



# The Sig House

*A Newsletter from the Board of Grand Trustees*

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## House Corporation 101

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 fund raising 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 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 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. For tips on how to schedule, run and record meetings, see [www.meetingwizard.org](http://www.meetingwizard.org)

**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 officers.

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

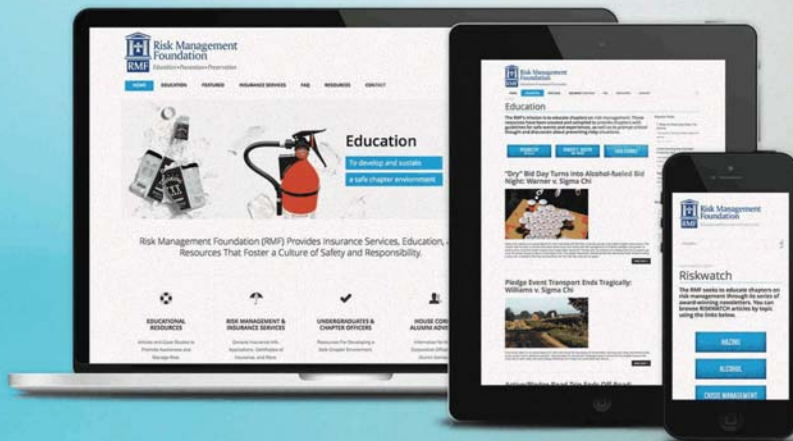
**6. Operate Within Your Governing Documents.** The articles of incorporation and bylaws give the board specific authority which has limitations. They can be amended if the board wants to change that level of authority but the board should not exceed authority without doing so. Liability insurance coverage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

**7. Secure Proper Insurance.** Most Sigma Chi house corporations are insured by Risk Management Foundation (RMF) for Fire, Hazard and General Liability Insurance to protect volunteers that serve on the house corporation board. For insurance coverage details, contact RMF at [www.rmfeducation.org](http://www.rmfeducation.org)

**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

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operations. Keep the relationship between the house corporation and active chapter strictly landlord-tenant. 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 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 Grand Trustee for help (see Page 1; assignments are by state).

By Grand Trustees Rich Thompson & Harvey Silverman. **IHSV**

## Out Damn Spot!

One of a house corporation's important tasks is to perform various types of repair and maintenance on the chapter house. Painting, carpeting and floor replacement fall in this category. One critical task that is often left up to Active Chapter is cleaning. The theory is if you rent a house, you are responsible to keep it clean. Great in theory but not so much in real life.

Older alums remember the days when regular house cleaning was mandatory and often a team building event for actives and pledges. While the results of these exercises weren't always stellar, when performed weekly (not weakly), the results were tolerable.

But as most of today's house corporations can attest to, the standards of cleanliness at chapter houses often leaves a lot to be desired. In some cases, the level of sanitation borders on toxic. One chapter house was reported

to have evidence of the highly infectious ebola virus. There may have been dire consequences if the house corporation had not taken immediate remediation measures.

But plague conditions aside, overflowing garbage cans, unswept floors, unvacuumed carpets and unwashed windows are common. The condition of kitchens and bathrooms often gives rise to mold and bacterial conditions that cause real health problems.

When it comes to cleaning, some things are more important than others. Keeping the kitchen and bathroom germ and mold free is at the top of the priority list. But knowing how to clean these areas is of critical importance:

**Use Commercial Cleaning Products & Equipment.** Treat chapter houses like commercial space and shop at janitorial supply outlets. Not only will the distributor be able to give expert advice on proper technique and products, the products come in large quantity containers that will save money. Many of these products are designed for

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janitorial professionals so having proper equipment (rubber gloves, rags, mops, etc.) is important.

### **Establish a Regular Schedule.**

Kitchens and bathrooms need thorough cleaning at least weekly, no exceptions. Bathrooms need tubs, shower walls, sinks, toilets and urinals to receive a proper cleaning with bacterial and mold killing products.

