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VCMEP

Virtual Continuing Membership Education Program
Kappa Kappa Psi National Honorary Band Fraternity

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<http://www.kkpsi.org>

Malinda's Mailbag 2: Is it hazing?

You have asked questions about hazing, and we'll address many of them in this issue.

Every member has responsibility to ensure that their own activities, and those of their Brothers, don't become hazing activities. Every chapter should actively plan its membership education and other activities, and regularly check its work with district and national representatives, to ensure appropriate and fun activities and to avoid perpetuating hazing.

The summer is a great time to help your Vice

President and Membership Education committee ensure that your MEP next year will comply with all of our policies.

Just as in an ensemble, KKPsi's strength is in our diversity. Hazing seeks to eliminate diversity by targeting those who are different and seeking to enforce needless conformity just for the sake of conformity. That is reason enough to avoid hazing.

Keep those questions coming!

Malinda

Questions: If they say it is ok, is it hazing then?

Dr. Matney:

My chapter has this great activity that, due to a technicality, is against the hazing policy as written. However, our candidates are always told it is voluntary, and they always want to do it. It isn't hazing if they volunteer, right?

Wrong! Let's take a look at what this Brother is saying:

- *It is a great activity.* What is great about the activity? If there is truly some value being taught, there is another better way to teach it.
- *Due to a technicality, it violates the policy.* We don't have a complicated or highly detailed policy. There are examples that illustrate the policy, but nothing that becomes "fine print" or "technicalities."
- *Our candidates are told it is voluntary, and they always want to do it.* These candidates are not in a position to say no. They know that there is another day coming when a vote will be taken on them. That creates a level of coercion, in ways that active members or alumni may not appreciate. The general public does tend to see the coercion. At the

same time, since the candidates may never have seen the activity, they do not truly know what they are agreeing to do. In the absence of that knowledge, they cannot consent.

A candidate cannot sign away his or her rights to be treated with respect with regard to our national constitution or our policies, and it is the responsibility of *all* of our Brothers to ensure candidates aren't put into that position.

I get what you are saying about the need for knowledge and consent. You are probably just worried about the lawyers. We'll just make a consent form in writing. That will protect us, right?

No. As I mentioned before, candidates don't have the true ability to consent, no matter how you ask them to do it. Moreover, hazing is illegal in most states, and a consent form would have no effect. But most importantly, our number one concern is the safety and well-being of our candidates and members.

We'll just do the activity after initiation. That makes things ok, right?

No. Our hazing policy applies to all involved, including candidates, actives, and alumni, whether or not it happens as part of membership education. Don't think that postponing the activity makes it any less a hazing activity.



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www.kkpsi.org/policies.asp

Questions: Are you trying to take away all the fun?

Dr. Matney:

You keep harping on hazing, but how else will we build Brotherhood? We need this to bond.

I question how “bonded” you are if you are relying on hazing. Hazing is not about bonding, but rather is the ultimate act of disrespect. Hazing is about threats, intimidation, and fear. Why rely on activities that teach disrespect, destroy trust, and often hurt people?

Instead, focus on what outcomes you want.

- If you enjoy fun from thrills, go to an amusement park, find a ropes course, or start an intramural team.
- If you want to teach Brotherhood, spend time talking about the values of Kappa Kappa Psi and what

they mean to each of you. The actives should participate as well.

- If you want the positive feeling of achievement, find a large project that candidates and actives can do together for the band program. This could be one of those seemingly impossible projects that you all brainstorm a way to complete. You’ll have a tangible product everyone can enjoy for a longer time.

Are you just trying to take away all the fun?

No. I’m just trying to make sure everyone is in on the fun. The point of the MEP is not to entertain actives or alumni at the expense of candidates’ feelings or health. The point of the MEP is to create excellent Brothers and chapters. We all can have more fun if we aren’t treating candidates with disrespect.

Questions: If it wasn’t a problem 20 years ago, why is it now?

Dr. Matney:

You were an active 20 years ago. You probably had a few activities happen to you that are now in our hazing policy. Why is it bad now?

Hazing was a bad idea then, too. We know much more now about the risks and dangers of hazing, and about the damage hazing does.

We know that more people wish to cause harm (intentionally or unintentionally) than most would believe. Part of improving the Fraternity experience means lowering the possibility for harm.

In addition to these important reasons, we forbid hazing because when members haze, chapters lose focus on the core of Kappa Kappa Psi: the college band. Nothing about hazing honors band members, strengthens service, teaches leadership, or provides a positive social experience. Hazing breaks individuals, chapters, and bands.

Hey, Dr. Matney, doesn’t the National Council have better things to do than go on the warpath about hazing?

Yes we do, but we can’t do those

things while hazing occurs. We cannot ignore the threat that hazing perpetuates.

- Hazing poses problems by chasing away great prospective members who have too much self respect to be hazed.
- Hazing threatens our future as an organization by weakening our future leadership and destroying chapters.
- If you haze, you put our national organization at risk. Every time we respond to allegations of hazing, our resources and the time of our volunteer leaders and our HQ staff is diverted towards the investigating and resolving the hazing allegations instead of developing our national programs and promoting the fraternity. Our insurance premiums could rise (which will directly affect your dues), and the financial foundation of the fraternity is at risk. Your careless action could stop the promotion of college bands nationally.

You have the power to decide that our college bands will have a bright future. Act accordingly.