

**Final Report of the Committee on Hazing and Initiations****Submitted to Dean Mary Miller****April 21, 2011**

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On January 18, 2011 the Committee on Hazing and Initiations received its charge from the Dean of Yale College, Professor Mary Miller. Dean Miller asked the Committee to look into initiation practices across a wide range of undergraduate organizations, including those that are not registered, with the goals of understanding more deeply and broadly how initiations influence and are influenced by underlying organizational culture; examining the extent to which organizations engage in hazing as part of initiation rituals; recommending effective ways to prevent hazing practices; and identifying positive initiation practices. The Committee was also asked to re-evaluate Yale's current definition of hazing in the context of our findings and with attention to the wording of the laws of the State of Connecticut.

The Committee met for two hours on alternate weeks throughout the spring term as a “Committee of the Whole” (a total of 7 meetings) and worked in sub-groups between sessions on various aspects of our assignment. We reviewed hazing policies at peer schools; reviewed

relevant state law across the nation; examined the literature on hazing; explored web sites at these schools and the NCAA; and examined existing guidelines, orientation materials, and educational materials currently used by various Yale student groups.

We considered conducting interviews and focus groups with various campus organizations about initiation practices and devising a way to gather anonymous data about hazing from individual members of the Yale community. We ultimately concluded that such an effort would contribute little new information to our Committee. Sadly, we were provided with more than ample public evidence that hazing exists on our campus, and it seemed to us that our time would be better spent examining ways to prevent future occurrences. That said, we believe there is a time and place for the gathering of more granular data about hazing as well as about positive initiation practices as reflected in our recommendations below. We think such data will be more effectively gathered by peers and student organizations for the purpose of hazing education and prevention; we address this matter in our recommendations.

The Committee spent considerable time reviewing Yale's existing policies on hazing as well as those of our peer universities. We concluded that Yale's policies need to be expanded, beyond the letter of Connecticut law, to hold organizations, including their leaders and responsible members, accountable for initiation practices and hazing; and to include effects on third parties. What follows under Recommendation # 1 is our proposed YCDO Statement on Hazing. We envision that this "Statement" as a whole would appear on a newly designed YCDO Web page dedicated to information about hazing and initiations, would be published annually in the Yale Bulletin and other appropriate campus publications, and would be circulated as part of various orientation materials to student organizations and teams. We also recommend that our

proposed definition of “Hazing” be reviewed, vetted, and ultimately approved for inclusion in the Undergraduate Regulations.

**Recommendation #1: Revise the Undergraduate Regulations such that student organizations, their leaders and responsible members can be held accountable for hazing activities, and expand the definition of hazing to include effects on third parties. We propose a specific definition below.**

### **PROPOSED YALE COLLEGE STATEMENT ON HAZING**

“The mission of Yale College is to seek exceptionally promising students of all backgrounds from across the nation and around the world and to educate them, through mental discipline and social experience, to develop their intellectual, moral, civic, and creative capacities to the fullest. The aim of this education is the cultivation of citizens with a rich awareness of our heritage to lead and serve in every sphere of human activity.” (The University Mission Statement)

“Yale College is an academic community dedicated to the advancement of learning. Students freely associate themselves with the College and in doing so affirm their commitment to a philosophy of mutual tolerance and respect. All students admitted to Yale should understand the responsibility thus placed upon them. If any member of the community should interfere with its functions or show himself or herself unable or unwilling to assist in them, the community may find it necessary to protect itself by suspending or terminating his or her membership. Indeed, by formal vote the Yale College Faculty has affirmed:

1. Its commitment to protect free expression and peaceful dissent and to preserve mutual respect and charitable relations among all members of the Yale community.
2. Its belief that physical restriction, coercion, or intimidation of any member of that community is contrary to the basic principles of the University.
3. Its expectation that such action will ordinarily result in temporary or permanent separation from Yale College.” (Yale Undergraduate Regulations, General Conduct and Discipline, p.3)

“Students must recognize that Yale College exists within a larger community that has its own laws and standards of behavior and that membership in Yale College confers no exemption from those laws and standards. Unruly behavior or illegal or destructive acts that adversely affect the community surrounding the Yale campus will not be condoned.” (Yale Undergraduate Regulations, General Conduct and Discipline, p.3)

### **Hazing**

Because it violates our community values and standards, Yale College prohibits all acts of hazing. Hazing includes any action that violates Connecticut hazing law (see Box 1, CT General Statute, Section 53-23a, Hazing) as well as additional violations spelled out in the Yale College regulations.

