Changing the Culture of University Hazing
A Review of Hazing Trends and Prevention Strategies

Custom Research Brief

Research Associate
Toni R. Brink

Research Manager
Joe LeMaster
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# Table of Contents

I. Research Methodology .................................................................................................................. 4  
   Project Challenge ...................................................................................................................... 4  
   Project Sources ......................................................................................................................... 4  
   Research Parameters .................................................................................................................. 5  
   Greek Organizations Referenced in this Report ........................................................................... 5  

II. Executive Overview .................................................................................................................... 6  
   Key Observations ....................................................................................................................... 6  

III. Hazing Trends among Student Organizations ............................................................................ 7  
   A Review of Hazing Literature ................................................................................................. 7  
   Hazing Trends among Greek-Letter Organizations ..................................................................... 7  
   Hazing Trends among Athletic Teams ....................................................................................... 8  

IV. Strategies for Preventing and Responding to Hazing ................................................................. 8  
   A Comprehensive Approach to Hazing Prevention ..................................................................... 8  

V. Procedures, Adjudication, and Incident Information Sharing ..................................................... 11  
   Hazing Incident Reporting ....................................................................................................... 11  
   Collaboration across Multiple Units ......................................................................................... 12  

VI. The Role of Alcohol in Hazing ................................................................................................ 13  
   Targeting Alcohol to Target Hazing ....................................................................................... 14  
   Cultural Elements of Alcohol and Hazing ................................................................................ 14
I. Research Methodology

Project Challenge  Leadership at a member institution approached the Council with the following questions:

- Promoting Cultural Change: How have institutions responded to hazing cases over the past decade? Which methods have proven most effective? Which methods have proven unsuccessful? How have institutions promoted and facilitated a change in campus culture in terms of sentiment towards hazing? How do institutions promote cultural change outside of Greek organizations (e.g., ROTC, band, athletics)?

- Procedures, Information Sharing, and Adjudication: What procedures do peer institutions follow when responding to a hazing incident? Who is involved in investigating and adjudicating hazing cases? How are investigations coordinated across multiple offices? How is information on hazing cases leveraged after adjudication (e.g., a public database listing organizations found responsible in hazing cases, reports for administrators and other stakeholders)? Do peer institutions use anonymous reporting systems? Are anonymous reporting systems effective?

- The Role of Alcohol in Hazing: To what extent does alcohol play a role in hazing? If there is an increase in non-alcohol related hazing, how are peer institutions responding?

Project Sources

- Education Advisory Board’s internal and online (http://www.educationadvisoryboard.com) research libraries
- National Center for Education Statistics (http://nces.ed.gov)
The Council interviewed student affairs administrators at large, public universities:

## A Guide to the Institutions Profiled in this Brief

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<tr>
<th>Institution</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Approximate Enrollment (Total)</th>
<th>Classification</th>
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Source: National Center for Education Statistics

Greek life is divided into four primary coordinating bodies: National Pan-Hellenic Council (NPHC), National Pan-Hellenic Conference (NPC), Interfraternity Council (IFC), and National Multicultural Greek Council (NMGC).

- National Pan-Hellenic Council (NPHC) –Coordinating body for nine historically African-American fraternities and sororities.
- National Pan-Hellenic Conference (NPC) –Coordinating body for 26 national and international women’s fraternities and sororities.
- National Interfraternity Council (IFC) –Coordinating body for 75 national and international men’s fraternities.
- National Multicultural Greek Council (NMGC) –Coordinating body for 11 multicultural and multiethnic fraternities and sororities.
II. Executive Overview

Key Observations

Contacts agree that there are significant differences in how university administrators and students define hazing. Although administrators outline hazing definitions and penalties, students overall do not agree with the activities that administrators define as hazing. For example, although activities such as scavenger hunts or drinking games fall constitute hazing, students consider them minor offenses and are surprised when they invoke hazing penalties.

