

# FarmHouse International Fraternity

## Chapter Advisor Handbook



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**FarmHouse Fraternity**  
11020 NW Ambassador Drive  
Suite 330  
Kansas City, MO 64153  
PH: (816) 891-9445  
FAX: (816) 891-0838  
[www.FarmHouse.org](http://www.FarmHouse.org)

**FarmHouse International Fraternity  
Chapter Advisor Handbook**

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## **I. INTRODUCTION**

Any serious concern for building men to levels of excellence in FarmHouse Fraternity requires attention to the work of the Advisor. Wherever a strong, vital and dynamic chapter is found, there will be 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 a guide. Alumni participation is vital to the success of any chapter and the Chapter Advisor is often the primary link between the alumni and the chapter. Chapter advisors are a key constituency of a chapter. 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. However, beyond these obvious requirements lies the comparatively vague area of defining a chapter in terms of its principles and policies.

We earnestly hope that the individual who contemplates the role of advisor, and the individual who assumes it, will benefit by the thoughtful reading of these guidelines. The main requisites of an advisor are maturity, interest, and a desire to help improve the lives of the men he or she is advising. He or she works with the Fraternity and with each member in the area of his personal growth, as the member has new experiences, becomes independent of and separated from his family, and fashions his life for these new surroundings. You will find this is a challenging but richly rewarding task.

## II. THE CHAPTER ADVISOR

### The Advisor's Role

The principal goal of FarmHouse Fraternity is the building of men – character is an essential part of individual growth – especially during such formative years in college. Scholarship needs to be balanced with participation in university life. Responsibility is an attribute sought in all chapter members. While these young men have been selected for their potential in these areas, they need mature guidance as they develop control over their business affairs, learn to deal with the challenges of living together in harmony, and seek to develop a balanced program in these surroundings.

This is where the role of an advisor is vital. You will challenge the members and help guide and counsel them as they discover their own path for their lives and careers. You are both a friend and an authority figure and must balance which role is appropriate for any given situation. You must guide the chapter, but also work with the individual members whom will drive positive change. The advisor should never believe that he or she is simply a signature on forms. The advisor should be committed to the success of the organization and may have to go beyond the call of duty to achieve this success.

### Responsibilities

FarmHouse Fraternity is in the business of building men. This can only be done in an environment that promotes the personal growth of each individual. Such an environment is developed through continuing effort by the advisor 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 but *never moving in to make decisions*. The role of the advisor is dynamic and his effectiveness hinges on fulfilling these responsibilities:

- In coordination with the other members of the Chapter Advisory Committee, seek to ensure that at least one Chapter Advisor attends each chapter meeting (and attend chapter Executive Council meetings).
- Strive to maintain a close working relationship with the chapter.
- Serves in the unique functional combination of teacher, counselor and friend.
- Assist the chapter in its self-evaluations and retreats.
- The Advisor is not a cop, but you need to make sure the chapter is aware of and follows all FarmHouse and University policies and procedures, especially regarding risk management.
- Assist the chapter and its members to continually become as self-reliant as possible.
- The ability to continually adapt activities to the fluid nature of the chapter and the university.
- Remember that the chapter is a collection of individuals whose welfare is vital to the welfare of the group.
- Remain objective with FarmHouse men whether in the classroom or chapter situations and assist the officers in enforcing chapter discipline evenly and fairly.

Advisors function as a partner with the members in the management of the chapter. To be effective partners, the advisors must know the chapter intimately, including the workings, its rules, its traditions, and its individual members. The advisor must take the initiative to develop strong and fruitful relationship with the individual members and gain their confidence. When such a relationship has been established, the advisors will find that they can engage the members in open discussions and an honest exchange of opinions. They can even argue strongly for a certain point without being considered dictatorial.

### **Structure & Limits**

The By-Laws of the Fraternity specify that: (Article XVIII, Section 1 of By-Laws): 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, association or honorary member of FarmHouse (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.

Although the Committee must have at least three advisors, the By-Laws do not restrict membership to three. The Advisory Committee should be organized in such a way that one member is replaced each year. 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.

During the third year of his term an advisor usually serves as chairman of the advisory committee. The chairman periodically calls meetings to discuss the business of the chapter and to share any problems that may have arisen. At these meetings, the members can allocate responsibilities, plan who will attend the various chapter functions, and generally share information and concerns.

To serve the chapter more effectively, some advisors have divided specific responsibilities among themselves. This allows each advisor to become well informed in a specific area and, possibly more important – particular chapter officers will know whom to turn to for counsel. For example, one advisor works with the Vice President – Recruitment and the Director of New Member Education; another works with the VP – Finance and Director of House Operations; while another works with the President, Director of Administration, and other officers on administrative matters, morale, discipline, scholarship, and activities.

