

National Hazing Prevention Week: Now Is The Time

– Ray Lutzky

[Hazing must be stopped. What are you doing about it?]

Association of Fraternity Advisors (AFA) members are aware of the devastating impact hazing can have on the success of the fraternal movement. This why AFA has joined many other organizations in taking a firm stance against such practices.

In 2003, AFA hosted a hazing think tank at the Annual Meeting. One of the outcomes of the think tank was the National Hazing Symposium, coordinated by CAMPUSPEAK and co-sponsored by AFA along with several other organizations. The first National Hazing Symposium was held in conjunction with the 2004 Indiana Greek Leadership Conference to work towards ending hazing through educational programming. CAMPUSPEAK then created National Hazing Prevention Week (NHPW), an awareness week designed to bring together professionals in student affairs, athletic departments, parents, military personnel, and others interested in helping to fight hazing practices. Launched in 2005, NHPW has been met with acclaim and interest nationwide from student organizations, legislators, and anti-hazing advocates.

While NHPW is the last week in September (September 24-28, 2007), campuses are encouraged to plan their own events any time during the year to suit their own schedule and needs. If practical, year-round campaigns can be effective for educating students about the dangers of hazing and helping them find alternatives to this practice. Campuses should plan their NHPW activities in response to the unique needs of the campus community, such as considering when hazing activities typically occur.

Successful NHPW activities take many forms. In 2006, Indiana University of Pennsylvania initiated an anti-hazing pledge, which was signed by hundreds of fraternity and sorority members. They also created information packets for campus administrators, a handout on Pennsylvania hazing law, and hosted events on campus throughout the week, including films and speakers. Many campuses, including University of North Carolina at Charlotte, Case Western Reserve University, Auburn University, and State University of New York at Oswego, initiated awareness campaigns with ribbons and buttons worn by students, staff, and faculty. Still others created web sites specifically designed around anti-hazing

initiatives (see the Cornell University website at www.hazing.cornell.edu).

Additional examples of campuses' successful NHPW activities and other educational resources are available on the National Hazing Prevention Week website (www.nhpw.com). The site features articles about hazing incidents, sample policies, programs, ideas for combating hazing, posters and wallet call cards, and many other useful documents and ideas. CAMPUSPEAK, which administers the website, encourages professionals in all areas impacted by hazing to submit their resource materials to help better our communities.

The National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA), Sigma Nu Fraternity, and the National Panhellenic Conference have made leadership-level contributions to earn "premier sponsor" status for NHPW and the National Hazing Symposium. Their proactive contributions show a great commitment and make a public statement about their efforts to prevent hazing.

The 2007 National Hazing Symposium focused on the role of bystanders in preventing hazing. Too often, professionals in fraternity and sorority life shrink away from hazing issues unless they become too apparent or harmful to ignore. It is time for every fraternity and sorority professional to recommit themselves to the AFA anti-hazing resolution (http://www.fraternityadvisors.org/Resolutions/Hazing_Education.aspx) and take a stand. As fraternity and sorority professionals, we cannot afford to be bystanders in the prevention of hazing, and each of us must take up this cause as a personal initiative in our campus communities.

NHPW does not happen on a campus overnight (or over a week!). Professionals seeking to empower their fraternity and sorority community to tackle hazing issues must recognize that such an effort is transformational. As such, professionals can learn from the experience of other functional groups and industries that have undergone transformational change, such as financial planning or information technology. For many of these, "maturity models" have been used to help communities improve capabilities in a structured and manageable way.

Maturity models define discreet and

sequential levels of capability. Capabilities are defined by specific, repeatable behaviors. Maturity models are useful tools because they help objectively benchmark an organization's current state, and they explain required sets of behaviors to achieve a desired target state. With current and desired states identified, a maturity model helps an organization build a roadmap for transformation from point A to point B. In the case of hazing awareness and building an anti-hazing movement, a maturity model can be an effective way for professionals to benchmark community-wide success.

A three-level maturity model for NHPW on your campus could look something like this:

[Level 1: Awareness Builders.] This is where to start if NHPW has never been tried on your campus and you are unsure how the community will respond. Simply showing support for anti-hazing initiatives can have a viral impact on campus. Button campaigns, ribbon campaigns, banners, posters, t-shirts, and even sidewalk chalk can help create a grass-roots feel to your NHPW activities. The goal is to grow support and acknowledge that hazing is an important issue that must be dealt with by all members of the campus community. Sometimes achieving this buy-in can be one of the most challenging steps in building anti-hazing initiatives.

[Level 2: Educators.] Education is a good place to begin if the campus community acknowledges hazing as an issue to attack. Typical activities can include speakers, retreats, teleconferences, and seminars designed to better inform participants of the negative impacts of hazing. Written educational materials such as brochures, handbooks, articles, web sites, and newsletters should also be used. These educational initiatives should not be limited to students; administrators and faculty can always use a refresher on campus policies and state laws. Campuses may also choose to involve local first-responders, such as the police, counseling professionals, and student judicial officers, since they are often most likely to view the aftermath of hazing incidents when they occur. Use these educational opportunities as a way to build community-wide dialogue.

[Level 3: Anti-Hazing Advocates.] Initiating change on campus, or even across your state, requires an informed campus

community that recognizes the urgency of the issue. If the campus has already begun NHPW activities, there are ways to adapt them that can lead to positive changes. For example, an anti-hazing pledge, while symbolic, can be made more significant if it

As NHPW gains momentum across the country, many campuses will move from Level 1 to Level 2, and from Level 2 to Level 3. Partnering with local campuses that have made progress on their own NHPW activities can provide insight

something” is a step in the right direction. As even more campuses bring light to this critical issue, its importance will expand beyond the fraternity and sorority community. Through understanding of resources available and use of tools such as a maturity

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requests changes to campus policies or even state law. Focusing on a specific policy issue around hazing can be a challenge for an entire campus community, however there are usually small ways that such changes can assist the anti-hazing effort. For example, a goal for NHPW can be to propose a campus amnesty program for students that report hazing activities they were associated with, or to create an anonymous hazing reporting hotline. Starting with small steps can have a big impact.

and ideas for improvements in your own campus community and moving along the maturity model.

The theme of the second National Hazing Symposium, held in conjunction with the 2005 AFA Annual Meeting, was “Just do something!” While many campuses have adopted National Hazing Prevention Week, there are others that have not yet been able to organize related events in their communities. For those groups, “just doing

model to benchmark success, professionals can become well equipped to tackle the terror of hazing. Ultimately, NHPW cannot continue to be a success without the personal commitment of all AFA members, and collective success is dependant on our forward momentum.

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