



Member Intake & Education Statement of Understanding

Each individual active member and sponsor of a Greek organization must review these conditions and requirements and sign the Statement of Understanding at the back of this packet prior to Bid Day and the intake of members.

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I. Organizational Standards & Philosophy Statement

The emphasis of all programs and organizations with provisional members/new members and/or active members shall be on development of the spirit and understanding of the dignity and worth of each individual. In recognition of the historical abuses in this area and the potential for damage to the dignity of the individual, the College prohibits any activities by individuals or organizations that subjects individuals to physical pain, indignity or humiliation. Prohibited activities and practices include, but are not limited to, physical exercises, deprivation of normal sleep or rest, any form of corporal punishment, the placing of anyone in actual or simulated peril or jeopardy of health, illegal activities, any indecent activity, the public wearing of degrading apparel, any humiliating activities or any promiscuous sexual activity or event designed to promote sexual activity. All organizations and their members shall follow membership and initiation procedures. For more information see the Greek Life Handbook, the Student Organization Handbook and the corresponding organization's constitution, which are available from the Department of Student Engagement, Enrichment, and Development.

The College no longer supports a "pledge" and/or "new member education" period for any student organization. Students who join an organization, club, or team, including a fraternity or sorority, become

members of that organization immediately. Organizations will focus on treating all members equally and fairly, striving for continuous development of members throughout their collegiate experience.

II. Hazing Information

Texas State Hazing Law

All Austin College community members are expected to be aware of this law and will be expected to understand how they as individuals and as members of a group are accountable to this law. It was added by Acts 1995, during the 74th Legislative Session, Ch. 260, § 1, and went into full effect May 30, 1995. The statute can be found under Subtitle G. Safe Schools, Chapter 37. Discipline; Law and Order; Subchapter F. Hazing in the Texas Education Code.

Definitions:

“Educational institution” includes a public or private: high school; or college, university or other post secondary educational establishment.

“Pledge” is any person who has been accepted by, is considering an offer of membership from or is in the process of qualifying for membership in an organization.

“Pledging” is any action or activity related to becoming a member of an organization.

“Student” is any person who is registered in or in attendance at an educational institution; or has been accepted for admission at the educational institution where the hazing incident occurs; or intends to attend an educational institution during any of its regular sessions after a period of scheduled vacation.

“Organization” is a fraternity, sorority, association, corporation, order, society, corps, cooperative, club or service, social or similar group whose members are primarily students at an educational institution.

“Hazing” means any intentional, knowing or reckless act, occurring on or off the campus of an educational institution, by one person alone or acting with others, directed against a student, that endangers the mental or physical health or safety of a student for the purpose of pledging, being initiated into, affiliating with, holding office in or maintaining membership in any organization whose members are or include students at the educational institution.

The term hazing includes, but is not limited to: any type of physical brutality, such as whipping, beating, striking, branding, electronic shocking, placing of a harmful substance on the body or similar activity; any type of physical activity, such as sleep deprivation, exposure to the elements, confinement in a small space, calisthenics or other activity that subjects the student to an unreasonable risk of harm or that adversely affects the mental or physical health or safety of the student; Any activity involving consumption of a food, liquid, alcoholic beverage, liquor, drug or other substance that subjects the student to an unreasonable risk or harm or which adversely affects the mental or physical health or safety of the student; any activity that intimidates or threatens the student with ostracism, that subjects the student to extreme mental stress, shame, humiliation or that adversely affects the mental health or

dignity of the student or discourages the student from entering or remaining registered in an educational institution or that may reasonably be expected to cause a student to leave the organization or the institution rather than submit to acts described in this subsection; any activity that induces, causes or requires the student to perform a duty or task that involves a violation of the Penal Code.

Personal Hazing Offense

A person commits an offense if the person:

- a. engages in hazing;
- b. solicits, encourages, directs, aids or attempts to aid another in engaging in hazing;
- c. intentionally, knowingly or recklessly permits hazing to occur; or
- d. has first-hand knowledge of the planning of a specific hazing incident involving a student in an educational institution, or first-hand knowledge that a specific hazing incident has occurred, and knowingly fails to report said knowledge in writing to the Dean of Students or Vice President for Student Affairs and Athletics or other appropriate official of the institution.

The offense of failing to report is a misdemeanor punishable by a fine not to exceed \$1,000, confinement in county jail for not more than 180 days or both such fine and confinement.

