Pledge Expectations and Hazing Prevention

Rensselaer Greek Life 101
Jonathan “Jerry” Witter, Ph.D.
Media Stereotypes

But is it Real?
Comedic Parody

Harsh Reality
Things you should know about hazing

- Hazing is a violation of Rensselaer policy and New York State law.
- Hazing takes various forms, but typically involves physical risks or mental distress through, for example, humiliating, intimidating, or demeaning treatment.
- Hazing can cause significant harm to individuals, groups and the University.
- Hazing has occurred in fraternities, sororities, athletic teams, performance groups, and other organizations.
- Groups that haze often view it as positive and necessary.
- Groups that haze can achieve the positive outcomes they seek from hazing through non-hazing means.

Adapted from Cornell’s website - [http://www.hazing.cornell.edu/](http://www.hazing.cornell.edu/)
RPI Student Handbook Hazing Policy

- No individual or group may haze another at any time including initiation into or affiliation with any organization or on-going association or membership. Under the law of New York State, all organization constitutions and by-laws are automatically amended to prohibit hazing activities as defined by the Penal Law of the State of New York.

- Hazing is defined by Rensselaer as any conduct that subjects another person, whether physically, mentally, emotionally or psychologically, to anything that may endanger, abuse, degrade or intimidate the person as a condition of association with a group or organization, **regardless of the person’s consent or lack of consent**.

- Such activities and situations include, but are not limited to, paddling in any form; forced consumption of alcohol or other drugs; creation of excessive fatigue; required calisthenics; “kidnapping;” physical and psychological shock; publicly wearing apparel which is conspicuous and not normally in good taste; engaging in public stunts and buffoonery; morally degrading or humiliating games and activities; late night activities; work sessions which interfere with scholastic activities; activities which are not normally performed by the active membership; and any other activities which are not consistent with organization law, ritual, or policy; or the regulations and policies of the Institute.

- Member recruitment, orientation, education and development programs must be constructive and strive to make individuals a part of the larger group by mutually understanding objectives and participating in programs.

NY State Penal Law 120.16 and 120.17

• S 120.16 Hazing in the first degree. A person is guilty of hazing in the first degree when, in the course of another person`s initiation into or affiliation with any organization, he intentionally or recklessly engages in conduct which creates a substantial risk of physical injury to such other person or a third person and thereby causes such injury.
  – Hazing in the first degree is a Class A misdemeanor.

• S 120.17 Hazing in the second degree. A person is guilty of hazing in the second degree when, in the course of another person`s initiation or affiliation with any organization, he intentionally or recklessly engages in conduct which creates a substantial risk of physical injury to such other person or a third person.
  – Hazing in the second degree is a violation.
Who Hazes?

- Fraternities
- High Schools
- Sororities
- Athletics
- Military
- Dorms

But that does not mean all organizations within these categories haze and in fact, **all** have programs to prevent it.
Why do people haze?

- They like to feel dominant
- They think they are actually "teaching"
- They want to continue the tradition
- They know no other way of communicating
- They feel it gives a “Rite of Passage”

But what do the Hazers say……

http://www.purdue.edu/hazing/warning_signs.shtml
What the Hazers say:

- “It builds respect”
- “It creates pledge class unity”
- “They have to earn their letters”
- “It’s tradition”
- “Pledging shouldn’t be easy”
- “The new members will feel like they accomplished something”
- “What about military or sports teams? Don’t they haze?”
- “I was hazed, so they should be too”

*Watch for these excuses from your brothers or sisters*
Hazing Defined

- Subtle
- Harassment
- Violent
  - Physical
  - Emotional
  - Psychological

http://www.stophazing.org/definition.html
Subtle Hazing
– Emphasizes Power Imbalance

- Deception
- Assigning demerits
- Silence periods with implied threats for violation
- Deprivation of privileges granted to other members
- Requiring new members/rookies to perform duties not assigned to other members
- Socially isolating new members/rookies
- Line-ups and Drills/Tests on meaningless information
- Name calling
- Requiring new members/rookies to refer to other members with titles (e.g. “Mr.,” “Miss”) while they are identified with demeaning terms
- Expecting certain items to always be in one's possession
Harassment Hazing
– Discomfort in Order to be Part of Group

