



The Sig House

A Newsletter from the Board of Grand Trustees

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First Impressions

There is an old saying "You never get a second chance at a first impression". This is never truer than at the beginning of the school year when major recruitment takes place. Besides organizing informative and fun events for the prospective members, the chapter house needs to be looking its absolute best. Effective cleaning and removal of excess furniture and too long stored goods is a must. Windows, doors, walls and floors should be repaired and spit shined. In a phrase, "Put on the Ritz!" You'll make a good and lasting impression on potential members, their parents, alumni, university officials, the neighbors and the whole community.

Cleaning the Barn. Move in condition of the chapter facilities is often a wildcard. Some chapter houses are relatively well maintained while others "need work" (a lot of work). To attract the best pledges, the facilities should be clean and in good repair. Question: If the chapter house is a pig sty, what kind or pledges will you attract? (Answer: Pigs.) Strive for the best condition that your money and sweat equity can muster.

Rental Agreements. Part of moving back in the chapter house involves the business of landlording. House corporations which administrate owned facilities need to oversee signing of rental agreements and collection of rent and deposits. In chapter owned houses, sometimes rent collection is handled by active chapter and sometimes directly by the house corporation. For privately owned facilities where the landlord is a private investor or the university, the active chapter brothers sign a rental agreement with those entities. Yet, consider that most actives have little

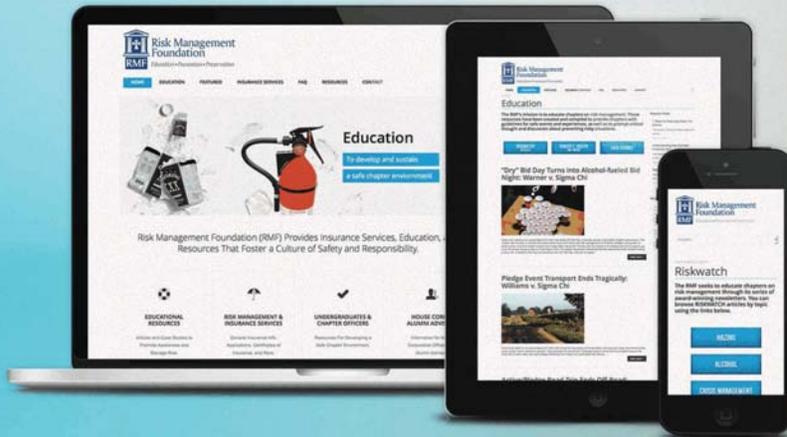
experience in Landlord Tenant law or the intricacies of real estate contracts. They usually appreciate the input from a caring and knowledgeable alumni brother who can assist in rental agreement review. If your chapter house is rented from others, do the active brothers a big favor and lend a hand in the rental process.

Condition of Premises. Whatever condition the facilities are in, a written Condition of Premises should be prepared by an experienced brother or property manager. That list should include a separate list for each bedroom and one for the common areas. A Condition of Premises specific to the bedroom occupied should be provided to each resident. The Condition of Premises for the common areas can be delivered to the Consul. Each one of these documents establishes a benchmark for measuring normal wear and tear which excludes broken windows, holes in the walls and doors and other damage not caused by normal wear and tear. It also documents if there are existing damages so that the tenant won't get blamed for something he didn't do. Upon move out, the Condition of Premises is used to compare move out with move in condition. If warranted, money can be retained from the security deposit.

Security Deposit. A reasonable amount of money should be collected from each tenant to secure payment of the rent and damage to the premises. This should be at least \$200 and more if you can get it. The security deposit may be inadequate to cover what is owed but at least it will help. You can press for formal collection of the balance if necessary.

Rules. A list of reasonable rules should be included in the rental agreement and

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Know the Risks, Be Proactive, Develop a Plan



clearly posted in the House including prohibitions on in-room appliances, smoking, candles, etc.

Fire & Life Safety. Evacuation routes and emergency procedures should be clearly posted and reviewed at the first active chapter meeting and again at the beginning of each semester. For owned chapter houses, the house corporation should perform at least quarterly inspections accompanied by the House Manager and Consul. Review the fire alarm system, smoke detectors, fire extinguishers, exit signs and emergency lights for proper function. Hallways, stairwells and exits should be clear of obstructions.

Cleaning & Maintenance Inspection. At least every two months, the house corporation should inspect the facilities for cleanliness and repair. In particular, review the kitchen and bathrooms where unclean conditions are a health hazard. Take appropriate action.

Fund Raising. With rising cost of

operations, many chapters fall way short in rent revenue to address ongoing maintenance and repairs. Fund raising should be part of every house corporation's purpose. Even universities are constantly fund raising. Where do you think all those new dormitories and buildings come from? Fraternities are no exception. Fund raising has many benefits:

- ▶ Provides the money necessary to effect repairs.
- ▶ Provides a sense of higher purpose for the house corporation. Long term goals and execution is much more satisfying than short term crisis management.
- ▶ Creates a volunteer "magnet". Successful brothers like being part of a successful and visionary purpose.
- ▶ Rallies the alums. Even though many alums don't make it to Homecoming every year, newsletters showing them the good work their donations have facilitated do make a big impact

and reinforce the staying power of Sigma Chi.

As you enter the new school year, rally your house corporation to handle the business of effective chapter house management. Making a great first impression is worth its weight in gold and success breeds success. [HSV](#)

Suspended Chapter Asset Management

Some house corporations may face a time when the active chapter charter is suspended by the general fraternity. This event leaves the house corporation with assets that must be managed without an active chapter to pay the carrying costs. There are typically both funds and real estate to deal with.

