



Damon Sims
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Dear Presidents, Officers, Captains, Advisors, and Coaches of Student Organizations, Athletic Teams, Intramural Teams and Club Sports--

Please read this letter. It contains information that could save a life and help you avoid considerable trouble.

At this challenging time, as we continue to facilitate the in-person experience at Penn State, it remains important for us to be reminded of other issues that must continue to receive our attention, too.

The University Park campus recognizes and supports more than 1,000 student organizations, intramural, and athletic teams which add real value to a student experience all should enjoy. But student engagement and leadership come with both privileges and responsibilities, and perhaps foremost among those responsibilities is the obligation for every student to care for the welfare of their fellow students.

Few things put student welfare in greater jeopardy than hazing. Couple that trouble with the misuse of alcohol and the result can be deadly, as happened in February of 2017, when a student at Penn State—Timothy Piazza—died in a hazing incident near campus. The pain and memory of that experience in our community remain and run deep.

We write to ask that you do all you can to end hazing at Penn State. We write to you because your safety and the safety of every other student at Penn State is our foremost concern. We write to you because hazing violates both Pennsylvania law and University regulations. We write to you to make clear that the consequence for violating these laws and regulations can be a prison sentence and the end of your experience as a student at Penn State.

Misguided or foolish attempts to encourage group loyalty by demeaning, injuring, or endangering members of your organization or team will not be tolerated. Please know that the University will investigate every allegation of hazing to the fullest extent possible. Under the University's anti-hazing policy (<https://policy.psu.edu/policies/ad98>), any individual or organization found responsible for hazing is subject to University discipline that may include expulsion or termination of employment. Those individuals and organizations also are subject to criminal prosecution and the forfeiture of property. With the passage of the Timothy J. Piazza Anti-Hazing law last year, hazing in Pennsylvania now can lead to a felony conviction.

Don't take that chance. Resist anyone who encourages you to join into hazing activities. Report them when they do. Leaders have special responsibilities, and for each of you, this is one.

As a leader of your organization or team, you may not knowingly permit or condone any hazing or other violation of the Code of Conduct by your organization or team or any of its members. Instead, you have a responsibility to act when necessary to prevent hazing and notify appropriate staff and advisors when you are aware of a potential violation. Failure to do so may implicate you in the violation.

And if you know of a victim of hazing, or become a victim yourself, do not hesitate to contact Student Conduct (814-863-0342), Student Activities (814-863-4624), Fraternity or Sorority Life (814-863-8065), Ethics and Compliance (814-865-0721), or the University Police (814-863-1111). Staff members are available to meet with you, your team, or your organization. And if anonymity or an opportunity to report outside those units is preferred, the University's hotline is another option (1-800-560-1637).

We ask that you share this message with your organization or team soon. The other members need to know the gravity of the risk caused by hazing. This practice has no place at Penn State. Let's work together to keep it from happening. We owe that commitment to those we lead and one another.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Damon", with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Damon Sims
Vice President for Student Affairs

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Sandy Barbour", with a vertical line extending downwards from the end of the signature.

Sandy Barbour
Vice President for Intercollegiate Athletics