- Verbal abuse
- Threats or implied threats
- Asking new members to wear embarrassing or humiliating attire
- Stunt or skit nights with degrading, crude, or humiliating acts
- Expecting new members/rookies to perform personal service to other members such as carrying books, errands, cooking, cleaning etc
- Sleep deprivation
- Sexual simulations
- Expecting new members/rookies to be deprived of maintaining a normal schedule of bodily cleanliness.
- Be expected to harass others
Violent Hazing
– Physical and Emotional Harm

- Forced or coerced alcohol or other drug consumption
- Beating, paddling, or other forms of assault
- Branding
- Forced or coerced ingestion of vile substances or concoctions
- Burning
- Water intoxication
- Expecting abuse or mistreatment of animals
- Public nudity
- Expecting illegal activity
- Bondage
- Abductions/kidnaps
- Exposure to cold weather or extreme heat without appropriate protection
How Does Hazing Happen?

- **Group Think - A “Lord of the Flies” Environment**
  - Mankind can organize himself into effective groups that will act in a civilized manner
  - However, ‘Lord of the Flies’ investigates the potential if there are no laws and no authority, then mankind can descend into savagery and exploit the weak
  - The group mentality can then swamp individual morality with terrible consequences

- **Rogue Individuals**
  - Small sub-group of members wanting their own time with and power over pledges
  - Bad Judgment
  - Alcohol
Table 7. Most Frequently Reported Hazing Behaviors: Social Fraternities and Sororities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participate in a drinking game</td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sing or chant by self or with select others of groups in public in a situation that is not a related event, game, or practice</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drink large amounts of alcohol to the point of getting sick or passing out</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Be awakened during the night by other members</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Be screamed, yelled, or cursed at by other members</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deprive yourself of sleep</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Associate with specific people and not others</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attend a skit or roast where other members of the group are humiliated</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perform sex acts with the opposite gender</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Act as a personal servant to others members</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Watch live sex acts</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wear clothing that is embarrassing and not part of a uniform</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Be transported and dropped off in an unfamiliar location</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(N=1,295)

### Table 18. Reasons for Not Reporting the Hazing Activities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>54%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I didn’t want to get my team or group in trouble</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I was afraid of negative consequences to me as a individual from other team or group members</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I was afraid other members of the team or group would find out I reported it and I would be an outsider</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did not know where to report it</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I might be hurt by team or group members if they learned I had reported it</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Patterns to the “Other” Response

Minimization of hazing
- “It was no big deal.”
- “No one was harmed.”
- “I didn’t consider the hazing to be extreme or troubling.”

Being hazed is a choice
- “I had a choice to participate or not.”
- “I knew it would occur and was willing to be hazed. Consequently I didn't feel it bore reporting.”
- “I was happy and willing to do all of the things I did, I have no desire to report them.”

Rationalization
- It “made me a better man.”
- “It made me and my brothers better people. It was a positive experience!”
- “Feelings afterward outweighed the pain or stress felt during it.”

Patterns to the “Other” Response

**Normalization**
- “It was tradition so didn't mind.”
- “Hazing is a right of passage. If you can't take it, get out.”

**Lack of Awareness**
- “I didn’t understand it was hazing until much later.”
- “I didn’t know it was hazing and I felt no harm in it.”

**Disagreement with “definitions” of hazing**
- “There is no problem with some actions the law considers hazing.”
- “Because the given definition of hazing does not allow for significant and important practices which encourage personal development.”
- “Don't believe there are negative consequences to the hazing observed by YOUR definition of hazing.”
Investigations into Hazing Acceptance

Tied to a pole with saran wrap, a "What Would You Do?" actor appears to be caught in an uncomfortable public hazing ritual. (ABC News)
How to Stop Hazing?

- Member Awareness
- Member Education
- Member Violation Detection
- Take Correction Action

It begins with you:
If you saw a friend drowning, would you take no action?

http://www.purdue.edu/hazing/how_to_stop.shtml
Bystander Behavior: Barriers to Intervening

- Social Influence: *Bad, but not so bad; peers*
- Fear of Embarrassment: *Could I be wrong?*
- Diffusion of Responsibility: *Someone else will act*
- Fear of Retaliation: *Don’t want to get in trouble*
- Pluralistic Ignorance: *Perception is not reality*

(Transforming Values Into Action)

http://www.beck-company.com/RESPONSE_ABILITY_-_a_project_of_BECK___CO__Corporate_Video_Production_Services.html
Programs Designed to Fight Hazing

www.campusharmonyinc.com
US Government Programs

I was sexually assaulted in high school. I've had a hard time trusting people since then. I haven't been on a date in two years because I'm afraid. My friends don't know what happened to me.

