

## Identifying and Preventing Hazing

Bowdoin recognizes that traditions and rituals can create and strengthen community bonds; however, such experiences must be focused on creating meaningful connections, not a bond through shared humiliation. Traditions and rituals must be carried out in an affirming way that is free from coercion, pressure, or intimidation of any kind.

All members of the Bowdoin community must understand what does and does not constitute hazing. Student leaders bear particular responsibility for conducting their team, club, organization, or group in such a manner that welcomes new members without resorting to hazing to create bonding and camaraderie.

When in doubt about whether an activity constitutes hazing, always err on the side of caution and ask a dean, coach, or other College employee who works with student group or teams. Engaging in open conversations about potential situations or categories of activities can be especially helpful. Knowledgeable staff can provide additional examples of behaviors that might constitute hazing, examples of positive group-building activities and rites of passage for new members, assistance with organizing legitimate events to foster teamwork and cohesiveness, and other relevant information and support. Students who choose not to consult knowledgeable staff are taking ownership for their actions and responsibility for any consequences.

## Questions to Ask

Here are some key questions to consider when planning any activity that is part of an initiation or admission into a group or is required for continued acceptance in a group:

- Is a person or group being targeted in an inappropriate way because of status or class year?
- Would you be willing to describe the activity to your own parents, grandparents, the parents of a fellow student, a professor, a dean, the College president, a police officer, or a judge?
- How would you feel if the activity was photographed and appeared in *The Orient* or other publications, or on Social Media?
- Is there a risk of real or even perceived physical or psychological discomfort or harm, *i.e.*, was it demeaning, abusive or dangerous?
- Even if you would not be embarrassed by this activity, can you imagine that someone else might be?
- Could safety be at risk?
- Is there a level of coercion and peer pressure involved?
- Will current members be participating in the activities that new members will be asked to do?
- Do the activities interfere with students' other activities or obligations (academic, extracurricular, family, religious, etc.)?
- Are alcohol and/or drugs involved?

- Is there a sexual element to the activity?
- Do any activities violate College policy or federal, state, or local law?

Answering “yes” or even “maybe” to any of these questions suggests the activity could be construed as hazing and should therefore be avoided.

### **Positive Group Bonding**

There are new-member activities that are positive and/or educationally valid that serve to build team, develop unity by connecting students to one another, create a sense of belonging, and bolster self-esteem. Examples include:

- a scavenger hunt or talent show involving all members of an group or team in which all participants are treated equally and the activities are not embarrassing, demeaning or dangerous;
- a themed dress-up party that is inclusive and not embarrassing, demeaning, or in violation of the College’s policies against discrimination and harassment;
- paintball;
- video game tournaments;
- meals together;
- study sessions;
- community service projects;
- attending other teams’ sporting events;
- movie nights;
- game or trivia nights;
- bowling;
- cooking classes or classes at the Craft Center;
- outdoor games—spike ball, capture the flag, Frisbee, etc.;
- a ropes course training;
- rafting or outdoor trips;
- trips to Freeport, Portland, Fun Town Splash Town, etc.;
- tournaments around group history;
- making and burying a time capsule;
- mentoring relationships between old and new members;
- creating an organizational intramural sports team; or small or large group roundtable discussions on topics important to the team or group.

### **Education, Prevention, & Bystander Intervention Strategies**

The following are some tools and strategies for hazing prevention:

[Free Hazing Prevention Course from the NFHS Learning Center](#)  
[Hazing Prevention: 5 Ds for Effective Bystander Intervention](#)  
[Hazing Prevention 101: Smart Steps 4 Staying Safe](#)  
[We Don’t Haze Video](#)