



# The Sig House

*A Newsletter from the Board of Grand Trustees*

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Ph 703.319.8806

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Ph 972.571.5202

Central Texas, Northern Texas

**John Watson (2015)** [John.Watson@sigmachi.com](mailto:John.Watson@sigmachi.com)  
Ph 604.277.7028

(Canada)  
California Bay Area, North Central

## Building Host Institution Rapport

An important strategy for every house corporation to develop is to build a working partnership with the host institution. All too often, the only time a house corp interacts with the university is when active chapter has done something wrong. Why not cultivate a relationship based on something right? Establish a good rapport with key people in the administration and nurture those relationships regularly.

**Start at the Top.** A house corp delegation should arrange meetings with the university President plus the Vice President of Student Affairs or their equivalents. This meeting is both social and strategic. The goals are to know the top administrators on a personal level, to express strong support for the university and to affirm the house corp's commitment to managing the chapter house, including discipline issues.

Specifically ask for the university's support of the Greek system which returns so much financially to the school (something true of all universities that have a Greek system). This point is extremely important particularly when there is an undergraduate chapter discipline issue to deal with. If the administration focuses primarily on the undergraduates and not the long term benefits of Greek alums, the relationship will not be a happy one. If, however, the long term benefits lead, the administration will be more reluctant to kill the pipeline.

**Extend Invitations.** If the chapter hosts special events like a scholarship award dinner, invite the President/Dean and VP of Student Affairs to attend. This helps balance the view that Greeks

are nothing but trouble.

**When Trouble Calls.** Sooner or later, some out of control event will happen at the chapter house that calls for the house corp to intercede. It is very important for the house corp to take *immediate* action and communicate that intent to the university. This demonstrates the house corp's resolve to manage all of its business, good and bad.

The rental agreement should allow eviction for violations of the law, university or fraternity policy. If the crime warrants and there is a repeat offender, evict him for the good of the chapter. If it involves egregious behavior (conduct unbecoming a Sigma Chi), alums can work with the Grand Praetor and Active Chapter to suspend or expel the brother from the fraternity.

**Renew the Rapport.** Nurture your host institution relationship each and every year by meeting with the President. Ask how Sigma Chi can make their job easier. This sentiment will buy lots of points from someone whose job is huge and stressful. But also tell them what they can do for you as a valued partner. One hand washes the other.

Building good rapport with your host institution will stand your house corp in good stead when the storms of adversity blow. With the university is viewed as a valued partner instead of an adversary, storm damage will be more easily repaired. **IHSV**

## Fighting Fire with Safety

According to the United States Fire Administration, an estimated 150 fires will occur in Greek housing this year. Amid the increased efforts in fire safety education to identify the dangerous risk placed upon our members, we are reminded of the three fatalities

occurring in a fraternity fire at the University of Mississippi in August 2004. Statistics from the Center for Campus Safety indicate that an average of 15 student housing fire fatalities occur each year. These are a needless loss of life and can be prevented through simple fire safety measures and updated facilities. Well maintained facilities compliant with fire and health standards, complimented with education and awareness by tenants will remain the key objectives to reduce risks.

**Items to Limit & Restrict:**

**Candles.** A leading cause of fire among Greek housing, the dangers of candles begin with the exposed and often unattended flame. Members should restrict the use of candles throughout the facility and replace their use with flameless (battery operated) candles in ritualistic ceremonies.

**Space Heaters.** Space heaters pose a significant risk. Up to 70% of home heating fires and deaths each year are attributed to space heaters.

**High Wattage Lightbulbs.** The US Consumer Product Safety Commission has issued a warning about the excessive temperatures of bulbs of 300 watts or higher. Fabrics, paper and plastic products burn quickly when in close proximity to high wattage bulbs.

**Smoking.** Smoking materials (cigarettes, cigars, pipes, etc.) are a leading cause of fire deaths in the United States. Members should enact a no smoking policy throughout the building, restricting smoking to the outside ground level with a proper receptacle for disposal.

**Extension Cords.** Often seen as the answer to more outlets or flexibility in the placement of appliances or electronics, extension cords not only pose increased fire risk but also a safety hazard as tripping or entanglement in cords is common. An estimated 4,700 fires and 50 fatalities result from extension cords each year.

In addition to these key items, safe facilities can be provided through:

1. The proper storage of combustible

- items in a dry and secured location, away from mechanical items such as water heaters and boilers;
2. Kitchens that meet all necessary fire and health safety requirements with limited or restricted use of the appliances by members;
3. Laundry dryers that receive regular maintenance, repair and cleaning (lint traps and exhaust vents).
4. Emergency signage and lighting
5. Secondary points of egress
6. Working fire extinguishers at all recommended locations.
7. Monitored and hardwired fire alarm system, and
8. Fire sprinkler system.

Analysis of property claims resulting from fire reveals in recent years indicates the average cost of a fire exceeds \$335,000. Costs to provide safe and updated facilities are far less expensive and quickly outweigh the alternatives. Simple steps can be taken to prevent the outbreak of fire within chapter facilities and avoid a fatal or costly accident. **IHSV**

**Basic Math**

For most people, math is not a strong suit. Many even have trouble making change and balancing a bank account. And when it comes to geometry, algebra and calculus....forget it. But there are two basic math equations that speak volumes to how well or poorly House Corporations and Active Chapters work together:  $R-R=R$  and  $R+R=R$ .