And now, you're hazing me...

STOP HAZING NOW
You have no idea what buttons you're pushing.

National Hazing Prevention Week
Learn more about hazing at www.HazingPrevention.org

I have been on medication for depression since I was 14. I thought about suicide when I was a junior in high school. Most of the time I feel fine, but sometimes, I spend the whole weekend in bed.

And now, you're hazing me...

STOP HAZING NOW
You have no idea what buttons you're pushing.

National Hazing Prevention Week
Learn more about hazing at www.HazingPrevention.org

My father used to hit my mom, and he hit me a few times, too. I spent a few years in foster care, moving around between families. College is a big opportunity for me, but I'm struggling in my classes. I'm worried about blowing it.

And now, you're hazing me...

STOP HAZING NOW
You have no idea what buttons you're pushing.

National Hazing Prevention Week
Learn more about hazing at www.HazingPrevention.org

www.HazingPrevention.org
Lawsuit Settlement Programs
In Memory of Jack Phoummarath
April 19, 1987 - December 10, 2005

• The Phoummarath's took proceeds from the settlements and created an endowment in honor of their son to promote alcohol awareness and to educate other students about the dangers of hazing and binge drinking.

• The family also developed a professionally produced educational video distributed to universities across the nation and is available for download at http://inmemoryofjack.com/.

• The Phoummarath family hopes their efforts will make a difference and prevent other families from losing a child in such a senseless tragedy.
Fraternity Programs
Phi Delta Theta: “Don’t Tarnish the Badge”

Hazing Prevention Program by Greeks

- As part of the ongoing attempt to end hazing on college campuses and particularly within Greek organizations, 21 international fraternities and sororities have joined forces in a coalition to establish the Greek Anti-Hazing Hotline. The toll-free number is 1-888-NOT-HAZE (1-888-668-4293)

The 21 Greek organizations responsible for the initiative:

- **Fraternities**
  - Alpha Epsilon Pi, Alpha Sigma Phi, Delta Chi, Delta Sigma Phi, Delta Tau Delta, Delta Upsilon, Kappa Alpha Order, Lambda Chi Alpha, Phi Gamma Delta, Phi Kappa Psi, Sigma Pi

- **Sororities**
  - Alpha Chi Omega, Alpha Delta Pi, Alpha Epsilon Phi, Alpha Phi, Alpha Sigma Tau, Chi Omega, Gamma Phi Beta, Kappa Kappa Gamma, Sigma Sigma Sigma, Zeta Tau Alpha
HELP FOR HAZING VICTIMS IS JUST A PHONE CALL AWAY.

HAZING IS A CRIME. HERE'S HOW TO STOP IT.

A reminder from:

and all fraternities and sororities committed to ending hazing and bullying on college campuses.

In partnership with these fraternities and sororities:

DELTS.ORG
Need for Some Form of a Rite of Passage

- Should acknowledge transitions and promote them
- Rituals can help formalize a transition
- Mentorship is key – not just meetings, but year long interactions – *use your big brothers and sisters*

*Respect and Pride are Earned, not Demanded or Taught*
Your Ritual – Pledging Ceremonies

• Most of you had an Open Ritual Pledging Ceremony
  – “Before your initiation into our Fraternity may be achieved, you must complete a period of pledgeship which is designed to test your loyalty and enthusiasm; but which contains no improper ordeal or physical peril. Are you willing to proceed with the ceremony of pledging?”

