



The Sig House

A Newsletter from the Board of Grand Trustees

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Building Good Rapport

It's a bad rap. Fraternity houses are full of well meaning, well mannered members who are focused on their studies. They don't have loud parties until the wee hours of the morning. It must be someone else that is prompting the neighbors to call the cops. Right?

While house corporations and chapter advisors hope for the best, active brothers can use bad judgment from time to time and events like parties spin out of control causing clashes with the neighbors. Most of the time, the neighbors simply call the police to deal with it. The police, in turn, often make this information available to university officials who monitor such things. If the acts are outrageous enough, the local media make sure the whole community knows about them. What started as a good time can rapidly become a public relations nightmare.

While the occupant mix at a chapter house changes over time as brothers move in, move out and graduate, most of the neighbors remain the same. Some neighbors have very long memories and each time there is an "event" at the chapter house that causes them dismay, consternation or outright anger, it is added to their list of high crimes and misdemeanors. The result is cumulative: sins of past brothers are laid on the brothers of the present, guilty or not.

One of the biggest obstacles to overcoming bad press is the "island" mentality that active members can develop. This mind set is akin to "whatever happens in Vegas, stays in Vegas". But the chapter house is not in Vegas. When it's in close proximity to working people, families or seniors, there is a thin line that, once crossed, is difficult to retreat from.

It's said that good judgment comes from experience and experience comes from bad judgment. Bad judgment by active brothers can create lasting animosity with the neighbors, university and community. Besides using better judgment in the future, what can be done to improve relations *today*?

Get Acquainted. It's much easier to stay angry at strangers than friends. Why not host an Open House and invite non-Greek neighbors within a two block radius? A mid week holiday event with hot apple cider and cookies will set the tone. Clean up the chapter house, decorate a Christmas tree and pass out invitations door to door. Use this opportunity to invite key university officials like the President, Greek Advisor and others that can help or hinder your cause. This kind of positive event will reap large and long term results in the public relations department. On the flip side, the brothers will likely be more considerate of the neighbors and lessen the likelihood and number of confrontations.

Lend a Helping Hand. In every neighborhood there are seniors and disabled who could use a hand with raking leaves, washing cars, yard cleanup or shoveling snow. Active chapter could spend a few hours on a Saturday afternoon roaming the area offering to help.

Do It Yearly. Rapport building needs nurturing. Positive events fade over time and every year there are new brothers that need to be introduced to the benefits of the exercise. Make it part of a strategic plan to host annual events that leave good and lasting memories with the neighbors. Most will be much more forgiving of the occasional bad judgment.

Sigma Chi Fraternity's



Affordable financing options up to \$250,000 for Sigma Chi house corporations that own chapter houses

- ✦ Chapter House Purchase
- ✦ Life & Fire Safety Upgrades
- ✦ New Construction
- ✦ Renovation



Ritual Regalia Loans up to \$5000



For more information, contact robert.schock.zo@sigmachi.com

Principles of Fundraising

The Sigma Chi experience is much more than the chapter house. But the chapter house is an essential component of the experience since it provides the stage where friendships are grown and the seeds of high minded values are sown. As with friendships and values, the chapter house requires care and renewal, all of which costs money...sometimes BIG money.

Every chapter house needs funds to renew, renovate and upgrade. Safety considerations drive the need for fire sprinkler systems, smoke alarms, up to code wiring, fire extinguishers and safe egress. Economic considerations dictate adequate insulation, energy efficient windows and efficient heating and cooling equipment. Recruitment considerations mandate an attractive and competitively priced housing alternative.

Weatherization and insulating work can sometimes be paid for through state grants or utility company rebates or

subsidies. Search the internet for "weatherization programs" in your state for alternatives. Other types of renovation work generally require a private funding source. While private lenders may consider lending to a properly registered house corporation with adequate collateral and source of repayment, bank financing carries loan fees, high interest rates, short repayment terms and higher payments. By far, the best source of renovation funding is contributions from chapter alums.

Consider some statistics about fund raisers:

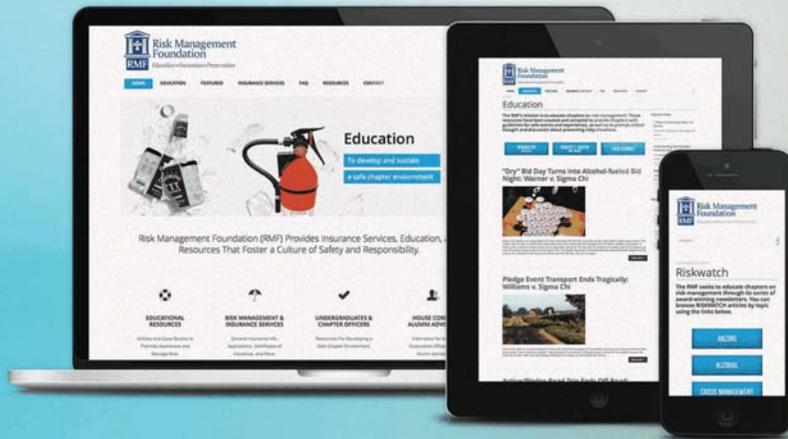
1. A 20-25% participation rate is very good. So, if you have 1,000 potential donors, you can expect only 200 to 250 contributions of any size. Do the math for your chapter.
2. 80% of all contributions will come from 20% of donors.
3. Your top 10 contributions typically make up 50% of the campaign goal.

