



The Sig House

A Newsletter from the Board of Grand Trustees

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ALL CAPS or Emoticons?

Good communication is essential for a good outcome. Yet, as it plays out between house corps and active chapters, it's often not so good. To quote a famous line from the movie Cool Hand Luke, "What we have here is a failure to communicate."

Many house corp members are old school in how they communicate (sometimes *really* old school). Take the email style that is written in ALL CAPS. This style is typically only used to emphasize something IMPORTANT. So, how is an email to be interpreted that has every word IN CAPS? On the active chapter side of communication is Millennial Shorthand: LOL, BTW, OMG, WTF and hundreds of emoticons. What's to be made of this? This is the fraternity equivalent of Mars and Venus.

Many house corp members grew up in a generation where rugged individualism was the norm. Brother John Wayne epitomized this trait and was famous for saying "A man's gotta do what a man's gotta do." Today's active brothers rely more on group think. They value the opinions of others and seek them out with social media. This difference in and of itself can be a big hindrance in good communication with house corps.

Millennials tend to be non-confrontational. When confronted by a house corp mandate, they will often be unresponsive, evasive or placating. Unresponsive can be maddening because it's uncertain whether the communication was received at all. Evasive is intended to shift blame or

focus on to someone or something else. Placating is agreeing to do something without really doing anything (tell them what they want to hear).

Active brothers have vastly different priorities than their house corp landlords. While one of those priorities is, hopefully, to excel in academics, many are more self serving: girls, parties and no one to tell them what to do. They have been released from mom and dad's chore wheel so can view the house corp as surrogate parents and best to be avoided. So how can this communication breakdown be fixed?

1. Engage in personal contact. Face to face communications reveal a host of issues that the written word cannot including body language and verbal tone. These nuances are HUGE in understanding what is really going on. To achieve this:

2. Schedule house corp board meetings at the chapter house. Good things will happen: board members will get personally acquainted with active brothers. You will find that they are really not all that different than you were at that age. They have hopes and dreams and are trying to figure out what life is all about. (Hell, I'm *still* trying to figure that out.) They are seeking approval from supportive and mature brothers. In spite of how they act at times, they know that they don't know a lot about life. Positive encouragement helps point them the right way. Criticism, on the other hand, generally shuts down communication.

3. Encourage potential leaders. Sigma Chi is all about growing leaders. Some think that leaders are born but, for most, it's a learning and maturation process.

Sigma Chi provides active a governing structure to learn leadership. Consul, Pro Consul, Quaestor, Tribune, Magister, Kitchen Steward, Risk Manager, House Manager and other roles are training ground for career and family obligations to come. They also instruct about the importance of giving back (it's about others and not about me). So, house corp members can encourage potential leaders to step up to the challenge. Many of these brothers don't yet have the confidence to step up on their own. A word of encouragement could make all the difference. The added bonus is that with the right brothers in charge of active chapter, the house corp is likely to have fewer problems.

4. Establish and grow a scholarship endowment. While house corp's main focus is housing, it can also raise money for scholarship. If the chapter benefits from annual scholarship awards, it will help recruit more academically inclined brothers. The awards should be handed out by alums at a scholarship dinner so it's clearly understood that alums were the source of the funds and so the winners can be showcased as an encouragement to lower performers. With that in mind, instead of handing out all scholarships to the highest grade earners, consider awarding scholarships to Most Improved. Moving from a 1.0 to a 2.5 grade average can make all the difference whether a brother that graduates or flunks out. Encourage better performance. The lesson will last a lifetime.

ALL CAPS or emoticons? Communication between the generations can be a challenge but using these time tested techniques will improve the results.

By Grand Trustee Rich Thompson IHSV

Taming the Energy Tiger

Winter weather will soon start spiking energy costs of many chapter houses. Heating chapter houses is always a major bite of the budget. With energy prices ever rising, proper budgeting and

better control of heating costs is essential before the energy tiger pounces on another victim.

In older chapter housing, poor insulation and inefficient or poorly tuned HVAC equipment is often the culprit. In new facilities built to conserve energy, the tiger is the tenant who carelessly leaves doors and windows open.