• You all made similar pledges to your organization
  – To do your best academically and socially
  – To get to know and make friends with your new brothers/sisters
  – To learn your Fraternity/Sorority traditions and history
  – To prove yourselves worthy of full membership

  *Unspoken commitment is to gain the same passion for the group as the upperclassmen*
Final Thoughts

- Do not expect to be hazed or feel you missed out on something if not - you aren’t
- Be dedicated to honor your oath made at the time of pledging
- Become true brothers or sisters to your pledge class and the chapter
- Challenge your chapter’s membership to uphold and live to your organization’s values
- If things are inconsistent with how you think they should be, speak up to someone
- You have the power - you all are the futures of your chapters
Back-up Resource Slides
Myths About Hazing

**Myth #1:** Hazing is a problem for fraternities and sororities primarily.

**Fact:** Hazing is a societal problem. Hazing incidents have been frequently documented in the military, athletic teams, marching bands, religious cults, professional schools and other types of clubs and/or, organizations. Reports of hazing activities in high schools are on the rise.

**Myth #2:** Hazing is no more than foolish pranks that sometimes go awry.

**Fact:** Hazing is an act of power and control over others --- it is victimization. Hazing is pre-meditated and NOT accidental. Hazing is abusive, degrading and often life-threatening.

**Myth #3:** As long as there's no malicious intent, a little hazing should be O.K.

**Fact:** Even if there's no malicious "intent" safety may still be a factor in traditional hazing activities that are considered to be "all in good fun." For example, serious accidents have occurred during scavenger hunts and kidnapping trips. Besides, what purpose do such activities serve in promoting the growth and development of group team members?

Myths About Hazing

**Myth #4:** Hazing is an effective way to teach respect and develop discipline.

**Fact:** Respect must be EARNED--not taught. Victims of hazing rarely report having respect for those who have hazed them. Just like other forms of victimization, hazing breeds mistrust, apathy and alienation.

**Myth #5:** If someone agrees to participate in an activity, it can't be considered hazing.

**Fact:** In states that have laws against hazing consent of the victim can't be used as a defense in a civil suit. Even if someone agrees to participate in a potentially hazardous action it may not be true consent when considering the peer pressure and desire to belong to the group.

**Myth #6:** It's difficult to determine whether or not a certain activity is hazing--it's such a gray area sometimes.

**Fact:** It's not difficult to decide if an activity is hazing if you use common sense and ask yourself the following questions:

A Hazing Self Assessment Test

- Is this an activity where alcohol is involved and where any minors are consuming alcohol?
- Will current members refuse to do exactly what new members/pledges are being asked to do?
- Is there risk of emotional or physical abuse?
- Is there any risk for injury or is safety a question?
- Would you feel uncomfortable describing the activity to your parents, to a professor or university official?
- Would you object to the activity being photographed or video taped by the media or school paper?

If you have to ask if it’s hazing, it is.
A Self Test from Purdue

• Would we be OK with this being in our city or campus newspaper?
• Would we perform this activity in front of our parents or a University administrator?
• Does this activity involve criminal acts? (Including minors consuming alcohol)
• Would we be prepared to go to court to defend the merit of this activity?
• Have we had a close call?

If you have to ask if it’s hazing, it is.

http://www.purdue.edu/hazing/warning_signs.shtml
Warning Signs of Hazing

- Members justifying an activity by saying "it's a tradition"
- The presence of alcohol
- Secrecy
- Peer pressure for everyone to participate
- Singling out an individual or specific group
- Miscellaneous bad judgment

http://www.purdue.edu/hazing/warning_signs.shtml
Water - Just because it isn’t alcohol, doesn’t mean it isn’t hazing


• A police investigation in 2003 concluded that Mr. Jennings had died from swelling of the brain after being forced to drink gallons of water poured through a funnel. The Times Union reported that over a period of 12 days he was also repeatedly forced to drink alcohol until he vomited, consume drinks that had been urinated in, and sit in a confined space where the heat had been turned up as high as 100 degrees after he was forced to do calisthenics.

The parents of a fraternity pledge who died after 12 days of hazing and torture were awarded $1.5 million in a wrongful death suit . . . .

[the parents] filed suit in 2004 against Burnius and 13 other members of the Psi Epsilon Chi fraternity at the State University of New York at Plattsburgh. All but Burnius settled out of court.

Jennings was a freshman . . . when he died on March 12, 2003. He had been deprived of sleep for days, repeatedly forced to drink alcohol until he vomited, consume drinks that had been urinated in, and sit in a sweat box after he was forced to do calisthenics. He died of water intoxication after being forced to drink so much water that his brained swelled and he went into a coma.

