



# The Sig House

*A Newsletter from the Board of Grand Trustees*

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**Scott Ross (2019)** [hsross@bellsouth.net](mailto:hsross@bellsouth.net)  
Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama Ph 662.494.2593

## Friend Raising

The Sigma Chi experience is much more than the chapter house. But the chapter house is an essential component of the experience since it provides the stage where friendships are grown and the seeds of high minded values are sown. As with friendships and values, the chapter house requires care and renewal, all of which costs money...sometimes BIG money.

Every chapter house needs funds to renew, renovate and upgrade. Safety considerations drive the need for fire sprinkler systems, smoke alarms, up to code wiring, fire extinguishers and safe egress. Economic considerations dictate adequate insulation, energy efficient windows and efficient heating and cooling equipment. Recruitment considerations mandate an attractive and competitively priced housing alternative.

Weatherization and insulating work can sometimes be paid for through state grants or utility company rebates or subsidies. Search the internet for "weatherization programs" in your state for alternatives. Other types of renovation work generally require a private funding source. While private lenders may consider lending to a properly registered house corporation with adequate collateral and source of repayment, bank financing carries loan fees, high interest rates, short repayment terms and higher payments. By far, the best source of renovation funding is contributions from chapter alums.

Consider some statistics about fund raisers:

1. A 20-25% participation rate is very good. So, if you have 1,000 potential donors, you can expect only 200 to 250 contributions of *any size*. Do the math for your chapter.

2. 80% of all contributions will come from 20% of donors.

3. Your top 10 contributions typically make up 50% of the campaign goal.

4. The largest gift will be 15% of the campaign goal.

Being successful in gathering the gold requires a carefully executed plan which includes:

**Defining the Donor Pool.** Every house corporation should make having a complete and accurate alumni database a high priority. It is not only indispensable for raising money, it provides a mechanism for brothers to reconnect with other brothers. Sigma Chi Headquarters [www.sigmachi.org](http://www.sigmachi.org) can provide the information it has to begin the database building process. Since brothers move, databases are ever changing. This is especially true of many younger alums who move frequently. Since the post office maintains change of address requests for six months, doing First Class mailings with "Return Service Requested" at least twice a year will capture many of those changes. Bottom Line: building and maintaining a reliable database is essential to fund raising and virtually every other successful house corporation endeavor.

**Wield the Web.** The vast majority of brothers have access to the internet and use email regularly. Use this fact to your advantage by

hosting a chapter website. The cost is nominal and it's accessible 24/7. Post your database, newsletters, pictures and more. And gather and use email addresses to reduce mailing costs.

**Fund Raiser Theme.** Every fund raiser should be named. The theme should be carefully chosen, visionary and appeal to the heart because the heart is the key to the wallet. Some examples of successful themes include "Giving Back" which appeals to repaying the debt owed to Sigma Chi for a lifetime of value.

**How & When Funds Will Be Spent.** Along with a theme goes the scheme. All fund raisers need to have a dollar goal based on specific renovation projects systematically accomplished according to a schedule. It's okay to spread the work over several years if the projects are volunteer driven. If hiring a general contractor, most mid range renovations should be accomplished during the summer to avoid occupancy conflicts. If the work is more involved, temporary alternative housing for the chapter needs to be part of the plan.

**A Picture is Worth (well, you know).** Many alums have not visited the chapter house for years, sometimes decades. A video that shows the current condition and plans for renovation is free to produce on a cell phone and then posted on the chapter's website and/or Facebook page designed for this purpose. Focus first on fond memories and then segue into the renovation and money it will take to keep the dream alive for future brothers.

**Identifying the Big Hitters.** This pool is less than 5% of your total number of prospects but will yield the biggest dollars by far. Most of those who qualify will be in their fifties or older so having generational contacts who know who they are is vital. Once the Big Hitters have been identified, a personal visit is best even if that means long distance travel. Those Big Hitters that commit often know

who the other Big Hitters are and may be willing to make personal calls to them. Don't forget to ask.

**Name Levels of Giving.** Most contributors want to know where they stand in relation to their peers. Brothers are competitive that way. Establish at least five levels of giving that allow the Big Hitters to hit big (like \$10,000 or \$25,000 or more) but still allow smaller donors to play (like \$100 and up). Name the categories for Sigma Chi symbols (Norman Shield, Jordan Standard, White Cross, etc.) or for chapter founders or achievers that are well known. Publish updated results on the chapter website and in newsletters.

