



The Sig House

A Newsletter from the Board of Grand Trustees

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Millennial Housing

Sigma Chi is steeped in tradition. The older the chapter, the more likely that it will have an older chapter house and alums that have fond memories of dormitory style living, sit down meal times and shared entertainment like TV. The common area was regularly used for brother gatherings and socializing with guests. It was all good. For you. But that was then.

Chapter houses of today must attract and hold brothers with a very different mind set. Baby Boomers, Gen-Xers and Gen-Yers have been replaced with Millennials. Understanding how the Millennial thinks is critical to managing, renovating and constructing a chapter house. Here are seven Millennial characteristics to consider from *Millennials Go To College* by Neil Howe and William Strauss:

1. Special. They have always been treated as special and important. Every milestone has been celebrated and praised. As a result, they may carry a sense of entitlement with them.

2. Sheltered. They were highly protected as children and grew up with an increasing level of safety measures like car seats and bike helmets. They were rarely left unsupervised. They were prevented from settling their own conflicts as parents interceded on their behalf.

3. Goal Oriented. They are motivated, goal-oriented and expect college to help launch them to greatness.

4. Team-Oriented. They are group oriented and prefer egalitarian leadership, not hierarchies. They are

oriented toward service and volunteerism.

5. Achieving. They see college as the key to a high paying job and may miss the bigger picture of college as character building.

6. Pressured. Tightly scheduled as children, they struggle with personal time management. They may take on too much and expect others to be flexible with scheduling conflicts.

7. Conventional. Respectful to the point of not questioning authority, they fear being considered non-conformist. Their clothing, music and cultural markings are mainstream for their age group. They support social rules and are more in line with their parents' values than previous generations.

Other significant characteristics include:

- **Wealthier.** College Millennials are often an economically advantaged group and bring lots of high priced electronics with them. This plays out in several ways: They want larger personal living spaces to accommodate their possessions. They want private rooms to protect their things. Their devices all come with power cords that need seriously greater electrical capacity.

- **Web Connected.** Having reliable and wireless high speed internet connection is mandatory. Many colleges require it for course work and it is a major source of music and video entertainment. Fortunately, wireless routers are inexpensive.

- **Physically Modest.** Many never had to undress in front of others so there is a desire for private bedrooms and

bathrooms.

With these characteristics in mind, a house corporation is often hard-pressed to provide the kind of housing that the Millennial brother is looking for. Older chapter houses are typically designed for multiple occupancy rooms with little space for the many possessions Millennials have and the power it takes to drive them.

Kitchen operations are challenged since the concept of set meal times is foreign to today's brother. Instead of group meals, brothers expect meals to fit their schedule and personal tastes. Many colleges have responded with food courts that provide many different kinds of food any time of the day.

Parking is a bigger challenge as more students have personal vehicles than in years past. This burdens not only off street parking but street parking as well which can create a point of conflict with the neighbors.

House corporations are forced to consider these dynamics or experience dwindling numbers at the chapter house. But there is hope even with older designs. Excess common space can be converted to bedrooms to increase capacity and rental income. Gang showers can be converted with privacy partitions. Electrical service can be upgraded to handle greater capacity requirements. There are many creative solutions that don't require a new house.

If you are an older brother and thinking "Why do we have to change? If it was good enough for me...", the answer is "Get over it!" While today's Millennial may think and do things differently, their need for Sigma Chi has never been greater and chapter houses are the places where life lessons and friendships are best developed. If Sigma Chi does not provide the right kind of housing, others will and the opportunity will be lost. To that end, the Board of Grand Trustees offers a number of helpful resources:

Chapter House Plan Archive. The **Chapter House Design Advisory Committee** composed of Grand Trustees

Bill Robinson and John Watson have teamed with brother architect Rod Reid to assemble a Chapter House Plan Archive at www.TheSigHouse.org These house plans represent a variety of approaches that reflect Millennial housing trends. Other plans are available by searching the internet for "fraternity house floor plans".

Design & Planning Assistance. Renovating or building a chapter house is a complex undertaking which requires complex planning including a needs and site assessment, design and specifications and most importantly, funding. Rod Reid has extensive experience in chapter house design and is available to assist with this process. His contact information is rod.reid@comcast.net and Phone 217.390.7403.

