

Hazing Case Study Scenario #4

Regional Commuter University – NALFO Organization

The Context:

Riverside Regional University (RRU) is a public regional institution with approximately 20,000 students, of which about 17,000 are undergraduates. Located in a diverse metropolitan suburb, RRU serves a predominantly commuter population with approximately 12% of students living in on-campus housing. The student body is racially and ethnically diverse, with significant populations of Latinx students (35%), Asian/Pacific Islander students (18%), Black students (15%), and white students (25%), along with growing international student enrollment. Many RRU students are first-generation college students who work part-time or full-time jobs while attending school, and a substantial number maintain significant family responsibilities, including caring for younger siblings or supporting family income.

The fraternity and sorority life community at RRU is small but actively growing, with approximately 2% of students affiliated across 10 chapters. The community includes the Interfraternity Council (IFC | 3 chapters), Panhellenic Council (PHC | 2 chapters), National Pan-Hellenic Council (NPHC | 3 chapters), and Latinx Greek Council (LGC | 2 chapters) which includes organizations affiliated with the National Association of Latino Fraternal Organizations (NALFO). RRU's FSL community operates without dedicated Greek housing, with chapter activities occurring primarily in campus spaces, cultural centers, or members' off-campus residences. The Office of Student Engagement includes one Coordinator of Fraternity and Sorority Life who shares responsibilities with overseeing other cultural and identity-based student organizations. The coordinator works closely with the university's Office of Intercultural Student Engagement to support culturally-based Greek organizations.

The Situation:

Alpha Beta Gamma (ABG) sorority, a NALFO-affiliated organization focused on serving the Latinx community, conducted fall recruitment and welcomed a new member class of eight women. The chapter has a strong reputation for cultural programming, community service in local Latinx neighborhoods, and academic support for members. Many chapter members are first-generation college students themselves and take pride in mentoring younger Latinas navigating higher education. The chapter's membership intake process is designed to educate new members about the organization's history, the broader NALFO movement, Latinx cultural heritage, and leadership development.

Eight weeks into the semester, Carmen, a second-year student and ABG new member, met with her assigned academic advisor, Professor Maria Herrera, for a mid-semester check-in. Professor Herrera noticed that Carmen appeared exhausted, had dark circles under her eyes, and seemed distracted during the appointment. When Professor Herrera asked how Carmen was adjusting to college, Carmen initially said everything was fine but then became emotional and began to open up about her experiences.

Carmen disclosed that she was participating in the ABG membership intake process and that she was "not getting much sleep." She explained that new members were required to attend "educational sessions" at various members' apartments and off-campus locations from 10:00 PM to 2:00 or 3:00 AM on weeknights, in addition to longer weekend sessions. During these sessions, new members were required to memorize extensive amounts of information about the organization's history, founder biographies, Greek letters and symbols, chapter lineage dating back to the founding, songs and chants, and detailed information about each active member. Carmen described being tested on this information repeatedly, and if new members made mistakes or couldn't recall information quickly enough, the entire group would have to start the session over or face additional requirements.

Carmen shared that the late-night sessions were referred to as "study sessions" but that actual studying for her classes was prohibited during these meetings. She was falling behind in her coursework because, between the late-night sessions, her part-time job at a retail store (20 hours per

week), and her classes, she was averaging only three to four hours of sleep per night. Carmen mentioned that she was afraid to speak up because she didn't want to disrespect the active members, many of whom she looked up to as role models and who had helped her adjust to college life. She also expressed that her family was very proud of her for being selected to join the organization and she felt pressure not to disappoint them by dropping out of the process.

Carmen emphasized that the active members were "really nice" and "not trying to be mean," explaining that they frequently told new members that this process was about "building sisterhood," "honoring those who came before," and "proving dedication to the Latina community." She noted that several active members had shared their own experiences going through similar processes and framed this as an important tradition that connected them to Latinas across the country who had undergone the same experience. Carmen specifically said, "I don't think they realize how hard this is with work and school, but I also don't want to seem weak or like I can't handle it."

Professor Herrera, who is trained as a mandatory reporter and has completed the university's hazing awareness training, recognized that Carmen's description raised serious concerns about hazing, particularly given the impact on Carmen's sleep, academics, and well-being. Professor Herrera consulted with the Chair of her department and then filed a report with the Dean of Students' Office. When the FSL Coordinator and Student Conduct Office reached out to other ABG new members, they confirmed similar experiences and noted that sessions were sometimes held at locations off campus, making it difficult for those without cars to get home safely late at night. The new members also revealed that they had been told to keep the process "private" and not discuss it with non-members, which they understood as an instruction not to tell anyone about the late-night sessions.

Your Role:

You are the Greek Council President and also serve as a student representative on the university's Diversity and Inclusion Student Advisory Board. The Dean of Students has convened a meeting that includes you, the FSL Coordinator, a representative from the Intercultural Student Engagement Center, and the Director of Community Standards to address this situation. You are asked to help develop a comprehensive response plan that addresses the immediate well-being and academic support needs of ABG new members (particularly considering their work and family obligations), make recommendations for appropriate accountability measures for the chapter while being sensitive to cultural context and the organization's mission, provides education about hazing that acknowledges the difference between cultural education and harmful practices, creates support for culturally-based organizations to develop meaningful membership intake processes that honor tradition without causing harm, and establishes mechanisms for students to report concerns about Greek organizations without fear that their communities will be unfairly targeted or misunderstood. Consider how you will balance respect for cultural traditions and the important role culturally based organizations play in supporting Latinx students with the need to ensure student safety and well-being.

Keywords: regional public university, suburban campus, commuter campus, diverse student body, small Greek community, NALFO sorority, Latinx Greek Council, culturally-based organization, sleep deprivation, working students, first-generation students, family obligations, mandatory reporter, cultural traditions, community service mission