Fortunately, many states offer energy conservation loans or rebates to help old housing become more energy efficient. These opportunities trigger an "energy audit" to determine where the building needs help. The energy audit is usually arranged through your local power, gas or oil provider. If available, do this first since it will provide a priority list to determine needed upgrades and cost. Most energy upgrades pay for themselves in less than ten years so upgrading is more of an investment than an expense. If your state offers assistance in energy audits, loans and/or rebates RUN, don't walk, to the phone and investigate the options today.

Here is a handy checklist of things to look for:

- Check doors for proper weatherstripping. Add where needed.
- If windows are single pane, add aluminum storm windows or replace with thermopane windows.
- Close vents in storage areas and other rooms that do not require heat.
- Service the boiler, furnace, or heat pump to assure efficiency, understanding units in poor operation use more fuel and work harder. Replace air filters several times a year. If the heating or cooling equipment is old and inefficient, investigate modern replacements. The cost is often paid back in a few years by the energy cost savings.
- Use less hot water by installing low flow shower heads. Wash clothes in

cold water, Set the hot water heater at 120 degrees.

- Set daytime temperature at 68-70 degrees in the daytime and 62-66 degrees in the evenings. In no circumstance should heat be set lower than 55 during cold winter conditions since pipes can freeze.
- Install a humidistat that automatically controls bathroom ventilation fans based on room humidity. Once humidity is removed, it shuts off so that excess heated air isn't being unnecessarily exhausted as well. Keeping the moisture level down inhibits mold growth.
- Keep all exterior doors and windows closed during extreme weather. Install automatic closers on doors to help the process.

Begin the energy conservation process when weather is moderate so that you can enjoy the savings when costs begin to ratchet up. Tame that energy eating tiger.

By Grand Trustee Rich Thompson IHSV

House Corp Basics

Chapter housing varies considerably from chapter to chapter. Some own their own chapter house, some rent from private owners, some rent from the university, some are in a fundraising mode to build a house while others have no facility at all and no immediate plans to do so. At each of these locations, there may be an entity comprised of volunteer alumni that calls itself "house corporation".

As the term "house corporation" suggests, there should be a legal entity behind the name. While this would seem obvious, a "house corporation" is not a corporation at all if it has never legally filed for incorporation or has let the corporation charter lapse. Having a legal corporation is *extremely* important for liability purposes. It helps legally protect volunteers from personal liability. If you are unsure of the legal status of your house corporation, have a

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local corporation attorney review the state records or assist in setting one up. House corporations have a number of duties and functions including:

1. Holding Meetings & Taking Minutes. The house corporation board generally meets at least once a year or more often to discuss chapter house business. Minutes are the legal record of what business was transacted at each of these meetings. Minutes *summarize* actions, they don't recite the whole meeting word for word. Remember: Minutes are minutes, not seconds or hours. That means not too much and not too little. Record minutes keeping in mind those that did not attend that need to understand what happened.

2. Adopt Bylaws. Bylaws are like the official game plan on how a corporation is to be run and operated. Bylaws also state the rights and powers of the shareholders, directors and officers.

3. Hold Annual Elections. Director

term of office is often two or three years and it's best to stagger the terms so not all director terms expire at the same time. Continuity is a good thing.

4. Perform Annual Reporting. States generally require the filing of an Annual Report which includes payment of a fee and completion of a form which identifies the current key officers.

5. File Annual Tax Returns. All corporations must file an annual tax return even when no tax is owed.

6. Operate Within Your Governing Documents. The articles of incorporation and bylaws give the board specific authority which has limitations. They can be amended if the board wants to change that level of authority but the board should not exceed authority without doing so. Liability insurance coverage may be invalidated if the board exceeds its authority.