If a decision is made to sell the chapter house, what should happen to the sale proceeds and other funds held by the corporation? There are provisions of Sigma Chi Governing Law that may apply and the house corporation may

Sigma Chi Fraternity's



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have specific requirements pertaining to sales proceeds. Review the articles of incorporation and bylaws for specifics. That notwithstanding, consulting with a knowledgeable tax attorney, CPA or your Grand Trustee is highly advisable.

Does this mean the chapter house of a suspended chapter always be sold? The answer varies. If the house corporation holds title to a property in good repair that could be leased out until the chapter can be re-chartered, then it may make sense to follow that course of action. However, if the house is in need of significant repair, structurally unsound or unsafe, the best course of action may be to sell. Regardless of the circumstances, the house corporation is charged with prudent action so consulting with a CPA and an attorney is highly recommended.

There may be significant tax consequences when a house corporation sells its house. Regardless of a corporation's non-profit status, the sale of house corporation-owned property may be subject to capital gains and other

taxes. A tax-free exchange under the IRS code might be a means to minimize a taxable event. A knowledgeable real estate attorney or CPA can explain available options.

While a charter suspension is a disheartening event, it often also provides another chance to do it better when rechartering can be accomplished. We commend you who serve unselfishly to provide safe and adequate housing to our undergraduate brothers.

By *Harvey Silverman* [IHSV](#)

Summer Security

It's that time of year again. If the chapter house will be vacant for the summer, it's time to secure the building. Do a walkabout and:

1. Check all doors and locks; secure all windows and remove all personal valuables from the chapter house.
2. Arrange to have the house checked at least weekly during the summer to make sure all is in order. Make sure to

leave emergency contact information with all neighbors.

3. Turn off the water and natural gas supply.
4. Have a certified heating professional inspect your furnace operation, automatic shut-offs and venting.
5. Remove all combustibles such as paint and spray cans from the furnace area and store in a cool, dry place.
6. Empty all garbage and ensure no combustible items such as trash and paper are left in any public areas.
7. Make sure no electrical outlets are overloaded or potential fire hazards are left unattended. [IHSV](#)

2016 Outstanding House Corporation Awards

Each year, the Board of Grand Trustees honors those Sigma Chi house

corporations that demonstrate superior business practices in these 15 areas:

1. Have a minimum of 3 board members
2. Hold a minimum of 2 board meetings each year
3. Have adopted written bylaws.
4. Current with state/province reporting requirements.
5. House corporation funds are segregated from chapter funds.
6. Use a written rental agreement for each tenant.
7. Charge a tenant security deposit.
8. Have at least a weekly janitorial service.
9. Have a plan for replacing major building components.
10. Have a fire sprinkler system.
11. Have a professional property manager.
12. Publish at least 2 newsletters per year.
13. Maintain an alumni database.
14. Maintain a website.
15. Have an active fund raising campaign.

This year, 31 house corporations submitted applications for this prestigious award. The winners are (drum roll please):

Gold Award (20-25 POINTS)

- Bradley University
- Clarkson University
- DePauw University
- Embry-Riddle-Daytona Beach
- Indiana University of Pennsylvania
- Kettering University
- Massachusetts Institute of Technology
- Oklahoma State University
- Pennsylvania State University
- Southern Methodist University
- Syracuse University
- Texas A&M University-Commerce
- University of Arizona
- University of Cincinnati
- University of Denver
- University of Illinois
- University of Memphis
- University of Michigan
- University of Minnesota
- University of Montana
- University of Pennsylvania
- University of Texas-Arlington
- University of Texas-Austin
- University of Washington
- University of Wyoming

Virginia Polytechnic Institute

Blue Award (15-19 POINTS)

- Clemson University
- University of Arkansas
- University of British Columbia
- University of North Alabama
- University of St Thomas

Congratulations to these hard working and effective house corporations. **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
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 Patrick Terrian **C 310.590.4413**
pterrian@memberplanet.com www.memberplanet.com
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 Patrick Alderdice palderdice@penningtonco.com
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HOUSE DIRECTOR SEARCH & SCREENING

Greek House Resource 361.450.0818
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 Screen, interview and placement for chapter house directors.

INCORPORATION ASSISTANCE

Grand Trustee Harvey Silverman 703.319.8806
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IHSV



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LIFE LOYAL SIG

Life Loyal Sigs are part of a brotherhood of young and old alumni who continue to reap the benefits of Sigma Chi membership long after their college years are over. Life Loyal Sigs exemplify the prosperity, achievement, idealism and deep sense of personal responsibility that we all wish for ourselves and our families. A Life Loyal membership is the best way for members to take part in the enduring spirit and heritage of Sigma Chi.

The first Life Loyal Sig was William “Pop” Henning, **DEPAUW 1890**, who is most commonly known for leading the Fraternity through the difficult years of the World War I era. Since that time, more than 58,000 brothers have become Life Loyal Sigs.

A Life Loyal Sig membership allows brothers to;

- **Stay in Touch**
 - Receive a subscription to *The Magazine of Sigma Chi* and learn of the lives and achievements of the Fraternity’s more than 240,000 living members.
 - Gain special recognition in both *The Magazine of Sigma Chi* and The Sigma Chi Fraternity Membership Directory
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Email _____

Where you would like materials shipped:

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Address 2 _____

City/State/Zip _____

Mail completed forms to:

**Sigma Chi International Fraternity
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Evanston, IL 60201**

For any questions please contact headquarters at 847-869-3655 ext. 255 or email lifeloyal@sigmachi.org