RECOMMENDATIONS FOR TOP STUDENT AFFAIRS OFFICERS LEADING HAZING PREVENTION EFFORTS

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Health, safety, and prevention work is a concern for all students and student groups on college campuses. However, the behaviors may vary from one group to another. According to Prevent.Zone (2023) (online hazing prevention course) data, among students who were aware of hazing on their campus (n = 45,071), most (61%) said isolated events occur occasionally. About 1 in 3 (32%) reported that hazing is fairly common on their campus, 7% said it is extremely common. Of those respondents (32,185) said they were aware of one or more of the four types of hazing mentioned in the survey:

- 83% alcohol-related hazing
- 54% psychological harm
- 42% physical harm
- 29% sexual assault

According to students in the Piazza Center's What Works prevention study (2024) at six campuses (n = 1,712), hazing occurs in other chapters or other teams and organizations but is rarely required in their own organization. The three most commonly perceived hazing behaviors in other fraternity and sorority chapters were group lineups (44%), forced consumption of alcohol (43%), and embarrassment (42%).

Hazing is not the same across campus subpopulations and student groups. Therefore, it is important to consider distinct vulnerabilities of subpopulations of students in select organizations and communities, such as specific sports clubs, fraternities, business fraternities, and bands.

The Piazza Center gathered a group of frontline staff engaged in prevention to ask what Senior Student Affairs Officer (SSAO) needed to be aware to navigate, support, and lead prevention practice. The goal of this guide is to provide suggestions for building prevention practice in addressing student behavior change for safer student organizations and fraternity and sorority life as well as other vulnerable campus communities.

Hazing as a Public Health Issue

Alcohol abuse and sexual violence are framed as public health issues, and as a result, prevention is viewed as a larger campus problem. If we frame hazing as a public health concern, we are more likely to think more broadly, campus wide, about policies and programs (Biddix et al., 2024). Further, a prevention approach can help shift campus culture rather than only preventing incidents.

Creating a hazing-free culture requires prioritizing directions that shape people and their environment. A new definition of hazing describes this phenomenon and connects it to a public health concern:

- Hazing is a power dynamic behavior aimed at screening, fostering bonds, or establishing standing in organizations that risks the health and safety of individuals, causing deliberate or unforeseen physical and/or emotional harm counter to organization purposes (Piazza Center, 2024).

Avoid the trap that a "check the box" policy and program will be enough to prevent hazing on your campus. For example, if a state hazing law led to more tactics such as mandated education, a key "prevention effort" is that a completed check box or part of a larger comprehensive effort to develop a hazing free culture.

Campus Size and Leadership

The size of campus and structure of student affairs will have an impact on who leads, manages and oversees hazing prevention. A SSAO from a large campus is likely to delegate most of the more task-oriented opportunities to an associate or assistant vice president (AVP) or director, with the expectation that they would then report specific data and recommendations. In this context a SSAO would want to be most engaged in

- Understanding the hazing culture of their campus
- Setting vision, mission and goals for the work in alignment with university priorities.
- Consider the human and financial resources needed to support a comprehensive hazing prevention strategy
- What are the policies and interventions that are best practices throughout higher education

The AVP or director would be tasked with all other needs as they are closer to leading the plan for prevention. And, convene campus partners to meet important goals.

The guide is divided into four sections. First, a sample checklist of tasks is provided to assist leaders in implementing and uplifting prevention work. Next, a deeper dive into recommendations for creating policies, supporting initiatives, and building relationships to develop a comprehensive prevention program.

- **Hazing Prevention Checklist**
- **Creating and Implementing Prevention Policies**
- **Supporting Prevention Initiatives**
- **Building Relationships**

Hazing Prevention Checklist

This checklist is meant to help SSAOs prioritize tasks associated with prevention work. The checklist is framed in a timeline to highlight the cyclical nature of hazing prevention.

Step One

Summer:
Increase your Understanding

- Complete a problem analysis
  - Understand campus data that informs campus prevention efforts.
    - *Who are your subject matter experts? Meet with staff who have information regarding student behaviors. This could include conduct staff, residence life/hall directors, campus activities, athletics, etc.*
- Understand and use national data and trends. What does the research currently tell us about prevention?
- Read the Stop Campus Hazing Act
- Review your states anti-hazing law
- Identify current campus prevention strategies and accountability measures
- Review current policies and practices and compare them to national, state, and local laws or best practices; See Piazza Center hazing prevention resources
- Identify current prevention resources (funding, staff, etc.)
- If you are responsible for implementing a prevention working team or committee
  - Begin to identify committee members
  - What is the committee's charge
  - Who is the committee chair
  - Meet with the committee to give the charge, expectations, and deadlines
- If you are not responsible for implementing a prevention working team or committee
  - Who from your staff has been asked to serve on the committee?
  - What is the ask of your staff member?
  - What is the committee's charge?