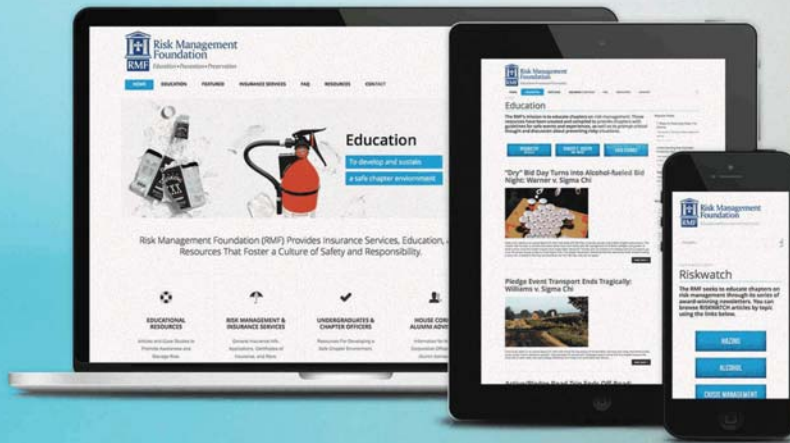
7. Secure Proper Insurance. While

many chapters are insured by Sigma Chi's Risk Management Foundation (RMF) for fire, hazard and general liability insurance, the house corporation needs coverage to protect volunteers that serve on the house corporation board and committees. RMF provides this essential coverage. For more, see www.rmfeducation.org. It's also advisable that each director carry a personal umbrella liability insurance to protect himself while serving on the house corporation board and other volunteer activity.

8. Regularly Inspect and Correct Unsafe Conditions in the Chapter House. You need to visit the house to know what the condition is. Do this at least once each school term.

9. Maintain Arms Length Relationship with Active Chapter. Do not interfere with active chapter operations. Keep the relationship between the house corporation and active chapter strictly landlord-tenant.

Announcing our new website...



RMFEducation.org

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Know the Risks, Be Proactive, Develop a Plan



Do not collect the chapter's dues or house bills for them. Communicate with the undergraduates, yes. Attempt to direct and control them, no.

10. Take advantage of Grand Trustee Resources. To assist the Grand Trustees in determining the highest housing priorities, complete and return surveys when requested. Attend House Corporation Officers Training Seminar (HCOTS) which is underwritten by Sigma Chi. The things you learn will be invaluable.

11. Volunteer and encourage others to do the same. Give of your time and experience to grow more Sigma Chis.

Serving on a Sigma Chi house corporation is a noble calling. There is always room for a few more good men. When you decide to step up, make sure your house corporation is more than a name. Contact your province Grand Trustee for help.

By Grand Trustee Harv Silverman. **IHSV**

WWW.THESIGHOUSE.ORG

The Grand Trustees Historical Prospective

Ever since its creation in 1903, the Board of Grand Trustees has been a well-respected and useful partner in Sigma Chi governance. Starting as a group of five senior Fraternity leaders, its mandate was to oversee the Endowment Funds, the precursor of the Sigma Chi Foundation. The Endowment Funds included programs of aid for chapter houses, scholarships, student aid and The Magazine.

As the Fraternity grew in size and importance, so did the Endowments and with them, the Board of Grand Trustees. In 1936, the Board was enlarged to nine members; in 1955 at the Centennial Grand Chapter, the number of Grand Trustees was set at fifteen. Currently, there are eighteen serving on the Board.

With the creation of the Sigma Chi Foundation in 1939, the Grand Trustees continued to concentrate on Fraternity

related assets with a focus on housing and house corporations which grew at an ever-increasing rate after World War II. However, because the Board did not publicize its valuable work, they began to be criticized as “an elephant’s graveyard” and a “holding tank” for Grand Consuls-in-waiting.

At the 1975 Grand Chapter, the mission of the Grand Trustees was clarified, focusing them completely on housing issues. Almost immediately, the make-up of the Board began to change. Younger members were elected and functioning committees were organized. At one point in the early 1980s, the Grand Trustees ranged in age from early 30s to over 90.

In 1985, the Board was given the responsibility of making mortgage loans from the Endowment and a Mortgage Credit Committee was created to undertake and manage this function. At the same time, Grand Trustees began a

transformation into the Fraternity's "think tank."

Aware of the problems that active chapters and house corporations were experiencing in securing liability and property insurance at reasonable cost, Grand Trustees lead an Insurance Commission to tackle the problem. Three years later, the Risk Management Foundation was rolled out. Not long after, in order to modernize chapter property financing, the Board brought forth the concept of a Sigma Chi mortgage bank and Constantine Capital, Inc. was born. Both organizations are wholly-owned subsidiaries of the Sigma Chi Corporation and originally staffed by Grand Trustees. They are innovative approaches to Fraternity insurance and mortgage lending concerns.

