consequences for individuals found guilty of hazing.

Since the late 1970s, hazing has gained more publicity and national attention - tragically, because of hazing deaths. Most states have attempted to strengthen the laws that are on the books by passing anti-hazing laws that are punishable as a misdemeanor, while a handful of states consider hazing a felony if there is significant injury or death. Additionally, there are laws in place that hold institutions accountable by requiring reporting and training

Since you and your institution may be liable in civil litigation it is important to consult with your school's attorney and Enterprise Risk Management team to proactively address any vulnerability.

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Consequences of Hazing con’t

When an individual is hazed, the impact reverberates throughout the various aspects of the campus community and has serious and unintended consequences.

A school’s reputation could be at stake. From the American Sociological Review, they’ve found that suspensions and expulsions create a negative experience for all students, whether they were involved in the hazing activities or not. Current and potential students may not feel safe attending a college that has the negative stigma of hazing associated with it. An institution may see a decline in retention and recruitment. Students are less likely to bond with teachers and other staff which can then promote campus tension and eventually internal conflict.

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Consequences of Hazing con’t

There can also be significant consequences for the team, club, or group that is found responsible for hazing. Colleges have forfeited games, suspended clubs and organizations for a certain number of years, and some colleges have completely eliminated Greek Life as a result of a hazing tragedy. Most tragically, a life may have been lost. Hazing can end in personal and institutional upheaval.

A potentially unsafe environment combined with legal troubles will be reported to the press, as they should be. Pair that with a dwindling academic status and on-campus extracurricular activities, this negative exposure will certainly have an effect on alumni and parent relations.

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Addressing and Preventing Hazing

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Talking to Students Who May Have Been Hazed

If you suspect a student has been hazed, it's important to have a planned and thoughtful conversation. Knowing that hazing can be abusive, it may be worthwhile for administrators to speak to your institutions Title IX (nine) investigator about how to conduct a "trauma informed interview." Because of the unique dynamics associated with hazing, one should not assume the hazing victim will automatically be forthcoming with the details and description of the hazing.

Staff and faculty should have their "radar up." If you're hearing suspicious requests (for example, a rookie needs to miss practice) or you see unexplained injuries or fatigue, inquire with the following questions:

- What groups or teams or clubs have you recently joined?
- What's been the joining process?
- Have you had mixed feelings about anything they've asked you to do? Did it seem like a requirement of joining?
- What is the most concerning thing you've had to do?
- Are there things that you've done that you are not supposed to talk about?

Treat these students as victims with scattered emotions. Be patient, supportive and express concern. Explore options and develop a safety plan that works for them.

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Strategies for Administrators to Address Hazing

If you want to be proactive and attempt to address hazing on your campus, there are important considerations prior to taking action.

It is important to clearly define your goal and steps needed. For example, if your policy is “zero tolerance” – what does that mean? What will be the consequence, and will those actions end the hazing or reduce harm?

Additionally, have you assessed the prevalence of hazing on your campus? Have you surveyed your students or are you responding to anecdotal rumors? Build a culture of evidence, but don’t feel like you need to reinvent the wheel. You can turn to the National College Health Assessment which provides a current profile of health trends among campus communities.

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Are you taking steps to motivate stakeholders or request support from the President? Do you have buy-in from the campus community? Do you have a clear strategy that can be implemented and evaluated with measurable outcomes?

In the recent article “A public health approach to preventing hazing on a university campus” the authors found that a comprehensive, public health approach to hazing prevention:

- “lowered the hazing experiences reported by students” (and)
- “increased endorsement of a positive normative belief about hazing.”

The public health model reflects the best response to hazing.

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Hazing prevention efforts should focus on these four attainable strategies:

- Detection
- Accountability
- Education, (and)
- Alternatives

First, you want to be sure faculty and staff are aware of their roles in regard to hazing and everyone is on the same page when it comes to detection.

Develop a community coalition; don’t just make it a department or division issue. Consider sub-committees to address and assess strategies. Enlist parents, alums, and others in the community as partners in your initiatives.

- Assign the responsibility for reporting to advisors and coaches.
- Establish reporting mechanisms, including an online anonymous option. (and)
- Conduct effective investigations using staff who have been properly trained.

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Then, you want to be sure to have a good foundation of policy and an infrastructure that supports accountability..

Take a look at your policy and practices with "fresh eyes." Use the opportunity to review past reports of hazing and critique the process. Additionally, do a search of peer institutions and compare their policies and practices with yours.

Each campus is unique and has its own culture, Knowing each club, group, or team has the potential for hazing is not enough. It is critical to understand what would motivate your students to haze each other. Effective prevention requires understanding the reasons for hazing. Misunderstanding the reasons leads to ineffective (or insufficient) strategies.

Critique campus culture when it comes to initiations. Don't accept behaviors that intend to belittle students, at any level, as "bonding activities." Actively monitor initiation practices. Review "new member" orientation. Ask students for details. Survey alums about past practices. And listen for evasiveness and inconsistencies.

Even though budgets may be constrained, additional questions specific to hazing can be included on pre-existing surveys – but remembering students don't view or call their behaviors "hazing," the questions need to focus on behaviors and actions that were a **condition** of joining a team, club, or group.