Although contacts report different hazing cultures among Greek-letter organizations, most conduct primarily alcohol-based hazing. The majority of Greek-letter organizations consist of Interfraternity Council (IFC) Greeks, and hazing within this group typically involves alcohol and drinking games. Contacts report National Multicultural Greek Council (NMGC) organizations are less prone to hazing; however, some contacts experience resistance from regional and national leadership which supports certain hazing activities (e.g., shaving the heads of new male members). Although alcohol is not a prevalent feature of National Pan-Hellenic Council (NPHC) organizational culture, contacts caution that physical hazing is common among this group.

Strategies for hazing prevention include encouragement of self-reporting among student organizations, clear communication of institutional expectations related to hazing, collaboration with student leaders to develop alternatives to hazing, and training to help staff and parents recognize warning signs associated with hazing.

Parents are involved in hazing prevention, although some may continue to promote the hazing traditions. Contacts report that parental involvement has increased recently and observe parents frequently communicating with students through daily text communication, telephone calls, and e-mail. Some student affairs administrators capitalize on this trend and invite parents to contribute to hazing prevention. Administrators target parents with mailings and brochures notifying them of the warning signs of hazing and hold parent-only briefings about hazing during new student orientation; however, some contacts caution that some parents are alumni of organizations that haze and support hazing.

Administrators report that student affairs and athletics departments work separately to address hazing on campus at all but one contact institution. Most student affairs administrators are not aware of the nature or frequency of anti-hazing programming within athletics departments.

Some contacts provide training to staff members and encourage a proactive approach to addressing hazing from staff members (e.g., requiring all staff to report hazing). Staff are trained to recognize and identify warning signs of hazing, follow the proper procedures for reporting an incident, and to consistently enforce anti-hazing policies.
III. Hazing Trends among Student Organizations

A Review of Hazing Literature

Student Attitudes Indicate Tolerance for Hazing

Particularly in recent years, hazing has gained much attention from leading academics as well as popular press. In 2008, Dr. Elizabeth Allan and Dr. Mary Madden compiled a comprehensive study on hazing, “Hazing in View: College Students at Risk.” This study highlights national trends in hazing behaviors and attitudes. Key findings of this report include:

- Although 55 percent of university students involved in extracurricular activities (e.g., clubs, organizations, and teams) experience hazing, 95 percent do not report the hazing experience to campus officials.
- 47 percent of students experience hazing behavior before college.
- 9 out of 10 students who have experienced hazing behavior do not consider it as such.¹

A Comprehensive Definition of Hazing

“Any activity expected of someone joining or participating in a group that humiliates, degrades, abuses, or endangers them regardless of a person’s willingness to participate.”

Dr. Elizabeth Allan and Dr. Mary Madden, “Hazing in View: College Students at Risk”

Hazing Trends among Greek-Letter Organizations

Common Types of Hazing Differ by Greek Organization

Contacts from seven profiled institutions list servitude (e.g. running errands or custodial work), sleep deprivation, and alcohol-related incidents as the most common types of hazing at their institutions. Outlined below is a collection of Greek hazing trends by coordinating body affiliation as described by contacts:

- National Pan-Hellenic Council (NPHC)
- National Pan-Hellenic Conference (NPC)

Contacts report that alcohol is not a significant factor in hazing within NPHC organizations. Hazing tends to be physical in nature, and may consist of mandatory step routines or physical beatings. Contacts further observe that students in these organizations are less likely to report hazing due to a greater organizational emphasis on secrecy.

Contacts describe hazing within NPC as psychological in nature. At University C, for example, contacts describe incidents in which sorority sisters assume control over each others’ personal lives and insist that members may only date fellow Greeks. In some cases, sorority sisters discourage serious romantic relationships altogether in favor of a more promiscuous lifestyle.

Hazing Trends among Athletic Teams

Hazing is Most Prevalent among Varsity Athletes

- **Intramural and Club Sports**: Allen and Madden’s comprehensive study on hazing reports that hazing among intramural and club sports are largely alcohol-related, with 28 percent of intramural hazing incidents and 42 percent of club sport hazing incidents involving drinking games.¹

- **Varsity Athletics**: Allen and Madden also report that varsity athletes experience hazing in frequencies similar to Greek organizations, with 74 percent of varsity athletes and 73 percent of Greeks reporting hazing activity during their college career. Within varsity athletics, 47 percent of hazing incidents involve participation in a drinking game, followed by 27 percent involving singing or chanting alone, and 24 percent involving drinking large amounts of a non-alcoholic beverage.²

IV. Strategies for Preventing and Responding to Hazing

A Comprehensive Approach to Hazing Prevention

Institutions employ a comprehensive strategy for changing the culture of hazing rather than a single approach. Contacts further caution that with any method, change can be slow.