Step Two

Fall:
Build Relationships, Leverage Stakeholders

- Prevention team/committee should be meeting.
- Meet monthly with committee chair or staff members who belong to the committee.
  - Be prepared for chair and staff members to ask about:
    - Funding resources
    - Priorities and timelines
    - University expectations
  - Help committee chair or staff members prioritize the prevention work.
  - Ask that the committee chair develops a prevention plan.
  - Ask what does the committee or staff member need for the implementation phase of their prevention plan?
- Meet with other senior administrators regarding prevention efforts to build partnerships and gain buy in (e.g., athletics, faculty, club sports, ROTC, band, etc.).
- Meet with subject matter experts and practitioners to understand the Fall semester trends and student behavior
- Advocate for and promote the work of the committee to senior-level administrators and university president
- Towards the end of the semester, anticipate reviewing policies and committee work products. Assess the policies and work products for equity, and provide feedback.

Step Three

Winter:
Support Prevention Initiatives

- Meet monthly with committee chair or staff members who belong to the committee.
  - Be prepared for chair and staff members to ask about:
    - Feedback
    - University priorities
    - Expectations
  - Ask--what does the committee or staff member need from you to move the projects forward?
- What is your role in the implementation phase? Do you need to present new policies, programs, or resource requests to constituents (e.g., university president, board of trustees, general counsel).
  - If so, who from the committee should be in those spaces with you?
  - How should items be presented?
  - Connect the prevention work products to unspoken and spoken strategic planning priorities, mission statements, and student success.
  - Ensure structure and systems are in place to support the prevention plan. This may include meeting with IT, budget administrators, etc.
- Continue to meet with other senior administrators regarding prevention efforts to build partnerships and gain buy in (e.g., athletics, faculty, club sports, ROTC, band, etc.).
- Continue to meet with subject matter experts and practitioners to understand the Fall semester trends and student behavior
- Continue to advocate for and promote the work of the committee to senior-level administrators and university president
- Report on the progress of the prevention initiatives to stakeholders and constituents.
  - Student survey data
  - Incident reports
- Share the committee's work with others (e.g., on campus, locally, regionally, or nationally).

Step Four

Spring:
Communication and Consistency

- Report challenges and success. Update stakeholders on progress and sharing strategies, practices and programs with peers.
- Ensure SSAO/AVP/Directors and prevention team has a regular check in to review data related to hazing concerns received by offices is helpful for knowing if an impact is being made.
  - Share general assessment of students from survey data.
  - Report occurrence of hazing concerns is vital to contextualize progress and emerging priorities.
- Strive for consistency. Influence athletic/ academic conferences in order to respond to state and federal laws.
  - Share peer programs and responses.
  - Offer support for staff to work collaboratively with other institutions.

Creating and Implementing Policies

University policies communicate behavioral standards and expectations to university communities. It is important for a SSAO to review policies related to high risk behavior (e.g., hazing, alcohol, drug, or sexual assault policies, etc). Furthermore a SSAO should ensure that university policies align with best practices and meet the requirements of national, state, and local laws.

Review Hazing Laws and Research

- Hazing laws and related research is growing, with more attention and resources being applied. The best resources for creating a baseline understanding for prevention are:
- Stop Campus Hazing Act: Reflect on what implications this Act may have on the campus community and where it may fit into your overall strategic plan.
- Respective or Adjacent State's Anti-Hazing Law(s): Identify how students and staff are educated on both laws and campus policy. If your state doesn't have an undated hazing law, the Virginia and Ohio laws have clear expectations for higher education involvement hazing prevention and education.
- Current Institutional Policy: Consider whether what you've learned about your campus context and the above resources align with policies, when policies should be reviewed and what data is being gathered to inform policy changes. The Piazza Center resource guides offer an opportunity to talk to your team about prevention implementation and the support they may need to execute.
- Organizational or Campus Amnesty Policy: In the event hazing happens, amnesty policies save lives and encourage students who have made bad decisions to rectify those by calling for help.
- Hazing Prevention Matrix: This gives an overview of research informed prevention initiatives at the individual, organizational, and community level. A mix of programs is essential for changing hazing cultures.

Suggested Staff Assignments

As decisions are made surrounding policy creation and implementation, ask how policies are designed, assessed, and implemented. Also consider asking who benefits from the policy; this will be valuable in defending policies with external and internal stakeholders.

