

FarmHouse International Fraternity

Chapter Advisor Handbook



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**FarmHouse International Fraternity
Chapter Advisor Handbook**

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I. INTRODUCTION

Any serious concern for building men of Excellence in FarmHouse Fraternity requires attention to the work of chapter advisors. Strong, vital, and dynamic chapters have interested, dedicated and involved advisors. The opposite is also true. While FarmHouse builds men and gives them the tools to grow and become independent, confident leaders, they still need guidance. Chapter advisors are often the primary link between alumni and chapter members. The insight, ideas, and guidance that chapter advisors provide ensure the success and health of the fraternity.

The purpose of this handbook is to outline the role of the chapter advisor. Each FarmHouse chapter has its own special character, determined by its age, number of members, quality of leadership, financial status, and many other factors. But the bonds of FarmHouse and its philosophy are an underlying connection that unites all FarmHouse chapters and members. There are general responsibilities of each office including that of advisor. This handbook should help provide resources and guidance beyond these obvious requirements.

We earnestly hope that individuals who contemplate or assume the role of advisor will benefit by the thoughtful reading of these guidelines. The main requisites of an advisor are maturity, relatability with college students, and a desire to help improve the lives of the men he or she is advising. Working with FarmHouse Fraternity and each member may be challenging at times, but is a richly rewarding task as the members experience personal growth through advisors' guidance.

II. THE CHAPTER ADVISOR

The Advisor's Role

The principal goal of FarmHouse Fraternity is the building of men. Advisors are tasked with assisting this process during the college experience. Character is an essential part of a FarmHouse member's personal growth. Young men have been selected into our fraternity for many great attributes and potential. However, every member needs proper guidance in order to further develop as a leader and effectively face the challenges of college life today. Scholarship needs to be balanced with participation in university life. Responsibility is an attribute sought in all chapter members.

This is where the role of an advisor is vital; providing guidance and counsel to members in decision making both personally and within the fraternity. As a friend and an authority figure, good advisors balance which role is appropriate for any given situation. Advisors must guide the chapter, but also work with the individual members whom will drive positive change. Advisors should never believe they are simply a signature on forms. Rather advisors are committed to the success of the organization and actively involved with the chapter.

Responsibilities of Advisors

The building of men occurs in environments that promote personal growth. Such an environment is developed through the continuing effort of advisors and leaders of the chapter. Most of the effort must come from the members, but the purpose of a chapter advisor is to provide guidance and advice *when needed*. Men become self-reliant as they make their own decisions. Therefore, the effective chapter advisor *remains in the background*, always ready to consult and provide feedback but *never moving in to make decisions*. The role of an advisory committee is dynamic and effectiveness hinges on fulfilling these responsibilities:

- Ensure at least one advisor attends each full chapter and executive committee meeting.
- Build rapport with the chapter and its members in order to be identified by members as a resource. Serve as a mentor in the context of character, leadership, and friendship.
- Assist the chapter and its members to become self-governed and self-reliant. Assist the chapter in hosting retreats as well as its self-evaluations throughout the year.
- Ensure the chapter is aware of all FarmHouse, IFC, and university policies/procedures.
- Identify policy violations with chapter leaders and help to create positive change. Acknowledge FarmHouse's Amnesty Policy and consult staff members for assistance.
- Continually adapt activities to the fluid nature of the chapter and the university.
- Remain objective with FarmHouse men whether in the classroom or chapter situations and assist the officers in enforcing chapter discipline evenly and fairly.
- Be aware of the welfare of individuals and provide support or resources when needed.
- Help the chapter contact and engage campus resources such as the Career Center, Counseling Center, tutoring offices, etc.
- Provide constructive feedback in appropriate scenarios to encourage continued progress.
- Attend and guide FarmHouse Ritual, Builder of Men Affirmation, ceremonies in cooperation with chapter officers.
- Provide assistance to the chapter in their academic goals. Work directly with individual members that are below minimum expectations.
- Become familiar with the Chapter Award of Excellence and ensure the chapter exceeds minimum standards.

Advisors function as a partner with the members in the management of the chapter. The advisors must know the chapter intimately, including its workings, rules, traditions, and individual members. When rapport is built and strong relationships are established, the advisors will find that they can engage the members in open discussions and an honest exchange of opinions.

