



# The Sig House

*A Newsletter from the Board of Grand Trustees*

## BOARD OF GRAND TRUSTEES

**Rich Thompson (2017)** [rich.thompson@sigmachi.com](mailto:rich.thompson@sigmachi.com)  
**Chairman** Ph 503.977.7974  
Newsletter Editor/ Website Manager  
Northwestern, The Big Sky

**Steve Schuyler (2015)** [sgschuyler@sigmachi.com](mailto:sgschuyler@sigmachi.com)  
**Vice Chairman** Ph 520.745.6221  
Grand Canyon, Southwestern, Utah/Nevada

**Ray Baumgarten (2013)** [rayb.tulsa@gmail.com](mailto:rayb.tulsa@gmail.com)  
**Treasurer** Ph 918.231.0700  
Northern Missouri, Oklahoma/Arkansas, Southern Missouri

**Rich Hronek (2017)** [hronesign@gmail.com](mailto:hronesign@gmail.com)  
**Secretary** Ph 330.606.0827  
Northern Indiana, Northern Ohio, Southern Indiana,  
Southern Ohio

**Bill Bringham, Jr. (2013)** [ECBFinl@att.net](mailto:ECBFinl@att.net)  
Ph 847.446.7890  
East Illinois, East Michigan, Northern Illinois, West  
Michigan, West Illinois, Wisconsin

**Bill Bowlin (2015)** [bbowlin@caslp.com](mailto:bbowlin@caslp.com)  
Ph 713.906.8600  
East Texas, Kansas

**Bruce Morgan Casner (2013)**  
[Bruce.Morgan.Casner@sigmachi.com](mailto:Bruce.Morgan.Casner@sigmachi.com) Ph 202.543.4600  
Eastern, Ontario, St. Lawrence

**Tom Ely (2017)** [telytn@gmail.com](mailto:telytn@gmail.com)  
Ph 931.358.4981  
North Carolina, North Georgia, South Carolina, South  
Georgia

**John "Tony" Flores (2017)** [john.flores@sigmachi.com](mailto:john.flores@sigmachi.com)  
Ph 539.304.0686  
California Central Valley, Los Angeles Coastal, Southern  
California

**JB Allen (2015)** [jballen@sig1855.com](mailto:jballen@sig1855.com)  
Ph 212.849.3973  
Hudson Valley, Mid Atlantic, Northwestern New York

**Breck Grover (2013)** [dbgrover1@comcast.net](mailto:dbgrover1@comcast.net)  
Ph 720.913.5033  
Central, Rocky Mountain

**Dan Harrop (2017)** [DanHarrop@sigmachi.com](mailto:DanHarrop@sigmachi.com)  
Ph 401.274.8337  
Connecticut/Rhode Island, North Atlantic

**Bill Robinson (2013)** [bill.robinson@sigmachi.com](mailto:bill.robinson@sigmachi.com)  
Ph 239.293.5239  
Central Florida, Florida Sun Coast, North Florida, South  
Florida

**Scott Ross (2013)** [hsross@bellsouth.net](mailto:hsross@bellsouth.net)  
**Liaison to Grand Praetors** Ph 662.494.2593  
Alabama Northern, Alabama/Gulf Coast, Southern

**Tom Samulski (2017)** [tjsamulski@aol.com](mailto:tjsamulski@aol.com)  
Ph 815.666.5742  
East Tennessee, Kentucky, West Tennessee

**Harvey Silverman (2015)** [harveyas@aol.com](mailto:harveyas@aol.com)  
**Liaison to Executive Committee** Ph 703.319.8806  
Central Pennsylvania, Eastern Virginia, Western Virginia,  
West Virginia/Western Pennsylvania

**Chad Ward (2015)** [chad.ward@sigmachi.com](mailto:chad.ward@sigmachi.com)  
Ph 972.571.5202  
Central Texas, Northern Texas

**John Watson (2015)** [John.Watson@sigmachi.com](mailto:John.Watson@sigmachi.com)  
(Canada) Ph 604.277.7028  
California Bay Area, North Central

## Soap and Things

One of the classic lines of the Sigma Chi song **I'm a Howling Sigma Chi** is "charge up drinks to soap and things". This, of course, means buying alcohol. Most brothers engage in drinking alcohol during their college careers. So Sigma Chi, among other things, is steeped in a drinking tradition.

While drinking in and of itself is not a bad thing, too often young brothers engage in it too frequently and too much which wreaks havoc on their grades and the chapter house. For some, it means the end of their college career and, for others, their life.