Any other offense under this section which does not cause serious bodily injury to another is a misdemeanor punishable by a fine of not less than \$500 nor more than \$1,000, confinement in county jail for not less than 90 days nor more than 180 days or both such fine and confinement.

Any other offense under this section which causes bodily injury to another is a misdemeanor punishable by a fine of not less than \$1,000 nor more than \$5,000, confinement in county jail for not less than 180 days nor more than one year or both such fine and confinement.

Any other offense under this section which causes death of another is a misdemeanor punishable by a fine of not less than \$5,000 nor more than \$10,000, confinement in county jail for not less than one year nor more than two years or both such fine and confinement.

Except when an offense causes the death of a student, in sentencing a person convicted of an offense under this section, the court may require the person to perform community service, subject to the same condition imposed on community service probationers by Subdivision (1), Subsection (e) and Subsections (c), (d), (g) and (h) of Section 10A, Article 42.12, Code of Criminal Procedure, for an appropriate period of time in lieu of confinement in county jail or in lieu of a part of the time the person is sentenced to confinement in county jail.

Organization Hazing Offense

An organization commits an offense if the organization condones or encourages hazing or if an officer or any combination of members, pledges or alumni of the organization commit or assist in the commission of hazing. An offense under this section is a misdemeanor punishable by a fine of not less than \$5,000

nor more than \$10,000, or if a court finds that the offense caused personal injury, property damage or other loss, the court may sentence the organization to pay a fine of not less than \$5,000 nor more than double the amount lost or expenses incurred because of such injury, damage or loss.

Consent Not a Defense

It is not a defense to prosecution of an offense under hazing laws that the person against whom the hazing was directed, consented to or acquiesced in the hazing activity.

Immunity from Prosecution Available

In the prosecution of an offense under this subchapter, the court or prosecution may grant immunity to witnesses at its discretion. Any person reporting in bad faith or with malice is not protected by this section.

III. Alternatives to Traditional New Member Education Activities

Some specific means to replace the traditional activities of New Member Education or Pledgeship and make ongoing, holistic, member development a positive experience:

Remember: The best member development activities are those wherein all members are working together in the activity.

Develop unity of all initiated members: Involve all members on committees, attend meetings, hold sports events with mixed teams of all initiated members and have an all organization retreat. Work together on a community service/organizational improvement project.

Promote scholarship: Take advantage of the college academic and tutoring services, designate available study space/time for members, invite College speakers to discuss test-taking skills, study methods, etc.

Develop problem-solving abilities: Have members discuss organization weaknesses such as poor rush, apathy, and poor scholarship. These solutions should be shared with the entire membership. Everyone should then be involved in the implementation of solutions.

Develop social skills: Hold a seminar on table etiquette and other social graces; plan a seminar with College resources on effective communication skills, body language, eye contact, and other aspects of communicating.

Instill a sense of brotherhood or sisterhood: Plan special events when the entire organization gets together, e.g., attend a movie, play, professional sports game, etc.

Build awareness of organization history: Invite an older alumna or alumnus to talk about the organization's early days, its founding, special traditions, and prominent or most involved alumnae or alumni.

Develop leadership: Have each member active in a committee. Expect that all members are active in planning and implementing activities. Encourage participation in campus activities outside of the sorority or fraternity.

Develop knowledge of the Greek community: Invite the Greek Council President or the Assistant Director of S.E.E.D. to speak on the Greek community, covering the purposes of fraternities and sororities, the regulations they formulate, and the goals and expectations of the Greek system.

Aid career goals: Use college resources for seminars on resume writing, internships, the job search, job interview skills; invite different alumnae or alumni to speak on various careers.

Involve members in the community: Visit a nursing home or youth center to sing, play games, or just talk; get involved with Big Brothers/Big Sisters or other community organizations. Such involvement should continue well after initiation.

Improve relations with other Greeks: Have members get together to plan joint social or service activities; members can plan a cook-out with another organization, followed by a sports activity (softball, volleyball, etc.).

Prohibit alcohol at educational and developmental events: Since many of your members almost certainly are underage, alcohol has no place in any member development activity and is specifically prohibited.