Today, the Board of Grand Trustees continues serving its mandate to provide liaison and expertise to house corporations in all aspects of Fraternity housing management and financing.

Grand Trustees serve several functions by virtue of their offices: As Grand Officers, they are Members of the Grand Council and serve ceremonial functions, representing the General Fraternity at such events as Initiations and chapter house dedications. They are also available to address Sigma Chi gatherings and present awards.

Individual Trustees consult with house corporations in all possible areas of chapter housing, including administration, fund raising, recruitment and retention of board members, and other specialized areas including leases, insurance, contracting and regulatory concerns. They also serve as local, front-line access to the individual specialties of other Trustees and services of the Board and General Fraternity.

Last, but not least, they maintain their position as Sigma Chi's most esteemed leadership pool. More than half of the Grand Consuls elected since 1903 have had previous service as Grand Trustees.

The Board of Grand Trustees is proud of its history and confident of its future. Grand Trustees look forward to continue making valuable contributions to the Fraternity in service to their brothers and the White Cross of Sigma Chi.

By Bruce Morgan Casner IHSV

House Corporation Training Webinars

Based on the overwhelming success of our November 2015 Fundraising 101 Webinar, more webinars are planned for 2016. Watch your Inbox for registration information! **IHSV**

House Corporation Resource Directory

ARCHITECTURAL & PLANNING SERVICES

Aynesworth Architects & Consultants 512.328.2272
G. Tim Aynesworth tim@aynesworth.com
PO Box 161434, Austin TX 78716 www.aynesworth.com
Architectural design and construction management. Texas Registered Architect, Certified by National Council of Architectural Registration Board.

Hug & Associates, LLC 678.297.2929
Mike Hug mhug@HugArchitects.com
5250 Avalon Blvd
Alpharetta GA 30009 www.HugArchitects.com
Specializing in the design and renovation of fraternity housing.

Reid Studio Architecture LLC 217.390.7403
Rod Reid rod.reid@comcast.net
Chapter house renovation and construction design; collects data, analyzes project requirements, develops cost estimates; assists locating design and construction team members.

CHAPTER HOUSING DEVELOPMENT

Pierce Education Properties, L.P. 619.297.0400
Matt Maruccia, VP for Acquisitions
www.PierceEducationProperties.com National developers, buyers, owners and operators of student housing with specific expertise in Greek Housing acquisition, disposition, development, finance, etc.

CHAPTER HOUSE FINANCING

Constantine Capital, Inc. 816.300.0604
Bob Schock robert.schock.zo@sigmachi.com
Affordable financing to Sigma Chi house corporations for chapter house purchase, life & safety upgrades, new construction, renovation and loan guaranty

CHAPTER HOUSE RENOVATION & DESIGN

LAUNCH Interior Design 916.660.9856
David Leinberger C 916.769.2464
launch@starstream.net www.launchinteriordesign.com
New construction and renovation for cost effective and efficient design selections including paint colors, furniture, lighting, window & floor coverings and more.

FINANCIAL & DATABASE MANAGEMENT

GreekBill, Inc. www.greekbill.com 800.457.3816
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OmegaFi www.omegafi.com 800.276.6342
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Member Planet

888.298.8845
Patrick Terrian C 310.590.4413
pterrian@memberplanet.com www.memberplanet.com
Email newsletters and text messaging, chapter websites, member database, donation sites.

Pennington & Associates

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Patrick Alderdice palderdice@penningtonco.com
www.penningtonco.com Capital campaign coordination, gift management, alumni relations programs, website development

The Laurus Group

770.903.3987
Bill Paris bparis@thelaurusgroup.net C 404.441.9630
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HOUSE DIRECTOR SEARCH & SCREENING

Greek House Resource 361.450.0818
greekhs@gmail.com www.greekhouse.net
Screen, interview and placement for chapter house directors.

INCORPORATION ASSISTANCE

Grand Trustee Harvey Silverman 703.319.8806
harveyas@aol.com

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Missing: Dan Harrop and Steve Schuyler