“Hazing is so steeped in tradition, and the process of changing this culture feels like moving a glacier. It is so incremental that you do not always feel it, but slowly I believe that we are chipping away at that glacier.”

-Council Interview

Encourage Self-Reporting

Contacts at University B, University D, and University G implemented a self-reporting system through which student leaders can come forward about hazing practices without fear of penalty. At University D and University G, this process prompts a dialogue about changing the culture of hazing within these organizations. University administrators and organization leaders work together to develop new activities that help new members meet the development objectives of the organization without the risks and consequences of hazing. At University B, the system allows organization leaders to change hazing behaviors internally, without the risk of immediate suspension, which is a possible penalty if hazing is not self-reported.

Determine Underlying Goals of Hazing Behavior and Suggest Alternatives

Contacts engage in discussions with students to determine the underlying goals of hazing. For example, proponents of hazing argue that hazing activities help develop a sense of camaraderie among new members. Administrators therefore seek to identify alternatives to hazing that will build that same sense of camaraderie. Contacts at University G ask organization leaders the meaning of membership in their group as well as the goals of the new member hazing process. Once students and administrators clearly understand the purpose behind the hazing behavior (e.g., team building), they work together to develop a new member program that addresses these goals in a safer way.

Engage Parents

Contacts describe a shift in parent-student relationships in recent years; students now communicate with parents daily through text messaging, the internet, and phone calls. University D distributes hazing prevention materials directly to parents in response to this increased communication and invites parents to participate in preventing and indentifying hazing on their campus. For example, parents are now more aware of warning signs of hazing, as well the procedures for reporting them; they therefore report suspicious behavior, such as painting shoes for pledging activities, to university administrators. Administrators at University G also engage parents through presentations and developed a parent page on the university website; but they also caution that not all parents are willing to fight hazing, especially if parents were members of the same organization and participated in hazing activities themselves.

Clearly Communicate Institutional Expectations and Respond Consistently

Administrators at University E observe an improvement in campus conduct overall since forming a campus behavior team. Composed of student affairs administrators, the athletics director, and police chief, the team clearly communicates campus expectations and ensures consistent enforcement of campus policies. Contacts at University C report that although their students understand the rules about hazing, some are still surprised when the rules are enforced. Administrators at University G responded to a serious hazing incident with the oldest fraternity on campus by closing the chapter, which sent a clear message to the campus community about the university’s position on hazing. Since the chapter closing, campus administrators have seized the opportunity to initiate dialogue with students and alumni about hazing.

Examples of Hazing-Free Team Building Activities

- Low ropes courses
- Community engagement activities

The campus behavior team at University E meets weekly to discuss a variety of student conduct concerns, including hazing.
**Educate New Student Organization Members**

Most universities require new and potential members of campus organizations to attend extended anti-hazing information sessions. At University F, Greek pledges attend a one-time non-credit course facilitated by the Dean of Students Office—during which students are reminded of university expectations and policies regarding hazing. University B offers a weekly program, during which the Dean of Students supplements new member education through a speaker series addressing topics including hazing, alcohol abuse, and risk management.

**Develop Student Leaders to Challenge Hazing**

Contacts believe that student leaders must be fully engaged in changing the culture of hazing, and some expect that with more engaged and educated leadership, organizations will evolve away from hazing. University A offers special programming, such as leadership development seminars, anti-hazing seminars, and retreats, for organization leaders; hazing prevention is one of many goals of these programs.