In truth, alcohol consumption is the leading cause of chapter problems. At minimum, it leads to loud and disorderly behavior and at its extreme, leads to assault, rape, vandalism and other felonious activity. In other words, little good comes from it when it's practiced at this age level. Why? According to motivational speaker Mike Green, too many brothers engage in *competitive* drinking. The goal is to see who can drink the most and the fastest. There are many activities like "beer pong" and "keg stand" where the specific goal is to get drunk.

Also, many young brothers tend to be shy and naturally attracted to the ladies. To break down the shyness, they engage in heavy drinking before they head to the bars hoping to get lucky.

So, one of the biggest and ongoing problems house corporations must deal with is the effects of alcohol on the chapter house and the membership. Tenants that are drunk and disorderly tend to break things, not clean up and run short of rent money. Brothers and pledges that binge drink too often fail to make grades which could disqualify them from living in the chapter house or from college altogether. Then there is

the brother that engages in drunken behavior that results in death, assault, rape, etc. When this happens, all too often, the chapter circles the wagons around these individuals in a misguided effort to be brothers. Police and college administrators view this type of gang mentality dimly and press for closing the chapter as the most effective solution.

So what part should a house corporation play in controlling such destructive behavior? Where the house corp acts as a landlord or is signing a lease on behalf of an active chapter, there is an *obligation* to hold brothers accountable for illegal activity. Since it is generally true that the majority of undergraduate brothers are underage, the majority of them are drinking illegally whether they get intoxicated or not. So there is an ever present danger that at any given moment it all may spin out of control.

Some advocate having a "dry house" policy under the theory that if alcohol is banned, there will be no drinking or, those found guilty will be evicted. In most cases, the dry house concept is hatched by alums that have no interest in enforcement. There in lies the rub. Unless the undergraduate brothers are willing to self-discipline, this policy is dead on arrival. An alcohol policy that is devised by active chapter and enforced internally has the best chance of success. That policy needs to acknowledge the authority of local laws, university and Sigma Chi policies and have real consequences. This is where the house corp can assist with enforcement like a member review.

While the ultimate solution to the alcohol problem may seem to be total prohibition (and we all know how well Prohibition worked), reality points to a hybrid policy where Active Chapter is empowered to control this behavior with the house corp in the background ready,

willing and able to be an iron-fisted landlord when necessary.

This is a serious issue that demands serious and ongoing discussion. Winking at “soap and things” never diminishes the tragic consequences of out of control drinking. **IHSV**

## Chapter House Checklist

Each year, Sigma Chi house corporations are charged with life/fire safety and maintenance of the chapter house. Due to the customarily “intense” lifestyles of the active brothers, the facilities often experience a higher degree of wear and tear. Keeping up with these tasks in a consistent way is extremely important. Take the time to perform the following each year:

**Life & Fire Safety.** The highest priority of all for a house corporation is to provide a safe environment for the residents. Here is a list of common life and fire safety issues that chapter houses should review:

- Fire Alarm System.** Inspected and certified in good working order by a qualified contractor.
- Fire Sprinkler System.** Inspected and repaired annually by a qualified contractor. (If your chapter house does not have fire sprinklers, contact your Grand Trustee for further information and resources.)
- Smoke Detectors.** All in place and working, especially in sleeping rooms. (Replace battery operated detectors with hardwired.)
- Exit Signs & Emergency Lights.** All in place and functioning properly.
- Fire Egress.** All required egress windows and doors meet fire code. All hallways, stairwells, egress doors and windows are clear of obstructions.
- Fire Extinguishers.** All are in place and have been inspected and recharged as needed within the last twelve months.
- Housekeeping.** No accumulation of trash, clothes or other flammables.
- Kitchen Range Hood.** Steam cleaned within the last 6 months.
- Central Heating System.** Furnace or boiler has received an annual inspection and repair by a qualified contractor. Furnace/boiler room is free of storage (boxes, furniture, flammables, etc.).

- Fire Doors.** Fire rated doors in all locations required by fire code. All hardware (crash bars, hinges, knobsets and closers) working properly.
- Stairwells.** All hand rails in place and stairs in good repair.
- Flammable Storage.** All flammables (cleaners, gasoline, etc.) are in proper containers and fire code rated storage.

**Maintenance & Repair.** Keeping the chapter house in good repair is essential to preserving liveability and attracting and retaining brothers who appreciate high standards.