**Accountability.** Hold active chapter accountable through the Consul and House Manager.

**Spot Checks.** Regular inspections by the house corporation is essential for good results. Set up a schedule and keep it.

**Hire Professionals.** If reasonable efforts to encourage cleanliness fail, hiring a janitorial service and passing the cost on to the active chapter is a alternative that can be done. Limit the service to the kitchen, restrooms and common areas. The pros are trained and paid so can be held to a reasonable standard.

Maintaining a clean chapter house is more than just a healthy thing to do. It demonstrates pride and helps in recruiting brothers with high standards. Help the brothers help themselves and all of Sigma Chi wins. **IHSV**

### **Bad News Travails**

Late night phone calls. Loud pounding on the door. These events rarely bring good news. After a number of them, the phone, door and mail go unanswered. Who needs more bad news? Better not knowing than dealing with it.

Anyone that has served on a house corporation knows that a certain amount of bad news goes with the territory. This is entirely predictable because active brothers are men in training. Their quiver of life experiences is mostly empty and waiting to be filled.

Young brothers in this stage of life can get very creative when it comes to filling that quiver. A tour of most chapter houses reveals lofts built out of random lumber and nails, walls and

doors installed where none existed before, padlocks on fire exits and flammable partitions hung randomly.

Housekeeping, of course, is seldom done other than to impress the alums and to give the illusion that it's regular. In between those times, dirty laundry is heaped next to portable heaters, shower mold grows to mutant proportions, floors go uncleaned and garbage cans overflow.

And the parties! Not satisfied with just beverages, food and good company, the addition of costumes, props and pyrotechnics can turn the chapter house into a firetrap along with obligatory eardrum crushing music guaranteed to bring out the worst in the neighbors and attention from law enforcement.

This kind of behavior is beyond the pale! It's outrageous! It's, well, pretty much the what you did when you were that age. And it all seemed to be such great fun! But to directors of a house corporation, it's pretty much bad news because the consequences of this lifestyle are noise complaints, arrests, fires and citations.

Before you know it, serving on the house corporation board seems like trying to ride herd on stampeding buffalo. Anyone with half a wit should get out of the way of the thundering herd, right? Sure, if you let the buffalo call the shots.

But most of the young brothers have good intentions. When they lived at home, they were given regular course corrections by their parents. But the folks don't live at the chapter house. That's where the caring and regular influence of mature brothers can go a long way.

Providing that mature influence is a tag team effort. The Chapter Advisor can't do it alone. The house corporation brothers can add their worthy influence by holding meetings at the chapter house. Alums can host special recognition events to present scholarships and certificates of achievement.

For greatest impact, schedule events at the chapter house once or twice a month. Several things will happen: The house will be cleaner. Alums will get to know the actives personally. And both of these happy events will help balance bad news.

Curiously, as a tighter bond is formed between actives and alumni, the less bad news happens. Why? True brotherhood promotes accountability. As active brothers better understand their responsibilities as Sigma Chis, the more they think about consequences of their actions.

So, rather than get into "the older I get, the better I was" mentality, remember that you are them, only older and wiser. You turned out pretty well and so will most of them, especially with your help. Don't fear the bad news. It's a call to action. **IHSV**

## 2015 HCOTS

The Grand Trustees are happy to report that the 2015 House Corporation Officers Training Seminar (HCOTS) held at Bowling Green University as a huge success with nothing but high praises for the presenters and their topics from all those house corporation officers that attended.

Topics that were discussed were Governance, Standard Operating

[WWW.THESIGHOUSE.ORG](http://WWW.THESIGHOUSE.ORG)

Procedures, House Operations, Budgets, Preventive Maintenance, Risk Management and a presentation about the Fraternity Row project being developed at Bowling Green to be completed in 2016. Since we will be holding our next HCOTS at Bowling Green in 2016, we'll have an opportunity to inspect the results.

