



# DEVIN WALKER

Director, Fraternity and Sorority Life  
University of Maryland

*Candidate, AFA Board of Directors*

**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?**

I think that the greatest opportunities to build stakeholder alignment and consensus over the next five years will be professional development and synergy across stakeholder groups. Professional development will be a key opportunity because we will all need to work together to strengthen a workforce in the fraternity sorority space, given that we may have less young professionals entering the functional area and continued attrition. Alignment and consensus in this area may help us keep staff and grow an interest in the work amongst new graduates. Synergy is an opportunity because achieving this will mean that at all levels, we will be providing efficient and consistent support for the student experience. This synergy must exist between HQ staff, alumni, regional representatives, volunteers, and campus professionals; recognizing that we may have competing interests at times, but we can still be aligned in what it supporting and bolstering the experience for members. I would effectively lead the association in this by facilitating spaces and opportunities for perspectives to be shared and for dialogue to occur. I would then seek to synthesize that context to facilitate solutions that may involve intentionally bringing together umbrella groups or working with associations outside of higher education. I would lean on existing and new relationships to drive our initiatives forward.

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**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?**

I believe that the BOD is positioned to set the strategic vision for the association and navigate a fiduciary responsibility to manage association finances. The BOD also serves as the external face of the association and engages in fundraising on behalf of the foundation. The BOD executes the mission and vision through the creation of committees and workgroups. The BOD advances the fraternity and sorority experience through its work to facilitate spaces and conversations for the development and change-oriented growth of the membership. I believe that I would be an effective board member because I am a highly relational person that understands how to utilize relationships to learn about the needs of people, elevate those voices, and work collaboratively towards change. I have done this in my professional work as I have navigated situations with IFC/NIC at different campuses, as well as in driving change through an educational initiative at my previous institution. I also believe that I would be an effective BOD member because I listen intently and am able to birth ideas for discussion. I say discussion because I also recognize that decisions and the implementation of ideas require consensus amongst a team. That has been my approach as a leader in professional spaces and I would carry that team-oriented mentality to the BOD.

**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 am a straight, Black, cisgender, male that is a husband and father. These identities show up in both my professional and personal lives. As a member of the BOD, these identities may lead me to couch every conversation and decision with an inclusive lens. I strive to ensure that all types of folks are brought to the table, and if they can't physically be present, their voice will be. I also would want to ensure that the work we do on the BOD moves us toward the persistence of the fraternity and sorority experience so that my kids have the opportunity to join, should they choose, in the future. I am also someone that does not speak for the sake of speaking. One reason for that is my physical awareness as I am a relatively tall Black man. I try not to take over conversations and physical space so folks are comfortable. I will also add that I am a member of a BGLO, so I will always seek to advocate for professionals in culturally-based organizations.

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**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?**

I believe that AFA can best facilitate development by innovating new ways to deliver content and bring professionals together. I can't stress enough how important relationships are in all of this. Much of our development happens amongst individuals, and AFA is well positioned to create new ways for members to come together and also bolster current opportunities, like the Annual Meeting. AFA can also lean on the wealth of knowledge and experience amongst the membership to bring fresh content and perspectives to forefront. I believe that as an association, we aren't doing enough to challenge seasoned professionals to present at conferences or engage in fraternity and sorority research. The association can become a greater thought-leader in the functional area, but only if we can get our members with the knowledge to act. With the emphasis on more professionals sharing their knowledge comes a need to re-evaluate what it is that we need to know for the work. We can talk more about topics such as: budget management, politics, public health, and navigating systems. We have to broaden the content base to help members grow as higher education professionals and not just fraternity and sorority advisors.

**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 manage a budget of around \$700,000, inclusive of gift accounts. As we approach a tighter budget period, I have had to choose between funding our usual six undergraduate staff and two graduate assistants, and funding more office-led programming initiatives. I made the choice to fund staff because we need more hands on deck to design new approaches to the work; as well as handle some assessment pieces, benchmarking, and data input. This decision was difficult because we need to grow our prevention training, leadership training for presidents, and build training for emerging leaders. I also know that we can still do some of this work by leaning into our campus partners. This experience would be useful on the BOD because I will bring an understanding of how to prioritize needs and I will not hesitate to advocate for the tough decision to be made in the best interest of the association. I also bring a critical lens and a willingness to engage in discourse before advocating for a particular decision.

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**AFA's strategic plan, 'Forward to 50', will be the 'north star' for the Association's efforts over the 2025 and 2026 years. Discuss how you typically approach prioritization and allocation of strategic planning efforts, and what you see as the Board of Directors' role in strategic plan execution.**

I typically approach prioritization and allocation of strategic planning efforts by first gaining a firm understanding of the plan and the reasoning behind it. I can then work with the team to determine an approach to putting the plan into action. This typically involves plotting out an order to action items, as well as an approach to including aspects of the plan in multiple initiatives. I would also seek to ensure that we are consistently revisiting the plan to review progress and keep us on the agreed upon path. I believe the role of the BOD is to put the plan into action by designing and driving committees, projects and research to reach our 'north star.' The BOD must also seek to gain the perspectives of the membership to understand whether we are adhering to plan in their eyes. If we are not, then we can come back to the table and chart a new path that honors the perspective of the membership. In short, the BOD must ensure that everything that the association does is in alignment with the plan and shift as needed to remain on course.