IV. Positive Events and Ideas

- Serenade - All members serenade campus or other Greek groups.
- Attend College soccer, football, softball, basketball events together.
- Retreats attended by all members.
- Each initiated member writes a page about him/herself. Pages are put into a book and can be given out to membership.
- Have study buddies to encourage all members to make grades for remaining active.
- Have big brothers/sisters - (great way to get to know each other.)
- Sponsor a dinner for members, inviting leaders from other Greek groups.
- Send letters to the parents of members and share with them how joining your organization can help their son/daughter during his/her college years.
- Invite parents to an event scheduled over Parents Weekend.
- "Build a Crest" - Each member starts with a blank crest. As he/she learns things about the fraternity or sorority, he/she adds to his/her crest.
- Have VIP - Very Important Person for the Week award.
- Movie Nights - All gather at a house or someone's room, with popcorn, movie theatre candy, and drinks to watch TV.
- Have committees of members responsible for planning some type of surprise for the rest of the membership at meetings each week. (Ex.: refreshments)
- Have different organization officers pair up with a potential officer candidate to discuss what each is doing with his/her office.
- Have the Member Educator and/or the Member Education Committee meet with each member to discuss how their development is going. Ask about suggestions, problems, etc.

- Participate in a Ropes Course.
- Teambuilding Activities (can be facilitated by Member Educator or campus professional – there are hundreds of these activities that you could use)
- Participate in and/or plan a Community Service Project
- Have a Resume Writing Workshop presented by Career Services
- Attend Educational Speaker and discuss as a group
- Leadership Book-of-the-Semester
- Invite Faculty Sponsor to lunch
- Have a Discussion about the Relevance of the Creed today
- Study Skills Workshop presented by the Academic Skills Center
- Successful Alumni Speaker to talk about how fraternity or sorority gave skills to succeed
- Arts and Crafts for a Cause
- Participate in a Workshop offered by Greek Council
- Invite Greek Council Officers to Speak about Community Governance
- Invite Assistant Director of S.E.E.D. to speak about lifetime membership
- Dinner and a Movie
- Shadow an Officer and assist in planning of a program/event
- Create a vision and goals for the organization
- Plan a fundraiser
- Include all members in meetings
- Include all members in regularly scheduled activities
- Discuss fraternal values and how they apply (or don't apply)
- Plan and present a speaker on a health/wellness topic
- Require active membership in at least one organization outside the group
- Evaluate the process continually as a group
- Host a Family Weekend activity
- Participate in all-Greek events
- Ask leadership experts to discuss issues such as motivation and group dynamics
- Have members take the Meyers-Briggs Personality Type Inventory and discuss (you've already taken it)
- Ask a faculty member to discuss ethical decision making
- Ask a faculty member to facilitate a conversation on diversity in fraternities and sororities
- Ask campus health educator to do a presentation on eating disorders or depression, etc.
- Ask College police to discuss the prevention of violence against women
- Ask Assistant Director of S.E.E.D. to describe what the college offers fraternities/sororities
- Plan a philanthropy project for a local charity
- Have a contest for who can recruit the most members to join and reward the winner
- Members make "secret sisters/brothers" gifts for each other
- Discuss risk management and liability with a college official
- Brainstorm ways to recruit members and present to organization
- Have an all-campus or all-fraternity/sorority community "Meet Our Members" Picnic
- Have members play on a fraternity/sorority intramural team
- Plant a tree in memoriam or honor of someone or the organization
- Sponsor a big/little academic challenge with free textbooks to the winner
- Have a candlelight/pass the gavel ceremony about what fraternity/sorority means to me

