Hazing Incident Makes Headlines at UGA

February brought serious news from a sister institution. Eleven brothers were arrested for hazing at a single fraternity at the University of Georgia. The UGA Police Chief stated, “When we contacted them [the alleged victims], it became apparent that there were a number of activities where pledges were being struck with fists.” Let’s look at some aspects of this developing story:

• **The campus acted strongly.** The arrests were made by campus police. In fact, the information that led to the arrests came from the Student Affairs office. UGA’s policy and actions reflect “zero tolerance” for hazing.

• **Word travels fast.** The police learned of the conduct the day after the incident. It’s impossible to hide in a world of cell phone pictures and texts.

• **It’s still hazing, even without serious injuries.** The police chief stated that, although there were “some physical injuries,” there was “nothing that required medical treatment.” In short, serious criminal charges do not require serious physical injury.

• **These charges will haunt the accused for years.** The defendants are already easily identifiable on social media platforms.

• **The members could face significant jail time.** Even without injuries that required medical treatment, if found guilty, the defendants could face up to 12 months in jail and a $5,000 fine.

• **The consequences could have been worse.** The authorities have chosen to treat this as a “single event” even though multiple victims were involved. The next prosecutor could see that differently and bring separate charges for each victim.

• **UGA will also act.** The members will be charged separately in a student conduct process. The fraternity has already been interimly suspended.

The students appear to be fighting the charges, so there may be more developments. Don’t become your own story.

**Things to think about:**
1. Does your campus have a similar policy? You bet it does.
2. Have you looked at your campus policy and state law?
3. Even if acquitted, will the stories identifying these brothers ever go away?
4. What if the injuries had been more severe? Hazing could have been the least of the charges.

**Correction** – The January GRB referenced a hazing case where two defendants were sentenced to two years in prison. One defendant was alleged to have actively participated in the beating. The other did not beat the victim. We regret the error.

**For more information:**
• “Fraternity members turned themselves in, now face UGA review of hazing charges,” The Red & Black, 7 Feb 2014.
• “Nearly a dozen UGA fraternity members charged with hazing,” Athens Banner-Herald, 7 Feb 2014.
• Alabama hazing statute