### INSIDE

- Bathrooms.** All fixtures are working properly. No evidence of mold.
- Carpet/Vinyl.** No tears or seam separation.
- Electrical Outlets/Switches.** Intact and working properly.
- Furnace/HVAC.** In good working order.
- Furniture.** In good serviceable condition.
- Hot Water Heater/Boiler.** Flushed to remove sediment and working properly.
- Kitchen.** All equipment is working properly.
- Lights-Interior.** All working properly including light bulbs.
- Plumbing.** No leaks.

### OUTSIDE

- Broken/Missing Glass.** All window and door glass is in good repair.
- Concrete Safety Repair.** No tripping hazards.
- Entry Door Locks.** All locks are in good repair.
- Roof.** In good condition; no torn, missing or broken shingles.
- Fire Escape Stairs.** In good repair and free of obstruction.
- Roof-Gutters & Downspouts.** In good repair and running clear (test with hose if necessary).
- Siding & Trim.** In good repair, caulking around windows and doors in tact.
- Paint-Exterior.** No cracking or peeling.
- Lights-Exterior.** All in good working condition including light bulbs.

**Curb Appeal.** Looks matter to the city, college, neighbors, rushees and pledges. To encourage self respect, pride in the chapter house and to make it attractive for actives and pledges, the following should be done weekly:

- House.** Cleaning to remove trash, vacuum, mop, dust, clean kitchen and bathrooms. (This is also a fire safety issue.)
- Grounds.** Yard and parking lot free of trash and debris. Bushes and trees are pruned. Lawn is regularly mowed and watered.

Doing a chapter house walk through to address these specific issues is extremely important and should be done at least twice a year. Performing this checklist will help develop your To Do List and keep the chapter house in good and safe repair. **IHSV**

## Brother Landlord

House corporation members find themselves in conflicting roles. As landlords of the chapter house, there is the obligation to enforce rent payments and proper maintenance of the facilities. As a Sigma Chi brother, there is an obligation to mentor and advise and be a “strong arm to lean on”. Doing both well at the same time can be difficult.

As a landlord, there are ongoing challenges: rent revenue is usually inadequate to pay for all the usual operating costs of insurance, maintenance and major renovation. Those issues is exacerbated by high level of wear and tear on the facilities.

The landlord role puts house corporations in the unwelcome role of rule enforcers and collection agents. While some do the job begrudgingly, others avoid conflict which allows collections to mount and maintenance to mushroom (literally!). Those that landlord chapter houses well are definitely made of “sterner stuff”.

But the active brothers need much more than a kick in the rear. They need the perspective of mature and experienced Sigma Chis who can point them the way to go as men and brothers. It’s one of the true strengths of the fraternity that allows older and younger men to enjoy a common bond.

So how can house corporation members

take advantage of this conflicted relationship of landlord and brother? Let's count the ways:

**Get Acquainted.** Knowing the active brothers on a personal level will produce enormous dividends. When there is a personal connection, there is a higher degree of accountability, responsiveness and respect.

**Get It in Writing.** The criteria for living in the chapter house should be clearly defined in plain English and in writing. (See the sample "Live In Agreement" at the end of the newsletter). While the Live In Agreement is essentially a rental agreement, it reinforces the fraternal obligation aspect as well. Having such a document establishes the expectations and consequences for non-compliance from the get-go and helps eliminate disputes.

**Encourage Communication.** While actives like to be self sufficient, most 18 to 21 year olds lack the life experience to deal with complex maintenance, relational and organizational issues. The smart ones will welcome constructive input, especially when it's not done in a condescending or paternal way.

**Identify & Promote Leaders.** Within each active chapter, there are individuals that bear the traits of leadership (academics, enthusiasm, confidence, command respect, etc.) It's important to identify who these men are as early as possible and encourage them to run for office.

While it's often said that the cream rises to the top, this isn't necessarily the case at active chapter. Encouragement from a mature brother can make the difference whether the candidates are the best or the worst picks.

**Problem Solving.** From time to time, Active Chapter is faced with difficult situations involving individual members who are struggling with personal or academic issues that impact the well being of the entire chapter. Undergraduate brothers often have difficulty with confrontation or can underestimate the ramification of these problems.

House corporations can help by assisting in the confrontation and getting specific plans and commitments for change. These "defining moments" will demonstrate the power in partnering with

older brothers in problem solving. More importantly, this course correction may make all the difference whether a Sigma Chi survives college or even life. We owe it to our brothers to do what we can to help.

