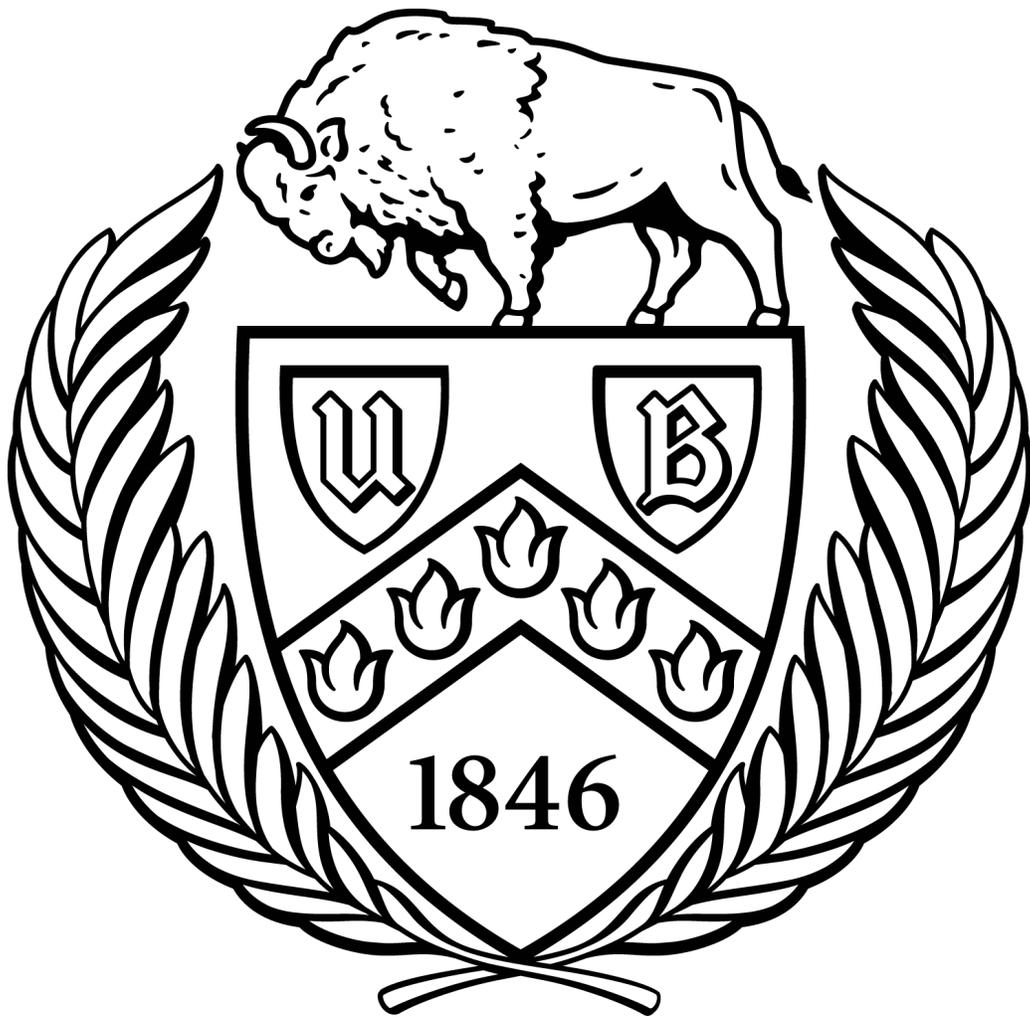




Greek Life Review Committee Report



University at Buffalo

August 2019

Executive Summary

Hazing is a stubborn and ingrained problem across student groups (e.g., Greek life, athletics, honor societies) and at universities. No series of recommendations, education, or programming can eliminate the risk of hazing entirely, but this report emphasizes the measures we can try to take to reduce incidents of hazing and promote students making good choices.

Recognizing the fact that hazing is not unique to the University at Buffalo (UB), we examined hazing and Greek life from a national perspective in order to identify recommended practices that seemed to serve as deterrents and as “best practices” that fit into a UB context in order to reduce incidents of hazing. These include the following broad categories:

I. University Oversight

- a) Expand the Office of Fraternity and Sorority Life in order to have the capacity to oversee all aspects of Greek-letter, social, fraternal organizations in order to ensure greater accountability.

