

March 2, 2015

Dear Skidmore Faculty,

Although Skidmore College has had few reported incidents of hazing in the recent past, the Institutional Policy and Planning Committee Subcommittee on Student Affairs believed that it was necessary to re-evaluate our current policy and develop one that is more comprehensive and holistic. The following policy is a greater articulation of how Skidmore College defines hazing in its entirety. The policy specifically highlights aspects of hazing such as 'Passive Participation', 'Subtle Hazing', 'Consent' which we deem to be facets of hazing that are not touched upon as frequently as the facets of hazing we have defined as 'Harassment Hazing' or 'Violent Hazing'.

This policy is the result of extensive review of hazing policies at both peer and aspirant institutions as well as other institutions that have comprehensively and effectively addressed the issue of hazing on their campuses. In addition, the Institutional Policy and Planning Committee Subcommittee on Student Affairs hosted three community open forums in October, 2014 to gather additional feedback and participated in two extensive conversations with the Institutional Policy and Planning Committee and received the endorsement of the policy from the Student Government Association and Senate.

Our current policy:

Any behavior that is physically, emotionally, or psychologically abusive to an individual or selected group of individuals for the purpose of gaining entrance or acceptance to an established group. (Skidmore Student Handbook)

Our revised policy:

Skidmore College defines hazing as any act committed by a person, whether individually or as a part of a group, against a member of the Skidmore Community and which is intended to have the effect of, or reasonably be expected to have the effect of, humiliating, intimidating, demeaning a community member, or endangering the mental or physical health of a community member. Acts of hazing may involve: being initiated into, affiliated with, participating in, and/or maintaining membership in any organization, club, group, department, and/or team affiliated with Skidmore College.

Skidmore's definition of hazing encompasses all acts of soliciting, directing, aiding, or otherwise participating actively or passively in any of the above acts regardless of their intention or willingness to participate. Skidmore prohibits all hazing activities whether conducted on or off College property.

Every organization, club, group, department, and/or team can provide transformative opportunities for friendship, leadership, personal growth, and discovery. Hazing of any kind is antithetical to these goals; therefore, the College prohibits hazing activities, whether by an individual or an organization. Skidmore College is committed to providing a learning, working, and living environment that reflects and promotes personal integrity, civility, and mutual respect. Members of the Skidmore community have the right to be free from all forms of abuse, harassment, and coercive conduct, including hazing.

The organization, club, group, department, and/or team may be held accountable for actions of individual members.

Consent

Because of the socially coercive nature of hazing, implied or expressed consent to hazing is not a defense under this policy. Offering anyone an opportunity not to take part in an act that is or becomes hazing is not a valid defense of conduct.

Passive participation is defined as, but not limited to: witnessing hazing taking place as a group member, affiliate or guest, or participating in or being present in person or via technology in discussions where hazing is being planned.

Hazing Categories

Subtle Hazing, Harassment Hazing, and Violent Hazing are outlined in this document to guide the respective Skidmore College conduct boards throughout their processes. The definitions of the three forms of hazing are intended to be fluid, and it is the responsibility of the conduct boards to evaluate alleged acts of hazing, but not necessarily to delineate the specific form of hazing.

Subtle Hazing is defined as behavior that emphasizes a systematic power imbalance between new members and other members of the organization, club, group, department, and/or team. These types of hazing are often taken for granted or accepted as “harmless” or meaningless. Subtle hazing typically involves activities or attitudes that breach reasonable standards of mutual respect and place new members on the receiving end of ridicule, embarrassment and/or humiliation tactics. New members often feel the need to endure subtle hazing to feel like part of the group (some types of subtle hazing may also be considered harassment hazing). Examples include, but are not limited to: deception, assigning demerits, silence periods with implied threats for violation, deprivation of privileges granted to other members, requiring new members/rookies to perform duties not assigned to other members, socially isolating new members/rookies, line ups and drills/tests on meaningless information, name calling, requiring new members/rookies to refer to members with titles (e.g. “Mr.” “Miss”) while they are identified with demeaning terms, or expecting certain items to always be in one’s possession.

Harassment Hazing is defined as behavior that causes emotional anguish or physical discomfort in order to feel like part of the group. Harassment hazing may confuse, frustrate, and cause undue stress for new members/rookies (some types of harassment hazing can also be considered violent hazing). Examples include, but are not limited to: verbal abuse, implied threats of violence, requiring new members/rookies to wear embarrassing or humiliating attire, expecting new member/rookie to provide personal services to members (e.g. cooking, cleaning, carrying books, errands, etc.), sleep deprivations, sexual simulations, expecting new members/rookies to be deprived of maintaining a schedule of bodily cleanliness being expected to harass others.

Violent Hazing is defined as behavior that has the potential to cause physical, emotional and/or psychological harm. Examples include, but are not limited to: forced or coerced drug or alcohol consumption, beating, paddling, and other forms of assault, branding, forced or coerced consumption of vile concoctions or substances, burning, water intoxication, expecting abuse or mistreatment of animals, sexual acts, nudity, expecting illegal activity, bondage, abductions/kidnappings, exposure to cold weather or heat without appropriate protection.

Reporting Hazing

Activities believed to be hazing should be reported to the Dean of Students/Vice President for Student Affairs, Director of Athletics, the appropriate Department or Program Chair, or, in the case of student organizations and clubs, the Student Government Association Executive Committee. Hazing may also be reported anonymously on the Skidmore TIPS Hotline 580 TIPS (8477) or on the SGA hazing page (insert URL).

The current student conduct process can be found in the Skidmore College Student Handbook and those found in violation of this, or any of Skidmore College policy may be subject to that conduct process and the local, state and federal criminal codes.

SGA clubs and officers may also be subject to the SGA Executive Board conduct process.

Appendix:

New York State Penal Codes state*:

S 120.16 Hazing in the first degree.

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 which creates a substantial risk of physical injury to such other person or a third person and thereby causes such injury.

Hazing in the first degree is a class B misdemeanor in Skidmore.