It is our sincere hope that as many house corporations as possible will take advantage of the expertise and experience our presenters. By gaining better skills with chapter house operations, the house corporation job will be more rewarding.

We are in the early planning stages of hosting Regional HCOTS. Keep your eyes open for that announcement when it is made. There might just be one near you! **IHSV**

## House Corporation Resource Directory

### ARCHITECTURAL & PLANNING SERVICES

**Aynesworth Architects & Consultants 512.328.2272**  
G. Tim Aynesworth [tim@aynesworth.com](mailto:tim@aynesworth.com)  
PO Box 161434, Austin TX 78716 [www.aynesworth.com](http://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](mailto:mhug@HugArchitects.com)  
5250 Avalon Blvd  
Alpharetta GA 30009 [www.HugArchitects.com](http://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](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 HOUSING DEVELOPMENT

**Pierce Education Properties, L.P. 619.297.0400**  
Matt Maruccia, VP for Acquisitions  
[www.PierceEducationProperties.com](http://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@sigmachicago.com](mailto:robert.schock.zo@sigmachicago.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](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.

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**GreekBill, Inc. www.greekbill.com 800.457.3816**  
Web-based billing and financial management service enables billing, collecting, budgeting, reporting, online payment options

**OmegaFi 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.

### FOOD SERVICES

**Campus Cooks 847.309.1859**  
William Reeder [wreeder@campuscooks.com](mailto:wreeder@campuscooks.com)  
Comprehensive program: on-site cook 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.

**Gill Grilling 443.822.0264**  
Brian Gill [brian@gillgrilling.com](mailto:brian@gillgrilling.com)  
[www.gillgrilling.com](http://www.gillgrilling.com) Equipment consultation & purchasing, Nutritional analysis, payroll, custom menus. Serving Maryland, Massachusetts & Alabama.

**Greek Kitchen Management 623.565.8289**  
Justin Rolnick [info@greekkitchenmanagement.com](mailto:info@greekkitchenmanagement.com)  
[www.greekkitchenmanagement.com](http://www.greekkitchenmanagement.com) Kitchen management program: staffing, ordering and food preparation. Cleaning products: cleaning chemicals, supplies & paper goods

### FLOORING

**The Carpet Company 541.484.5373**  
Daryl Egbert **C 541.517.8820**  
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**Member Planet 888.298.8845**  
Patrick Terrian **C 310.590.4413**  
[pterrian@memberplanet.com](mailto:pterrian@memberplanet.com) [www.memberplanet.com](http://www.memberplanet.com)  
Email newsletters and text messaging, chapter websites, member database, donation sites.

**Pennington & Associates 785.843.1661**  
Patrick Alderdice [palderdice@penningtonco.com](mailto:palderdice@penningtonco.com)  
[www.penningtonco.com](http://www.penningtonco.com) Capital campaign coordination, gift management, alumni relations programs, website development

**The Laurus Group 770.903.3987**  
Bill Paris [bparis@thelaurusgroup.net](mailto:bparis@thelaurusgroup.net) **C 404.441.9630**  
[www.thelaurusgroup.net](http://www.thelaurusgroup.net) Fundraising consulting specializing in capital campaigns, gift management, alumni communications, annual funds

### HOUSE DIRECTOR SEARCH & SCREENING

**Greek House Resource 361.450.0818**  
[greekhs@gmail.com](mailto:greekhs@gmail.com) [www.greekhouse.net](http://www.greekhouse.net)  
Screen, interview and placement for chapter house directors.

### INCORPORATION ASSISTANCE

**Grand Trustee Harvey Silverman 703.319.8806**  
[harveyas@aol.com](mailto:harveyas@aol.com)

Do you provide a product or service for Sigma Chi Fraternity chapter houses? Get listed in The Sig House Resource Directory! Email [rich.thompson@sigmachicago.com](mailto:rich.thompson@sigmachicago.com)  
**IHSV**

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