

## Hazing Case Study Scenario #3

### *Medium Regional University – Primarily Commuter Campus*

#### **The Context:**

Metro Valley University (MVU) is a regional public university with approximately 30,000 students, of which about 18,000 are undergraduates. Located in a large metro area in a suburb about 20 miles from a major city, MVU serves a predominantly commuter population, with only 15% of students living in on-campus housing. The university draws from a diverse student body, including many first-generation college students, working students, and students who balance significant family and work responsibilities alongside their academic commitments. The institution has limited athletics and campus life activities. The fraternity and sorority life community is relatively small but growing, with approximately 5% of students affiliated across 12 chapters representing the Interfraternity Council (IFC | 4 chapters), Panhellenic Council (PHC | 4 chapters), National Pan-Hellenic Council (NPHC | 3 chapters), and one independent multicultural fraternity.

MVU's FSL community operates without Greek housing, with most chapter activities occurring in campus meeting spaces or off-campus venues. The Office of Student Involvement includes one Coordinator of Fraternity and Sorority Life who manages all Greek organizations along with other student organization responsibilities. The coordinator works closely with chapter advisors and inter/national organization representatives to provide support. MVU conducts informal recruitment year-round for most organizations, with IFC and PHC holding structured recruitment in both fall and spring. The smaller size of the community means chapters are very visible to one another, and there is often strong inter-council collaboration on programming and events.

#### **The Situation:**

Alpha Beta (AB) fraternity conducted fall recruitment with 12 new men joining, which represented significant growth for the chapter that had struggled with membership retention in recent years. Eager to build a strong new member class and establish better chapter cohesion, the chapter leadership planned a "new member retreat" at a cabin owned by an alumnus located about two hours from campus. The retreat was scheduled for a weekend in late September and was described to new members as an opportunity to bond with each other and active members while learning about chapter values and history.

The retreat began on Friday evening, with new members and active members arriving at the cabin around 6:00 PM. What was supposed to be an educational and team-building experience quickly took a concerning turn. New members were told to surrender their cell phones and car keys "to minimize distractions" and were informed they would participate in a series of challenges throughout the weekend to "prove their commitment" to the fraternity. These challenges included a scavenger hunt in the woods at night without flashlights, a physical fitness competition where new members competed against each other in push-ups and running while active members watched and criticized their performance, and required consumption of large amounts of food and energy drinks within time limits.

On Saturday evening, active members introduced a "trust exercise" where new members were blindfolded and led into the woods by active members. While blindfolded, new members were verbally berated about their perceived shortcomings and told they needed to "earn" their place in the fraternity. Some new members were left alone in the woods for periods of time and told to find their way back to the cabin. The experience was intensely frightening for several new members, particularly those who had never been camping or spent time in rural areas.

The situation came to light when one new member, David, a working student who had to request time off from his part-time job to attend the retreat, left the cabin early Sunday morning. David walked to a nearby gas station and called a friend to pick him up, feeling unsafe and concerned about what else might happen. He reported that he and other new members were sleep-deprived, emotionally exhausted, and that at least two new members had gotten sick from being forced to eat and drink too much. When David returned to campus, he met with the Coordinator of Fraternity and Sorority Life to

report what had occurred. The coordinator immediately contacted the other new members, several of whom confirmed David's account and said they felt they couldn't leave earlier because their phones and keys had been taken and they didn't know the area.

**Your Role:**

**You are the Council President and also serve as a student representative on the university's Greek Life Advisory Board. The Dean of Students has asked you to work with the FSL Coordinator and the Council Executive Board to develop a response to this situation. You are asked to create a plan that addresses the immediate safety and support needs of Alpha Beta new members, make recommendations for appropriate accountability measures for chapter leadership and members who organized and participated in the retreat activities, recommend educational programming on what constitutes hazing and appropriate new member education practices for all FSL chapters, help establish clear policies regarding off-campus events and overnight activities, and creates better oversight mechanisms for recruitment and new member activities in a small FSL community with limited professional staff resources. Consider how the commuter nature of your campus and limited professional staffing affects both the risks of hazing and the resources available for prevention and response.**

Keywords: medium regional university, public university, suburban campus, commuter campus, small Greek community, limited housing, IFC fraternity, physical hazing, isolation, off-campus activities, limited oversight, new member retention, trust exercises, working students