Responsibilities of Chapter Officers to Advisors

Advisors work with all members, but much of their focus is coordinated with and through chapter officers. In order for advisors to effectively serve the chapter, officers must collectively fulfill their responsibilities to the advisory team:

- Communicate at least weekly with chapter advisors.
- Update advisors on the chapter's goals and strategic plan. Consider their feedback and ask for any resources that could help in accomplishing the plan set forth.
- Invite advisors to recruitment events, FarmHouse Ritual ceremonies, social gathers, chapter meetings, and other related events.
- Utilize advisors as speakers and program facilitators within new member and member education programming.
- Expect members with academic issues to meet with a chapter advisor regularly.
- Show appreciation to your chapter advisors for their service as a volunteer.
- Communicate with advisors about the chapter's performance in terms of the Chapter Award of Excellence, academic standards, recruitment, etc.

Structure

Article XVIII, Section 1 of FarmHouse International Fraternity By-Laws state:

“Each chapter shall maintain at least three (3) chapter advisors, of which at least one is a university faculty member and one is an alumnus, associate or honorary member (one individual can fulfill both requirements). The advisors shall constitute the Chapter Advisory Committee, whose advice may be sought by or freely given to the chapter, association and the International Executive Board on all matters pertaining to the welfare of the chapter.”

A female advisor is highly recommended, particularly if the chapter does not have a housemother. The committee must have at least three advisors but there is no maximum number. Advisors should be selected in such a way that best supports the chapter. For example, advisors could divide responsibilities in a way that allows each individual to be most effective. However, all advisors shall be aware of all matters pertaining to general Fraternity operations and be available to advise any member of the chapter.

Neither the advisors nor the chapter should feel that any advisor is obligated for more than one 3-year term. Nor should the chapter hesitate to ask for a resignation of an advisor not fulfilling his obligations.

The advisory committee is the primary liaison of information between the chapter, association board, and university officials. Periodic meetings of this committee to discuss the business of the chapter and to share any problems. At these meetings the advisors can allocate responsibilities, plan who will attend the various chapter functions, and generally share information or concerns.

III. AREAS OF FOCUS

Advisors provide guidance in three primary areas; chapter operations, alumni relations, and university/community relations. Each of these areas are important aspects in the success of FarmHouse members and their chapter. Advisors need to be aware of current chapter activities in all facets and be prepared to provide the appropriate guidance or resources. Contact FarmHouse Headquarters at FHHQ@farmhouse.org in regards to any of these areas to learn more and best support the chapter.

Chapter Operations

Chapter Management

Advisors assist the chapter in conducting business efficiently and professionally, encourage attendance at all FarmHouse programs, and ensure effective communication with university officials as well as FarmHouse staff and volunteers. Advisors make sure the chapter is aware of and follow the chapter's by-laws in addition to proper parliamentary procedure during meetings. Another important role in chapter management is helping the chapter set and evaluate goals that are challenging but obtainable. This will require feedback to chapter leaders during meetings on the achievement of goals or lack thereof.

Risk Management

The chapter is expected to have an atmosphere of active risk management that ensures safety for all members and guests by obeying the law, university regulations, and Fraternity policies. As such, the chapter will have a thorough overview of FarmHouse International Fraternity's risk management policies and review related chapter procedures each semester. Advisors ensure those conversations are facilitated each semester and that chapter members are educated beyond policies on safety concerns encountered in the college environment coupled with discussions about how to address those scenarios. Additionally, advisors provide assistance with the preparation of an action-response plan for crises or emergencies including; fires, fights, sexual assaults, alcohol poisoning, etc.

Recruitment

Recruitment is essential to a chapter's survival and advisors ensure that all members focus recruiting new members year-round, not just during an official "rush" period. Selection of men for membership is a matter of highest importance and is prime responsibility of the chapter. The chapter must strongly consider membership qualifications including their values alignment with FarmHouse values, academic performance, and involvement in leadership organizations or service projects. Advisors provide feedback on these decisions and make sure that personal appearance or popularity are not factors in recruitment.

New Member Education

The primary focus of new member education is the integration of newly recruited men into the chapter while advancing their personal development. Because of its importance to the chapter and the prospective member, new member education must be serious, constructive, and dynamic. Advisors assist the director of new member education in developing and implementing a program at the highest level of Excellence. All activities are carefully planned with or reviewed by the advisors to ensure the program is effective and educational. Advisors are especially aware of the chapter culture around new member education and have knowledge of how to identify hazing practices.

Scholarship

Excellence in scholarship is achieved only as each man develops his individual scholastic potential. The advisors must aid the chapter in establishing parameters for chapter life that will foster scholarship. Common tools include the establishment and observation of quiet hours in the house, peer mentoring of members, university resources, and the development of a balance between the activity calendar and scholarship. Advisors primary role is advocating for the use of campus resources and making them more accessible to individual members who may be embarrassed to ask for help. One-on-one meetings with members that are below chapter standards are necessary each semester.