**Announcing the Campaign.** Keep the announcement under wraps until you have gotten commitments for at least half of the goal. *This part is critical.* If announced too soon, levels of giving and numbers of donors will be much smaller. When the campaign is announced with much of the goal already committed and who committed it, others will be more inclined to contribute and match or out do their peers. Do not underestimate the power of this tactic. It is time tested and works.

**Keeping the Ball Rolling.** Once the campaign is announced, plan to communicate to the alums three or four times a year to show the progress and continued urgency to donate. A year end appeal in particular can be very effective since charitable giving deductions face a December 31 deadline.

**Don't Start Renovation Too Soon.** Even though the announced schedule indicates the renovation work will start on such-and-such a date, delay the start if insufficient pledges have been received. Starting too soon is a message to those that haven't contributed that you don't need their money. Put the responsibility for the delay on those that haven't pledged. Tell them "this train can't leave the station without YOU on it".

Aside from the hard work and excitement that comes with a

chapter house renovation, the rewards to those that participate cannot be understated. Fund raising and renovation projects give the house corporation board a series of positive long range goals to work on. As goals are accomplished, those that helped should be recognized for the effort in person and in public.

This is one of the best team building exercises there is. It gives others a desire to join a winning team. And it gives still other brothers a chance to show their financial appreciation for what Sigma Chi has meant to their lives.

*By Grand Trustee Rich Thompson*

## **Alumni Engagement Report**

Several initiatives have taken place to improve alumni engagement. A new Facebook page named "Sigs That Want to Be Involved" has grown to over 700 members. To improve communications, brothers should go to [www.sigmachi.org](http://www.sigmachi.org) > Members Only and create a Sigma Chi profile or update your existing profile.

Every chapter is encouraged to have a virtual alumni chapter via Facebook or the chapter website. Large city Alumni Chapters can analyze Sigma Chi databases sorted by zip code, school and chapter as a way to create satellite groups of the main alumni chapter. Databases are available from Sigma Chi International Headquarters Bill Scott [William.Scott@sigmachi.org](mailto:William.Scott@sigmachi.org)

Some ways for alums to engage:

☞ House Corporations should serve as an alumni base for chapter towns until a formal alumni club or chapter is established.

☞ Form a common interest alumni group for business networking, hobby, sports, etc.

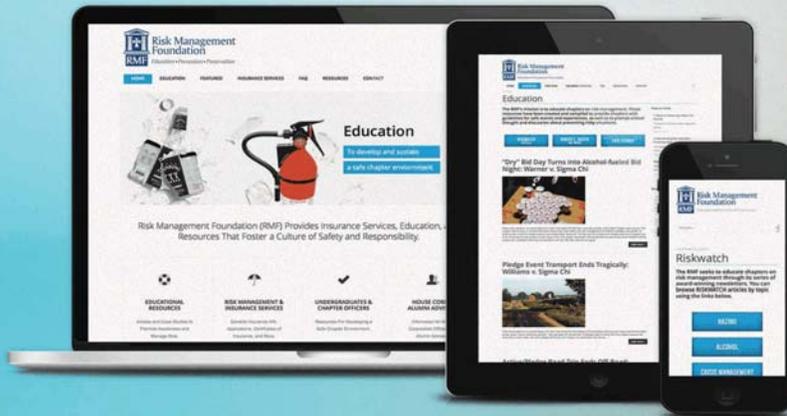
☞ Become a Life Loyal Sig [www.sigmachi.org/life-loyal-sig](http://www.sigmachi.org/life-loyal-sig)

☞ Create chapter specific alumni chapters in large cities to increase participation.

☞ Register an alumni chapter with Sigma Chi Headquarters. There is no fee.

☞ Get involved with a local active chapter. Ask the Chapter Advisor or

Announcing our new website...



**RMFEducation.org**

- ✦ Watch Risk Management Videos
- ✦ Read RISKWATCH Articles
- ✦ Download Checklists & Safety Tips
- ✦ Search RMF Archives

**Know the Risks, Be Proactive, Develop a Plan**



**Sigma Chi Fraternity's**



Affordable financing options up to \$250,000 for Sigma Chi house corporations that own chapter houses

- ✦ Chapter House Purchase
- ✦ Life & Fire Safety Upgrades
- ✦ New Construction
- ✦ Renovation



*Ritual Regalia Loans up to \$5000*



For more information, contact  
**Ed Rammrath**  
[eramrath@rammrathrealty.com](mailto:eramrath@rammrathrealty.com)  
Phone 832.483.8676

Grand Praetor if they need team members or mentors.

