



The Sig House

A Quarterly Newsletter from the Board of Grand Trustees

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HCOTS 2008

The Board of Grand Trustees is proud to announce **House Corporation Officers Training Seminar 2008**. The event will take place in Irving (Dallas) Texas on June 6-8, 2008 and is open to directors of Sigma Chi house corporations.

Topics to be covered include Knowing Your Customers, Legal & Corporate Governance Issues, Fundraising 101, How to Attract Volunteers, Chapter House Maintenance and Risk Management. By popular demand, break out sessions will allow brothers to share successes and experiences for the Good of the Order.

HCOTS 2008 is presented by the Sigma Chi Board of Grand Trustees with budgetary support from the General Fraternity. Airfare will be reimbursed up to \$300. Double occupancy room and meals will be provided. Participants will be required to pay a \$125 registration fee.

Interested brothers should apply using the **HCOTS 2008 Participant Registration Form** found at the end of this newsletter. There are limited openings. All registrations are subject to approval by the HCOTS 2008 Committee. Priority will be given to brothers who have not previously attended an HCOTS. Please complete the registration and fax, mail or email it by no later than March 30, 2008.

Men of SIGNificance

House corporations deal with a dynamic group of clients. Undergraduate brothers in various stages of maturity present ongoing challenges in chapter house maintenance and rent collection. At times, the challenges for the directors of a house corporation can seem more cumbersome than the

reward. At times like these, it's important to review and reflect on the main reason Sigma Chi exists in the first place: to grow men of SIGNificance.

Most young brothers want to make their mark in the world. There are many ways to get noticed. There are many bad ways. Prisons are full of them. And there are good ways. Consider the case of Oliver Smoot.

Oliver attended Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) in the 1950s. Like many young men, he pledged a fraternity. As one of his pledge duties, he was required to measure the Harvard Bridge which connects Boston to Cambridge. For many college kids, the trek across the Harvard Bridge in winter was a cold and windy ordeal. So, the thinking went, knowing how much farther it was to go would be useful information. The twist on this task was that Smoot was to measure the bridge *with his body*. Smoot was chosen because, at 5' 7", he was the shortest man in the pledge class and the job would be hardest for him.

So, Oliver and several pledge brothers set about the task. He would lie down, a chalk mark was made and then he'd get up, move forward and repeat the process. Every ten body lengths, a painted mark was made. Since the bridge is over 2000 feet long, the exercise soon grew tiring so his pledge brothers began carrying him from one position to the next.

When all was said and done, the tally was 364.4 body lengths. One of the fraternity brothers named the measurement a "smoot" in Oliver's honor and because the term sounded scientific. While this prank seemed senseless and immature, something about it struck a cord with the locals. It had two components of a classic MIT prank: a hint of science and a low level of vandalism.

But keeping the smoot alive took the cooperation of strange bedfellows. As part of an annual ritual, the fraternity brothers repaint the smoot marks. And during a 1990s bridge renovation, the government contractor agreed to score the sidewalk every 5' 7" in honor of Smoot instead of the traditional six feet. The legend has been passed on now for 50 years.

But it doesn't end there. Oliver was a dedicated student and eventually earned a Bachelor of Science (BS) degree followed by a Juris Doctorus (JD) law degree. His long and distinguished career included serving as Chairman of the American National Standards Institute (ANSI) and President of the International Organization for Standardization (ISO). Both organizations deal with, in part, establishing standards in measurement.

And there's still more. Google, the internet's largest search engine, includes the "smoot" as a unit of measurement in its Google Earth measurement tool. [Download Google Earth at <http://earth.google.com> Launch the program and go Tools>Ruler>Line tab. Use the drop down menu and *voilà!*]

So what does this mean to Sigma Chi?

- What started as a prank of a few captured the imagination of many. Each of us is born with special talents. Discovering and using them for others is what we were made for.
- The smoot reminds that the world really is a random place no matter how we like to categorize, define and contain it. The foot, the yard, the mile and the smoot are all arbitrary measurements. There is comfort in knowing that randomness is still honored.
- Humor is vital in making sense of an incomprehensible world.
- There is little in life we truly control. Those that understand that maintain a sense of humility which keeps the ups and downs of life in perspective.
- No matter what greatness we achieve, we need others to help do it. Smoot's pledge brothers carried him in an effort that made him a legend.
- We are all called on to serve. Instead

of spectating, Smoot's pledge brothers stepped in and lent him a helping hand.

- Be careful how you measure your life. Piling up trophies, money and goods is self serving. Use the talent and treasures you're given for others. That's the true measure of a successful life.

When random acts of immaturity by active members cause frustration, anger and despair, take heart. Seemingly meaningless events can produce profound impacts. Many of these young brothers will achieve greatness beyond their and your wildest dreams. Think back to your days as an undergrad and the mistakes you made. You turned out pretty well. What's the point? The point is Smoot.