- Have a senior Student Affairs administrator talk about history of fraternities/sororities at the College
- Brainstorm ways to improve scholarship (other than study hours)
- Attend theatrical production or athletic event
- Ask the library to give a lecture on effective research methods
- Attend a program or event another organization is sponsoring
- Have a discussion about membership standards and expectations
- Have a goal-setting retreat
- Nominate a newer member to accompany leaders to local Greek conference
- Attend the campus Leadership Forums or workshops
- Deconstruct past activities to determine intent and brainstorm alternatives
- Write a “letter to the founders” to thank them for the opportunity (not to be shared)
- Have members alternate helping Executive Board develop an icebreaker for each meeting
- Develop a fraternity/sorority “wish list”
- Develop a time line of organization and campus activities
- Invite the Academic Skills Center or Career Services, Health Services, or Counseling Services to explain their services
- Develop a faculty sponsor appreciation gesture
- Fraternity/sorority collaborates on a campus improvement project.
- Develop an event with a non-Greek organization
- Have members develop a list of ways to end motivation issues.
- Ask the Mayor to discuss city issues and how the group can help.
- Require members to register to vote. Give an incentive to those who do.
- Require members below a 3.0 to attend a study skills program.
- Discuss the founding of the group and how the organization has evolved over time while maintaining the vision. If it hasn't, how can the group return to its' roots?
- Review the history of hazing, the evolution of Greek new member education and the direction fraternity/sorority recruitment is headed.
- Discuss the “old way” of pledging versus the “new way” with a panel of alumni, administrators and council officers.
- Develop or co-sponsor a program or event with another sorority if you're a women's groups or a fraternity, if a men's group.
- Have a professional discuss the “Millennial Generation” and how groups can better recruit based on this research.
- Offer incentive for going to Alternative Spring Break.
- Give highest member GPA recipient a plaque or \$25 gift certificate to nice restaurant.
- Member who develops best recruitment plan (or scholarship plan) gets a free ____.
- Attend any workshop of your choice with the Assistant Director of S.E.E.D.
- Check a book out on student leadership to read and have a discussion about.
- Allow members time for themselves to do and be what they want. Don't monopolize their time.
- Have a weekly forum for the members to discuss their feelings, if willing.
- Invite another group to develop a program to benefit the entire Greek Community.
- Invite a nutritionist or fitness professional to discuss dietary and workout options – pros and cons.

- Ask each member to list the offices/chairs they would be interested in. Have them list five things they would do differently about each. Compile results without names attached and have a constructive conversation.
- Eliminate the creation of pledge class “paddles”, no matter their use. They’re symbolic of hazing. Create an alternative.
- Ask a professor or Career Services to do a workshop on etiquette.
- Have lunch together once a week in a dining hall with the entire sorority/fraternity.
- Invite faculty sponsor to meetings.
- Question each activity and evaluate the program each semester with the help of the sponsor and Assistant Director of S.E.E.D.

V. Prohibited Activities and Practices

Prohibited activities and practices include, but are not limited to:

- Forced road trips off campus, kidnaps of members. This prohibition is meant to abolish situations in which members are bound, gagged, or otherwise restrained or left stranded in the middle of nowhere, or any other like activity.
- Any form of forced physical activities and exercise, whether extreme or not (e.g., push-ups, sit-ups or other calisthenics, runs, walks, etc.; whether on a regular surface such as land or a floor, or in some substance such as mud, snow, etc.)
- Squirting members with hoses or fire extinguishers
- Scavenger hunts, whether or not such hunts promote theft, vandalism, destruction of property, and humiliating public acts
- Paddling, paddle swats, or any other striking, beating, or hitting
- Kidnappings; transporting a member against his or her will
- All night work or study sessions
- Forcing or requiring members to ingest any liquid or solid matter, edible or non-edible (e.g., any alcoholic substance, chewing tobacco, goldfish, raw onions, spoiled food, etc.)
- Dropping food (eggs, grapes, liver, etc.) or any other item into the mouths of members
- Requiring members to wear unusual, conspicuous, embarrassing, or uncomfortable clothing, or clothing that is not normally considered to be in good taste (e.g., burlap underwear)
- Uncomfortable or inconvenient sleeping arrangements, including sleeping outdoors
- Games designed to physically harm members
- Shows performed in front of brothers or sisters involving only a specific group of members
- Sleep deprivation - waking up members repeatedly during the night (members must be allowed at least six continuous, uninterrupted hours of sleep each night, including during pre-initiation and initiation night)
- Humiliation in front of non-members
- Verbal abuse such as calling any member “scum” or “maggot”; yelling and screaming at members
- Line-ups, or grilling individuals or groups of members with questions of any kind