Financing Assistance. Sigma Chi's Constantine Capital Inc. (CCI) is available to provide chapter house financing up to \$250,000. For more, contact rich@regenesisis.net

Look for ways to improve your chapter house in life safety and function. Give our Millennial brothers a place to grow as leaders in a way which the Seven Founders would approve.

2010 Outstanding House Corporation Awards

Each year, the Grand Trustees honor Sigma Chi house corporations that are "doing it right" by following best practices in the areas of Board Structure and Administration, Facility Management and Communications. This year, there were nine areas that were used as best practice criteria:

1. Size of Board. Volunteer burn out can run high with this job. It is recommended that a house corporation board have at least five members so tasks can be shared.

2. Number of Board Meetings. It is recommended that the board meet at least twice per year (four times would be better) to review financial reports, maintenance and repair issues and for

long range planning.

3. Written Bylaws. Every house corporation should have bylaws which lay out how the organizational framework. A sample set of bylaws is available at www.TheSigHouse.org **Articles** under **Forms & Samples**.

4. Written Rental Agreements. It is extremely important to put your agreement with Active Chapter and individual brothers in writing. Sample Rental Agreements are available at www.TheSigHouse.org **Articles** under **Forms & Samples**.

5. Security Deposit Required. This is a basic rule for helping to enforce payments, repairs and maintenance.

6. Replacement Schedule for Major Building Components. Also known as a "reserve study", this is a long range plan for funding and scheduling expensive and complicated repairs. There is a sample reserve study at www.TheSigHouse.org **Articles** under **Chapter House Renovation**.

7. Maintain Alumni Database. Building and maintaining an alumni database that includes email addresses cannot be understated. This database can be used for communications, newsletters, fund raising and to connect brothers to brothers. Sigma Chi headquarters can provide some database information. See www.SigmaChi.org **Contact HQ** under **Alumni Lists/Address Lists**.

8. Newsletters. Successful house corporations produce at least two newsletters a year to build a strong bond with chapter alums. Since the Post Office limits new address forwarding to six months, semi-annual newsletters that are mailed First Class will be returned with new forwarding information.

9. House Corp Website. Since few house corporations have money to burn, the vast majority of brothers have email addresses and websites are dirt cheap and easy to maintain, this is a no brainer. A website could be shared with active chapter but the house corporation

website should be maintained by the house corp and focused on the chapter house and alum issues.

To Qualify for the 2010 Outstanding House Corporation Award: Only house corporations that submitted an Annual Report were qualified to apply. Of the 153 that submitted an Annual Report, 30 applied for the Outstanding House Corporation Award.

To Win the Award: Winners needed to achieve at least 7 of 9 best practices. Based on the applications received, the Board of Grand Trustees is pleased to bestow the 2010 Outstanding House Corporation Award to the following 25 house corporations that met the mark:

**Alpha Chi Chapter
Pennsylvania State University**

**Alpha Omega Chapter
Stanford University**

**Alpha Pi Chapter
Albion College**

**Beta Delta Chapter
University of Montana**

**Delta Delta Chapter
Purdue University**

**Delta Iota Chapter
University of Denver**

**Delta Rho Chapter
Bradley University**

**Epsilon Eta Chapter
California State University-Fresno**

**Epsilon Kappa Chapter
University of Memphis**

**Epsilon Theta Chapter
San Jose State University**

**Eta Omicron Chapter
Indiana University of Pennsylvania**

**Eta Psi Chapter
Clemson University**

**Eta Rho Chapter
University of North Alabama**

**Gamma Delta Chapter
Oklahoma State University**

**Gamma Upsilon Chapter
Mississippi State University**

**Iota Iota Chapter
University of Alabama**

**Iota Mu Chapter
Wilfrid Laurier University**

**Omega Omega Chapter
University of Arkansas**

**Iota Zeta Chapter
Clarkson University**

**Psi Psi Chapter
Syracuse University**

**Theta Kappa
University of Texas-Arlington**

**Upsilon Upsilon
University of Washington**

**Xi Xi Chapter
University of Missouri-Columbia**

**Zeta Eta Chapter
Texas A&M University-Commerce**

**Zeta Psi Chapter
University of Cincinnati**

ΣXcellent job! Thanks to all of you that applied and for all you do for Sigma Chi.

House Corporation: More Than a Name

Chapter housing varies considerably from chapter to chapter. Some house corporations own the chapter house, some rent from private owners, some rent from the university, while others have no chapter house at all. But every chapter should have a house corporation that acts on its behalf.