II. Greek Organizational Accountability

- b) From our examination of current practices, we observed that there is room to grow for our Greek-letter, social, fraternal organizations in terms of their positive contributions to the campus culture. We believe that the leadership of these groups, as well as all members, must recognize their role in helping to foster a safe and social campus experience for all students. We provide a set of recommendations that require measures of accountability. We also ask the leadership of these organizations to take a more visible role in validating the importance of accountability and responsibility.

c) Combatting Banned/unrecognized Organizations

There is an opportunity for the University and Greek-letter, social, fraternal organizations to forge productive partnerships in ensuring a healthy and vibrant campus culture. However, the continued existence of unrecognized/banned groups poses a threat to the campus. We recommend, as part of this notion of

shared responsibility outlined above, the development of multiple systematic means to minimize the existence and impact of these groups.

This committee believes that Greek-letter, social, fraternal organizations have a place on UB's campus. In order to ensure that these organizations are contributing, productive members of UB's community and adhere to UB's core beliefs in the inherent dignity of all of its members, the committee offers the following recommendations for consideration for implementation:

I. Introduction

In April, 2019, with the tragic injury and subsequent death of Sebastian Serafin-Bazan from a possible hazing incident, President Tripathi immediately suspended official activities¹ of all Greek-letter, social, fraternal organizations. Since this time, these organization have been prohibited from recruiting and engaging in new member education activities; participating in University-related events on or off campus as a fraternity or sorority; and conducting meetings regarding fraternity or sorority functions or activities.

At the time President Tripathi suspended all official activities of Greek-letter, social, fraternal organizations, he also reiterated that, “As a university community, we are committed to providing a safe educational environment for our students.”² With that, the president announced that the university would perform an internal review of Greek-letter, social, fraternal organizations through the examination of policies and structures to better understand and to deter the culture and conduct that may have led to this tragic event.

Background

Greek-letter, social, fraternal organizations have existed at UB for many years. On many of the nation's college campuses, including at UB, students engage in continuing episodes of hazing often associated with Greek Life, despite the university’s zero tolerance policy toward hazing and university-wide efforts to educate and eliminate this behavior.

UB’s Student Code of Conduct defines hazing as, “Any act which endangers the mental or physical health or safety of a student, including, but not limited to, making physical contact with or requiring physical activity of such student, or which destroys or removes public or private

¹ Statement from President Tripathi. (April 12, 2019). <http://www.buffalo.edu/president/from-the-president/communications/statement-from-president-tripathi.html>

² Same as above.

property, for the purpose of initiation, admission into, affiliation with, or as a condition for continued membership in, a group or organization³.”

University policy also prohibits, “Attempting to flee or unlawfully leaving the area of an accident, crime, a University violation (and/or areas of potential accidents, crimes, or violations), or avoiding being apprehended or questioning the University or other law enforcement agencies.⁴”

Pursuant to UB’s Student Code of Conduct, *“University disciplinary processes take appropriate action when student conduct directly and/or significantly interferes with the University’s primary educational responsibility of ensuring all members of its community the opportunity to attain their educational objectives in consonance with the institution’s mandate. These regulations governing student behavior have been formulated to be reasonable and realistic for all students.”*

At UB, we have historically employed a comprehensive educational strategy to educate our students on acceptable student conduct with an emphasis on our zero tolerance policy toward hazing. While the university has policies and educational programs to deter these types of misconduct, there is genuine concern that such policies and/or programs have not entirely eradicated conduct that puts students in harm’s way or may lead to tragic outcomes.

Greek Life Committee Charge

President Tripathi charged Vice President A. Scott Weber with facilitating this internal review starting with convening the Greek Life Review Committee. Suzanne Rosenblith, Dean of the Graduate School of Education, was invited by the president to chair the committee.

³ Student Code of Conduct: University Standards and Administrative Regulations (2018-2019). General Rules of Conduct #19 Hazing. <https://www.buffalo.edu/content/dam/www/studentlife/units/uls/student-conduct/ub-student-code-of-conduct.pdf>

⁴ Student Code of Conduct: University Standards and Administrative Regulations (2018-2019). General Rules of Conduct #24 Leaving the Scene. <https://www.buffalo.edu/content/dam/www/studentlife/units/uls/student-conduct/ub-student-code-of-conduct.pdf>

Broadly speaking, the committee was charged with examining policies and structures with the goal of deterring the culture and conduct that leads to hazing. In more specific terms, the committee's charge was to:

- Review current University-wide educational strategies, programs and policies associated with UB's zero tolerance of hazing.
- Review current conduct, health and safety programs including anti-hazing and Good Samaritan policies for all UB recognized Greek-letter, social, fraternal organizations.
- Review the culture of Greek Life at UB more generally and assess their current status in contributing to the University's values.
- Review nationally-lauded fraternal social organizations' best practices.