**Box 1****CT General Statutes: Sec. 53-23a. Hazing.**

(a) For purposes of this section:

(1) "**Hazing**" means any action which recklessly or intentionally endangers the health or safety of a person for the purpose of initiation, admission into or affiliation with, or as a condition for continued membership in a student organization. The term shall include, but not be limited to:

(A) Requiring indecent exposure of the body;

(B) Requiring any activity that would subject the person to extreme mental stress, such as sleep deprivation or extended isolation from social contact;

(C) Confinement of the person to unreasonably small, unventilated, unsanitary or unlighted areas;

(D) Any assault upon the person; or

(E) Requiring the ingestion of any substance or any other physical activity which could adversely affect the health or safety of the individual. The term shall not include an action sponsored by an institution of higher education which requires any athletic practice, conditioning, or competition or curricular activity.

(2) "Student organization" means a fraternity, sorority or any other organization organized or operating at an institution of higher education.

(b) No student organization or member of a student organization shall engage in **hazing** any member or person pledged to be a member of the organization. The implied or express consent of the victim shall not be a defense in any action brought under this section.

(c) A student organization which violates subsection (b) of this section (1) shall be subject to a fine of not more than one thousand five hundred dollars and (2) shall forfeit for a period of not less than one year all of the rights and privileges of being an organization organized or operating at an institution of higher education.

(d) A member of a student organization who violates subsection (b) of this section shall be subject to a fine of not more than one thousand dollars.

(e) This section shall not in any manner limit or exclude prosecution or punishment for any crime or any civil remedy.

A deliberate attempt to commit any of the above offenses is in itself an offense.

In addition to CT law, Yale College defines hazing to include initiation or affiliation activities that intentionally or recklessly endanger physical or mental health; that intimidate, denigrate, or humiliate persons pledging or seeking membership, or seeking to retain membership, in a registered or unregistered student organization or on an athletic team; or that intimidate, denigrate, or humiliate third parties who are witness to or subject to such activities. Because hazing is an organizational activity, the organization, its officers, and responsible members will be held accountable for hazing violations.

Hazing is an offense whether it occurs on or off campus. The Yale College Executive Committee will not consider the implied or express consent of the person being hazed as a defense; nor will it consider the use of alcohol or drugs as a mitigating factor. To the contrary, in the context of hazing, the use of alcohol or drugs will be considered an express attempt to impair judgment, likely contributing to reckless behavior.

Pursuant to Yale policies, a student who commits a disciplinary offense while under the influence of alcohol or drugs will be referred to the substance abuse counselor at the University Health Services. Any record of such a visit is confidential to the substance abuse counselor and does not become part of a student's Yale College Record.

All undergraduate student organizations, whether registered or unregistered,<sup>1</sup> must provide the Yale College Dean's Office with contact information for all undergraduate officers (or their equivalent) and faculty or alumni advisors (if any) and complete a non-hazing attestation form. Registered groups will furnish this information as part of the registration process. Unregistered groups must furnish this information to the Yale College Dean's Office by October 1<sup>st</sup>.

Where harm or the potential for harm occurs to any person or persons as a result of hazing by members of a student group, the hosts of the event as well as the individuals directly involved and officers of the organization (or their equivalent) can be held personally responsible.

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<sup>1</sup> There are over 300 registered undergraduate student organizations in Yale College and an unknown number of unregistered student organizations. Examples include but are not limited to athletic clubs, Varsity teams, fraternities, sororities, singing groups, junior and senior societies, drama groups, comedy groups, political groups, cultural houses, tour guides, student government organizations, and residential colleges.

With respect to possible disciplinary action against all such persons, the Executive Committee may consider as mitigating factors efforts made to prevent the harmful or potentially harmful situation, as well as their cooperation with the Executive Committee's investigation of the situation.

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Further, our Committee makes recommendations that might provide students, student-leaders, faculty, coaches, and administrators with better education and understanding about hazing and initiation practices as well as tools for prevention.

**Recommendation # 2: Establish a clear and consistent link between hazing activities and accountability of both organizations and individuals.**

As a Committee, we were very impressed with the Cornell Web page (<http://hazing.cornell.edu/hazing/>) that linked narratives and examples of hazing with disciplinary outcomes. It was a clear "these are the likely consequences" message. The Committee believes the YCDO can take a similar posture going forward if the undergraduate regulations are expanded to hold organizations, as well as their individual leaders and responsible members, accountable.

In the context of holding organizations accountable, we discussed the idea of an "in good standing" criteria for student organizations, both registered and unregistered. Organizations in good standing would have the privilege of recruiting new members from among the Yale undergraduate community and/or using University space (if they are a registered organization). Good standing might be simply defined as having a record clear of any disciplinary actions for a

full term; having signed an anti-hazing attestation form; having leadership who participated in at least one anti-hazing and sexual harassment orientation; and, where appropriate, being in good standing with their national organization (for example, being up to date on annual dues and free of any disciplinary or probationary actions). Over time and with input from student groups, the definition might be expanded to include other elements. Organizations not in good standing would be prohibited from recruiting new members and from whatever other privileges similar organizations enjoy on the Yale campus.