Financial Management

Financial health is both a cause and a result of general chapter operations. Of concern to the advisors are the matters of budget preparation and implementation. Make sure that the chapter pays strict attention to collection of accounts receivable, establishment of margins sufficient to allow for unexpected expenses, equitability of charges to members, and the preparation of monthly financial statements. The chapter must be current in all payment to the International Fraternity for fees and insurance. If the advisors do not have enough financial expertise, an alumnus can be recruited to assist the vice president of finance.

Member Education

Total member education is often a low priority for chapters. Make sure the director of new member education, total member educator and the executive council focus on the continuation of the FarmHouse experience through the 4-Fold Development model. Encourage the members to attend regional and international programming to enrich their fraternal experience. Ensure the member education includes the use resources available for educational programming from FarmHouse staff, alumni, professionals, university officials, and other sources.

Relationships with the Housemother/Resident Advisor

This individual is an invaluable asset to the chapter advisor. The advisory committee needs to establish a close and cordial relationship with the housemother. A periodic discussion concerning the long-range plans, growth of individual members, and daily chapter operations of the chapter is highly beneficial. Working together as a support group models the way for the chapter to work together and accomplish their goals.

Alumni Relations

Association Board & Housing

The advisory committee is the liaison between the chapter and the association board. At least one advisor serves as an ex-officio member of the association board. Advisors will communicate with the director of house operations to keep the board informed about any necessary chapter house maintenance and repair as well as suggest financial management changes that could be made. Additionally, advisors hold the chapter and association board accountable to safety issues in the house including housekeeping and food service concerns. Housing structures should be compliant with all laws and housing codes comparable to dorm and private housing in the community.

Local Alumni

Continued communication between alumni and undergraduates is essential to preserving the philosophy of FarmHouse Fraternity. Advisors encourage the chapter to hold at least two alumni events per year, frequently circulate an alumni newsletter, and invite alumni to become involved in chapter activities and member education. The director of alumni relations requires assistance to ensure participation from various alumni at events. Additionally, advisors should encourage and facilitate alumni participation in recruitment activities.

Reporting to the FarmHouse Headquarters

Necessary to the functions of the International Fraternity are regular reports such as finances, initiation and term reports, news for *Pearls and Rubies* and other specific information as needed. The chapter advisors coach members who are responsible for such information and urge that reports be submitted on time with complete and accurate information. Maintaining strong ties to the Fraternity beyond your campus is vital and the advisor is often the primary liaison between the local chapter and the larger organization.

University/Community Relations

Relationships with the Administration

Advisors shall serve as an example in emphasizing the chapter's positive communication with the administration, faculty, and fellow students. Communicate with university Greek Life staff regularly to offer updates of the chapter and learn what the chapter needs to be accomplishing from their perspective. Develop and maintain relationships with key stakeholders on campus in order to serve as an advocate for the Fraternity and fraternity life in general. Periodic voluntary conferences with these officials will prove useful. Advisors need to know university regulations as they apply to the chapter, individual members and to organized student groups.

Participation in Campus Activities

Individual chapter members are expected and encouraged to participate in extra-curricular activities, but without negatively impacting their classroom performance. Recruitment efforts need to focus on young men who have already demonstrated their involvement on campus. Emphasize that extra-curricular activities have greater meaning when they are part of a desire to learn and contribute to the life of the university. As an advisor, be aware of general campus activities and resources to help new members become involved, serve as a connection to opportunities.

Community Service/Philanthropy

FarmHouse is committed to service and philanthropy through partnerships with Leukemia-Lymphoma Society (LLS) and Be The Match (BTM). Chapters are asked to host events that raise funds for these organizations that fight blood cancers, like leukemia and lymphoma, which are the second most common cancers among young men. Be The Match is operated by the National Marrow Donor Program that seeks to match potential marrow donors with those in need through a national registry. Recently, it has been discovered the registry was founded by FarmHouse alumnus Bob Graves (CO '53) after his daughter's life was saved by the first ever bone marrow transplant from an unrelated donor. Chapters work with Be The Match employees to host events on campus to continue building the registry and raise funds to support the organization.

Chapters are expected to perform at least one chapter-wide community service event each semester and promote service projects to their individual members. This participation should be facilitated in order to enhance the members' fraternal experience, not simply be seen as a requirement. Advisors can facilitate discussions before and after these events to create a greater impact. Additionally, assist the chapter in tracking their service hours as they are requested in the Award of Excellence application and other university reports.