The president asked the committee for its recommendations by the start of the fall 2019 semester.

Committee Membership

Dr. Suzanne Rosenblith, Dean, Graduate School of Education, Committee Chair

Mr. Mark Alnutt, Director of Athletics

Ms. Brielle Anderson, Graduate Student, Chair of Panhellenic Council

Mr. Chris Bartolomei, Chief of Police, University Police Dept.

Mr. Lincoln Backman-Lowe, Student – President of InterGreek Council

Dr. Anne Curtis, Professor, Jacobs School of Medicine and Biomedical Sciences

Dr. David Dietz, Professor, Pharmacology and Toxicology

Dr. Bonita Durand, Greek Life Advisor

Dr. Mark Frank, Professor, Communication Professor. Jim Gardner, Professor, School of Law

Mr. Lee Melvin, Vice Provost for Enrollment Management

Dr. Amanda Nickerson, Professor, Graduate School of Education

Ms. Sharon Nolan Weiss, Director, Equity Diversity and Inclusion

Ms. Barbara Ricotta, Dean of Students, Student Life

Mr. Eric Rooney, Student, Undergraduate Student Association Chief of Staff

Ms. Pamela Stephens-Jackson, Assistant Director Student Engagement

II. Methodology and Literature Review

Research Areas/Subcommittees

Initially, three subcommittees were formed from the larger committee to review policies and programs, UB Greek life, and national best practices.

Subcommittee on Polices and Programs. This subcommittee was charged with reviewing current university-wide educational strategies, programs and polices associated with UB's zero tolerance policy on hazing.

The subcommittee also reviewed current conduct, health and safety programs—including anti-hazing and Good Samaritan policies—for all UB-recognized Greek-letter, social, fraternal organizations

Subcommittee on UB Greek Life. The subcommittee reviewed the structure of Greek Life including governance, organization, programs, and chapter affiliations.

The subcommittee also examined the benefits that Greek Life provides to students and the campus community.

Subcommittee on national best practices. The subcommittee reviewed and examined national best practices of Greek-letter, fraternal, social, organizations including university reports from Pennsylvania State University, University of Missouri, Louisiana State University, and Florida State University.⁵

⁵ Pennsylvania State University, "New Measures" <https://pennstateupdate.psu.edu/jan-9-2018-updated-graphic-of-new-measures/>, Florida State University, "Moving Forward Together: The Future of Fraternity and Sorority Life at FSU" https://ofsl.union.fsu.edu/sites/g/files/upcbnu1526/files/media/documents/FSU-Moving-Forward-Together_Web.pdf, Louisiana State University, "President's Task Force on Greek Life" <https://www.lsu.edu/greek-life-taskforce/>, University of Missouri "Mizzou Fraternity and Sorority Advisory Board Report" <https://studentaffairs.missouri.edu/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/Mizzou-Fraternity-Sorority-Advisory-Board-Report.pdf>

The subcommittee also examined the characteristics of exemplar Greek-letter, social, fraternal organizations.

III. Findings

Many of the recommendations below have already been adopted by other universities (Florida State University, University of Missouri, Pennsylvania State University, and Louisiana State University) following incidents on their campuses. While many of these recommendations are ones we endorse for UB, there are two circumstances that make adherence to the policies recommended below more challenging. The first is the distributed nature of UB's Greek-letter, social, fraternal organizations. Unlike our peers, UB does not have dedicated Greek housing, and members of Greek-letter, social, fraternal organizations live off-campus, sometimes with non-members or former members. It is therefore challenging to monitor or control Greek events, or even to determine whether a party or other event is connected to a Greek-letter, social, fraternal organization. In addition, UB's particular context of having a host of "unrecognized" Greek-letter, social, fraternal organizations content with maintaining this status informs the recommendations set forth below. To that end, the committee felt it was important that UB develop positive incentives to motivate more Greek-letter, social, fraternal organizations to seek recognition and to disincentivize maintaining unrecognized status.

IV. Recommendations

A. Overall/General Recommendations:

1. The Vice President for Student Life establish an implementation team comprised of faculty, staff, and students (particularly those impacted by the recommendations). The committee felt strongly that there needed to be a representative group, especially from Greek-letter, social, fraternal organizational leadership involved with the implementation.

