

REPORT

Hazing Task Force

Coalition for a Responsible Community

Spring 2007

Task force members:

Katrina Brent, '07
Page Cotton, staff
Michael Cowden, '08
Porschia Davis, '08
Chris Gines, '07
Tom Hansen (co-chair), staff
Andrew Ibendahl, '08
Ben Jones (co-chair), '07
Kate Kaminski, '07
Matt Kubacki, '08
Chris Mahnken, '09
Zach Marquand, '07
Joshua Pendl, '09
Joshua Robinson, '07
Courtney Schmidt, '08
Norval Stephens, Trustee
Shannon Trabert, '08
Robert White, '07
Eric Wudtke, '09

The Charge

The Coalition for a Responsible Community appointed the Hazing Task Force in the Fall of 2006 for the 2006-2007 Academic Year. The Task Force was charged to:

1. Comprehensively study the climate with regard to hazing within NPC, NIC, NPHC and NALFO Greek organizations.
2. Comprehensively study the climate with regard to hazing within athletic teams.
3. Review University and other relevant hazing policies. Make recommendations for any necessary change.
4. Study hazing education programs at other institutions with significant Greek systems and national Greek organizations.
5. Study hazing education systems for athletics at peer institutions and the NCAA.
6. Make recommendations for the design and implementation of a comprehensive anti-hazing program for Greek organizations.
7. Make recommendations for the design and implementation of a comprehensive anti-hazing program for athletic teams.

Composition

The Hazing Task Force was co-chaired by one student and the Director of Fraternity and Sorority Life. The membership included a cross-section of the DePauw community. The student membership represented three classes, Greek, Independent, and Athletes. The Task Force also included DePauw alumni, faculty, staff, a Trustee and representatives from National Greek Organizations.

Approach

After recognizing the importance of all seven charges the Task Force laid out goals for the year and organized the charges in order of need and importance. The persistence of hazing as reflected in the number of hazing incidents in recent years underscores the importance of the Task Force addressing its charges in an effective and timely manner.

The first charges to be addressed were a comprehensive study of the hazing climate within Greek and Athletic organizations at DePauw as well as a review of the University and other relevant hazing policies and potential recommendations. Given the current independent development of hazing education programs through several campus organizations and the need for a clear policy and understanding of the climate prior to the development of comprehensive hazing education programs, our charge to develop hazing education programs was held off until the completion of the work on our other charges.

At this point, the Task Force has reached a pausing point on its charge to comprehensively study the hazing climate at DePauw with regard to both athletic and Greek organizations. The Task Force has reviewed University hazing policies and re-drafted the definition DePauw uses for hazing and provided recommendations for changes to the policy and associated supporting information.

It is worth noting that the Task Force has not satisfactorily addressed the recommendation of a comprehensive anti-hazing program. However, the Task Force did provide some early recommendations for implementation prior to the Spring 2007 recruitment period.

Charge: Comprehensively study the climate with regard to hazing

Finding an appropriate method to approach this charge was a significant challenge for the Task Force. While the student members felt confident in their ability to describe the hazing climate at DePauw the need for accurate data to reflect student perception was also needed.

The following are observations made by the Task Force that will require hard data to effectively corroborate. The Task Force agreed that hazing does occur at DePauw and goes underreported to the appropriate judicial and oversight bodies. Furthermore, the Task Force agreed that typical hazing incidents are not violent acts, but do reflect several typical behaviors such as shouting at new members, alcohol abuse, forced exercise, etc. It is also worth noting that hazing methods employed on campus vary according to the organization.

Understanding the need to fully describe the hazing climate at DePauw the Task Force sought a means, through survey or focus groups, to provide data to support the initial conclusions. The immediate problem was that of legitimacy and acquiring honest data. Recognizing that students would be skeptical of any fact-finding mission of the Hazing Task Force, be it through survey or focus group, the Task Force sought out alternate means of acquiring legitimate statistical data on DePauw's hazing climate. This is a reflection of concerns about trust among segments of the student body.

The Task Force ultimately chose to build upon a national study of student hazing underway under the auspices of the University of Maine and lead researcher Dr. Elizabeth Allan. The study, titled *Examining and Transforming Campus Hazing Cultures*, is described as follows at www.hazingstudy.org:

Examining and Transforming Campus Hazing Cultures is a national research initiative to examine hazing in colleges and universities throughout the U.S. This path-breaking study will investigate hazing traditions among diverse students involved in many types of student organizations including campus clubs, varsity athletic teams, marching bands, recreational sports, and Greek-letter organizations. We will also gather information about students' high school experiences with hazing.