**Train University Staff in Hazing Prevention and Intervention**

Administrators at University C recently revised their hazing prevention policy to require staff members to report hazing. University staff members are also trained to identify warning signs of hazing and how to respond. University E engages campus staff in hazing prevention through increased training focused on teaching the warning signs of hazing and reporting procedures. There are also penalties for staff members who selectively enforce campus regulations. For example, two Resident Assistants at University E were terminated for failing to report hazing incidents.

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**Real Greek – Fake Greek Continuum at University A**

Contacts at University A developed a continuum, which they call the “Real Greek – Fake Greek Continuum,” through which they illustrate the relationships between certain activities and organization goals. Administrators monitor Greek organizations for warning signs that they are falling out of line with university policies and with organizational goals. Administrators look for trends in chapter grade point averages (GPA), levels of community involvement, as well as prevalence of hazing. If administrators notice a negative trend in any of the aforementioned behaviors, they intervene in the chapter and help organization leaders develop strategies for moving the chapter in a positive direction—towards becoming “Real Greeks.”
V. Procedures, Adjudication, and Incident Information Sharing

Hazing Incident Reporting

Hazing incident reporting occurs in three phases: reporting, investigation, and adjudication.

Contact Institutions Offer both Anonymous and Self-Identifiable Methods for Reporting Hazing

Most contact institutions maintain a hazing hotline or a webpage that delivers reports to the Dean of Students Office or the student conduct office. Although all contact institutions allow anonymous reporting, contacts at University E note that the majority of students choose to self-identify. At University E, campus police also receive reports and deliver them to the office of student conduct. Administrators at University G report that students rarely use the hazing hotline, and they are therefore converting to a web-based only system. Contacts also explain the importance of clearly communicating with students about the reporting process, as administrators at University E found that there was a fear among the student body that hazing reports were communicated directly to organization presidents.

Administrators Respond by First Determining Validity and Urgency

Once administrators receive a hazing incident report they assess its validity and whether or not it is an emergency (i.e., if the incident is in progress and if student safety is at risk); contacts look for specific details in the report, such as names and approximate times. When assessing whether or not a report is urgent, contacts consider student safety; if a student reports a current or ongoing incident, contacts intervene immediately. Contacts further describe difficulty responding to a hazing incident if the report is anonymous and lacks sufficient detail.

Organizations May Face Interim Probation during a Hazing Investigation

Administrators at University E prioritize student safety over organization activities in deciding whether or not to temporarily suspend organizations during investigations. If a hazing incident involves potential or real harm to a student, the organization is immediately placed on interim probation. Organizations on probation halt all new member activities until the hazing incident is either dismissed or adjudicated. Interim probation is also employed at University B and University G.

National Headquarters Cooperate with Administrators in Investigations

The dean of students office or the student conduct office oversees hazing investigations at contact institutions. Investigation procedures include:

- Discussing the allegations with the incident reporter (unless anonymous)
- Discussing allegations with organization leadership (i.e., the chapter president)
- Contacting the organization’s national representative (if applicable)
If the organization has a national representative, administrators alert them to the ongoing investigation. Contacts at University G describe three probable responses from the organization’s national headquarters, but most contacts agree that national headquarters representatives are usually very cooperative with universities.

1. Nationals partner with the university through the investigation and send additional investigators to assist university staff.
2. Nationals choose to conduct their own simultaneous investigation.
3. Nationals take no action.

If administrators uncover sufficient evidence to support hazing allegations, adjudications begin against the individuals involved and, in some cases, the organization. Administrators at University E invite accused students to a preliminary disciplinary conference during which staff present students with charges and proposed sanctions. Students may either agree with the charges and consequences as proposed or request a hearing.

Sanctions for Hazing Vary Based on Severity and Frequency

If administrators determine the validity of the hazing incident, both students and the organization are held responsible. Contacts report that individual and organization sanctions vary and that each incident is considered on a case-by-case basis. Sanctions can include: a warning, probation, suspension, or expulsion—for both organizations and individuals. Contacts at University G consider contextual issues when determining punitive action. Sanction considerations for individuals and organizations include:

- **History of Offense:** If a student or organization is repeatedly involved in hazing, even minor hazing, they are more likely to face harsher penalties with each offense.
- **Severity of Offense:** Student health and safety is a serious concern, and hazing incidents that violate either tend to incur steeper penalties.