Eleven students . . . were charged with dozens of crimes related to hazing. They all eventually accepted plea agreements and were sentenced to probation and community service.

http://chronicle.com/article/Parents-Are-Awarded/40069
Milk - Just because it isn’t alcohol, doesn’t mean it isn’t hazing

Got Milk? ASU Kappa Sigs hit with hazing charges
- Kappa Sigma fraternity’s charter has been temporarily revoked after a series of incidents including hazing, according to ASU public records.
- Earlier this semester, a student was seen vomiting near a trash bin filled with empty milk cartons after apparently being forced to drink excessive amounts of milk, records state.

And in 2008 Again at ASU
- **ASU students vomiting milk may have caused crash**
- Arizona State University police have arrested nine fraternity members suspected of vomiting milk from a footbridge onto the busy street below and causing a car crash, said Assistant Chief of Police Jay Spradling.
- The pledges of the Delta Sigma Phi fraternity, who were allegedly being hazed by active members, were told to drink a gallon of milk, which caused them to vomit onto oncoming traffic passing under the footbridge.

Watchdog: Nude Parties, Hazing Compromising Security at Embassy in Kabul

- According to a stunning report, "deviant hazing and humiliation" among guards at the U.S. Embassy in Kabul has led to a breakdown in the chain of command and compromised security -- all at the very heart of the United States' war against terrorism. - FOXNews.com Wednesday, September 02, 2009

Guards tasked to protect the U.S. Embassy in Kabul, where 1,000 U.S. diplomats and staff work, have been staging raucous, homoerotic parties where supervisors are subjecting their subordinates to abuse and sexual humiliation.

According to a stunning report alleging the debauchery taking place just miles from the U.S. diplomatic mission, the "deviant hazing and humiliation" has led to a breakdown in the chain of command and compromised security -- all at the very heart of the United States' war against terrorism.

According to the report, and the personal accounts it included, the behavior was not consensual. POGO said that guards claim the supervisors are hazing and pressuring other guards to participate, creating a "climate of fear and coercion." Those who do not participate are ridiculed, demoted or even fired.

"The result is an environment that is dangerous and volatile," the report said. "Some guards have reported barricading themselves in their rooms for fear that those carrying out the hazing will harm them physically.

A “Lord of the Flies” Environment

Alternatives to Hazing and Planning Purposeful Activities

- Organize new and old members to complete a community service project together.
- Participate in a ropes course to build group unity.
- Attend or participate in an athletic event as an organization.
- Encourage everyone to join another campus or community organization.
- Assign new members to committees.
- Develop a peer mentor program.
- Invite speakers to talk about campus, business, or community aspects of life.
- Plan social exchanges with other organizations.
- Organize movie nights.
- Pass the Gavel — allow each member time to reflect on what the organization means to him/her.
- Designate study hours for all members.
- Attend a presentation on study skills or test-taking tips.
- Invite distinguished members and alumni to reflect on values and the founding heritage.
- Offer workshops on résumé writing, dressing for success, and interview skills.
- Conduct fundraisers for the community.
- Organize new members to interview initiated members.
- Plan meal exchanges.
- Hold new-member retreats.
- Teach the organization's history.

http://www.purdue.edu/hazing/how_to_stop.shtml
Role of Big Brothers/Big Sisters

A Big Brother/Sister should:
✓ Be in good standing with the chapter (have a zero account balance)
✓ Be at or above the all men’s/women’s average
✓ Serve as a positive role model for their Little Brother/Sister
✓ Monitor academic performance
✓ Assist in the Little Brother’s/Sister’s social adjustment
✓ Act as a sounding board when needed
✓ Introduce and explain chapter customs to the Little Brother/Sister
✓ Spend time with their Little Brother/sister at least once a week (this is the absolute minimum)
✓ Help and hold their Little Brother/Sister accountable for completing the requirements of the pledge program

A Little Brother/Sister should:
✓ Meet with their Big Brother/Sister at least once a week
✓ Not select a best friend, but an ideal person to emulate
✓ Demand continual involvement from their Big Brother/Sister
✓ Discuss any difficulties and problems with their Big Brother/Sister
✓ Use their Big Brother/Sister as a link for fraternal, academic and social issues