2. Empower the leadership of the Inter-Greek Council, which includes: the Inter-Fraternity Council (NIC), the National Pan-Hellenic Council (NPHC), the UB Panhellenic Council (NPC), and the United Council of Cultural Fraternities & Sororities (UCCFS) by requiring that a representative from each organization take part in developing and executing all accountability and educational recommendations set forth within this document.
3. After a period of two years of full implementation of recommendations, we suggest that the University conduct an evaluation of the effectiveness of these recommendations as deterrents to hazing.
4. After a period of two years of full implementation of recommendations, we recommend that the Office of Greek Life conduct a student satisfaction survey to determine the degree to which these new policies have impacted students' experiences in Greek-letter, social, fraternal organizations.

B. Specific Recommendations

Public Accountability

Recommendation 1:

- Develop an annual fraternity and sorority scorecard for the purpose of providing basic information of public interest that showcases the strength of Greek-letter, social, fraternal organizations at UB.

Implementation guidance: Many universities are adopting the scorecard model. There are a variety of data points that others include in their scorecard. Please see Appendix 1 for scorecard data points.

Internal Accountability: University Policies

The following recommendations were drafted to strengthen and clarify existing University policies in order to ensure consistent accountability.

Recommendation 2:

- Develop a consistent, specific, and operational definition of hazing. The definition should be comprehensive, targeting both physically dangerous activities, psychologically harmful/humiliating activities, and other activities that endanger the safety or welfare of students (ex. activities requiring shoplifting). The definition should exclude activities that are harmless in and of themselves (ex. treasure hunts). The definition should also include sleep deprivation, and excessive exercising (please see Appendix 2 to review examples of definitions the committee endorses).

Recommendation 3:

- Expand the University's current Good Samaritan policy to apply beyond drug and alcohol use, and to encompass good faith reporting of hazing.

Implementation guidance: The state of Florida recently enacted an antihazing law which explicitly extends the Good Samaritan policy to hazing. A recent article on the legislation can be found in Appendix 3.

Current University Processes

Recommendation 4:

While it continues to be a challenge to provide oversight of Greek-letter, social, fraternal organization social events that occur in private homes off-campus, for the safety of all members, we recommend that the University develop a coherent policy regarding off-campus housing that will enable University officials to better ensure the safety of students living in these environments.

- Each Greek-letter, social, fraternal organization will be required to submit, to the Office Fraternity and Sorority Life on an annual basis, a roster with current local addresses of all members and pledges, and keep this list up to date.

Recommendation 5:

- Expand the Office of Fraternity and Sorority Life in order to have the capacity to oversee all aspects of Greek-letter, social, fraternal organizations to ensure greater accountability. (Please see Appendix 4 for more details)
- Given the number of recommendations and the changes in accountability and enrichment opportunities, we recommend that the requirement that Greek-letter, social, fraternal organizations have a faculty/staff advisor be re-instituted for a period of 2 years.

Implementation Guidance: While the committee identified several places where the faculty/staff advisor role would be beneficial, we believe the precise details of the advisor responsibilities should be jointly developed by the implementation committee.

Recommendation 6:

It is not uncommon for universities to levy a small fee on Greek-letter, social, fraternal organization members to provide centralized services and programming. These fees would be applied to programs and services that provide a direct benefit to these organizations.

- All members of Greek life organizations will pay a programming fee of \$25/semester. There will be a waiver option for students who have financial hardships.
 - Following the example of Binghamton University, the programming fee could be used for the following activities:
 - Chapter grants
 - General Greek marketing
 - Retreats, conferences, workshops
 - Awards and recognition

Combatting Banned/Unrecognized Organizations

It was brought to the attention of the committee that recruitment by banned/unrecognized organizations sometimes occurs prior to new students' arrival on campus within high school settings. We therefore felt it was important to try to cut off or at least significantly impact these efforts prior to students arrival at UB.

Recommendation 7:

- Identify existing pipelines to high schools and actively collaborate with school districts to provide information to students and parents before UB orientations that educate them on the distinctions between recognized and banned/unrecognized organizations.
 - On an annual basis, send an electronic postcard to all accepted students highlighting/emphasizing Greek-letter, social, fraternal organizations. On the card would be a link to the website with that contains the scorecard data.
- Rename these entities to emphasize their illegitimacy as “banned/unrecognized”

Greek Organization Accountability

We believe providing signed documentation, on matters related to compliance, on an annual basis will provide the University with additional mechanisms for more oversight of individual Greek-letter, social, fraternal organizations.