Ask your staff to:

- **Describe how they assess campus issues (Problem Diagnosis Data)**. Create policies that match problems through clear root cause analysis. Further ask if this is a broad assessment or nuanced by distinct subpopulations that may present different forms of hazing, hazardous drinking and other resulting behaviors.
- **Highlight how they ensure the quality of program implementation (Program Implementation Fidelity Data)**, especially if it's a repetitive program to prevent drift and decay.
- **Demonstrate how prevention programs are making a difference (Program Efficacy Data)**. Outcome data is the ultimate goal in how initiatives are changing student attitudes, motivations and behaviors over time. The Four Forms of Data guide is an overview of the data your staff should provide to help determine policy, program and practice changes to address hazing and other closely associated issues.
- **Prioritize student development versus replacing it with prevention practice.** Student development is a vital strategy necessary to enable students to take on greater challenges. When paired with prevention programs the two strategies can be amplified.
- **Incorporate a prevention and developmental lens to accountability.** Have an articulated philosophy and structure to policies and their implementation that allows staff to practice student development and prevention strategies in the enforcement of policies. Policies that allow for student groups to own, correct, and instill organizational learning principles to correct and prevent negative behavior.
  - When there isn't a University Policy/Code of Conduct violation or in certain lower-level incidents, have policies in place that hold organizations accountable and allow them to correct behavior before elevating to University discipline. Also consider a partnership with organizations, co-owning policies within their organizational governance documents and their ability to enforce them.
  - Consider a tiered approach to policy implementation. Allow students the opportunity to adapt, respond, develop, and commit to change. A developmental approach may increase opportunities to support policies, allow for growth, and engage more students in positive change.
- **Identify which policies create equity issues**. A litmus test of sensing or having data that considered nuanced subpopulations, will help avoid equality issues, specifically if this data is used to build distinct approaches to prevention programs tailored to specific subpopulation issues and needs.
- **Review policies on a regular basis** to identify which ones staff feel are impediments to student safety. Make sure students who represent distinct subpopulations are represented.

Supporting Prevention Initiatives

Frontline prevention staff suggest the following things to consider when implementing prevention efforts.

- **Context Matters:** Have front line staff, subject matter experts, and students at the table when determining prevention initiatives.
- **Leadership:** SSAOs should set priorities and be the champion for those who are doing the work day to day. It may help if frontline staff are part of drafting policies, programs and practices.
- **More Reports:** Recognize that good prevention work means more response and reports. Reports will increase. Don't pull back when there is an uptick in reports. It's the first step in effective prevention.
- **Pushback:** Expect a trustee, donor, and media response to an increase in reports. Develop a plan and speaking points for key stakeholders and the media in order to stay the course and support colleagues in navigating the impacts of a higher number of reports.
- **Staff Resources:** Prevention is not a one size fits all approach. Staffing and staff competencies range my departments. Prevention support looks different across functional areas. Engage with a needs assessment to identify gaps, professional development and cross functional assignments specifically in staff facilitating in-person programs with students and the assessment of prevention programs.
- **Training and Development:** Gain an understanding of current capacity, competencies of staff, and professional development opportunities for growth. Preparation programs touch on prevention topics but current professionals are seeking skills and competencies for curriculum development, facilitation, motivational interviewing, and clinical assessment.
- **Time on Task:** Supporting your staff members who may be tapped to do the work. More than accolades, if prevention is a priority in select vulnerable subpopulations, where do you need to shift work responsibilities and assignment to prioritize prevention work?

Build Relationships with Key Stakeholders

Depending on institutional structures, departments and units, prevention programs may need help in bringing key relationships. Senior leadership is integral in supporting prevention programs within key areas of the university including fraternity and sorority life.

- **Be mindful of inter/national organization relationships.** While student organizations and fraternity and sorority life staff can manage those partners, SSAOs have an opportunity to engage in strategy to reinforce partnerships and key messages.
  - Reinforce the relationships your staff
  - Send social norm campaign information for stakeholders to use with student groups
  - Share data on issues
  - Inform stakeholders on new initiatives and upcoming programs
  - Create a point of contact for folks with similar roles
  - Host a town hall to meet senior leadership once a year
- **Identify key partners and stakeholders at the university leadership level.** Help bridge the gap with staff and faculty to empower a comprehensive approach. Similar to engaging outside stakeholders, recruit and inform adjacent staff and faculty regarding reporting, volunteer opportunities, key messages, and policy enforcement.

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