



Where We're Going, We Don't Need Roads

"Bob Dylan once wrote 'the times, they are a-changin.' Ron Burgundy never heard that song." – Anchorman (2004)

One of *Anchorman's* main themes is change and the ability, or inability, to adapt. Consider Ron Burgundy's thoughts and actions first as he is paired with a female anchor, later replaced by her, and ultimately moves into a successful co-anchor role. Time is a forward-moving concept, and with time comes the inevitability of change.

Imagine a typical chapter for a moment – there are plenty of fond memories catalogued in scrapbooks, in Flickr accounts, and in Facebook albums. These images tell the tale of past chapter members – maybe they are participating in Greek Week, carrying around paddles, standing in front of Budweiser signs at social events, or tailgating out of their ice and beer-filled car trunks. We like to look at these images and reminisce of a "better time," often thinking to ourselves or telling others, "Those were the days."

Now take a look around the chapter today. Members are still participating in Greek Week, going to football games, hosting social events, and having just as great a time. Sure, some of the locations, themes, and safety mechanisms have changed. So have the attire and haircuts of the members. These days it seems that we look to the past through rose-tinted lenses. It's a natural tendency: brothers of the 1970's likely looked upon the old chapter pictures and heard the tales of the chapter in the 1950's and thought, "those were the days."

We all speak of the past with great reverence. Memories typically exaggerate reality and lead us to paint a false picture of how things really were. As times change, so do we, and so does society. Trust me, what was "cool," "normal," or "acceptable" to past generations does not necessarily match with today's realities (see: pogs, Atari, bell bottoms, and lava lamps for a few examples).

There is nothing wrong with holding history in high regard, in fact, chapters should honor and share their history, but that does not mean they have to repeat it. When you live in the past or try to fight the forward moving progress of society you are ultimately doomed to fail. The hazing culture of today is doomed to fail. Chapters that embrace a hazing and drinking culture of the 60's, 70's, 80's, or even 90's are doomed to fail. However, chapters that embrace the present and plan strategically for the future have the potential to find success beyond their imagination.

Notes from the Frontline

For this month's issue, we interviewed anti-hazing expert Dr. Timothy Marchell to gather his thoughts on hazing prevention issues and trends. Dr. Marchell is the Director of Mental Health Initiatives at Cornell University. In this role he leads institutional strategies to address alcohol abuse, hazing, and mental health problems among Cornell students. Dr. Marchell is also a recurring member of the faculty for [The Novak Institute for Hazing Prevention](#), presented by [HazingPrevention.Org](#) which Sigma Nu has supported since their founding in 2007.

1. *What are the characteristics of student organizations that do not haze?*

In my experience, organizations that do not haze have leaders and alumni that state openly that hazing is unacceptable and unnecessary. The members speak about being a non-hazing group, and they are vigilant about avoiding any practices that could be experienced as coercive, humiliating, or intimidating, or which are unsafe or illegal. They are committed to their values and mission and they transmit those through their process of bringing in new members. *(continued on page 2)*

An Interview with Dr. Marchell *(continued from page 1)*

They [chapter members] engage in positive group-building experiences that foster bonding as well as individual learning and growth. Organizations that have had a history of hazing typically require a thorough process of self-examination, education, and planning in order to achieve these characteristics. In order for a group to change, it is important for alumni to communicate that what they did in the past was a mistake, and that new members will be fully accepted and respected without having to go through hazing.

2. *What have you found is the best defense against hazing?*

Eliminating hazing or preventing it from arising requires a comprehensive approach that works at multiple levels. It involves changes in organizational and campus culture, including beliefs and practices, which intentionally or unintentionally contribute to hazing. Strong anti-hazing statements from school administrators, student leaders, alumni, and officials from national organizations are critical. Education on hazing is vital both for these leaders and for all students, staff, faculty, alumni, and parents. Organizations need creative, non-hazing group-building activities and traditions that meet their needs for cohesion and identity. And for chapters or other groups that are caught hazing, the consequences must be predictable and sufficient to motivate change.

3. *What are some of the successes you have seen in preventing hazing and alcohol/substance abuse?*

When I work with chapters that have been caught hazing, we look at how their initiation activities align with their organizational and personal values. When members step back and look at them side by side, they often see that there is a fundamental disconnect between what they believe and how they act. In a moment of realization, one brother said to his chapter, "The people I'm closest to - my family - never humiliated or intimidated me. So if we're supposed to be 'brothers,' why did we do those things to the pledges?" That was the turning point when the brothers agreed to become a non-hazing chapter.

Another effective strategy has been to anonymously poll the chapter members about their beliefs regarding hazing and the new member process, and then provide the results to them. I find that many members do not believe that it is necessary to humiliate or intimidate new members, but they mistakenly think that most other members do. When they realize that they are not alone, members who oppose hazing are more likely to take a stand against it. We see similar things in relation to alcohol. In our research, we find that a clear majority of students think that it is never socially acceptable to drink to the point of blacking out. But they significantly underestimate how many others share their opinion.

4. *Is hazing a gender specific or Greek only problem?*

Both male and female groups engage in hazing, and it occurs in athletic teams, performing arts groups, and other non-Greek organizations. But fraternity and sorority members, along with athletes, are at the highest risk. In a [national study](#) conducted by researchers at the University of Maine, three-quarters of Greeks and athletes reported experiences of hazing. There are several factors that contribute to the frequency of hazing in Greek organizations. A basic challenge is that many chapters have traditions of hazing that students believe are important to the identity of the group. In addition, the goal of achieving the closeness of brotherhood or sisterhood in a period of a few weeks, rather than over the course of the entire experience of membership, contributes to the belief that the new member process needs to be very intense. Another contributing risk factor is the value many Greek organizations place on secrecy. While secrecy does not automatically result in hazing, it elevates the potential for it because it increases the chance that problematic internal group dynamics will be left unchallenged.

5. *Where do you see the issue of hazing in five years?*

I think we are in the middle of fundamental shift in societal attitudes about hazing, similar to the changes that occurred over the past decade in relation to bullying. Over time, people have realized that bullying is unacceptable because it can cause significant emotional as well as physical harm. Likewise, there is growing recognition that hazing is unacceptable not only when it involves alcohol or physical violence, but also when it includes humiliation or other forms of mental harm. The level of public outrage over hazing deaths also continues to grow. For all of these reasons, I think that campuses and courts are going to be less tolerant of behaviors that were treated with more lenience in the past. In the coming years, the hazing prevention field will develop significantly with new innovations in education and non-hazing group building strategies.