☞ Be a speaker at a local alumni meeting or event.

☞ Review all the alumni resources and updates at [www.sigmachi.org](http://www.sigmachi.org)

By Grand Trustee Bill Robinson

## Random Acts of Immaturity

House corporations deal with a dynamic group of undergraduate brothers in various stages of maturity. This presents ongoing challenges in chapter house maintenance and rent collection. At times, the challenges for a house corporation can seem more cumbersome than the reward. At times like these, it's important to reflect on the main reason Sigma Chi exists in the first place: to grow men of SIGNificance.

Most young brothers want to make a positive mark in the world. There are many ways to get attention. Some are very bad. 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 almost 60 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 has included the "smoot" as a unit of measurement in its Google Earth measurement tool.

So what does this all 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 cause frustration and anger, take heart. Many of these young brothers will achieve greatness beyond 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.

By Grand Trustee Rich Thompson

## 2018 House Corporation Report

Each year, the Grand Trustees request that each house corporation update their board member contact information. This allows us to deliver this newsletter and all expense paid House Corporation Training opportunities.

Completing this Annual Report also qualifies those house corporations to apply for the prestigious Outstanding House Corporation Award. When you receive the email request for this report, please take five minutes to complete and return it.

## We're Here to Help

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 such as real estate development, property management, project administration, politics, house maintenance and renovation, insurance, tax planning, accounting, construction, fund raising, legal, education, financing, 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.

## CCI Corner

Constantine Capital Inc. (CCI) is Sigma Chi's mortgage lender for qualified house corporations. It can finance a variety of renovation and upgrade projects up to \$250,000 such as:

- Chapter House Purchase
- Life & Safety Upgrades
- New Construction
- Renovation Projects, and
- Loan Guaranty

CCI recently received requests or approved loans for these house corporations:

**Kent State** (approved) \$130,000  
Kitchen and exterior renovations

**St. Thomas** (request) \$40,000  
Renovation

**Fort Hays** (request) \$120,000  
New house bridge loan

**Wilfred Laurier** (request) \$100,000  
Renovation

Does your house corporation have a chapter house financing needs? Contact Chair Ed Rammrath at Phone 832.483.8676 or [eramrath@rammrathrealty.com](mailto:eramrath@rammrathrealty.com)

[WWW.SIGMACHI.ORG/GRAND-TRUSTEES](http://WWW.SIGMACHI.ORG/GRAND-TRUSTEES)

## 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.

**Reifsteck Reid & Company Architects** 217.351.4100  
Rod Reid [rreid@rr-arch.com](mailto:rreid@rr-arch.com)  
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.** 832.483.8676  
Ed Rammrath [eramrath@rammrathrealty.com](mailto:eramrath@rammrathrealty.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.

### FINANCIAL & DATABASE MANAGEMENT

**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

**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.

### 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)

### College Chefs

Jordan Wigton [jwigton@collegechefs.com](mailto:jwigton@collegechefs.com) 217.369.7267  
[www.collegechefs.com](http://www.collegechefs.com) We provide trained professional chefs to prepare delicious meals and maintain a spotless kitchen.

### 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  
[daryle@thecarpetcompany.biz](mailto:daryle@thecarpetcompany.biz) [www.thecarpetcompany.biz](http://www.thecarpetcompany.biz)  
All major brands of commercial and residential flooring.

### FUNDRAISING & COMMUNICATION

**Affinity Connection** 814.237.0481 ext 131  
Greg Woodman [greg@affinityconnection.com](mailto:greg@affinityconnection.com)  
[www.affinityconnection.com](http://www.affinityconnection.com) Database management, website hosting/management, newsletter production, enewsletters, fundraising assistance, donation processing

**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.

Do you offer a service for Sigma Chi house corporations? Email [rich.thompson@sigmachicom](mailto:rich.thompson@sigmachicom) with the details and get listed in the Service Directory.

## Board of Grand Trustees



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Missing: Joel Jensen, Jim Carroll

