

# Be True to You - Choose Your Group at CSU

Student organizations and campus and community groups can help you find others with common interests and goals that can lead to life-long friendships and an enriched student experience. Colorado State University and the broader Fort Collins community have many healthy groups and organizations for students. However, from time to time, the University becomes aware of unsafe group behaviors or hazing practices. These harmful behaviors not only impact our students who are directly involved, but also impact our community as a whole. Not all groups provide a healthy, positive experience.

Keep these things in mind as you explore being a member or leader of a group:

## Look for groups that have these qualities:

- ✓ **Appreciates dialogue and questions:** Is open to the free exchange of ideas with a focus on learning. Answers your questions without becoming judgmental and punitive.
- ✓ **Democratic:** Shares decision making and encourages accountability and oversight.
- ✓ **Develops its members:** Encourages critical thinking, autonomy, and builds skills and self-esteem.
- ✓ **Encourages relationships:** Will encourage communication with family, community interaction and staying connected to existing friendships.
- ✓ **Membership is a choice:** You are able to leave the group and still remain in contact with leaders and members if you so choose.
- ✓ **Open to change:** Will admit failings and mistakes and accept constructive criticism and advice.
- ✓ **Positive reputation:** You hear and read good things about the group and there is no negative media.
- ✓ **Shares information:** Discloses information and can offer an independently audited financial statement regarding budget and expenses. Will tell you more than you want to know.

## Avoid groups that have:

- ✗ **Aggressive recruitment:** Persistently trying to engage unwanted conversation with door knocks, phone calls, or hanging around your living space can be crossing boundaries even if the approaches are friendly. You have the right to say "No," and that should be respected.
- ✗ **Authoritarianism:** The group or leader is always right and has an exclusive means of knowing the truth. Other comparable groups and sources are considered wrong.
- ✗ **Deception:** A group's identity, affiliation, and advertising should be clearly identified, with beliefs and practices transparent. Events, surveys, contests, and other recruitment methods should name the organization and its full purpose. For example, you are invited to a pizza party or hike by new friends but it turns into an attempt to recruit you.
- ✗ **Hazing:** Activities that are humiliating, controlling, degrading, abusive, or dangerous and expected of someone joining or participating in the group.
- ✗ **Invasiveness:** Attempts to gain inappropriate personal, financial, relational, or emotional information about or from you.
- ✗ **Isolation:** There is implicit or explicit pressure to not question the authority of leaders, to not date or associate with others outside the group; to lie to or disengage from your family or other community; or to avoid involvement in academics, campus activities, and other groups.
- ✗ **Negative reputation:** There are first person accounts, records, books, news articles, websites or television programs that document abuses of the group or group leader.
- ✗ **Shame:** The group shames you if you do not align with the group norms, give money, or spend time with them and you are left feeling unworthy or wrong or misguided in some way.
- ✗ **Shunning:** Reasons for leaving the group are denigrated and you are made to feel wrong (or even evil) for leaving. You are already involved and do not know how to get out of the group. You feel stuck as others have been shunned when leaving the group.

## Frequently Reported Hazing Behaviors

- ✗ Directed to associate with specific people and not others in order to belong to the group.
- ✗ Intentionally deprived of sleep by other group members.
- ✗ Drinking large amounts of alcohol to the point of getting sick or passing out.
- ✗ Being coerced, pressured or forced to participate in a drinking game.
- ✗ Singing or chanting in a public space.
- ✗ Screamed, yelled, or cursed at by other members.

**Reach out** if you or someone that you know experiences harmful or questionable behaviors from a group and its membership or leaders. **Support is available. Leaving an unsafe group can be difficult.**

Dean of Students – (970) 491-5312

Your Resident Assistant or Residence Director

Counseling Center – 491-6053

After hours counselor – 491-7111

Tell Someone – (970) 491-1350

CSU Police Department – (970) 491-6425 (non-emergency)

**If in danger call 911**

Materials are adapted from the <https://uafamily.arizona.edu> and <http://culturededucation.com/warningsigns.html> and <https://info.gr.am/hazing-is-9697253>



**Colorado State University**

DIVISION OF STUDENT AFFAIRS

Dean of Students