

## “Not All Fraternities...”: Addressing the Issues in Fraternity Culture

Time and time again, stories emerge involving the misbehavior in fraternities: underage drinking, sexual assault, hazing. In 2017, this harsh reality became ever more apparent in the Penn State community, after Timothy Piazza died as a result of hazing activities carried out by the fraternity Beta Theta Pi. His death highlighted the fact that fraternities were not prioritizing the safety and security of its members or its party goers, nor were they prioritizing their self-respect. This can be attributed to the fraternity culture that’s in place, in which fraternity members treat other people in a subhuman way, either through insults, sexual assault, or hazing. This culture needs to be corrected so that students at Penn State feel safe, secure, and respected in all aspects of their life. Three different approaches have been provided in order to address this pressing problem.

### Approach 1: Prioritize Mental Health Intervention

Research indicates that hazing in fraternities can expose men to psychological trauma, hyper-masculinity, intense feelings, depression, avoidance, and anxiety. These internal issues often manifest into deeper problems or events, such as alcoholism, sexual abuse, or toxic masculinity. Therefore, this option is a “looking from the inside out” approach through which we combat toxic fraternity culture by addressing the mental health issues that create it. Essentially, this option states that we should stop the issue before it starts by creating a fraternity culture that prioritizes mental health check-ins for the betterment of the brothers.

Possible Actions:	Drawbacks/tradeoffs/costs:	Stakeholders:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• One-on-one mental health check-ins with a therapist could be made mandatory for a time period such as once a month or once every 2 weeks.</li> <li>• Fraternities could be made to appoint a mental health chair that ensures the well-being of the group by organizing mandatory educational sessions with presenters.</li> <li>• Mandatory group discussions about mental health that are monitored by a mental health professional could take place.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There could be resistance from fraternity brothers due to the stigma surrounding mental health for men. They may feel that their masculinity is threatened in a practice that requires vulnerability. For this reason, group discussions may not feel like a space in which the brothers are comfortable talking about their feelings.</li> <li>• It would cost much of the brothers’ time and energy to implement multiple mandatory events related to mental</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fraternity members – They hold the most obvious stake in this issue. In fact, they can benefit the most from this option, as their mental health could drastically improve if focus is given to it</li> <li>• The University/mental health services – Penn State could benefit from this approach. Not only would they be able to take better care of their students, but successfully carrying out this approach could raise their status. They also could lose out if the approach isn’t successful, because they’re going to have to invest resources into</li> </ul>

	<p>health. This may cause further resistance.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There could be a monetary cost for Penn State associated with hiring mental health professionals, securing large meeting spaces, or hiring presenters.</li> </ul>	<p>this approach. If it isn't taken seriously, the University looks bad</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The community – generally speaking, the community (both State College and a broader community as well) benefits when its members are mentally healthy</li> </ul>
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**Approach 2: Education**

Many of the devastating events that occur within fraternity culture are simply due to the lack of education. This includes the education of fraternity members, guests of the fraternity house, and community members in general about how to have the safest experience possible. Because of this, providing education to these groups about how to navigate sticky situations may benefit all parties involved.

Possible Actions:	Drawbacks/tradeoffs/costs:	Stakeholders:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Providing resources/information on how to report sexual assault</li> <li>• Drug and alcohol abuse reminders</li> <li>• Enforce mandatory educational sessions for fraternity brothers on consequences of poor behavior</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No changes are made if groups are unreceptive- if fraternity members don't take this education seriously, then no changes will be made</li> <li>• People are unwilling to/cannot dedicate time to becoming educated</li> <li>• People agree to become educated but fail to apply what they've learned</li> <li>• Penn State will have to invest resources into educating fraternity members</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fraternity members – they stand to benefit from being educated, but of course they're going to have to put in the work to become educated, which could affect them, especially if it takes up too much time</li> <li>• The University – one could argue that it's Penn State's obligation to educate its students in all aspects of life, so doing this would be part of the university's job; of course, the university has to invest resources and if the education isn't effective, it could be a waste of resources.</li> </ul>

### Approach 3: Policy and Enforcement

Although colleges have attempted to reform fraternities' damaging habits, security and safety are still severely lacking within fraternities. So, if the current policies along with increased education and mental health awareness are inefficient, what can colleges like Penn State do to handle these safety issues more directly? Perhaps, instead of punishing a fraternity for something that happens (whether it be a hazing death, sexual assault case, or underage drinking), the goal should be to create environments through policy and policing so that it never reaches that point in the first place.

Possible Actions:	Drawbacks/tradeoffs/costs:	Stakeholders:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assigning police officers to monitor fraternities during popular party nights</li> <li>• Employing fraternity monitors / increasing the presence of these monitors in Frats, especially during periods where wrongdoing is especially prevalent</li> <li>• Reforming fraternity habits through implementing policies that limit hazing and harshly punishes fraternities that enable sexual assault and underage drinking</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lots of human resources will have to be invested into policing these fraternities to achieve the best results</li> <li>• Creativity will need to be used to create policies that reform fraternities but still make them appealing</li> <li>• If fraternities feel like the policing is too oppressive, then they could disband and form fraternities separate from the University, which would mean that they would no longer fall under the University's authority</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fraternity members - An increased police presence might hamper their sense of autonomy and self-respect, as they could feel like they are being treated like children, or that they are being treated unfairly because of past incidents that they are not responsible for.</li> <li>• The college community - Many people go to and join fraternities. An increase in oversight could potentially allow them to relax when considering going to a fraternity so that they can have a fun time and not have to worry about a potentially life altering event.</li> </ul>

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