Administrators Share Hazing Incident Information as Necessary

- **Past Hazing Information:** Administrators report that information regarding past hazing incidents is stored at either the dean of students office or the campus conduct office. Information about past incidents is not available to students due to privacy concerns for all students involved in the hazing incident. Contacts agree, however, that there is common knowledge among students and administrators about which organizations have been involved in hazing in the past, and administrators encourage students to be mindful of these reputations when selecting organizations to join.

- **Current Hazing Information:** University E recently developed a cross-campus committee charged with facilitating better communication regarding student conduct. Through this system, students and staff can report hazing to a) the office of student conduct, b) campus police, or c) the athletics department, and all reports are routed to the same committee.
Most Student Affairs Administrators Do Not Collaborate with Athletics Departments for Hazing Prevention

Contacts admit that it is difficult for student affairs administrators to identify hazing trends within athletics teams because athlete-centered hazing incidents are reported and adjudicated within the athletic department. However, there is a growing desire to change this and administrators at University E are making progress through increased collaboration between student affairs and the athletics department. Coaches are invited to work with student affairs officials on campus-wide initiatives, and administrators report increased cooperation and transparency with the athletics department. New administrators helped to ease tensions by offering clear policies and consistent enforcement.

“...The athletics department—and I believe this is not any different at any other institution—worries about taking their players off the field... There was a fear of losing players... A fear of the unknown. Now that the coaches understand [student affairs’] stance, which allows for a warning before probation, they are less fearful.”

-Council Interview

VI. The Role of Alcohol in Hazing

Alcohol Remains a Factor in Hazing for Most Organizations

Research authors and contacts consider alcohol a primary contributing factor in hazing, particularly because drinking games are among the most common forms of hazing. According to Allen and Madden’s study, hazing that directly involves alcohol accounts for 38 percent of overall hazing—with 26 percent of hazing consisting of drinking games and 12 percent involving drinking large amounts of alcohol to the point of illness or loss of consciousness.¹

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Alcohol-Related Hazing</th>
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<tr>
<td>38 percent of hazing involves drinking large amounts of alcohol or participating in drinking games.¹</td>
</tr>
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</table>

Frequency of Drinking Games in Hazing

- All groups: 26 percent
- Male students: 31 percent
- Female students: 23 percent
- Varsity athletics: 47 percent
- Greek-letter organizations: 53 percent
- Club sports: 41 percent
- Intramural sports: 28 percent

Alcohol May Play a Role Even When Hazing is Not Focused on Alcohol

Contacts at University F note that the influence of alcohol might not only make students more likely to haze but also make victims more susceptible to other types of hazing, such as chants, verbal abuse, or sleep deprivation. Other contacts agree that overall, alcohol significantly contributes to hazing.

Targeting Alcohol to Target Hazing

Administrators Target Alcohol Abuse as Part of the Campaign against Hazing

Contacts experience a dual challenge in addressing alcohol issues and hazing, explaining that, although they correlate, they are not exactly the same issue. University B targets alcohol abuse as a central component of the campaign against hazing through partnerships with sororities—who pledge not to attend fraternity parties where hard liquor is served—to which the contact credits a decrease in alcohol-related incidents on campus. Realizing that alcohol is still an issue, contacts at University B developed a medical amnesty program through which students who help other students obtain emergency medical care are not punished if they are also participating in underage drinking. Removing the fear of punitive action allows students to receive medical attention when necessary.

Cultural Elements of Alcohol and Hazing

Contacts Describe Different Relationships with Alcohol across Greek-Letter Organizations

Contacts report that alcohol is less of a factor in National Pan-Hellenic Council organizations’ (NPHC) hazing than in other Greek-letter organizations. University D attributes this notable difference to general cultural differences across organizations. Contacts at University G witness an increase in non-alcohol related hazing within NPHC organizations, noting that hazing within this group is more physical and more secretive than with other Greek-letter organizations. Contacts further note a view among this group that a member can join an organization “on paper” but must be “made” into a true member through hazing activities.