

## "Fall is Coming!"

The undergraduates have gone home for the summer, and routine maintenance and smaller capital projects are underway at our chapter houses.

Most colleges and universities have announced plans for an in-person learning experience for the fall semester. That is a good thing for them and a good thing for Phi Gamma Delta. We can begin the planning for fall events, including homecoming and Pig Dinner. Because our graduates will be visiting campus and our chapter homes, there are several things to consider:

1. Starting, building, or replenishing a reserve fund. Some house corporations had to use reserve funds to maintain the chapter house during the pandemic. Others now realize why a reserve fund is so necessary! Charging a market rent for live-in students and a parlor fee for students not living in the house allows the House Corporation to build a fund to address future capital expenditures (a new roof, HVAC, painting, etc.)
2. A reserve fund should be augmented with contributions from graduates raised through an **annual giving program**. Without such a fund, maintenance is continually deferred, leading to cosmetic problems and health and human safety issues. The House Corporation must necessarily be concerned with and preparing for the long-term viability of the chapter home. Continue (or begin) an annual fundraising program asking graduates to get in the routine of making regular contributions to the house corporation.
3. Send a graduate newsletter early in the fall semester. In our work for House Corporations, we all too often hear, "the Chapter/House Corporation only contacts me when they need money" The House Corporation is often the bridge between the undergraduates and your chapter's graduate brothers. Though building graduate relations is certainly not the house corporation's primary responsibility, it pays to be forward-thinking.

Send out newsletters on a consistent schedule, making sure invitations reach graduates well in advance, and arrange an Annual Fund mailing for smaller gifts each year, which gets your graduates in the habit of giving. Whether the Corporation does these things internally or hires an outside firm to handle them each year, it pays to be "friend raising" and cultivating your graduates well in advance. Informed graduates are much more willing to participate when their help is requested.

4. A "wealth screening" of your chapter graduates helps identify those brothers that have resources and may be able to assist with renovation and building campaigns. ***Understanding the financial capacity of your graduates is essential in any fundraising plan.*** Contact us for more information on facilitating a wealth screening project – the cost is minimal.
5. Plan for a professional fundraising feasibility study to determine your graduates' willingness to participate in future fundraising efforts. Knowing what you can raise is a critical part of deciding on whether to renovate or rebuild.
6. Always remember that a safe, modern and comfortable chapter house is your "brand" and plays a direct role in member recruitment. Renovations or complete rebuilds and the fundraising required should become a routine for any house corporation.

*Please reach out to the Columns Fundraising team for more information on annual giving programs, wealth screening, feasibility studies, and capital campaigns.*

**Mark R. Wilkison (Vermont 1983)**  
**Principal & Partner**  
**Columns Fundraising**  
**2870 Peachtree Road, Suite 956**  
**Atlanta, GA 30305**  
**[mark@columnsfundraising.com](mailto:mark@columnsfundraising.com)**  
**Direct: 404-317-0435**