Recommendation 8:

- Enhance Greek-letter, social, fraternal organization accountability by:
 - Requiring each Greek-letter, social, fraternal organization to have its members sign a “membership contract” annually. This contract should, at a minimum, include a code of conduct, explicit agreement to comply with all University and chapter policies, other behavioral expectations, and consequences for related infractions. A copy of each chapter's contract should be on file in the Office of Greek Life.

- Require each Greek-letter, social, fraternal organization to develop a comprehensive program for chapter and member accountability and reporting, which will include appropriate oversight by the University and chapter executive boards.
- Require all Greek-letter, social, fraternal organizations to have a “drug-free” policy for chapter events (with enforcement mechanisms and consequences for non-compliance) and have all primary officers certify with the University annually that they follow their policy. The policy will encompass both illegal drugs and the abuse of prescription medication (ex. Fentanyl, Oxycodone, Adderall).
- All Greek-letter, social, fraternal organizations advisors will participate in and complete compliance workshops annually.

New Member Recruitment

In order to ensure that all students have the opportunity to acclimate to University life, we recommend a policy that defers new member education/intake from a student’s first semester of University experience.

Recommendation 9:

- The University should create more oversight of new member recruitment beginning with a clear statement that limits eligibility for recruitment to only those students who have earned a minimum of 12 credit hours⁶ as a fully matriculated student at UB or another college or University with a minimum GPA of 2.5.
- In addition to tightening the eligibility requirement, the following may be considered for inclusion in greater oversight:

⁶ Students with a reduced courseload based on disability, and who have had the opportunity to acclimate to University life, may petition for eligibility to the Office of Greek Life.

- Require each Greek-letter, social, fraternal organization to have a written new member education plan (including specific activities planned, intended outcomes, and schedule/program length) and for those plans to be certified by the chapter president, new member education director, and faculty/staff advisor annually.
- Require annual submission of new member education plans to the Office of Fraternity and Sorority Life for review and approval.
- Require all new member recruitment, education, and related activities to be drug and alcohol-free.
- Require chapters to limit new member education programs (“pledge periods”) to a maximum of six weeks. Further, no new member education activities should occur during final examination periods.
- We recommend that the Office of Fraternity and Sorority Life create a template new member education plan that includes tabs for all required components.
 - Recommended mandatory components of new member education plans:
 - Specific activities planned
 - Prosocial activities planned (e.g. community outreach)
 - Intended outcomes
 - Schedule and program length
 - Signed compliance forms:
 - Hazing policy
 - Drug and alcohol-free policy
- All students interested in joining a fraternity or a sorority must complete the Fraternity and Sorority Life orientation program prior to any recruitment/intake processes to ensure all potential members understand expectations. The agenda for this program should be designed collaboratively between Greek-letter, social,

fraternal organization student leadership and University personnel. The themes the committee recommends for the orientation can be found in Appendix 5.

- New member orientation should be conducted at the earliest possible time in the academic year. If possible, we recommend that it occur annually during welcome week.

Educational Activities

The committee strongly recommends that all Greek-letter, social, fraternal organizations engage in robust, meaningful, and regular educational and training opportunities.

Recommendation 10:

- The Office of Fraternity and Sorority Life will regularly review current annual training and education requirements for Greek chapter members to ensure relevance, effectiveness, and balance among critical focus areas (e.g. alcohol/drug use, hazing, sexual misconduct, student conduct violations, bystander training, new member education). Planning for these educational activities and ensuring meaningful participation in these planned activities will be the joint responsibility of Greek-letter, social, fraternal organization student leadership as well as the Office of Fraternity and Sorority Life.

Social Activity Policy

Recommendation 11:

- Require Greek-letter, social, fraternal organization chapter presidents and faculty/staff advisors to sign a pledge annually that: (1) all on-campus social events will be registered and conducted according to applicable University and chapter policies; and (2) acknowledgement that the University code of conduct applies to all on and off-campus activities.

National Connections

As focus on Greek-letter, social, fraternal organization and hazing is heightened nationally, UB should be included in these national conversations.

