Piazza Center's Together Forward – Newsletter – April 2022

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Ground-Breaking Community of Practice Approach to Campus Hazing and Hazardous Drinking Launching Summer 2022

This Piazza Center with our partners are excited to announce the launch of the *Creating Communities of Practice to Address Campus Hazing and Hazardous Drinking in Fraternity and Sorority Life*. Dr. Robert Turrisi, Professor of Biobehavioral Health and Prevention Research Center, *at* Penn State University stated,

"This is a game changing project that has a real opportunity to greatly reduce hazing in fraternities and sororities."

The study is a three-year collaboration between Piazza Center at Penn State, the Gordie Center at the University of Virginia and the With Us Center at Cal Poly. More than a dozen experts, six institutions and a proven set of research guidelines promises to yield sound professional practices in the crucial areas of hazing and hazardous drinking prevention. Experts along with students and professionals from select campuses will co-develop custom strategies to reduce risky behaviors.

The span of the project is designed to increase campus implementation and adoption of strategies informed by literature, incorporate local data, and test and build new approaches to pressing hazing problems. The study aims to create a body of research that can inform professional practice.

Built on the premise that the application of prevention and intervention research in FSL can be a starting point for positive campus cultural change, the study's goals are to:

- Substantially reduce substance misuse and hazing
- Significantly increase safety and reduce harm, violence and deaths
- Fill a gap in the literature on sound professional practices that create behavior change
- Create a new standard for intervention and prevention in FSL across the nation
- Build a pathway forward and the belief that fraternities and sororities can live up to their promise of being safe and transformative organizations

Each campus is responsible for an implementation team of two students and two staff that includes an FSL professional and a prevention/intervention specialist as well as plans for student and staff departures/transitions. The institutional commitment also involves participation in community of practice meetings, full implementation of vetted strategies and payment of annual fees to cover consulting costs.

"Since its inception, West Virginia University has consistently partnered with the Piazza Center on various initiatives including the Fraternity & Sorority Experience Survey, the National Scorecard and now

this study on hazardous drinking behavior. The Piazza Center does more than just talk about the issues. Without them, there would be a significant gap in the professionalism of our industry," said Matthew Richardson, Director of the Center for Fraternal Values and Leadership at West Virginia University. "We are one of the campuses that has experienced a totally unnecessary student death in recent years. The more collaborative we can be in helping to yield important data to inform practice, the better. We owe Nolan Burch's legacy that."

The project has been in the planning stages for 18 months. In addition to sponsorship by the three Centers mentioned above, the study includes a formal relationship with StopHazing for use of their hazing assessment instrument and consultation with the universities and research faculty listed below in project design.

Higher education faculty assisting in assessment and research, as well as respected prevention and higher education research faculty to consult with campuses on their prevention and intervention strategies include:

- Dr. Elizabeth Allan, Professor of Higher Education, University of Maine and Principal of StopHazing
- Dr. James Barber, Associate Professor and Senior Associate Dean for Academic Programs, College of William & Mary
- Dr. Patrick Biddix, Professor of Higher Education, University of Tennessee Knoxville
- Dr. Jason Kilmer, Associate Professor in Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences at the University of Washington
- Dr. Pietro Sasso, Assistant Professor, Educational Leadership at Stephen F. Austin University
- Dr. Robert Turrisi, Professor of Biobehavioral Health and Prevention Research Center, *at* Penn State University

This approach is unique as it focuses on utilizing relationships across campuses, including students, to apply academic methods to current problems and use data and local knowledge to develop customized prevention approaches. Academic influences include prevention and intervention research from Health, Human Development, Biobehavioral Health, Epidemiology, Sociology, Psychology and Higher Education. The guiding principles for the Community of Practice will be: expectations and attitudes, intake/recruitment practices, educational programs, policies and procedures, accountability, and referral and counseling. These were adapted from the successful, 20-year-old APPLE Training Institute sponsored by the University of Virginia and its Gordie Center. The project is also in partnership with StopHazing which leads the Hazing Prevention Consortium (HPC). HPC is one of several models that influenced the CoP project structure.

Throughout the process, student input is a highly valued part of the proposed study and community of practice. Both by centering on student behavior change as well as embedding students in the diagnosis of problems, review of current professional practice, evaluation of interventions, and the assessment of change, student voices are centered in the project.

Participating institutions will reflect on their philosophies, policies, programs, and practices to effectively reduce hazing and hazardous drinking. This process will engage in four feedback steps including:

- Identification of hazing and hazardous drinking practices
- Understanding how professionals interface with students, chapters, and communities
- Examining how students perceive issues and solutions

- A robust evaluation of strategies

In addition to the formative evaluation of strategies, a summative assessment will add individual conduct statistics and student organization statistics (three years prior to current available data) in a case study design to determine the efficacy of the change model. Participating campuses are currently completing baseline assessments and the first meetings will take place in May and June.

Read the first article about this project.