

FRATERNITY OF MEN, NOT BOYS.

Sigma Nu's Risk Reduction Newsletter

December 19, 2012



Vol. 4 Issue 4

College of Chapters and AFH

In early January we will be conducting College of Chapters under its new format in St. Louis, Missouri. It will be a great time for Commanders to experience intensive training on all aspects of leadership and chapter governance. It will also be a great time to hear phenomenal guest speakers and network with fellow Commanders in your geographic region.

However, if you don't attend College of Chapters, then you'll miss out on all of that and more. The specific "and more" is that your chapter will be placed on Alcohol-Free Housing (AFH) status until the next conclave as detailed in Sigma Nu's [Risk Reduction Policy and Guidelines](#). That means regardless of any resident's or guest's age, alcohol will be prohibited inside the chapter house until the next conclave, which would be College of Chapters in 2014. Needless to say, AFH isn't something any officer wants to leave as part of their legacy. If your chapter has not yet registered, you should do so as soon as possible on the Sigma Nu website at <https://www.sigmanu.org/events/collegeofchapters/registration.php>.

#40Answers

The third annual #40Answers anti-hazing campaign was completed earlier this semester and was once again a resounding success with record participation. Each day, for 40 days leading up to the beginning of National Hazing Prevention Week (NHPW), a spontaneous group of participants tweeted their answers to a different hazing excuse.

These tweeted answers could then be used as entry points to a more meaningful conversation when responding to one of these commonly heard hazing excuses. With the help of HazingPrevention.Org, this year's #40Answers campaign resulted in over 2,500 answers.

You can view the compiled responses at: http://www.sigmanu.org/documents/anti_hazing_2500_reasons_to_stop_hazing.pdf.

Do-It-Yourself Membership Reviews

Members are disgruntled, there are underlying issues in the chapter, or we have some cultural issues to address. These are all commonly heard reasons for requesting a membership review be conducted by the General Fraternity, and those are all valid reasons to conduct one. However, why not just do it yourself?

A membership review is an opportunity to meet with members individually, and in confidence, to have candid conversations about the chapter and the individual member. It's not an interrogation or a "cleaning house" tool. In fact, it's much more of a "what's in this house?" tool. It's also not something that has to be done in tandem with a negative incident. I know of some chapters that conduct one annually and see great value in it. That value comes directly from the environment and tone they set with the membership review. It's an environment of mutual discussion where the member can discuss his opinions openly and privately and also receive constructive criticism and feedback.

So how does your chapter start conducting your own? Well the first step is to make it transparent and explain its purpose to the chapter. Make sure they understand the purpose and intended outcomes. This helps set the tone that this isn't a witch hunt, but instead, a way to improve the chapter. *(continued on page 2)*

Chapter House Winter Break Checklist

Adapted from "Leave The Heat On!" by Bobbi Larsen, Willis North America (Fall 2012)

As stressful as this time of the year may be with final exams and project deadlines, it is vital that the chapter does not neglect important maintenance items to ensure the chapter house stays in good shape over the winter break. Failure to do so can cost the chapter and/or local house corporation thousands of dollars in avoidable repairs.

Utilize the following checklist to prepare your chapter house for the upcoming winter break:

- Open the indoor faucets slightly to allow water to trickle as moving water does not freeze as easily.
- Ensure that someone is checking the interior and exterior of the facility regularly during the break. You can usually accomplish this by notifying your campus or local police department.
- As a chapter, clean the house before departing for break – nobody wants to come home to a dirty house.
- Respond to any leaks promptly to mitigate damage and prevent further harm.
- Keep the furnace on and thermostat set at or above 68 degrees.
- Unplug all electronic devices – televisions, computers, etc.
- Place additional insulation on exterior walls and windows.
- Insulate exterior doors appropriately, and assure all close and latch completely.
- Clear all snow and ice from sidewalks, fire escapes, and walkways and ensure someone is assigned this responsibility over the break.

The four leading risks to a chapter facility during holiday breaks are water freeze, fire, vandalism and theft. Over the past four years, there has been nearly \$1.2 million paid out in property insurance claims at fraternity houses in water/freeze-related claims alone.

There is no need for the chapter to return from the winter break to a damaged chapter house. Work with your local house corporation and college/university to ensure your chapter house is properly prepared for the winter break. For additional ideas on how to prepare the chapter facility for winter break check out: http://www.willisfraternity.com/wfdata/files/2012Winter_Break_Checklist_General.pdf.

Membership Review Steps *(continued from page 1)*

The next step is to figure out who will be conducting the membership review. This is an important step because it can affect the conversations in the room. Ideally there should be no active members conducting it. Have your Chapter Advisor conduct the membership review. This ensures that everyone is being looked at through the same lens and might also allow for members to discuss their opinions on the current leadership a little more candidly. Of course, this setup isn't always possible. In that case, limit the number of active members in the room. In fact, limit the number of people in the room period. This isn't the McCarthy Hearings, it's a conversation tool. I find a good rule of thumb is to have no more than four people in the room including the interviewee.

Step three is simple enough. Schedule it! Make sure it accommodates everyone's schedule. Typically, weekends are the best option. Distribute sign-up sheets to everyone in the chapter (including yourself) to sign up for a 30-minute time slot. While you're at it, go ahead and inform everyone to bring their information sheet to their interview time. Wait a second, information sheet? Yes, a simple form so the panel/interviewers know: who you are, how long you've been in school, which officer positions you've held or currently hold, your GPA, and your financial balance with the chapter.

Step four is the last step before the membership review is actually conducted. Create a script for the panel/interviewers to reference. Remember, this is a two-way dialogue. Make sure everyone is asked the same questions and gets to express his opinions, thoughts, and ideas. Let them drive the conversation.

Hopefully these easy steps can put you on the right path of starting your own annual membership review.