Recommendation 12:

- UB should maintain an active membership, presence, and involvement with the following organizations/initiatives such as:
 - Association of Fraternity and Sorority Advisors
 - Join collective action efforts (e.g. Penn State-APLU)
 - Affiliate (if possible) with new National Center (Piazza) at PSU

Prosocial Efforts

UB's active banned/unrecognized Greek-letter, social, fraternal organizations are threats to the host of accountability measures outlined in this document. We believe one of the strongest counters to a thriving underworld of Greek-letter, social, fraternal organization, is for the University to implement prosocial rewards and incentives for students and chapters engaging in official Greek organizational life. To that end, we recommend that the reward and incentive structure outlined below be the responsibility of the Vice President for Student Life, thereby carrying the degree of gravitas necessary for it to serve its purpose.

Recommendation 13:

- The Office of the Vice President for Student Life will establish an annual reward and incentive system that will serve to celebrate and recognize meaningful and outstanding contributions from individuals and Greek-letter, social, fraternal organizations. While this system could be exclusive to Greek-letter, social, fraternal organizations, it might also be considered as part of a larger University effort to recognize student contributions through student life.

Moving Forward

Recommendation 14:

- The committee recommends lifting the suspension of Greek Life so organizations can implement programs, training, and other accountability measures. However, we recommend that all recruitment activity remain suspended until educational programming and accountability measures are deemed in compliance by the Office of the Vice President for Student Life.

Conclusion

As stated in the University at Buffalo mission statement, “the University at Buffalo is a diverse, inclusive scholarly community dedicated to bringing the benefits of its research, scholarship and creative activity, and educational excellence to global and local communities in ways that impact and positively change the world...” While this committee applauds and supports this mission, we also recognize that as an institution of higher education, we must also provide for the social needs of students. Greek-letter, social, fraternal organizations are one option for students to realize their social needs. These recommendations are meant to show how Greek life can support the educational mission of the University.

First and foremost, it must be recognized that to reduce and eliminate incidents of hazing will require authentic shared responsibility. Students, individually and collectively, must take responsibility for their behavior and recognize that every student deserves to be treated with dignity. At the same time, this document also emphasizes ways in which it can legislate, through policy, new measures of compliance.

Appendix 1

Scorecard Data Points

- Total number of members
- Cumulative chapter GPA
- Alcohol and hazing violations
- Summarized results from the annual Greek assessment process
- Member roster
- Member demographics
- Chapter location(s)
- Rolling five-year history of adjudicated chapter disciplinary matters (eg, violations, probation, suspension, etc.)
- Chapter philanthropic and community service activities
- Current membership contract
- A history of chapter disciplinary matters
- Average member GPA (updated each semester)
- Chapter size
- Average hours of community service per member
- Average amount of dollars fundraised for charity over the past 5 years
- Organization conduct findings/status of chapter (updated as needed)
- Advisor to member ratio
- Number of advisors trained by the University
- Awards (National, University)
- Chapter highlights/Campus achievements (i.e.: individual accomplishments such as scholarships or campus leadership positions)
- Other metrics and information as appropriate

Appendix 2

Hazing Definitions

1. “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.”⁷
2. "any activity expected of someone joining a group that humiliates, degrades, abuses or endangers, regardless of the person's willingness to participate. This does not include activities such as rookies carrying the balls, team parties with community games, or going out with your teammates, unless an atmosphere of humiliation, degradation, abuse or danger arises.”⁸
3. “any action taken or any situation created intentionally that causes embarrassment, harassment or ridicule and risks emotional and/or physical harm to members of a group or team, whether new or not, regardless of the person’s willingness to participate.”⁹
4. “Any action taken or situation created, intentionally, whether on or off the organization’s premises, to produce mental or physical discomfort, embarrassment, harassment, ridicule or impairment of academic efforts regardless of a person’s willingness to participate.”

Such activities may include, but are not limited to, the following:

- use of alcohol or other drugs;
- lineups for the purpose of demeaning, degrading or intimidating;
- forced confinement or isolation;
- wearing of public apparel which is conspicuous and not normally in good taste;
- public nudity;
- morally degrading or humiliating games and activities;
- creation of excessive fatigue through any intentional means including sleep deprivation, forced calisthenics or other exercise, or other physical activity;

⁷ University of Maine Hazing in View: Initial Findings from the National Study of Student Hazing (2008).

⁸ Hoover, N.C. (1999). National survey: Initiation rites and athletics for NCAA sports teams, Alfred University.