The goals of the study are to:

- Better understand the realities of hazing among students.
- Offer research-based strategies for intervention and prevention.

The study entered the second of three phases this spring.

- Phase I in spring 2005 was a pilot study. Summary findings have been disclosed at seminars such as the annual Law and Higher Education Conference sponsored by Stetson University, and are available on-line.
- DePauw applied and was selected as one of 45 institutions to be part of Phase II, national data collection, which began April 16.
 - One quarter of DePauw students chosen at random received an e-mail invitation to complete a web-based survey.
 - The survey inquires into experiences in student clubs, organizations and teams, but does not specifically mention hazing until late in the survey process.
 - Student leaders assisted in the effort by encouraging students to participate.
- Phase III of this study in the 2007-2008 academic year will consist of in-person interviews with students on about 15 campuses.

The result is that DePauw and the Task Force will receive results from this professional study on hazing and will also allow DePauw to be compared against national results from the same survey, thus providing insight into behavior within both athletic teams and Greek organizations. DePauw also will receive the methodology and can extend the survey to other subsets of students if desired. In addition, the availability of research-based strategies can be combined with other measures identified by the Task Force and implemented during the past six months to guide further work on comprehensive anti-hazing efforts at DePauw.

Having involved DePauw in this effort, the Task Force felt that this charge could be set aside until the conclusion of Dr. Allan's study.

Charge: Recommendations regarding anti-hazing programs

Given the intended outcomes of the national hazing study, including its recommendations as described above, the Task Force did not undertake to design and implement a comprehensive anti-hazing program for Greek organizations and athletic teams. It did, however, identify several intermediate steps that were either implemented during the past six months or will be put into place beginning this fall:

- The new member education series for Greek chapters was reviewed and condensed from one 6-hour session and four follow-up meetings to four 90-minute seminars, which were conducted during late fall semester 2006.
- The anonymous reporting system available through Public Safety, Silent Witness, was publicized to Greek groups, and the addition of a separate toll-free

hazing telephone hotline was studied for implementation either as part of or in addition to the Silent Witness option.

- The “sunshine policy” in use at Cornell University was adopted for incidents beginning spring 2007. This policy involves publicly disclosing more details of hazing activities and the consequences for student organizations found to have hazed. This parallels a general increase in the amount of information made public with student organization violations of all types through the operation of the Community Standards Office. So far the sunshine policy has not been used as no organizations have been found to have engaged in hazing since its inception.
- A full disclosure policy is in effect for organizations that want to eliminate hazing or address gray areas, though no organizations have yet taken advantage of the policy. The purpose is for organizations to fully disclose past practices with the intent of revising their activities, and not be subject to disciplinary action for the fully disclosed past conduct.
- Use of signature forms by Greek chapter officers was continued, verifying that chapter presidents and new member educators understand the University’s hazing policy and agree to abide by it. Expanded use of such forms is recommended for rank and file members and ultimately to either new members or prospective members.

Charge: Recommendations regarding hazing and other policies

Most of the Task Force’s work centered on review of hazing and related policies, and drafting recommendations for improvements.

The consensus of the Task Force was that the current definition is too long (258 words, see Appendix A), and its list of examples raises the question of whether unlisted activities are not hazing. A further concern was that related University policies and guidelines are focused on new member education and do not take into account some hazing activities toward current members of teams and organizations.

The Task Force determined that a short definition is needed, and that it should be augmented in two ways:

- The hazing definition would form the center of a hazing policy with a broader series of explanatory materials regarding the value of student membership and participation in organizations and teams, and the harm caused by hazing.
- A web-based hazing resource document would be the starting point for students and others to examine hazing issues, obtain basic information and assistance, and link to other resources.

Proposed Hazing Definition

Within this structure, the Task Force recommends that the University adopt the following definition of hazing:

Hazing is any action or situation that humiliates, degrades or risks emotional or physical harm that is expected of new or current members of an organization or team, regardless of their willingness to participate.

Proposed Hazing Policy

Using the proposed 34-word definition of hazing, the Task Force then sought to tie together current University statements and policies about related topics (student organizations, new member education, etc.) into a cohesive statement.