**Make Regular House Calls.** Visiting the chapter house several times each month both during the week and on weekends keeps you informed about activity both good and bad. Try to catch them doing the **right thing** like cleaning up, studying, mowing the lawn, etc. Praising specific actions is extremely meaningful to those who receive them and reinforces the positive things active chapter is doing. In an age where focus often falls on fraternity troubles, this will be a welcome balance.

Consider holding your house corporation and alumni chapter meetings at the chapter house. If the actives know you're coming, they will often make an extra effort to tidy up. That's a good thing for them and for house corporation.

Regular visits to the chapter house will also give you a chance to spot repair or maintenance issues. Generally, the sooner these problems are identified, the cheaper they are to fix.

**In the Final Analysis.** Even if you wear the two hats of landlord and mentor, both can be successful. Protecting the viability of the chapter house will ensure it's there for many future Sigma Chis. Mentoring the active brothers will benefit their experience in the chapter house and life as Sigma Chis. This is a win-win that works! **IHSV**

## Here to Serve

The Board of Grand Trustees is available to assist house corporations in a myriad of ways. There is over *600 years of combined professional expertise* in such critical areas as real estate development, property management, project administration, politics, maintenance, renovation, insurance, tax planning, accounting, construction, fund raising, legal, education, housing, risk management and more.

While each Grand Trustee is assigned specific provinces to oversee, this combined expertise is available to all house corporations. The key to tapping

this gold mine is to contact your province's Grand Trustee with a specific request for assistance. If your request is outside of your Grand Trustee's specific area of expertise, other colleagues will assist in providing real solutions. Give us a try. **IHSV**

## House Corporation Resource Directory

### ARCHITECTURAL & PLANNING SERVICES

Reid Studio Architecture LLC 217.390.7403

Rod Reid [rod.reid@comcast.net](mailto: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 HOUSE FINANCING OPTIONS

Constantine Capital, Inc. 816.300.0604

Tom Burton [tom.burton@abrealty.com](mailto:tom.burton@abrealty.com)

Bob Schock [robert.schock.ze@sigmachi.com](mailto:robert.schock.ze@sigmachi.com)

Provides affordable financing options 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](mailto:launch@starstream.net) [www.launchinteriordesign.com](http://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

Legacy Financial LLC [www.legfi.com](http://www.legfi.com) 888.430.2253

Online bill paying and administration

OmegaFi [www.omegafi.com](http://www.omegafi.com) 800.276.6342

Chapter and alumni management tools to bill and collect dues and rent, manage rosters and records, pay bills and employees and file tax returns.

GreekBill, Inc. [www.greekbill.com](http://www.greekbill.com) 800.457.3816

Web-based billing and financial management service enables billing, collecting, budgeting, reporting, online payment options

### FOOD SERVICES

Campus Cooks 847.309.1859

William Reeder [wreeder@campuscooks.com](mailto:wreeder@campuscooks.com)

Comprehensive program includes an on-site cook who prepares meals and snacks plus management of staffing, payroll, food and supply ordering, menu preparation.

[www.campuscooks.com](http://www.campuscooks.com)

### Culinary Consultants Purchasing Services

Stan Faulkner [Support@infoccps.com](mailto:Support@infoccps.com) 314.422.3407

Brian Heider [www.infoccps.com](http://www.infoccps.com) 847.566.7533

National buying program exclusively for fraternity chapters with food programs. Instant cost savings with no major changes to existing food program.

### FUNDRAISING ASSISTANCE

Grand Trustee Bruce Morgan Casner 202.543.4600

[bruce.morgan.casner@sigmachi.com](mailto:bruce.morgan.casner@sigmachi.com)

Options on qualifying for tax deductible donations.

Pennington & Associates 785.843.1661

Patrick Alderdice [palderdice@penningtonco.com](mailto:palderdice@penningtonco.com) Capital campaign coordination, gift management, alumni relations programs, website development

[www.penningtonco.com](http://www.penningtonco.com)

### INCORPORATION ASSISTANCE

Grand Trustee Harvey Silverman 703.319.8806

[harveyas@aol.com](mailto:harveyas@aol.com)



## Board of Grand Trustees

Front Row L to R: Tom Ely, Harv Silverman, Bruce Casner, Rich Thompson, Bill Bringham Jr., Steve Schuyler, Dan Harrop, Rich Hronek  
Back Row L to R: Ray Baumgarten, Scott Ross, Breck Grover, Chad Ward, Tony Flores, Tom Samulski, John Watson, Bill Bowlin, Bill Robinson