All advisors should be aware of all matters pertaining to general Fraternity operations and be available to counsel any officer or member of the chapter. At least one advisor should be in attendance at every chapter meeting. All advisors should be invited and are expected to attend formal initiation ceremonies.

### **III. AREAS OF COVERAGE**

There are many specific areas within three main groups in which the welfare of the chapter is at stake. The advisors should be aware of them and be prepared to provide the appropriate counsel at the appropriate time.

#### **Chapter Operations**

##### Chapter Management

The advisor assists the chapter to conduct business efficiently and professionally, encourage attendance at regional and international events, and communicate effectively with the university, and International Headquarters Staff and volunteers. An important role is helping the chapter set and evaluate goals that are challenging but obtainable. A member of the Advisory committee should be at every Executive Council and chapter meeting. The advisor should make sure the chapter is aware of and follow the chapter's by-laws.

##### Risk Management

The advisor must make sure that the chapter creates an atmosphere of active risk management that ensures safety for all members and guests by obeying the law, university regulations, and fraternity policies. The chapter should be educating all of its members and guests about risk management. You must provide a thorough overview of FarmHouse's Risk Management policies and review chapter procedures with the Director of Risk Management. Assist the Directors of House Operations and Risk Management with the preparation of an action-response chapter information sheet created for crises or emergencies: including fires, fights, sexual assaults, alcohol poisoning, etc.

##### Recruitment

Recruitment is the key to a chapter's survival – the advisor must make sure that all members stay focused on recruiting new members year-round – not just during an official “rush” period. The advisor should encourage alumni to participate in recruitment activities and assist the chapter by working with the administration and International Headquarters to verify that all prospective members are eligible for membership.

Selection of men for membership is a matter of highest importance and is prime responsibility of the undergraduate chapter. The chapter must be very thoughtful about membership qualifications. New members should be selected on the basis of their potential as scholars, brother, leaders and men. Personal appearance or popularity is grossly inadequate qualifications for membership.

##### New Member Education

New Member Education should make chapters stronger by encouraging the assimilation of these men into the chapter as well as advancing the new member's personal development. Because of its importance to the chapter and the prospective member, it should be serious, constructive and dynamic. The advisors should assist the Director of New Member Education to develop and implement a program at the highest level of excellence. Normally advisors will participate in the program. Informal initiation activities should be as carefully planned with the advisors as any other part of the new member education program. The advisor should be vigilant for signs of hazing and eliminating any traditions or activities that could be considered hazing

##### Scholarship

Excellence in scholarship is achieved only as each man develops his individual scholastic potential. The advisors must aid the chapter to establish parameters for chapter life that will foster scholarship. Common tools include: the establishment and observation of quiet hours in the house; members are assisted in reaching their academic potential; and that there is a balance between the activity calendar and scholarship. You may also have to assist the Director of Scholarship to review grades to ensure that active members are in good standing.

### Financial Management

Financial Health is both a cause and a result of general chapter health. Of concern to the advisors should be matters of budget preparation and implementation. Make sure that the chapter pays strict attention to accounts receivable collection, establishment of margins sufficient to allow for unexpected expenses, equitability of charges, and the preparation of monthly financial statements. The chapter should be current in all payment to the International Headquarter for fees and insurance. If necessary, you should help recruit an alumnus to assist the VP – Finance.

### Housing

The Advisory Committee is the liaison between the chapter and the Association Board. The chairman of the Advisory Committee should serve as an ex-officio member of the Association Board. You should make sure that the Director of House Operations keeps the board informed about any necessary chapter house maintenance and repair, and suggest financial management changes that could be made. Make sure that the chapter and Association Board focus on Risk Management and safety issues in the house, as well as general housekeeping and food service. Housing structures should be compliant with all laws and housing codes, comparable to dorm and private housing in the community, and promote the ideals of the fraternity.

### Member Education

Total Member Education is a newer concept and can easily lose the chapter's attention. It is your duty to make sure the Director of New Member Education, Total Member Educator and Executive Council focus on how the FarmHouse experience can continually focus on the 4-Fold Development model to build men and enrich the members' fraternal experience. Encourage the members to attend regional and international programming and make sure the member education program is utilizing all of the resources available for educational programming from alumni, professionals, university officials, and other sources.

## **Alumni Relations**

### Local Alumni

Continued communication between alumni and undergraduates is essential to preserving the philosophy of FarmHouse Fraternity. Advisors should 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 may need your assistance to ensure participation from various alumni at events.

### Reporting to the International Headquarters

Necessary to the functions of the International Office are regular reports such as Financial, Initiation, Term Reports, news for *Pearls and Rubies* and occasionally, special information. The chapter advisors will want to counsel members who are responsible for such information and urge that reports be submitted on time and that these reports contain complete and accurate information. Maintaining strong ties to the FarmHouse International community is vital and the advisor is often the liaison between the local chapter and the larger organization.