- Preventing a member from practicing personal hygiene, including making him or her wear the same clothes for a week
- Jumping on the “nail” (which actually is a piece of aluminum foil)
- Penalizing members in any way for not having dates to specific events
- Forcing an individual to participate in any activity or become involved in any situation that is in violation of federal, state or local laws; contrary to the person’s genuine moral or religious beliefs; or contrary to the rules and regulations of the educational institution
- Carrying or wearing objects designed to make a member look foolish
- Physical or mental shocks, regardless of degree or nature
- Unwarranted touching of the body
- Ceremonial burials
- Degrading games and activities
- Public stunts of foolishness
- Tests of courage, bravery
- Tests of stamina
- Any situation that risks serious harm or damage to an individual, whether physical or mental
- Any activity that might reasonably bring physical harm to the individual
- Any activity that would degrade or otherwise compromise the dignity of the individual
- Any activity that requires an unreasonable or inordinate amount of the individual’s time, or in any manner impairs the individual’s academic efforts
- Any activity that makes the individual an object of amusement or ridicule
- Subjecting members to rough-house practices
- Dangerous stunts
- Nudity at any time; causing a member to be indecently exposed or embarrassed
- Wearing or carrying items such as coconuts, helmets, burlap bags, paddles, bricks, or rocks
- Throwing whipped cream, water, paint, etc. on a member
- Extremely loud music or many repetitions of the same music played at any time including during pre-initiation
- Pushing, shoving or tackling members
- Rat Court, Kangaroo Court, or other individual interrogations
- Lengthy work sessions
- War games or any other similar games
- Hot or cold (ice) baths
- Memorization of stories, poems, or information not directly related to your fraternity or sorority
- Putting members in a room that is uncomfortable (noise, temperature, too small) at any time
- Personal errands run by newly initiated members for other members (forced servitude)
- Assigning pranks such as stealing, painting objects, panty raids, or harassing another organization
- Members intentionally messing up a house or a room for the other members to clean

- Members not permitted adequate time for studies (including during pre-initiation or initiation night)
- Deception prior to the initiation designed to convince a potential member that he or she will not be initiated
- Creation of excessive fatigue
- Ditches
- Goat rides
- Ridiculous work assignments, e.g., cleaning floors with toothbrushes, etc.
- Harassing other fraternities or sororities
- Not being allowed to eat for any reason
- Memorization of stories, poems, or information not directly related to your fraternity or sorority (particularly when profanity is included)
- Polling, dunking, or showering any member because of an engagement or birthday
- Any special pre-initiation activities which do not contribute to the development of the member.
- Constantly, or many times throughout the day, asking members to think about what to expect in the initiation ritual
- The marking or branding of a members
- Preventing a member from attending class
- Members expected to do anything exclusively for the entertainment of other initiated members
- Duties and cleaning for newly initiated members that would not normally be assigned to members and that are not shared by initiated members
- Newly initiated members expected to do anything that previously initiated members will not do with them
- Black books, name lists, paddles, etc. on which signatures must be obtained. If these are solely for the purpose of getting to know each other and for no other purpose, and as long as the time and the place set for getting signatures are reasonable, this activity is not objectionable
- Newly initiated members versus previously initiated members in athletic contests that are purposefully unfair and do not promote friendly competition, or instead of teams composed from both groups
- Proof that “every man must be a man” or “every woman must be a woman”
- “Instilling humility” in members
- Tradition: “We did it, why shouldn’t they?”
- Running stairs while reciting material
- Purposeless runs for the sake of creating unity
- Members vehemently booed or hissed at or demeaned when they make a mistake in recitation in front of the organization
- Having members write lists of their faults, sins, believing they must read them to other members
- Bracing and finger-snapping in members’ ears
- Any violation of Ritual instructions, procedures or statutes

- Blindfolding members
- Use of ice, water, fire, or food in a manner not consistent with their proper use
- Any use of materials (nails, lumber, clothes, silverware, etc.) in any member activity not consistent with their proper use
- Excessive or particularly hard questioning of a member over fraternity or sorority information; abusive and extremely pressured questioning of any kind

VI. Statement of Understanding

By signing below, I signify that I have read and understand the Organizational Standards & Philosophy Statement, the summary of the 1995 Texas Statute on Hazing, the Alternatives to Traditional New Member Education Activities, Positive Events and Ideas, the Prohibited Activities and Practices, and will do all I can to ensure that my organization abides by and upholds these requirements and conditions.

If an organization is found to have violated any of the above expectations, the College will have no recourse but to enact its discipline process for those that may be involved. Additionally, such actions may cause the College to suspend the Greek organization's charter.

We, the undersigned, understand the expectations set forth by Austin College regarding our organization.

Name of Organization: _____

President: _____ **Date:** _____

Member Educator: _____ **Date:** _____

Sponsor: _____ **Date:** _____

Every member of the organization needs to sign this agreement prior to Bid Day.

Member Name: _____ Signature: _____

Member Name: _____ Signature: _____