



Governance Review and Recommendations Report

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Executive Summary

To elevate the work of sorority/fraternity professionals and lead them into the future, AFA is working to ensure board leadership represents the changing profession and reflects its diverse community. To this end, AFA hired .orgSource to perform a governance review. The following recommendations are based upon the project's objectives and review of AFA's board bylaws and other governing documents. Extensive research was performed including stakeholder interviews. The evaluation data was categorized into themes and subthemes. Finally, specific actions to advance AFA's governance were identified.

Findings

Our research, including conversations with 14 different AFA members and the Executive Director, yields four high-level themes. Each of the six project objectives is tied to a high-level theme. The interview data is the basis for the situational analysis. The situational analysis drove the identification of sub-themes under the high-level theme.

1. Align Nomination's Governance Structure to Support Strategic Direction

Objective: How the AFA board addresses its future direction and structures the governance to support it.

Objective: How AFA identifies, recruits, and selects strong, consistent Board leadership.

Situation:

- Several interviewees commented that AFA's strategic direction is not clearly informing the NEC process. Questions were also raised about AFA's commitment to board director education and preparing future Board Directors.
- We probed the definition of fraternity/sorority advisors. There does not appear to be a widely accepted definition. An interviewee mentioned the Board has tried to define the term but was unable to reach consensus. The lack of a clear definition may be the underlying cause of confusion and misalignment between the direction of AFA, the profession's career path, who the members think AFA serves and who Board Directors should be.
- The third most mentioned improvement is to include the full board's input in identifying the necessary board skills and qualities in board candidates, if AFA is to find the smartest, brightest, diverse, results-oriented thinkers.
- Interviewees stated the Nominations and Elections Committee (NEC) members should better understand the Board's role and responsibilities and the necessary Board skills and qualities to drive the strategic direction while adapting and changing an evolving industry.
- Several interviewees felt elected NEC members do not have the right qualifications due to lack of board experience or a long-term view of AFA.
- One interviewee commented it is not necessary to have a Past President chair the NEC if the Board has greater input into the Board skills and qualities.

Sub-themes:

- Reaffirm and clarify Board direction
- Hold a forum to define the profession
- Evolve the governance structure

2. Address Gaps Between Desired Outcomes and Bylaws

Objective: How AFA identifies and enacts eligibility requirements for Board leadership that reflect the nature of the Association.

Objective: How AFA and the AFA Board of Directors selects its officers (President, Secretary, and Treasurer).

Situation:

- Korn Ferry's The New Nominating and Governance Committee report¹ states, *"The strategic board is a diverse team representing a richness of different talents and backgrounds, thoughtfully and deliberately assembled. The team should be capable of world class insights and forward-looking decision-making."*
- Such talent requires a different view of AFA's eligibility requirements, particularly because one third of AFA's membership is a member for less than three years and one third of the membership do not work on a college campus.
- One of the AFA interviewees said, "It has been a challenge finding qualified individuals with the time and interest to serve on the Board while also trying to diversify skill set and background." AFA has expanded its board criteria to allow for diversity and inclusion, however, AFA and the business environment are demanding more experienced board skills and abilities. This is causing a gap in the preferred skill set and number of members with that skill set. The gap is further exacerbated by the size of age cohorts, AFA's young membership, and where members work.
- Almost half of all interviewees, regardless of years as member or AFA volunteer experience, found the member criteria limiting. They state if AFA wants to reflect the changing profession and address the higher education issues impacting the profession, the Board criteria should be broadened. They add it is important for a variety of professional experiences and voices, beyond those in a fraternity or sorority, to be at the Board table. Variety of professional experiences was defined as "substantial experience in the profession or other life experience that enhances the profession."
- AFA bylaws allow two individuals to be appointed as Board Directors. Typically, these appointments fill the needed skills of Treasurer and a world class thinker. AFA is not benefiting from succession planning for its Treasurer or world class thinkers. Nor is AFA accessing the breadth of skills nonmembers offer. Interviewees acknowledge while they want member representation on the Board, when it comes to finding the needed skills, AFA should be creative in their approach.
- The second most mentioned improvement is to close the communication gap about the Board role, responsibilities and if interested, how to prepare and apply to be a board member. Other comments

¹ <https://www.kornferry.com/content/dam/kornferry/docs/article-migration/The-New-Nominating-and-Governance-Committee.pdf>

relate to better socialization of the Call for Nomination process and recruitment process and detailing what skills and qualifications the Board is seeking and why.