There is more to a house corporation than a name. As the term suggests, there should be a legally incorporated corporation behind the name. While this would seem obvious, your house corporation is not be a corporation if it has never filed for incorporation or has

let the corporation lapse by not filing an Annual Report and paying the required fee. You can verify your house corp's corporate status by way of your state's or province's website.

House corporations have a number of duties and functions including:

1. Hold Meetings & Take Minutes. Minutes are the record of what business was transacted at each meeting. Minutes *summarize* actions, they don't recite the whole thing word for word. Remember: Minutes are minutes, not seconds or hours. That means not too much and not too little. Record them keeping in mind others that were not there need to understand what happened. For tips on how to record minutes, see www.meetingwizard.org

2. Adopt Bylaws. Bylaws are the official framework that describe how a corporation is to be run and the rights and powers of the directors and officers.

3. Hold Annual Elections. Director terms of office are often two or three years. It's best to stagger the terms so not all director terms expire at the same time. Continuity is a good thing so that a brand new board doesn't need to make the same mistakes all over again.

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

5. File Annual Tax Returns. 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 this step.

7. Secure Proper Insurance. House corporations insured by Risk Management Foundation (RMF) for Fire and Hazard and General Liability Insurance also insure volunteers that

serve on the house corporation board. However, it is recommended that each director also carry a personal umbrella liability insurance to protect himself while serving on a house corporation board.

8. Regularly Inspect and Correct Unsafe Conditions in the Chapter House. At regular intervals, the chapter house should be inspected for condition, cleanliness and fire safety. A To Do List should be compiled and tasks assigned to either house corp and active chapter as appropriate. The house corp should reinspect to ensure active chapter compliance.

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

10. Take advantage of your Grand Trustee resource. Each province's house corporations are assigned a Grand Trustee for assistance and advice. For contact information, see the cover of The Sig House newsletter of www.TheSigHouse.org

11. Attend House Corporation Officers Training Seminar (HCOTS). Sigma Chi underwrites a training each year for house corp officers. The time you spend there is invaluable.

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

Serving on a Sigma Chi house corporation is a noble calling. There is always room for "a few good men". And make sure your house corporation is more than just a name by performing the recommended tasks.

Collegiate Housing & Infrastructure Bill

Chapter houses seem to have an insatiable need for renovation. As the houses age and are subjected to "accelerated depreciation" by the residents, house corporations are

challenged to keep the housing safe and competitive with other forms of university housing. Universities have long had the advantage of being able to use tax deductible contributions to maintain their property.

The **Collegiate Housing and Infrastructure Act** (House 1547/Senate 781) would level the playing field by allowing non-university owned not-for-profit student housing, like fraternities and sororities, to enjoy the benefit of tax deductible donations. The effects of this bill will improve the housing capacity and life-safety challenges that currently face much of the college student housing market nationally.

This bill would permit house corporations to receive grants of tax-deductible contributions made to recognized foundations to use for fire and life safety renovations, structural and cosmetic reconstruction as well as maintenance and operations without being subject to the "educational purpose test" as required under current law.

Sigma Chi has joined in a cooperative effort to lobby passage of this badly needed legislation. For more on this coalition and the good work it does, see Capital Fraternal Caucus www.fraternalcaucus.org. Please consider registering on the site (Sigma Chi will get recognition for this).

To help promote passage of this bill, the Grand Trustees strongly urge every Sigma Chi house corporation member as well as their family and friends to send messages of support to your elected federal representatives: The Capital Fraternal Caucus website makes this easy. Sigma Chi will get points for each message sent. Grand Trustee **Bruce Morgan Casner** serves as the Chairman of Sigma Chi's Governmental Affairs Committee and sits on the Capital Fraternal Caucus Executive Committee as well. He assures us that these kinds of communications do make a difference.

Constantine Capital, Inc. Sigma Chi offers an funding alternative for chapter house fire/life safety

improvements and renovations. Constantine Capital, Inc. (CCI) can lend up to \$250,000 at competitive interest rates with up to a 30 year amortization schedule.

Also, if your house corporation is considering doing a major fund raiser, CCI can provide seed money to get architectural inspections and drawings done by providing short term funds to get the ball rolling.

Go to www.sigmachi.org > Members > Housing > Constantine Capital, Inc. for more information. For assistance in applying for CCI funding, contact your Grand Trustee.

We're 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. We're here to serve.