## **Community & Administration**

### Relationships With the Administration

Advisors should place particular emphasis upon the chapter's attitude toward the administration, faculty, fellow students, and other fraternities and sororities. The chapter will take its cues from the advisor, so you should demonstrate respect and a willingness to cooperate. Communicate with University Greek Life advisors regularly. You may need to intercede with university officials such as the Dean of Students, so make sure that you have developed a relationship with them. Periodic voluntary conferences with these officials will prove useful. Advisors need to know university regulations as they apply to individual students and to organized student groups.

### Participation In Campus Activities

Individual chapter members should be encouraged to participate in extra-curricular activities, but only after demonstrating solid strength in the classroom. The recruitment program should 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.

### Community Service

Chapters should perform at least one chapter-wide community service event each semester and promote service projects to their individual members. However, this participation while encouraged should not be taken to the point where they interfere with academics. A reasonable balance is needed.

#### **IV. KEYS TO SUCCESS**

##### **Preparation**

To serve as a FarmHouse Advisor is a challenging and rewarding experience, for it involves the guidance and development of young men. 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 Membership & History Handbook, chapter By-Laws, FarmHouse International By-Laws, written rules and policies of the chapter and International Fraternity, 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 advisors, your predecessors, the housemother, chapter and Association Board officers. You will need to establish lines of communication with appropriate officials such as the Greek Advisor and the Dean of Students, and be aware of the various university student services available.
3. Know the goals, accomplishments, and problems that have historically faced the chapter and how that picture appears over the next few years.
4. Stay informed. Utilize other chapter advisors, chapter officers and housemothers, attend chapter meetings, review reports and records of the chapter, attend Association Board meetings, and stay in touch with the International Headquarters.

Once you have decided to accept the Chapter Advisor position, notify the local chapter, local association, and the international fraternity office of your decision. Direct your letter to the president of the local chapter, with copies to the local association president and the International Executive Director.

## **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.

### Meetings

At least one advisor should be present for every regular meeting of the chapter. In these meetings, an informal man-to-man discussion is not possible. This is a more formal situation and you will be seen as an authority figure, so weigh your words carefully. Do NOT take part in formal debate during the meeting, unless it is absolutely necessary. More often than not, your presence and the good sense of the majority will direct the debate in an appropriate direction without requiring you to make a comment. Confine your remarks to when you are invited to make some by the chapter president at the close of the meeting.

### Informal Channels

If chapter meetings and other functions can represent a more formal role for the advisor, the informal contacts and communication with the individual members are the most effective means of communicating and developing a 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. To be effective, an advisor must gain the trust of every member and be available to all. Personal matters of a confidential nature MUST always be respected.

A relaxed and unhurried approach yields best results. Much of the time at the chapter house should be devoted to spur-of-the-moment contacts with individuals. Such informality encourages chapter members to take the initiative and to call on the advisor for help and counsel when needed.

During informal discussion, the advisor will often have the opportunity to guide an individual's thinking into new channels, and to challenge him to think constructively about his 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 around a concept or problem.

### Lead by Example

Do as I say and not as I do is a terrible leadership method. Advisors should be aware of the power of a "good example." Encouraging undergraduates to live up to their obligations is pointless if the advisor does not fulfill his duties to the chapter. If you want the chapter to model proper risk management behavior, you must hold yourself and other alumni accountable to the same standards at FarmHouse and other university functions.

The advisor's mission is to help and guide rather than to criticize and for this principle to be effective requires a positive approach. As long as the members feel that the advisor's role supports their own efforts, they will welcome your help and advice.

## V. ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

### **Relationships With the Housemother/Resident Advisor**

This individual can be an invaluable asset to the Chapter Advisor. The 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 helpful to all concerned. Advisors and housemothers will find it appropriate to work together so that the chapter stays focused on their goals and continues to provide an environment 24/7 that focuses on 4-Fold Development.

Confidential information from counseling individual members must be fully respected – RAs and Housemothers are not there to spy for the Advisor or Association Board. Do not compromise their position of trust with the men as their living companions.

### **Chapter Advisors**

#### Recruiting a Chapter Advisor

While this is a responsibility of the chapter, the Advisory Committee should have at least one faculty member. The Chapter Advisor helps keep the chapter focused academically and incorporates university priorities into chapter operations. They can also provide an outside perspective on the chapter. Chapter Advisors can be an invaluable communication link between chapters, the administration, the faculty, and alumni – use them! To engage 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 as your chapter's Chapter Advisor.