⁹ Allan, E. & Madden, M. (2012). The nature and extent of college student hazing. *International of Adolescent Medicine and Health*, 24, 83-90. doi: 10.1515/IJAMH.2012.012

- forced consumption of liquid, food, or non-food items;
 - physical assault, including but not limited to paddling, striking, whipping and kicking;
 - branding, cutting, labeling, or shaving parts of the body;
 - compelled sexual activity;
 - forced exposure to heat or cold, or to uncomfortable or dangerous conditions (ex. hosing down with water, waterboarding, burning);
 - physical and psychological shocks;
 - forcing, compelling, or urging acts that violate the law, including but not limited to shoplifting, vandalism, sexual offenses, and harassment of individuals or organizations; and
 - any other activities that would cause a reasonable person to fear for their health or safety, or which are not consistent with fraternal law, ritual or policy, the regulations and policies of the educational institution, or local, state and federal law.”¹⁰
5. “Any action taken or situation created, intentionally, whether on or off the organization’s premises, to produce mental or physical discomfort, danger, embarrassment, fear, intimidation, harassment, ridicule, or impairment of academic efforts regardless of a person’s willingness to participate.”¹¹
6. “Hazing is any activity, required implicitly or explicitly as a condition of initiation or continued membership in an organization. It includes humiliation, degradation, psychological, physical or sexual abuse, and any other form of endangerment that in some way compromises individual dignity regardless of a person’s willingness to participate.”¹²

¹⁰ Hazing Prevention (<https://hazingprevention.org/home/hazing/facts-what-hazing-looks-like/>)

¹¹ Tokar, K. & Stewart, C. (2010). Defining high school hazing: Control through clarity. *The Physical Educator*.

¹² Campo, et al., Prevalence and Profiling: Hazing among College Students and Points of Intervention, *American Journal of Health Behavior* (Mar. 2005).

Appendix 3

Published on *Inside Higher Ed*(<https://www.insidehighered.com>)

[Home](#) > Florida governor signs tough new hazing law

Florida governor signs tough new hazing law

Submitted by Jeremy Bauer-Wolf on July 18, 2019 - 3:00am

Florida's governor has signed one of the country's most intricate antihazing laws, an attempt to stem the sometimes deadly rituals by expanding those who could be criminally liable and offering protections for those who help an ailing victim.

Historians and experts say the law [1] is among the "most cutting-edge" in the nation. That's largely because of the unique provisions that ensure Good Samaritans can't be prosecuted if they see a hazing victim needs medical attention and they're the first to contact 911 or campus security. In order to escape criminal charges, the person making the phone call would need to remain on the scene until help arrived, according to the law. Such a measure may reduce hazing-related deaths if students don't fear being punished for contacting authorities. Under the law, a person could also be immune from charges if he or she administered medical aid.

Even those who orchestrated the hazing can take advantage of these exemptions.

"In a few remote possible cases, a true perpetrator of hazing may escape prosecution, but it is far more important that lives do not get extinguished while perps cower in fear and do nothing to save their friends," said Hank Nuwer, a journalism professor at Franklin College in Indiana who has written extensively about hazing.

Under the new law, those who weren't physically present during a hazing event, but who helped plan it, can now be prosecuted. This would likely affect a fraternity or sorority leader, but Peter Lake, director of the Center for Excellence in Higher Education Law and Policy at Stetson University, said he could envision a legal scenario in which administrators could also be held liable.

Sometimes officials must sign off on a Greek life event, and Lake said the law will likely test whether they would be immune from criminal charges or a civil case.

“This is definitely a new frontier for hazing prevention,” Lake said.

Nuwer said that chapter members have tended to skate by when a prosecutor brings charges only to the most “active” perpetrators and chapter officers.

“Finally it is recognized that individuals in the entire chapter bear some responsibility in a death when they knew, planned and abated actions by the most fervent zealots in the group who took things to a dangerous and fatal level,” Nuwer said.

Andrew’s Law, which the governor approved last month, is named for Andrew Coffey, a [Florida State University](#) [2] pledge who died in November 2017 after he drank an entire fifth of Wild Turkey bourbon at an off-campus party.

Coffey, 20, was participating in a “big brother” night where the initiates were expected to finish the bottle of alcohol presented to them by their “big.” Coffey did -- he then fell unconscious and was carried to a couch and ignored until the early morning. His “big” had gone home. Coffey was found without a pulse. His autopsy found he died of alcohol poisoning -- his blood alcohol level was 0.447, nearly six times the legal driving limit.

His death upended Greek life at Florida State. The president, John E. Thrasher, [shut down all fraternity and sorority](#) [3] activities that November, proclaiming the entire network of 50-some chapters needed to be reworked. Florida State did not respond to request for comment for this piece.

