

Name: John W. Keith

Gender Pronouns: He/Him/His

Position/Title: Director of Sorority & Fraternity Life

Organization/Institution/Employer: The University of Tennessee, Knoxville

Please concisely outline your professional volunteer experience (most recent position first) and any other volunteer experience, both within and outside of the association, that is directly related to association management, board service, or the position for which you are accepting a nomination. Be sure to include both the position held and dates of service.

SEC & Friends Working Group - April 2023 - Present UIFI Lead Facilitator - December 2022 - Present CBFO Pre-Con Facilitator for AFLV 2023 Pre-Con Facilitation Team for CBFOs at SGLA 2023 Facilitator for Risk Management presentations for Sigma Kappa - Fall 2022 - Present UTK Hazing Prevention Team Chair January 2021 - July 2021 Ex-Officio Member, UC Greek Affairs Alumni Council (Cincinnati) - 2018 - 2021 ASTP Facilitator, Alpha Chi Omega - 2017

The fraternity and sorority profession (and higher education in general) is a complex, interdisciplinary space with many key stakeholders. What do you see as the greatest opportunities to build stakeholder alignment and consensus over the next five years? How would you effectively lead the association through this exercise in alignment?

In my opinion, building stakeholder alignment and consensus in the fraternity and sorority profession will require strategic and inclusive leadership. Opportunities to build this alignment that I would focus on include: 1) enhancing communication channels, 2) establishing shared goals and values, 3) engaging association members and stakeholders in decision-making, 4) promoting data-driven discussions, 5) advocating for collaboration and partnerships, and 6) re-emphasizing our commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion. As a member of the board, I would make it my business to advocate for the "bigger picture" of the profession and engage members at all levels in the discussion of how to best position our association. It is my belief that stakeholders buy in when they see themselves reflected in the aims of the organization. My role as a member of the Board is to articulate the needs of our association in a way that everyone sees themselves reflected and find ways that we can move together collectively.

Describe your understanding of the role of the board of directors (BOD). What strengths or characteristics do you possess that would make you an effective BOD member? How, specifically, have you demonstrated this?

The Board of Directors exists to govern the affairs of the Association of Fraternity/Sorority Advisors. Moreover, the Board exists to position fraternity/sorority stakeholders well, and should be a representation of the past, present, and future of our profession. At its core the Board articulates the mission & values of our association and when appropriate, proposes changes that will allow the association to evolve to better meet the needs of the general body. Personally, I believe that I am a consensus-builder with a keen eye for opportunities to collaborate. I am a flexible, strategic thinker who welcomes diverse opinions & perspectives, and I try to thread the needle of needs and wants to attain a desired end. I demonstrate this daily in my role as Director of Sorority & Fraternity Life at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville. I recognize that it takes all of us (administrators, campus-based staff, I/NHQs, volunteers (no pun intended), alumni, and students) working together to make this ever-evolving organism that is fraternity & sorority life function well. My day-to-day involves meeting stakeholders where they are and demonstrating that we all want the same things, it's just dressed a little differently. That approach has served me well

and has allowed us to move the needle significantly since the start of my tenure here. I would look to do the same for the association if given the opportunity.

Describe any salient identities you hold, both professionally and personally, and how they may frame your perspective as a member of the board of directors.

I identify as a black, cis-gender, heterosexual male with a strong moral compass rooted in my belief that our greatest charge is to operate in love, understanding, and mutual respect. I am the oldest of four and am the product of a single-parent household who grew up watching my mother struggle to make ends meet yet never once did she complain about it. I was raised equal parts by my mother and my preacher grandfather who spent his life helping people. I'm a member of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc. and went to a school where "tri-council" was just a word we used during Greek Week. I say all of that because this informs my professional identity. As the oldest sibling, I have no problem taking charge, but as a sibling I'm used to seeing multiple sides. As a preacher's kid, I've always relied on my faith to get me through the hard times, but as the son of a single parent, I know the value of rolling up your sleeves and doing the work. As a member of the 1st Black Greek-Lettered Organization founded for African-American Collegiate Males, I know the responsibility that comes with being one of few, but as a Greek student at a University in South Georgia where we were ignored, I know that it is our responsibility to facilitate opportunities for our students to build relationships on purpose. I am the summation of my experiences and I hope to bring that sense of challenge, support, work ethic, inclusion, wonder, and opportunity with me to the Board of Directors.

AFA at its core is a professional development association, and has continued to invest in and enhance our professional core competencies. How can AFA best facilitate the development of necessary knowledge and skills for those doing the work of the fraternity/sorority profession, and how do you see that work needing to evolve?

AFA has done a fantastic job partnering with NASPA and other associations to create certifications in Student Affairs, particularly in the area of Fraternity/Sorority Advising. In order to better facilitate the dissemination of knowledge, I think AFA could greatly benefit from utilizing its Regions for either summer meet-ups or virtual drive-ins. Additionally, there may also be some benefit in creating delineation in the PD and Support that exists for campuses of varying sizes. Having worked at a number of smaller institutions prior to coming to the SEC, I can tell you that a lot of the things that I saw working well at larger schools were things that I wouldn't have been able to operationalize in my wildest dreams due to a lack of resources. Many states (Ohio comes to mind) have begun creating working groups to support the needs of their campuses and I think that's a wonderful opportunity for AFA to explore.

One of the main responsibilities of board members is to maintain financial accountability of the organization. Board members act as trustees of the organization's assets and must exercise due diligence to oversee that the organization is well-managed and that its financial situation remains sound. Please describe a time when you have had to make difficult financial and/or resource allocation decisions and how would you use that experience as you serve on the board.

I currently oversee the budget for the Office of Sorority & Fraternity Life at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville and must answer to campus, system, and state policies regarding how that funding is used. Between advocating for resources and being a good steward, I sometimes find myself unable to fund programmatic or need-based ideas due to having to prioritize another area/function/etc. The most recent example of this was my decision to reallocate money from an Admin line to create a full-time position. This decision, while not popular at the time because we were going to become one of the few Student Life

units without an admin, was a necessary one to ensure the continued growth and success of our community. Fortunately, we are now seeing the benefits of having a full-time coordinator, and while it was an adjustment for our team, our community has benefitted greatly from this change. This example is just one of many and speaks to the need of the Director or BOD to remain focused on meeting the needs of their stakeholders in the best ways possible. Not every decision is going to be a popular one, but we can't be afraid to make the necessary ones. The key however, is to make sure that we're as transparent as possible in our communication and that we communicate regularly about the challenge and our hoped-for outcomes.