Translated into plain English,  $R-R=R$  means Rules without Relationship equals Rebellion. The House Corporation that uses this approach stays distant and aloof from Active Chapter except for collection and rules enforcement. Since actives are still maturing, they inevitably will make some immature decisions when it comes to financial accountability and care of the chapter house. With a detached House Corporation, these bad decisions usually trigger a parental response. Angry phone calls or emails from House Corp rain down on the officers or a surprise visit tirade ensues with comments like “This place looks like s\*&#!”

With the  $R-R=R$  equation, Active

Chapter rebellion is predictable because young brothers carry a fair amount of pride and “I can do it myself” attitude. The rebellion may manifest itself openly or subversively. Open rebellion is in your face. Subversive rebellion is the smile of compliance followed with a failure to follow through. Whether open or subversive, the effects are the same. Either little changes or matters get worse.

$R+R=R$ , on the other hand, translates into Respect plus Relationship equals Responsibility. When a House Corporation takes the time to respectfully and regularly interact with active brothers about positive things, the tone of the relationship radically changes. Most young brothers have a desire for approval and a need to be appreciated. Take the time to find ways to compliment and encourage. Gush over rush success and improved grades. Praise the latest house cleaning, charity fundraiser or renovation project.

Take this equation to a personal level. Ask questions like:

- ✪ Where did you come from?
- ✪ What are you studying?
- ✪ How do you spend your time?
- ✪ Have you thought about running for office?
- ✪ What about Sigma Chi is most important to you?

The answers to these questions are very important to the one being asked. Make those answers important to you as well. A closer relationship can be further developed through Active/Alumni social events, House Corp Board Meetings held at the chapter house, mentoring, attending initiation ceremonies, helping with Initiation Week, athletic event tailgates and other ways. Be creative. These contacts should focus on nurturing the “brother” aspect of the relationship. These brothers already have parents and aren’t looking for more.

Another advantage of  $R+R=R$  is you can get a sense of who the potential leaders are. At Active Chapter, the cream doesn’t always rise to the top. Some obvious leaders still don’t recognize they have the talent. An older

brother's encouragement could make all the difference. Effective Active Chapter officers always make House Corp's job much easier because they will be more likely to enforce accountability. The better Active Chapter governs itself, the easier House Corp's job is.

The beauty of this basic math is it takes much less time than the damage control House Corps deal with when things are in crisis. Use the R+R=R formula for success. Not only will you focus on positive outcomes, you'll nurture lifelong relationships with new Sigma Chi brothers. **IHSV**

## Five Rs of Fundraising

Fundraising should be a fundamental goal of every house corporation and alumni chapter. If you have a chapter house, it is likely in need of fire and safety upgrades or renovation which often cost a lot of money. If you don't have a chapter house, money can be raised for scholarships to assist in the recruitment. While there are professional companies that engage in this type of work that do well with multi-million dollar campaigns, most fundraisers are smaller dollar values and executed by volunteers.

Whether large or small, every successful fundraising effort requires planning and careful execution, also known as the Five Rs:

**Research.** This forms the basis of the entire campaign. Developing a reliable contact alumni database is essential to success so it must be done first. It is your donor pool. The bigger the pool, the greater potential for donations. Fraternity headquarters can provide you much of the information as a starting point which must be updated. The ultimate goal should be to garner email addresses for as many alums as possible to eliminate cumbersome and costly mailings.

**Recruiting.** This phase is going on constantly, but primarily during the same time frame as research. Volunteers, from leadership level to initiation class chairman, are all necessary for a successful campaign. The amount of work involved and the number of people through the years that must be contacted demands it.

**Romance.** Commonly called cultivation, this is perhaps the most important part of the process. All contact is a form of cultivation. Every publication, phone call, event and publicity item serves to inform and interest your alumni. A concerted effort needs to be made prior to soliciting funds. The goal is to get prospects emotionally involved with the cause.

**Request.** This is the part when the prospect is actually asked to *invest*. The word "invest" is much more meaningful than "give". In a real sense, investing in a chapter house renovation provides a place for the chapter to thrive for years to come. So *invest* is more about the viability of the chapter than the real estate. Requests are best done by someone that knows the prospect so having generational volunteers is the best strategy.

**Recognition.** Early, frequent and creative ways to thank your volunteers and donors will insure that they stay involved and invested. It also sets a pattern which other prospects will notice. Every fundraiser needs to have a newsletter that goes out 2-4 times a year. Include descriptions of the work accomplished and pictures of the volunteers that helped, invitations to Homecoming, stories of generational reunions and names of those that attended. Brothers *love* to see their names in print. This strategy will pay off big time.

Every contact with an alum involves one or more of the Five Rs. Maximizing the effectiveness of those contacts is what will get you to your goal.

From Fraternity Management Group  
[www.fmgucson.com](http://www.fmgucson.com) **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@sigmachicago.com](mailto:robert.schock.ze@sigmachicago.com)

Provides affordable financing options to Sigma Chi house corporations for chapter house purchase, life & safety upgrades, new construction, renovation and loan guaranty

### 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@infocpps.com](mailto:Support@infocpps.com) 314.422.3407

Brian Heider [www.infocpps.com](http://www.infocpps.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@sigmachicago.com](mailto:bruce.morgan.casner@sigmachicago.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)



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