4. The largest gift will be 15% of the campaign goal.

Being successful in gathering the gold requires a carefully executed plan which includes:

Defining the Donor Pool. Every house corporation should make having a complete and accurate alumni database a high priority. It is not only indispensable for raising money, it provides a mechanism for brothers to reconnect with other brothers. Sigma Chi Headquarters www.sigmachi.org can provide the information it has to begin the database building process. Since brothers move, databases are ever changing. This is especially true of many younger alumni who move frequently. Since the post office maintains change of address requests for six months, doing First Class mailings with "Return Service Requested" at least twice a year will capture many of those changes. Bottom Line: building and maintaining a reliable database is essential to fund raising and virtually every other

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Know the Risks, Be Proactive, Develop a Plan



successful house corporation endeavor.

Wield the Web. The vast majority of brothers have access to the internet and use email regularly. Use this fact to your advantage by hosting a chapter website. The cost is nominal and it's accessible 24/7. Post your database, newsletters, pictures and more. And gather and use email addresses to reduce mailing costs.

Fund Raiser Theme. Every fund raiser should be named. The theme should be carefully chosen, visionary and appeal to the heart because the heart is the key to the wallet. An example of a successful theme is "Giving Back" which appeals to repaying the debt owed to Sigma Chi for a lifetime of value. "Building a Future Legacy" speaks to preserving Sigma Chi for brothers to come.

How & When Funds Will Be Spent. Along with a theme goes the scheme. All fund raisers need to have a dollar goal based on specific renovation projects systematically accomplished according to a schedule. It's okay to spread the work over several years if

WWW.THESIGHOUSE.ORG

the projects are volunteer driven. If hiring a general contractor, most mid range renovations should be accomplished during the summer to avoid occupancy conflicts. If the work is more involved, temporary alternative housing for the chapter needs to be part of the plan.

A Picture is Worth (well, you know). Many alums have not visited the chapter house for years, sometimes decades. A video shows the current condition and plans for renovation is very inexpensive to produce and distribute. Don't overlook the opportunity to stir the heart with the video. Focus first on fond memories and then segue into the renovation and money it will take to keep the dream alive for future brothers.

Identify the Big Hitters. This pool is less than 5% of your total number of prospects but will yield the biggest dollars by far. Most of those who qualify will be in their fifties or older so having generational contacts who know who they are is vital. Once the Big Hitters have been identified, a personal visit is best even if that means long

distance travel. Those Big Hitters that commit often know who the other Big Hitters are and may be willing to make personal calls to them. Don't forget to ask.

Name Levels of Giving. Most contributors want to know where they stand in relation to their peers. Brothers are competitive that way. Establish at least five levels of giving that allow the Big Hitters to hit big (like \$10,000 or \$25,000 or more) but still allow smaller donors to play (like \$100 and up). Name the categories for Sigma Chi symbols (Norman Shield, Jordan Standard, White Cross, etc.) or for chapter founders or achievers that are well known. Publish updated results on the chapter website and in newsletters.

Announcing the Campaign. Keep the announcement under wraps until you have gotten commitments for at least half of the goal. *This part is critical.* If announced too soon, levels of giving and numbers of donors will be much smaller. When the campaign is announced with much of the goal already committed and who committed it, others will be more inclined to

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contribute and match or out do their peers. Do not underestimate the power of this tactic. It is time tested and works.

Keeping the Ball Rolling. Once the campaign is announced, plan to communicate to the alums three or four times a year to show the progress and continued urgency to donate. A year end appeal in particular can be very effective since charitable giving deductions face a December 31 deadline.

Don't Start Renovation Too Soon. Even though the announced schedule indicates the renovation work will start on such-and-such a date, delay the start if insufficient pledges have been received. Starting too soon is a message to those that haven't contributed that you don't need their money. Put the responsibility for the delay on those that haven't pledged. Tell them "this train can't leave the station without YOU on it".

Aside from the hard work and excitement that comes with a chapter house renovation, the rewards to those that participate cannot be understated. Fund raising and renovation projects give the house corporation board a series of positive long range goals to work on. As goals are accomplished, those that helped should be recognized for the effort in person and in public.

This is one of the best team building exercises there is. It gives others a desire to join a winning team. And it gives still other brothers a chance to show their financial appreciation for what Sigma Chi has meant to their lives. So, make plans to gather the gold that's waiting there to be mined.

House Corporation Training Webinars

Twenty six brothers attended the November 2016 **House Corporation Officers Training Webinar** featuring Risk Management Foundation's (RMF) Executive Director Steve Davidson. Brother Davidson outlined the many benefits of RMF insurance including insurance to protect house corporation board members and other volunteers and the grants and loans available for life/safety upgrades.

The Board of Grand Trustees is planning more webinars to supplement the annual **House Corporation Officers Training Seminar (HCOTS)** held at Balfour Leadership Training Workshop each summer.

If you are interested in attending a future house corporation officer training webinar or seminar, email rich.thompson@sigmachi.com **IHSV**

House Corporation Resource Directory

ARCHITECTURAL & PLANNING SERVICES

Aynesworth Architects & Consultants 512.328.2272
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