IV. KEYS TO SUCCESS

Preparation

Serving as a fraternity advisor is challenging and rewarding experience as it involves the guidance and development of college students. It is a major responsibility requiring time, commitment and devotion. Careful preparation for this role is a major requisite for a successful and satisfying experience. There are four general elements of an adequate program of preparation:

1. A careful reading of this handbook, the FarmHouse chapter planning guide, the chapter operations handbook, chapter By-Laws, FarmHouse International Fraternity By-Laws and Policy Manual, and recent chapter reports from chapter visits. Reviewing the proceedings of recent international Conclaves, local university regulations, and recent chapter newsletters will also prove helpful.
2. Develop relationships with other FarmHouse advisors, other Greek chapter advisors, the housemother/resident advisor (if applicable), chapter officers, and Association Board officers. You will need to establish lines of communication with appropriate officials such as the Greek Life advisor in order to be fully aware of all the services the university provides to students.
3. Be aware of the history of the chapter including goals, accomplishments, and problems that have arisen. Ask about their strategic plan or help them create one for the upcoming semester.
4. Stay informed. Utilize other chapter advisors, chapter officers, attend chapter meetings, review reports and records of the chapter, attend Association Board meetings, and stay in touch with FarmHouse staff and volunteers working with the chapter.
5. Be engaged. The most effective advisors lead with how much they care by listening and engaging in conversations. An advisor's resources and knowledge is only helpful when members are accepting of those ideas. Ask open ended questions to engage conversations and to challenge members appropriately.

Once you have decided to accept the Chapter Advisor position, notify the local chapter, local association, and the international fraternity office of your decision.

Communication

Effective means of communication can vary greatly and depend upon the personalities of both the chapter members and the advisors. However, the basic relationships between the two groups must be initiated and maintained with a clear sense of purpose and direction. This is possible only if the advisors understand the nature and potentialities of the chapter and develop in their own minds a personal philosophy concerning the responsibilities outlined above. Additionally, confidential information from counseling individual members must be fully respected in each circumstance.

Meetings

At least one advisor needs to be present for every regular meeting of the chapter. Meetings are an opportunity to provide a concise report to the whole chapter on behalf of the advisory committee. Additionally, meetings are a time to gain understanding of what is currently happening in the chapter so it is important to be present during the whole meeting. Refrain from formal debate on a topic during the meeting, unless it is absolutely necessary. The presence of an advisor alone will often direct debate in an appropriate direction, but feedback should be offered outside of the meeting if discussion is not properly guided.

Informal Channels

If chapter meetings and other functions represent a more formal role for the advisor, the informal contacts and communication with the individual members are the most effective means of developing rapport with members. These efforts can both be purposefully sought out or happen randomly, but it permits greater latitude for the advisor to serve individual members as counselor and friend. Advisors must gain the trust of each member and be available to all in order to be effective. Personal matters of a confidential nature must always be respected.

A relaxed and unhurried approach yields best results in relationship building. Much of the time at the chapter house should be devoted to connecting with individuals, especially during various social functions. This connection encourage chapter leaders to more proactively seek guidance from advisors. During informal discussion, advisors often have the opportunity to guide an individual's thinking into new channels and to challenge him to think constructively about problems. The objective is to help the person do his own thinking rather than to tell him your answers, although this is usually easier said than done. Open-ended questions and empathy can be effective in assisting the member to stretch his mind in new ways.

Lead by Example

People rarely respect someone as a leader when their actions do not align with what is said. Advisors should be aware of the power of a good example. Encouraging undergraduates to live up to their obligations is useless when role models do not fulfill their duties to the chapter. Advisors must hold themselves and other alumni accountable to the same standards of the chapter at FarmHouse and other university functions. Modeling the way creates a powerful impact even though it is often unnoticed. The advisor's mission is to help and guide rather than to pass judgement and for this principle to be effective requires a positive approach. Members that feel the advisor's role supports their own efforts will welcome help and advice.

V. ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Recruiting a Chapter Advisor

While this is a responsibility of the chapter, the advisory committee should have at least one faculty member. The committee assists the chapter in focusing on academic and helps to incorporate university priorities into chapter operations. They can also provide an outside perspective on the chapter. Chapter advisors are an invaluable communication link between chapters, the administration, the faculty, and alumni. This makes it vital to have at least three actively engaged individuals on the advisory committee. To request a member of the faculty as an advisor, chapter members need to simply ask. Approach a faculty member you feel may be interested in assisting your chapter and ask them if they would like to serve in the role. Here are some key steps to consider in the process:

1. Talk to chapter members, recent alumni, deans, faculty, staff members and advisors of other chapters for suggested names. FarmHouse staff members are able to provide a list of local alumni and can assist in suggestions.
2. Establish criteria. Seek out men or women who take a personal interest in students and have the time to fulfill the commitment. An advisor should speak effectively on the occasions where he or she will be asked to represent the chapter to the administration and faculty. Make sure the entire chapter is involved in establishing the requisite criteria.
3. Invite potential advisors to functions and learn more about their background, family, career goals, and outside interests in social settings. Learn how he or she would deal with a particular problem or situation by asking them specific questions. It is a good practice to treat this as an informal interview between the potential advisor and chapter officers. This should determine whether or not the person has a style that will fit with the chapter.
4. Ask the person to serve as chapter advisor with a clear understanding of the duties, expectations of their role, and length of service requested. Allow them to ask any questions they may have about the role.
5. Once an individual commits to serving as a chapter advisor it is important to notify FarmHouse Headquarters, association board, Greek Life staff on campus, and other key stakeholders. Offer the new advisor to share a message in those correspondences and provide a calendar of upcoming events in order to begin their involvement with the chapter.

Chapter advisors are one of your chapter's most valuable assets. As a more mature and experienced adult they mentor brothers and the chapter through difficult situations. Successful chapters are supported by an effective and highly engaged set of advisors. Additionally, they purposefully reach out and fully utilize the skill set these individuals offer in the service.

FarmHouse Documents

An effective chapter advisor may not have all the answers and solutions, but does need to be prepared with ample resources. Make sure each of the chapter officers, other advisors, housemothers and association leaders have the most current FarmHouse materials and resources. Many resources can be found at www.FarmHouse.org. Here are a few key documents:

- [FarmHouse Builder of Men Affirmation](#) – This is the Ritual of FarmHouse International Fraternity. The most important portion is the Rites of Membership. The chapter should be properly conducting these ceremonies as described in this document. The “study on written and prescribed Ritual” section is a tool for advisors to facilitate a dialogue after each of these ceremonies with a chapter.
- [FarmHouse International By-Laws](#) – The By-Laws are the Fraternity’s primary governing document. All changes to the By-Laws are made at Conclave with a vote from delegates representing each chapter and association.
- [FarmHouse Policy Manual](#) – Similarly, the policy manual is approved at each Conclave by the voting delegates. This manual serves as a set of standing rules for FarmHouse chapters and members.
- [Chapter Planning Guide](#) – This guide is given in a binder to officers attending FarmHouse Leadership Institute. It is also available on www.farmhouse.org.
- [Chapter Award of Excellence](#) – The Chapter Award of Excellence is completed annually by each chapter. The criteria for the award are built upon basic expected performance in the various areas of chapter operations. As an advisor, familiarize yourself with these criteria and communicate those expectations throughout the year in order to assist the chapter in meeting expectations.

Additional Resources

Risk Management

[Holmes Murphy Educational Resources](#) – Educational resources provided by FarmHouse insurance provider Holmes Murphy. There are a large number of resources on everything from alcohol consumption to mental health.

[Fraternal Informational Programming Group \(FIPG\)](#) – The primary purpose of FIPG is to provide and promote information on risk management issues. FarmHouse members are expected to follow the FIPG policies. These guidelines are an ‘industry standard’ used by most fraternal groups, universities, and IFCs.

Membership Standards

[North-American Interfraternity Conference \(NIC\)](#) – The NIC is a trade association representing over 70 national and international fraternities. As a member, FarmHouse is committed to the membership standards created by the NIC.

Parliamentary Procedure

[FarmHouse- Basics of Parliamentary Procedure](#)

[An Introduction to Robert's Rules of Order](#)

[Video Blog from Robert's Rules Made Simple](#) (three recommended videos: [How to Debate Effectively](#), [How to be an Effective Chair](#), and [Mastering the 3 Most Important Motions](#))

Additional

Guyland by Michael Kimmel – College men today experience a much different environment than even their predecessors a few years ago. This book helps explain the complex and confusing world young men face as they mature in college and beyond.

LifeGiving Mentors by Tim Elmore – A great resource on the topic of mentoring. It provides practical, useful advice based on the latest research and creative ideas.

The Mentor Leader by Tony Dungy- Tony Dungy is a highly relatable author to young men as it is written from the context of being a football player and coach.

[TEDTalk: Start with Why](#) by Simon Sinek- This video has been used by FarmHouse in various programs. 'Starting with why' is an idea often emphasized to our membership and advisors should be aware of this important message.

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