

# For Clubs

Some students who haze contend that hazing results in positive outcomes for the group (e.g., increased closeness), the individuals who are hazed (e.g., personal growth from overcoming challenges), and the persons who do the hazing (e.g., pride in continuing traditions). But these positive outcomes can be achieved through non-hazing activities that avoid the negative effects that often result from hazing.

## Positive Strategies for Achieving Group Unity

Strong group unity and a sense of individual accomplishment are important for groups throughout society to achieve. Many businesses, for example, invest considerable resources to foster effective group processes and enhance individual motivation. And they generally do so through positive, encouraging strategies that build people up rather than tear them down.

## Carrying Constructive Strategies Forward in Life

Let's say you are a proponent of hazing. Now imagine that you have graduated and are in your first job as a sales representative for a major corporation. At a staff meeting your boss asks for suggestions on how to strengthen the functioning of the sales team. You recommend that he blindfold the team members, make them form a line, and then scream insults and threats at each of them. Would you argue that such an exercise would lead to increased sales? Wouldn't it be better if you could recommend a set of constructive, group-building strategies that you learned as a member of a group while in school?

## Is Failure to Change a Failure of Imagination?

Some members of groups that haze say that one of the biggest barriers to changing their practices is that they don't know what else to do that would accomplish their goals. On one hand, if the desired goals include making others endure the pain and degradation you went through, then there are no real alternatives. On the other hand, if the goals are to increase group unity, promote individual growth, instill positive values, and foster an identity within the group, then there are options. Employing alternatives to hazing doesn't mean holding hands in a circle singing Kumbaya. A program of activities aimed at replacing hazing will likely need to incorporate some level of challenge or intensity. It may also need to incorporate non-hazing mechanisms of self-governance for holding new members accountable to the expectations of the group.

# Alternatives: What Else Could Be Done?

Please keep in mind that some of the activities listed below may seem more relevant to all-male groups than all-female groups. Similarly, some may seem more relevant to fraternities and sororities than other organizations.

- Activities cannot include consumption of alcohol by new members.
- Traditions can be created as well as inherited. While the first year of an activity doesn't constitute a tradition, future cohorts of members will see it that way.
- Some group activities can be non-hazing or hazing, depending on how they are done. For example, having new members do skits can be a non-hazing activity, but not if members verbally degrade the performers or throw food at them. Similarly, scavenger hunts are not inherently forms of hazing (as any day camp counselor can tell you). But when the list includes things that must be stolen or would likely be humiliating or embarrassing to obtain, then it becomes hazing.
- Having current members participate along with new members in certain activities, such as cleaning the chapter property, can shift the activity from being hazing (i.e., servitude) to non-hazing.

## Community Service & Philanthropy

- Divide the new members into two groups with current members as team leaders and conduct a cleanup on a Saturday morning.
- Serve meals once a week to homeless community members, or distribute food through the local food pantry.
- Require new members to perform a set amount of community service hours in support of community agencies—have the new members appoint leaders within their group and develop a plan through the Community Service Center located on the third floor of the Campus Center.
- Have new members collect money for the International Red Cross' disaster relief efforts.

## Service Learning Trips

- New members and selected current members can spend spring break working in a southern inner city or rural community building a home with Habitat for Humanity. Use the first half of the spring semester to plan the trip and learn about the community you will be serving. Have current members with construction skills conduct workshops for new members to enhance their abilities.

## Mentoring

- Set up a mentoring program. Assign the mentor responsibility for teaching about the values of the organization and monitoring the new member's participation and academic performance (to ensure minimal expectations are met). Have the mentor take the new member out to dinner or to an athletic or cultural event at least three times.

## **Entertainment**

- Put on a talent show. Include categories such as karaoke, instrumental music, skits, impersonations, and magic tricks. Since it is not the new members' responsibility to entertain the members, have willing members from each year participate and entertain each other.

## **Share Common Activities**

- Have new members join current members for meals 2-3 times a week. Have new members sit by themselves and talk freely with each other. As initiation day approaches, invite them to sit with current members once a week, symbolizing their gradual entry into full membership.
- Have new members sit comfortably in a circle for two hours in a dark room with only a single candle for light in the center of the circle. Provide the group with discussion questions that they are expected to talk about. Start with non-threatening questions or incomplete statements (e.g., "If I had a billion dollars, I would ...") and end with more probing ones (e.g., "I'm afraid that ..." or "If I could live my life over, I would ..."). Option: have each member write a question on a card and put it in a question box. Select one question at a time and discuss it.
- Hold study hours in which new members are expected to be present and studying with current members. At the end of a study period, order pizzas.
- Divide new members into two teams. Give them each a box full of miscellaneous materials. Give them one hour to devise a competitive game using all of the items (only rules: everyone must play and no one can get hurt). Have the two teams compete against each other.

## **Road Trips**

- Have current members go with new members for a weekend of skiing or travel to Boston for a networking meeting with alumni. Rent a bus for the trip.

## **Rituals**

- Hold formal initiation rites that have a quality of solemnity. Formal attire, candlelight, and symbolic actions (e.g., taking an oath or signing a document) may be integrated into the ritual. Invite alumni to address the new member group as part of the initiation. Have representatives from the new member group speak about the meaning of their experience and hopes for the future.

## **Accountability Practices**

- Have each new member meet with his or her mentor weekly to review the new member's knowledge of the group and its members.
- Provide written guidelines for new members outlining the expectations of the group. Hold new member review panels periodically in which a small group of current members discusses the new member's progress with him or her. If deficiencies or a lack of commitment is noted, the panel places the new member on probation. In serious situations, the organization determines whether or not to terminate the relationship with the new member.

## **Athletic Competitions**

- Have new members compete in basketball, volleyball, or softball against current members or other groups.
- Have new members compete against members in laser tag or paintball.

## **History & Values Exercises**

- Have new members learn about the history underlying values of the organization. Divide them into groups and have them prepare PowerPoint presentations about the organization. Make the presentations preparation for the working world—have current members dress formally. Invite alumni to attend.
- Have new members conduct 20-minute interviews with subsets of current members to learn about their backgrounds and beliefs.
- Hold new member meetings in which each new member delivers a report on his/her interviews in order to "introduce" the members who have been interviewed.
- Have current members and alumni speak to current members about the values of the group and what they hope the new members will contribute and receive as part their experience.

*Adapted from Alternatives: What Else Could Be Done?, Cornell University*