

The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley™

Dean of Students

Maximizing Student Success

Rebecca K. Gadson
Dean of Students



Dear [First_Name],

UTRGV is committed to providing a safe educational environment for all students. Because safety of our students is our top priority, hazing in any form is not tolerated. In accordance with Texas law, the university provides all enrolled students details about how state law and university regulations define and address hazing. Individuals engaging in hazing may be subject to university discipline, fines, and/or criminal charges. If you are aware of hazing activities, please put the safety of our students first and **Report It** or contact the **Office of the Dean of Students** at (956) 882-5141 (Brownsville) or (956) 665-2260 (Edinburg). Details about how state law and university regulations define and address hazing are provided below.

Texas Law

The 70th Texas Legislature enacted a law concerning hazing which became effective on September 1, 1987 and was recently amended effective September 1, 2019. Under the law, individuals or organizations engaging in hazing could be subject to fines and charged with a criminal offense.

According to the law, a person can commit a hazing offense not only by engaging in a hazing activity, but also by soliciting, directing, encouraging, aiding or attempting to aid another in hazing; by intentionally, knowingly or recklessly allowing hazing to occur; or by failing to report in writing to the Dean of Students, firsthand knowledge that a hazing incident is planned or has occurred. The fact that a person consented to or acquiesced in a hazing activity is not a defense to prosecution for hazing under this law.

In an effort to encourage reporting of hazing incidents, the law grants immunity from civil or criminal liability to any person who reports a specific hazing event in good faith and without malice to the Dean of Students or other appropriate official of the institution and immunizes that person from participation in any judicial proceeding resulting from that report. Additionally, a doctor or other medical practitioner who treats a student who may have been subjected to hazing may make a good faith report of the suspected hazing activities to police

or other law enforcement official and is immune from civil or other liability that might otherwise be imposed or incurred as a result of the report. The penalty for failure to report is a fine of up to \$1,000.00, up to 180 days in jail, or both. Penalties for other hazing offenses vary according to the severity of the injury which results and range from \$500.00 to \$10,000.00 in fines and/or confinement for up to two years.

Hazing Defined

The law and the University defines hazing as **any intentional, knowing, or reckless act, occurring on or off campus, by one person alone or acting with others, directed against a student for the purpose of pledging, being initiated into, affiliating with, holding office in, or maintaining membership in an organization.**

Hazing includes but is not limited to:

1. Any type of physical brutality, such as whipping, beating, striking, branding, electronic shocking, placing of a harmful substance on the body, or similar activity;
2. Involves sleep deprivation, exposure to the elements, confinement in a small space, calisthenics, or other similar activity that subjects the student to an unreasonable risk of harm or that adversely affects the mental or physical health or safety of the student;
3. Involves consumption of food, liquid, alcoholic beverage, liquor, drug, or other substance that subjects the student to an unreasonable risk of harm or that adversely affects the mental or physical health or safety of the student;
4. Any activity that induces, causes, or requires the student to perform a duty or task which involves a violation of the Penal Code.
5. Involves coercing the student to consume a drug or alcoholic beverage or liquor in an amount that would lead a reasonable person to believe that the student is intoxicated.

University Disciplinary Rules

The law does not affect or in any way restrict the right of the University to enforce its own rules against hazing. Rules and Regulation of the Board of Regents of The University of Texas, Series 50101, Number 2, Section 2.8, provide that

- a. Hazing with or without the consent of the student whether on or off campus is prohibited by The University of Texas System, and a violation of that prohibition renders both the person inflicting the hazing and the person voluntarily submitting to the hazing subject to discipline. Knowingly failing to report hazing may also subject one to discipline.
- b. Initiations or activities by organizations may include no feature which is dangerous, harmful, or degrading to the student and a violation of this prohibition renders both the organization and participating individuals subject to discipline.

Penalized Organizations

In accordance with requirements of the Texas Education Code, Section 51.936(c), the following registered student organizations have been penalized for hazing within the past three years:

- UTRGV has no organization to report.
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For further information or clarification of probationary member activities, contact the **Office of the Dean of Students**. Additional information on hazing and reports of incidents can be found at utrgv.edu/hazing.

Visit our website and follow us on social media. Do you have comments or questions? Your feedback is important for us. Email us at dos@utrgv.edu. or give us a call at (956) 665-2260.



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