2007 House Corporation Awards

Each year, the Grand Trustees honor Sigma Chi house corporations that are meeting or exceeding operational excellence. This is determined by way of an informational application which is submitted by interested house corporations. For the year 2007, The Grand Trustees honor the following house corporations for demonstrating how it should be done:

**Alphi Pi Chapter
Albion College**

**Theta Omicron Chapter
University of California-Davis**

**Beta Delta Chapter
University of Montana**

**Upsilon Upsilon Chapter
University of Washington**

**Iota Omicron Chapter
Western Illinois University**

**Zeta Nu Chapter
Western Michigan University**

**Epsilon Theta Chapter
San Jose State University**

**Theta Iota Chapter
Saint Louis University**

**Iota Mu Chapter
Wilfred Laurier University**

**Theta Kappa Chapter
University of Texas at Arlington**

**Theta Upsilon Chapter
Yale University**

Our congratulations to the members of these fine house corporations and our heartfelt thanks for the work they do on behalf of Sigma Chi and their chapter house corporation. It is the efforts of the few that benefit the many.

That said, all Sigma Chi house corporations are invited to submit an application for **2008 House Corporation of the Year Award**. The application is available in Word format and can be obtained by contacting Grand Trustee Rich Thompson at rich@regenesisis.net or Phone 503.977.7974.

Grand Trustee Shuffle

After years of devoted service to the Board of Grand Trustees, **Mark Burroughs** has been selected to chair the Leadership Training Board and devote his considerable organizational, vision and social skills to reforming Sigma Chi's educational programs. The Grand Trustees will miss Mark but know he will always be there to assist if called upon.

Grand Consul Bob Jones has appointed **John Woolman** Oklahoma '71 (Beta Kappa) to serve Mark's remaining Grand Trustee term until the 2013. John has a long and successful career in banking, real estate development, construction and marketing. His skill set will serve the Grand Trustees' mandate well to improve chapter housing condition and safety.

Along with changes on the Board, come changes in Sigma Chi province assignments. Effective immediately:

John Woolman is assigned South Florida (formerly assigned to Mark Burroughs), Southern Missouri (formerly assigned to Tom Ely) and Oklahoma/Arkansas (formerly assigned to Breck Grover).

Tommy Geddings is assigned North Carolina (formerly assigned to Mark Burroughs).

Breck Grover is assigned Rocky Mountain (formerly assigned to Rich Thompson).

Collegiate Housing 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** (Senate Bill 638 and House Bill 643) filed in early 2007 would make that playing field more level by allowing non-university owned not-for-profit student housing, like fraternities and sororities, to enjoy the benefit of tax deductible donations. (Senate Bill 638 is attached.) 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 as well as structural and cosmetic reconstruction 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 Chairman **Bruce Casner** is the Chairman of Sigma Chi's Government 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.

New Grand Trustee Website

The Grand Trustees proudly announce www.TheSigHouse.org The website features a Newsletter and Article Archive, Sample Bylaws, Maintenance and Fire Safety Checklists, Procedures and other resources for house corporations.

This was all made possible by the generous support of Alumni Chapter Executive Committee Representative **Mike Greenberg** who also chairs the **Sigma Chi Alumni Services Committee**, which provides free website hosting. If your house corporation or alumni association is interested in having its own website, contact john.garrett@sigmachi.org for more information.

Pick Me! Pick Me!

When it comes to House Corporation Board elections, are candidates scarcer than snowballs in **h-e-double hockey sticks**? This is a common frustration where the same few brothers shoulder the responsibility for life. So, how do you get others to raise their hand and step forward? Some suggestions:

Communicate Regularly. Uninformed brothers are uninvolved brothers. If you don't tell them what's going on and give them a reason to get involved, they won't. Regular newsletters get the word out and help recruit the willing.

Put Them on a Pedestal. Most brothers love recognition. Turn a "thankless" job into a position of honor. Hand out kudos and certificates, praise and congratulations. Do this at every opportunity, including board meetings and newsletters. Volunteers are attracted to positive, uplifting environments.

Socialize. People like helping people they know but easily dodge commitment to strangers. House Corp should sponsor several socials each year to break the ice. Golf tournaments, rafting trips, pub crawls and other social events promote brotherhood and a desire to join in.

Encourage. Volunteers need to know they are doing the right thing. Remember to build them up and ask if they need help. Value their opinions.

Remember as a kid waiving your hand

wildly to be recognized by the teacher? Age tempers that need to stand up and stand out. It takes someone to get the ball rolling. Let'er roll! Pick me, pick ME!

Renovation Funding

Sigma Chi offers a great alternative for funding chapter house fire/life safety improvements and renovations. Constantine Capital, Inc.(CCI) has loan programs that 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 fundraiser, 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 then **Members** then **Housing** then **Constantine Capital** for more information. For assistance in applying for CCI funding, contact your Grand Trustee.

We're Here to Help

Your Board of Grand Trustees is here to assist Sigma Chi house corporations in a myriad of ways. Besides many years of service to Sigma Chi in various capacities, there is almost *500 years of combined professional expertise* in such things 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 out of your Grand Trustee's specific area of expertise, other colleagues will assist in providing real solutions.

Give us a try. The Grand Trustees are here to help your house corporation be the very best that it can be. Please use the contact information on Page One.



2007-2009 Board of Grand Trustees

FIRST ROW -L TO R: Tom Ely, Rich Hronek, Breck Grover, Rip Peterman, Bob Schock, Scott LeTellier
SECOND ROW- L TO R: Mark Burroughs (replaced by John Woodman effective 3/1/08), Dan Harrop, Scott Ross, Rich Thompson, Tommy Geddings, Bruce Casner, Bill Bringham Jr., Harvey Silverman, Bill Bowlin