1. Talk to actives, recent alumni, deans, faculty, staff members and advisors of other chapters for suggested names. Ideally, there may be brothers on faculty. When you are recruiting them, highlight the goals of the chapter – make sure they know why they should want to be a part of your success!
2. Establish your criteria. Seek out men who take a personal interest in their students and have the time to fulfill the commitment. Your chapter should genuinely enjoy your advisor's company. The advisor should speak effectively on the occasions where he will be asked to represent your viewpoint 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.
4. Learn how the advisor would deal with problems or situations by asking them to intercede with a brother on a particular matter that could also get your attention. This should determine whether or not the person has a style that will fit with the chapter.
5. Over a period of time, invite your top choice *and his family* into your chapter functions, especially alumni and parent's events.
6. ASK the person to serve as Chapter Advisor with a clear understanding of the duties and length of service requested. Invite the advisor to observe your New Member Education program. Be open to initiating the Advisor as an Associate Member.
7. Chapter Advisors should serve as ex-officio members of the Association Board and the Advisory Committee.

A Chapter Advisor can become one of your chapter's most valuable assets. As a more mature and experienced adult, they can mentor brothers and the chapter through difficult situations. If an advisor is utilized to their fullest potential, your chapter will forge a strong relationship with a member of faculty who will share in your chapter's success and act as a resource when needed.

#### Suggested Responsibilities for Chapter Advisors:

- Help the chapter contact and engage campus resources such as the Career Center, Counseling Center, and volunteer office.
- Become familiar with the Chapter Award of Excellence – the minimum standards program of the Fraternity - and help the chapter focusing on meeting the expectations.
- Help the chapter achieve their scholarship goals
- Review the chapter's scholarship program. If the chapter does not have a scholarship program, help the chapter create a program.
- Help chapter members who are having academic trouble.
- Speak with the chapter's alumni advisors at least once each term.
- Ensure that the New Member Education program devotes adequate time to scholarship and academic standards.
- Share the chapter's successes with the school.
- Challenge the chapter to improve.

#### Suggested Responsibilities for Chapters:

- Communicate regularly with your Chapter Advisor.
- Share your chapter's goals with your Chapter Advisor – especially for Scholarship.
- Invite your Chapter Advisor to recruitment and other formal events.
- Utilize your Chapter Advisors as speakers and program facilitators within new member and member education programming.
- Encourage members who are having academic issues to speak to your Chapter Advisor.
- Thank your Chapter Advisor for their service.

### **Resource Directory**

It is important to keep this list updated so that your successor does not have to re-invent the wheel each time a constituent needs to be contacted. You should make sure this is available in your officer notebooks, at the chapter house, and other locations.

- FarmHouse International Office
- Chapter Advisor
- Association President
- Vice President of Student Affairs/Dean of Students
- Greek Life Advisor
- Interfraternity Council President
- Emergency Contact Information (Local, Police, Fire, Paramedics, Hospitals)

### **Published Resources**

No chapter advisor should be without these resources. Go through your files and make sure each of the chapter officers, other advisors, housemothers and association leaders have the latest copy of all FarmHouse materials and resources. More than 30 resources have been updated in 2005 and are available in downloadable form at [www.FarmHouse.org](http://www.FarmHouse.org)

- 17 different chapter officer resources

- Chapter Operations Handbook
- Recruitment resource
- New Member Education resource
- Membership & History Handbook
- Public Relations resource
- Chapter Advisor's resource
- Housemother/Resident Advisor resource
- Expansion resource
- Association Board resource
- Chapter Retreat/Strategic Planning resource
- Frequently asked questions & responses (from FH Questions of the Week)
- Chapter Planning Guide
- FarmHouse International By-Laws
- Ritual of Initiation

As well as links to other resources, such as those listed on the North-American Interfraternity Conference website at [www.nicindy.org](http://www.nicindy.org).

### **Parliamentary Procedure**

Download basics of parliamentary procedure at:

[http://www.farmhouse.org/pdf/par\\_pro.pdf](http://www.farmhouse.org/pdf/par_pro.pdf)

Find more detailed resources at: [www.robertsrules.org](http://www.robertsrules.org)

### **Chapter Award of Excellence**

The FarmHouse International Fraternity has established the Chapter Award of Excellence as our minimum standards program. It is designed to recognize Chapters that are operating at the performance level outlined in our By-Laws, policies, and handbooks. The criteria for the Chapter Award of Excellence are built upon basic expected performance in the various areas of chapter operations. Each chapter officer has specific criteria within his area of responsibility. As Chapter Advisor, you should familiarize yourself with the criteria for the Chapter Award of Excellence each year and assist the Chapter President in coordinating the efforts of the officers. The most recent version of the Chapter Award of Excellence can be found at: [http://www.farmhouse.org/pdf/award\\_excellence.pdf](http://www.farmhouse.org/pdf/award_excellence.pdf)

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