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AVP & Dean of Students  
Area Dean of Students

## Institutional Policy on Hazing

### Policy Statement

The University of Southern Mississippi is a state institution of higher education devoted to excellence in teaching, research, and service to the people of the state. A part of that mission is fulfilled by the University's commitment to the development of students through academic and extracurricular activities.

In keeping with its commitment to a positive academic environment, The University of Southern Mississippi has unconditionally opposed any situation created intentionally or unintentionally to produce mental, physical, psychological, or emotional discomfort, embarrassment, harassment, or ridicule.

### Reason for Policy/Purpose

This policy is required for the effective communication of University policy regarding hazing.

### Who Needs to Know This Policy

All members of The University of Southern Mississippi community.

### Definitions

N/A

### Policy/Procedures

#### Section 1: Overview

The University of Southern Mississippi unconditionally opposes any situation created intentionally or

unintentionally to produce mental, physical, psychological, or emotional discomfort, embarrassment, harassment, or ridicule.

The University of Southern Mississippi follows both University policy and state law that concerns hazing and any other behavior that could be interpreted as such. Hazing degrades the values of the involved student(s) or organization(s) and creates an environment of disrespect that contradicts the University's creed.

No individual(s) shall directly engage in hazing or indirectly encourage, aid, or assist any other person in hazing. All students and other University representatives, including employees, should immediately report known or suspected hazing violations.

## **Section 2: Hazing Behaviors**

Hazing shall include any or all of the following, but not limited to:

- A. Any willful act or requirement by a student or organization directed against an individual that with or without intent,
  - Is likely to cause bodily harm or danger, injury, physical punishment, or disturbing pain;
  - Is likely to compromise the dignity of a person, cause embarrassment, shame, malicious ridicule, psychological harm, or substantial emotional strain;
  - Would reasonably impair a person's academic efforts;
  - Compels a person to participate in illegal or immoral behavior or behaviors that are contrary to any University policies or state laws.

Examples of hazing include, but are not limited to the following:

- Ingestion of alcohol, food, drugs, or any undesirable substance;
- participation in sexual rituals or assaults;
- Emotionally or psychologically abusive or demeaning behavior;
- Acts that could result in physical, psychological, or emotional deprivation, shock, or harm;
- Physical abuse, e.g., whipping, paddling, beating, tattooing, branding, and exposure to the elements, or the threat of such behaviors;
- Creation of excessive fatigue; Quests, treasure hunts, scavenger hunts, road trips, or any other such activities as required for membership;
- Wearing of public apparel that is conspicuous and not normally in good taste;
- Engaging in public stunts and buffoonery;
- Morally degrading or humiliating games and activities; and
- Any other such activities that are not consistent with academic achievement, fraternal law, ritual or policy, or the regulations and policies of the educational institution or applicable state law.

Where an activity amounts to hazing, a person's consent to the activity is not a defense. In order to

encourage students who may hesitate to report incidents of hazing for fear of revealing other policy violations, the University may offer leniency to a reporting student with respect to the behavior reported, depending on the circumstances involved.

### **Section 3: Supportive Behavior**

Any student shall have the right to be free of all activities which might constitute hazing, while attempting to become a member of, or maintain membership in, a fraternity, sorority, athletic team, student organization, eating club, or other organization. Organizations, their members, and their prospective members are prohibited from engaging in or encouraging others to engage in activities that are defined as hazing.

The creation of an environment conducive and/or supportive to the propagation of hazing traditions or culture is a violation of this policy. Insomuch, it is possible that self-directed or inflicted activities by student(s) or organizations would constitute hazing if a culture or atmosphere is pervasive enough to dictate acceptance, tradition, lineage, or otherwise perceived "need" to perform the activity.

Student organizations are responsible for ensuring that all activities exclude any form of hazing. While members may not be present at a new-member activity, it is still the organization's responsibility to ensure the activity does not include hazing. It is important that organizations realize they are responsible for the new-member activities and are held accountable for hazing violations if they occur.

Any requirement that compels a member or new member to participate in any activity that is illegal, which is known by the compelling person or organization to be contrary to the moral or religious beliefs of a member or new member, or that is contrary to any rules or regulations of this University constitutes hazing. Hazing by individuals or organizations is strictly prohibited at The University of Southern Mississippi.

### **Section 4: Consequences of a Violation**

The University of Southern Mississippi expects its students to conduct themselves in a socially responsible and respectful way. Thus, participation in hazing, either as an individual or as part of any student group, may result in serious individual and organizational consequences including, but not limited to: disciplinary action up to and including expulsion; permanent loss of organizational recognition; and loss of eligibility to remain a member of any club, team, or other USM-affiliated student groups. Consent, implied or expressed, is not a defense to any complaint or charge alleging a hazing violation.

### **Section 5: Mississippi Law**

Mississippi Hazing Law (§97-3-105. Hazing; initiation into the organization.)

- A. A person is guilty of hazing in the first degree when, in the course of another person's initiation into or affiliation with any organization, he intentionally or recklessly engages in conduct that creates a substantial risk of physical injury to such other person or a third person and thereby causes such injury.

1. Any person violating the provisions of "A" shall be guilty of a misdemeanor and, upon conviction thereof, shall be punished by a fine of not more than Two Thousand Dollars (\$2,000) or imprisonment in the county jail for not more than six (6) months, or both.
- B. A person is guilty of hazing in the second degree when, in the course of another person's initiation into or affiliation with any organization, he intentionally or recklessly engages in conduct that creates a substantial risk of physical injury to such other person or a third person.
1. Any person violating the provisions of subsection (3) of this section shall be guilty of a misdemeanor and, upon conviction thereof, shall be punished by a fine of not more than One Thousand Dollars (\$1,000.00).

## Review

The Dean of Students is responsible for the review of this policy every four years (or whenever circumstances require immediate review).

## Forms/Instructions

N/A

## Appendices

N/A

## Related Information

N/A

### All Revision Dates

06/2022, 01/2020, 02/2013, 11/2011

### Approval Signatures

Step Description	Approver	Date
General Counsel	Robert Gholson: General Counsel	06/2022
Director of Compliance and Ethics	Frank Walters: Dir Compl & Ethics/Asc Gen Col	06/2022

VP of Student Affairs	Deanna Anderson: VP Stu Affairs/Prof of Prac	06/2022
Dean of Students	Sirena Cantrell: Dean of Students	06/2022
Assistant Director of Compliance and Ethics	Jennifer Lewis: Asc Dir of Compl & Ethics	02/2022

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