**Recommendation #3: Create a prominent, easy to find, Web page for the purposes of clarification of policies on hazing, education about hazing, and student narratives/examples of hazing and its outcomes.**

The Cornell University's Web page (<http://hazing.cornell.edu/hazing/>) on hazing offers a model for the development of a Yale Web page. We believe this should be a student-led initiative with input from administration; the YCC might take the lead and there is a student member of our Committee who is eager to be involved. The Web page should have a variety of links to good external sources about initiation and hazing; to the YCDO Executive Committee Annual Report; to student-written narratives and examples that illustrate the unanticipated consequences of hazing and that educate about the distinction between initiation and hazing; and to explicit descriptions about the likely disciplinary consequences of hazing.



**Recommendation # 4: Incorporate hazing orientation materials into already existing or newly developing orientations (for example, the newly recommended orientation on Sexual Harassment).**

The Committee believes that material about hazing and initiations can and should be readily incorporated into existing orientation programs since there is considerable overlap with programs that already address alcohol, peer pressure, and sexual harassment. Material should be integrated into Freshman Counselor, Peer Liaison, and Old Campus Fellow training. Coaches should be encouraged to take a more proactive role. In the Athletics Department, the Kiphuth Leadership Program already incorporates hazing/initiation material into its education programs for captains and other team leaders. Deans and Masters should be encouraged to pro-actively address hazing not only with freshmen, but with sophomores, juniors and seniors who tend to be in leadership positions in various undergraduate organizations.

**Recommendation # 5: Form an Inter-Fraternity & Sorority Council (IFSC)**

We believe the time is right to gather the Presidents of all the fraternities and sororities and propose a joint IFSC. Such a Council would have a broader purpose than simply monitoring initiations. It could be a forum for discussion and development of “best practices” among the fraternities and sororities. It could be a way to promote philanthropic and community service efforts. It might become an incubator for setting standards of citizenship among the Greek organizations. We propose that there be a specific liaison/advisor from the YCDO and that the Council meet with the YCDO liaison at least once each term for the purpose of reviewing guidelines for initiation practices and undergraduate regulations, with special emphasis on the most high risk behaviors: hazing, sexual harassment, and alcohol use.

One example is the Council at the University of Pennsylvania, comprised of the leadership from the Inter-Fraternity Council, the Pan-Hellenic Council, and the Multicultural Greek Council. This council meets regularly with representatives from the central administration, provides academic support and community education for the pledge process, encourages closer communication with national organizations, organizes community service events, and helps coordinate non-IFSC social events.

**Recommendation # 6: We recommend that all fraternities and sororities adjust their pledge practices to correspond with national guidelines and the practices of peer institutions.**

Many peer institutions as well as national offices of fraternities and sororities do not permit fall term rush/initiation of freshmen. We recommend that all fraternities and sororities at Yale conduct their freshman rush and initiation processes in the spring term. We believe this would allow for better planning on the part of fraternity and sorority leadership and would give freshmen time to get settled into their residential colleges and academic routines before making a decision to join a fraternity or sorority. The College would also have more time to engage freshmen and fraternity/sorority leadership in relevant orientation programs.

**Recommendation # 7: Identify advisors who can work with groups to develop positive initiation practices, avoid hazing violations, and create new orientation programs to coincide with scheduled pledge, tap, and rush activities.**

Many undergraduate organizations already have natural advisors. Athletic teams have coaching staff and, in some instances, also have faculty mentors. The YCDO can work with

Athletics to develop the capacity of coaching staff to be proactive about initiation and hazing practices and also to further develop the faculty mentor program. Senior Societies have older alumni and faculty members who might be cultivated to serve a more active role in advising, and they have a Senior Society Council which could develop a more active liaison to the YCDO. Singing groups have the Singing Council that already has a relationship with the YCDO. There are members of the faculty and administration in the University who are former members of many other groups. The YCDO might explore developing advisor relationships using these former members. The Committee did not have time to identify each and every undergraduate organization, but recommends that the YCDO systematically explore the possibility of developing advisor roles for as many of these groups as possible.

**Recommendation # 8: Consider the creation of a Yale College Deans Office fund for undergraduate organizations to promote positive initiation practices such as team-building and leadership activities.**

Such a fund might be available to registered undergraduate student organizations in good standing through an application process at the beginning of each term. Examples of activities organizations might propose might include modest team-building activities, leadership workshops, and the purchase of media materials on group and leadership development, or website development funds.

**Recommendation # 9: Integrate hazing-prevention into the role functions of relevant Student Affairs positions.**

The Committee believes there are some natural opportunities to more actively address hazing through existing Student Affairs positions. For example, the Assistant Deans in the Cultural Houses, Old Campus Fellows, and the Student Affairs Fellow might find ways to actively and explicitly integrate hazing prevention into their current roles and functions. These individuals already have well-established relationships with their constituent groups and have good “on the ground” knowledge of when and how groups recruit new members.