Hazing: What’s the big deal?
by Ryan Jasen Henne, Director of Greek Life (02/08)

Whether we see it or not, hazing exists. Hazing can be obvious, as in requiring new members to down a beer bong before they enter a pledge event, or requiring first-year cadets to do three extra miles before and after every training session. On the other hand, hazing can rear its ugly head covertly, as in leaders requiring new team members to carry all of the sporting equipment out to the field and not allowing pledges to eat until after the rest of the chapter has been served. Simply put, hazing can be defined as any activity in which any individual or group of individuals is singled out to do anything that the rest of the organization does not have to do. Often, there are penalties or sanctions for those who do not complete the task.

There are three types of hazing: mental, emotional and physical. Mental hazing is often easy to identify: unusual clothing (not in good taste), requiring members to “streak,” slavery or servitude, or quests and scavenger hunts for meaningless items. Emotional hazing if often the most harmful. An example of emotional hazing would be the “buzz saw game” in which a person is shown a buzz saw and then blindfolded. Then a group member holds him or her down and brings the saw closer and closer. The person has no idea that the saw blade has been removed and that he or she was never in any real danger. Physical hazing is often the most apparent; examples include requiring a pledge to eat a dozen raw eggs, branding, calisthenics, or physical assault. For more examples of hazing and its impact, go to http://shs.wustl.edu/healthPromotion/hazing.htm.

People who believe hazing is NOT O.K., believe:
• It’s wrong to make others suffer.
• It lets the ‘bad apples’ take control.
• It teaches the wrong kind of leadership.
• Traditions were made to be broken.

People who believe hazing is O.K., believe:
• It builds loyalty and friendship.
• It builds respect for the organization.
• It brings status to the membership.
• It teaches teamwork.
• They want to be hazed.
• “It’s tradition.”

The fact is that hazing is a crime. Individuals and organizations caught hazing are subject to punishment by local authorities and the University.

So, what do you do if you might be a victim of hazing or have observed hazing? These campus resources are here to support you: Athletics (5-5288), Greek Life (5-5923), Health Promotion Services (5-7139) or Judicial Programs (5-4174). Online resources include http://glo.wustl.edu, http://anti-hazing.com, and http://stophazing.org. It is possible to break the hazing cycle, and I encourage you to do your part. I am available to speak with any students -- individually or in groups. If you have questions, please contact me by e-mail at ryan.henne@wustl.edu or by phone at 314-935-7985.