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Strategies for Administrators to Prevent Hazing

Since most campuses have experience responding to issues like sexual assault and substance abuse, the strategies and tactics for preventing hazing should seem very familiar. The template for prevention is very similar and some of the issues overlap and can be combined with pre-existing efforts.

Take decisive action against individuals and organizations for hazing. Require substantial sanctions for those in violation of your institution's policy and openly acknowledge hazing incidents on the school's website. Restrict new members from attending organization events where alcohol is present.

There has been research that indicates enforcement of alcohol policies has been effective in reducing consumption, and there is growing evidence that enforcement of the university's hazing policy may contribute to the reduction of hazing and creates a deterrent effect.

As a result, many campuses are publicizing those groups, teams, clubs, and organizations that are being investigated for possible hazing violations as well as those found responsible and the resulting consequences.

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Administrators should foster campus discussion about the culture and language of initiations. When doing so, be sure to call it hazing when it is.

Broaden the definitions of humiliation, intimidation, theft and alcohol consumption in regard to hazing. Provide examples of unacceptable behavior and couple it with alcohol prevention efforts.

Set clear expectations regarding hazing. Explain the consequences for individuals and groups.

Discuss the risks and hidden harm students can face.

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Identify and train anti-hazing leaders. This includes current students, staff and faculty and alums.

Targeted live training for all should be repeated, at the very least, annually. Recurring public statements by key leaders will promote consistent communication and enforcement of hazing policies.

Additionally, provide a consistent baseline of information that students can access through an online course or easily accessible webpage. This information could:

- list questions to determine if hazing is present,
- promote bystander intervention and reporting,
- provide ways to anonymously report hazing, (and)
- provide contact information for counseling and health services for confidential communication.

Educating your institution about hazing is more than a poster or information table. In the National Study of Student Hazing, students reported limited exposure to hazing prevention efforts that extended beyond a "hazing is not tolerated" approach. Everyone has to be taught and told that hazing is wrong and contrary to the mission of the school. They have to learn that the lessons and emotional needs that are met through hazing can be addressed in a healthy and beneficial way.

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Providing Alternatives to Combat the “Benefits” of Hazing

If you’re wondering what alternatives organizations, clubs, and teams at your institution can do to combat the “benefits” of hazing, then you’re on the right track. The challenge is going to be creating a bonding experience, or a rite of passage, or a sense of belonging that doesn't include the different components of hazing. If an organization is nationally affiliated, work collaboratively with their representatives.

Professor Jay Johnson’s research out of the University of Manitoba indicated some promising ways the hazing culture can be transformed through the use of team-building activities. Some campus groups have used arduous physical challenges like whitewater rafting, high ropes courses or wilderness camping to develop a cohesive bond amongst members. The whole group – current **and** new members participate – to complete the task.

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Providing Alternatives to Combat the “Benefits” of Hazing con’t

In order to create an effective team building experience, you may need to work with different offices and campus professionals to enlist their help in trying to figure out the best options. Ideally, you want to support the creation of inclusive activities so that all the participating members will feel like they've accomplished something together by being part of the group. New members can have a sense of accomplishment for sticking with these types of challenging initiations and current members can walk away with a sense of pride having influenced such positive accomplishments and possible new traditions for the future.

Additionally, your faculty and administration could become more proactive about hazing awareness. Every year, the last week of September is considered to be National Hazing Prevention Week . HazingPrevention.Org™ is the organizer of National Hazing Prevention Week and you can find a link to their site in the Resources section of this course. There, you can get access to hazing prevention experts, online resources, and opportunities for one-on-one consulting if so needed.

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Conclusion

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Summary and Implications

One of your responsibilities as an administrator or faculty member is to be able to protect the students in your institution from participating in hazing by helping to create a safe and inclusive environment for clubs, organizations, and teams . It is important for you to be able to recognize the effects hazing has on young adults so that you can identify if and when hazing may be occurring.

While the examples of hazing activities can seem broad, be aware of any organization's activities that span the spectrum of behavior over time. Look out for humiliating or degrading pranks and physical as well as emotional signs of pain and express your concern or contact a trained staff member that can reach out to the student in an official way.

Taking steps to combat hazing within your institution requires administrators and faculty to support organizations that value inclusion and positive networking through team building activities, philanthropic or fundraising events, academic challenges, as well as physical challenges that are designed around the concept of teamwork.

As we've discussed, there is no one definition or law for hazing, so familiarize yourself with your campus Code of Conduct as well as your state regulations. More and more colleges and states are cracking down on hazing, and students participating in the hazing are not the only ones being held accountable.

By making a commitment to educate the campus community about the dangers of hazing, your institution is sending a clear message that hazing will not be tolerated.

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Resources

College of William & Mary Hazing Prevention Coalition
www.wm.edu/sites/hazingprevention/hazingprevcomm/index.php
Cornell University
http://hazing.cornell.edu/
Florida State University Hazing Education Initiative
http://hazing.fsu.edu/
University of Arizona
www.stepupprogram.org/topics/hazing/
University of Virginia
www.virginia.edu/hazing/
NCAA: Building New Traditions, Hazing Prevention in College Athletics
http://www.ncaa.org/sport-science-institute/topics/hazing
Hazing Prevention
www.hazingprevention.org
Stop Hazing
www.stophazing.org
Hazing Laws
https://hazingprevention.org/about/state-laws

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