The proposed Hazing Policy (see Appendix C) has the following basic features:

- A statement of philosophy about the value of student organizations and teams
- Valuable statements about hazing:
- DePauw's Athletic Code of Conduct
- Excerpts from the Statement of Position on Hazing and Pre-Initiation Activities from the Fraternity Executives Association
- The hazing definition
- A statement prohibiting hazing
- Reference to the policies on student group responsibility
- Statements of position on new member education
- Links to hazing statements of national organizations with student chapters at DePauw
- An expressed expectation that organizations and teams must cooperate with investigations of possible hazing
- A statement regarding responsibility for actions of non-members (e.g. advisors, coaches, etc.)
- A full disclosure policy that allows organizations and teams to end hazing practices
- A "sunshine" policy that reports hazing violations and consequences as one means of holding teams and organizations responsible

Proposed Hazing information web site

An equally important document is that which students will use most, which the Task Force believes should be web based. As a result, the Task Force prepared text (see Appendix D) which should appear in a University web site with appropriate links from various DePauw web pages, and links to other policies and web resources.

An integral part of this web site is a FAQ that addresses commonly raised issues about activities that student believe are or are not hazing – mentor games, study tables, etc.

The definition and policy lend themselves to effective presentation to students in the vein of simpler statements of consequences for student misconduct that have arisen from the Greek Fact-Finding Commission process. Just as that effort followed a simple formula – what behavior is problematic, what action will Public Safety and others take when they encounter it, what consequences results through Community Standards, etc. – the hazing web site information should be condensed into simple documents that lay out the issues in terms students can immediately understand.

An additional resource that will accompany the web site is a breakdown of types and examples of hazing activities that illustrates the harm caused by each. The attached example (see Appendix E) is modified from information available at www.StopHazing.com, with input from DePauw students regarding some activities thought to occur on campus now or in the past.

Highlights of the proposed web page include:

- Definition of and prohibition of hazing
- What to do if you are being hazed
- Consequences of hazing, for organizations/teams and for individuals
- FAQs
- Resources, including links to the full hazing policy, examples of hazing, national organization policies on hazing, etc.

Other policy considerations

One complication of hazing investigations and sanctions is potential retaliation against students who took action against the hazing activity. Possible targets of retaliation or harassment are students being hazed; members of a hazing organization or team who work to stop or report hazing; and witnesses, either members or non-members of the group. The cooperation provision in the hazing policy contemplates more serious consequences for a group that retaliates against such students. However, disciplinary action against an individual student who retaliates is more appropriately covered by the University's harassment policy, and the Task Force recommends that it be reviewed to be sure it includes the concerns raised here.

Conclusion and further recommendations

The Task Force believes that adoption of the new hazing definition and policy, plus use of the hazing study process and results and other resources to create effective anti-hazing programming, will require the guidance of a Task Force or similar steering committee during the coming year. Ideally this group will represent student organizations including the Student Athletic Advisory Board, the Interfraternity Council,

the National Pan-Hellenic Council, the Panhellenic Council, Student Congress, and administrative offices that oversee student organizations.

A number of steps should be taken this spring and summer to further the progress of 2006-07:

- The Task Force recommendations for the hazing definition, policy and web page should be presented to the student organizations listed above, with a request that they seek comments from their constituencies.
- The recommendations should be published among coaches and advisors, alumni advisory bodies, and national organizations, seeking input and suggestions for programs to educate students about hazing.
- Discussions should begin with DePauw's First Year Program and with Residence Life to determine how best to incorporate issues related to hazing and membership in student organizations in training of mentors and resident assistances, and in discussions with first year students during orientation and the first year program.
- Data should be obtained as soon as possible from the national hazing study and analyzed for DePauw-specific opportunities for student programming and education.
- Consideration should be given toward having entering first year students take a form of the national hazing study's survey before arrival at DePauw, to gauge their experiences with student organizations and teams during high school.
- Signature forms that acknowledge agreement to the hazing policy and awareness of hazing issues should be expanded and specialized to be suitable for new and current members and officers or captains of organizations and teams for use beginning fall '07.
- Consideration should be made of whether to participate in National Hazing Prevention Week activities Sept. 24-28, 2007.
- With three Greek Life Coordinators joining DePauw's staff this summer, plans should be readied for new member education and hazing programming during fall '07 and winter term '08, including an evaluation of the fall '06 Greek new member education series.

The Hazing Task Force wishes to thank President Bottoms and members of the Coalition for a Responsible Community Steering Committee for their suggestions and guidance during the past year.