

HEALTHY GROUP BUILDING ACTIVITIES

GOALS OF AN ORGANIZATION

Research has shown that the main goal and priority of a student group when bringing in new members is to

1) create a bonded and unified new member group and

2) instill a sense of organizational identity into the new members.

Knowing this, advisors can work with their organization to plan events and activities that promote these goals in a safe and responsible way.

While organizations aim to achieve these goals listed on the left, they may not know proper and safe ways to achieve them. This may result in potentially dangerous events and activities that would constitute hazing. When student leaders do not know where to find resources or answers to accomplish their goals, they create the answers themselves.

If you are an advisor, it is important to work with your organization to ensure the events and activities they are planning are safe and responsible. Knowing the goals of an organization as it relates to onboarding new members can help advisors work with the chapter to plan safe and effective events.

GOALS FOR NEW MEMBERS

When new members join a group they seek acceptance and belonging within that organization. Current research tells us that new members seek to gain this acceptance in the fastest and quickest way possible. This can often lead to new members mirroring the actions and mannerisms of established members as a means to seek acceptance. This also means new members are more likely to change, amend, or disregard their personal values for the sake of acceptance. This understanding can explain why new members may subject themselves to hazing; they participate in hazing activities as a means of gaining acceptance by the group.

Below is a non-comprehensive list of non-hazing alternatives to help achieve the desired outcomes for new members and the organization. Remember to keep the ideas of both context and being thoughtful of how activities are actually implemented as you read through the following examples of non-hazing activities.

IMPORTANT CONSIDERATIONS

- **No singular strategy works for every group.** Some of the activities listed below may be more relevant to groups of a particular gender or to a particular kind of group.
- **Activities cannot include** consumption of alcohol or other drugs 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.
- **Having current members participate** along with new members in certain activities, such as cleaning, can shift the activity from a form of hazing (i.e., servitude) to non-hazing.

POSITIVE STRATEGIES FOR PROMOTING GROUP UNITY AND BONDING

OVERCOMING CHALLENGES

Reach out to Campus Recreation to have a staff member lead new members through a ropes course or climbing wall.

Have a group of new members and current members navigate through an escape room.

Organize a relay race for new and current members with different challenges.

Find a knowledgeable expert and have them supervise and instruct a group of new and current members to build something together.

GROUP BONDING

Register for one of Campus Recreation's Outdoor Adventures & Excursions.

Register for one of Campus Recreations Fitness Classes.

Go on a group hike through the Gordon Natural Area or one of the many local hiking spots in the area (Stroud Preserve, Riddle State Park, Delaware Water Gap).

Have new members join and participate in intramural sports.

Host a field day where new members and current members compete in a variety of lawn games and activities.

Have new members and current members go bowling or paintballing.

Host a cooking night or grill out.

Attend a WCU Athletics Event or sporting event in the area (Eagles, Phillies, Flyers, Wilmington Blue Rocks)

COMMUNITY SERVICE & PHILANTHROPY

Have new members and current member volunteer at a local food bank.

Participate in a town or park clean up.

Create teams of new and current members to raise money for a designated philanthropy or charity.

Participate as a group in a charity walk or race.

Host a donation drive and create teams of current and new members to compete against each other.

Volunteer at a local animal shelter.

BUILDING A SENSE OF MEMBERSHIP

Have new members plan an event for the entire organization. Put each new member in charge of a different task. Have current members guide and support new members in their event planning.

Host study hours where current and older members of the group mentor and help new members in similar classes/majors.

Provide new members with shirts, hats, other apparel, and items with the groups name, logo, or branding.

Create small groups of new members and current members to grab a meal 1-2 times a week.

Host a game night that pairs new members and current members together to compete against other groups.

Host professional and personal development workshops such as a resume workshop, LinkedIn workshop, or CPR certification workshop.

IS IT HAZING?

Often, students may not be aware their actions or activities can constitute hazing. Look at the questions below and if the answer to any of them is NO, the event or activity may be considered hazing. If this is the case, reach out to your advisor to talk through how to make the event safe and responsible.

Would I be comfortable describing this activity to my parents, a school official, or the media?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Is participation in the activity 100% voluntary, without pressure or coercion?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Is the activity equally required or open to all members, not just new or potential members?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Does the activity promote dignity, respect, and inclusion for all participants?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Would I feel comfortable being subjected to this activity myself, regardless of status or rank?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Is the activity free from physical, emotional, or psychological harm or discomfort?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Are all participants sober and not required to consume alcohol or drugs?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Does the activity avoid any sexual, discriminatory, or demeaning elements (even as "jokes")?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Can the activity be completed without fear, humiliation, or intimidation?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Is the primary purpose of the activity to build community, trust, or shared values—not to test endurance or obedience?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Is the activity free of secrecy and can it be openly discussed with advisors or leadership?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Is there a clear educational, team-building, or celebratory value to the activity?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Would this activity still happen if it were being supervised by a campus official or staff member?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Has the activity been approved or reviewed by appropriate advisors or governing bodies?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Will everyone leave the activity feeling safe, respected, and supported?

☐ Yes ☐ No