A couple of months later, Thrasher partially lifted the ban, adding new requirements for Greek life, requiring fraternities and sororities to use a third-party vendor to supply their booze and shortening the recruitment “rush” period, when many of these incidents occur.

But antihazing advocates, among them Coffey’s parents, were not fully satisfied. They lobbied the Florida Legislature to amp up the state’s law, which was already one of the stricter in the United States.

In 2005, Florida politicians made hazing a first-degree misdemeanor and a third-degree felony if a victim was seriously injured or died -- they named the law the Chad Meredith Act, for a University of Miami student who drowned in a hazing death in 2001. Then-governor Jeb Bush signed the law.

David Bianchi, one of the lawyers who helped write the Chad Meredith Act, also worked on Andrew's Law.

Bianchi, who represented the Coffey family, said prior to the bill's passage that the law needed some improvements. He referenced a hazing case last year, also at Florida State. During a hazing game, Nicholas Mauricio was hit so hard in the face he fractured his skull and was left unconscious. He lived, but police said at the time there was insufficient evidence to prosecute the fraternity members for hazing (Mauricio was already a member of Alpha Epsilon Pi fraternity but was not yet registered as a Florida State student).

The new law closes that loophole -- under the legislation, current members of a group can also be considered hazing victims.

The bill sailed through the legislative process, being unanimously approved at every step. It was bipartisan, being sponsored chiefly by both a Democrat and Republican. Lake said lawmakers were likely confident in passing the legislation after a Florida Supreme Court ruling in December that flatly rejected a challenge to the Chad Meredith Act as potentially unconstitutional.

On the federal side, two U.S. representatives, Marcia Fudge, a Democrat from Ohio, and G. T. Thompson, a Pennsylvania Republican, last month introduced the End All Hazing Act, an amendment to the Higher Education Act.

It would require institutions to maintain a website that would publicize information about student organizations that had been disciplined for hazing. Colleges and university officials would also need to report allegations of potentially deadly hazing within 72 hours to campus police or other law enforcement.

The End All Hazing Act has been endorsed by the National Panhellenic Conference and the North-American Interfraternity Conference, which represents many sororities and fraternities

nationally. Both groups created the Anti-Hazing Coalition, along with parents of students who died from hazing.

Andrea Benek, a spokeswoman with the North-American Interfraternity Conference, provided a statement on the new Florida law to *Inside Higher Ed*:

“The North-American Interfraternity Conference is deeply committed to eradicating hazing by advocating for stronger laws throughout the country. We support comprehensive hazing prevention measures -- proactive education, transparency and accountability around standards -- enacted through federal and state legislation. We work in partnership with the Anti-Hazing Coalition to make lasting cultural change in student organizations and on university campuses.”

Source URL: <https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2019/07/18/florida-governor-signs-tough-new-hazing-law>

Links

[1] <https://www.flsenate.gov/Session/Bill/2019/1080/BillText/er/PDF>

[2] <https://www.insidehighered.com/college/134097/florida-state-university>

[3] <https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2018/01/31/new-rules-florida-state-sororities-fraternities-hard-enforce-experts-say>

Appendix 4

Expansion of the Office of Fraternity and Sorority Life

Recommendation 5 calls for the expansion of the Office of Fraternity and Sorority Life (staffing through a combination of professional staff and graduate assistants). Below is a list of all job duties for the office. They reflect new accountability policies and procedures suggested in the recommendations. The precise number/combination of professional staff and student assistants is likely to change over time. With so many new policies more help might be needed initially.

Areas of responsibility/job duties

Academic statistics and assessment

New member processes and policies

Judicial processes

Advisory committees/faculty advisors

Programming/Education/Professional development

Orientation

Recognition

Compliance

Appendix 5

Greek Life Orientation Themes

- Member expectations
 - Behavioral
 - Academic
 - Town and gown relationships – respecting your neighbors
- Safety
 - Hazing
 - Alcohol and Substances
 - Unrecognized/banned organizations
 - CPR
- Personal Skills
 - Bystander intervention
 - Leadership
 - Avoiding conformity and groupthink
- Accountability
 - Office for Student Conduct and Advocacy
 - Office for Civil Rights, Title IX & ADA
 - EthicsPoint reporting
 - Review of all internal accountability measures:
 - Scorecard
 - New member education plans
 - Hazing definition
 - Drug and alcohol-free policy