- The fourth most mentioned improvement is to expand the eligibility requirements for President to be the same as a board member. AFA should celebrate strengthening the Board and successfully pulling in different voices through different membership categories. One interviewee stated, “We have narrowed the path to President and limited the Presidential candidates.” This interviewee shared, “After considering all requirements, there are only 13 people who are currently members eligible to be President. That pool is too small.”
- Bylaw requirements, the elections timeline, and date the President take office make it difficult for a President to prepare for their term, for the Board to quickly replace a President who resigns or is terminated, or for the President to complete their term if changing jobs. One interviewee suggests AFA must do a better job of succession for the Office of the President and help members understand those they elect to the Board could become the next AFA President.
- The fifth most mentioned improvement is to have the Board elect the President and change the title from President to Board Chair. A policy governing board has moved its attention from day-to-day work to focus on direction setting, oversight and establishing policy. This shift demands different responsibilities and skills from the Office of the President. Today, a board president is sometimes referred to as a board chair or chair of the Board. They are the person elected to serve as the head of the association’s board of directors <https://www.onboardmeetings.com/board-portal-glossary/board-president/>
- AFA appears to be experiencing a gap in Presidential leadership because of its Presidential eligibility criteria. AFA may also experience a capacity gap if it pursues changing the NEC to a standing committee. Comments suggest the Board would benefit from adding up to two additional seats.

Sub-themes:

- Address the Board and Presidential eligibility requirements
- Create detailed communications plan
- Address Board President bylaws
- Address Board Treasurer bylaws
- Consider number of board seats

3. Be Inclusive, Invest, and Add Value

Objective: How AFA identifies and organizes its membership categories in ways that support or detract from this improved governance structure.

Situation:

- The interviewees felt the member categories are appropriate. As of Dec 12, 2022, Professionals comprise 79.5% of AFA members, Affiliates 8.2%, Graduates 7.2%, Vendors 1.9%, and Emeritus .6%.

A few think AFA treat the Vendor member category as a transactional relationship and should be more inclusive of Vendor members. For example, when a Vendor member employee chooses to volunteer,

AFA requires them to join the Affiliate member category, potentially reducing Vendor engagement and bringing into question AFA's value.

- Early career Professionals are the largest percentage of AFA's membership. The interviews revealed AFA struggles with early career Professionals changing their career after their third year. This churn denies AFA from reaping the rewards of developing their future professionals and volunteer leaders. Early career members interviewed were excited to be/become involved with AFA but do not understand their options or how to access them. Such thinking led to one interviewer's observation "Equity is developing everyone for the ultimate role of board member."
- The number one area of improvement is to provide training and development, including volunteer opportunities, for future Board Directors. A couple of interviewees pointed out no program has been formalized, yet AFA has considered board training, development of future Board Directors and identified training topics.

Age cohort demographics support the case for investing in early career members as future leaders. *"The pattern of projected population aging is most consistent with rising shares of 50-to 59-year-olds and 60-to 69-year-olds relative to the broad group in their 20s, 30s, and 40s..."*

<https://read.dukeupress.edu/demography/article/57/1/1/168084/Relative-Sizes-of-Age-Cohorts-and-Labor-Force>

A number of interviewees pointed out early career members are the largest percent of membership. This segment expects AFA to develop their professional skills...adding value to their membership. There is an opportunity for AFA to stabilize member retention, develop the profession through career path(s), and provide support for navigating those career path(s).

Sub-themes:

- Be inclusive with your member categories and benefits
- Invest in your volunteer workforce and future board
- Identify the career path(s) of the profession

4. Manage Change

Objective: How AFA prepares its community for changes in its direction, governing structure, and processes.

Situation:

- Younger interviewee comments indicate a gap in knowledge about participating in greater volunteer and leadership roles, and how things are done for board nominations, board interviews and elections. Young members think AFA is still operating under the system of the volunteer who chaired the annual meeting becomes eligible for the Board.
- Beyond a communications plan, more must be done to help members get onboard with the Board's direction, AFA's identity and the opportunities AFA offers in their career advancement.

- It is possible if AFA decides to call a forum of allied organizations and AFA representatives to define fraternity/sorority advisors, another name may emerge to better describe the profession. AFA will want to be ready for this possibility.

Sub-themes:

- Develop change management plan
- Ensure AFA's name reflects its profession

The top five most mentioned areas of improvement by the interviewees were:

- Provide training and development, including volunteer opportunities, for future Board Directors.
- Close the communications gap about the Board role, responsibilities and if interested, how to prepare and apply to be a board member.
- Include the full board's input in identifying the necessary board skills and qualities in board candidates, if AFA is to find the smartest, brightest, diverse, results oriented thinkers.
- Expand the eligibility requirements for President to be the same as a board member.
- Have the Board elect the President and change the title from President to Board Chair.

High-Level Recommendations

Based on our analysis, and the sub-themes that emerged, specific recommendations were developed. The following recommendations should be evaluated and prioritized by the Board, before developing a 2 – 3-year implementation plan.

1. Align Nomination's Governance Structure to Support Strategic Direction

- Reaffirm AFA's identity and direction and clarify its intent.
- Hold a forum of allied organizations and AFA representatives to define the fraternity/sorority advisors' profession.
- Evolve the NEC (AFA Bylaw X.) to become a Governance & Nominations standing committee of the Board.

2. Address Gaps Between Desired Outcomes and Bylaws

- Allow all member categories to be eligible for the Board and for President.
- Restate the eligibility requirements for Board Directors and President as "is a member of AFA."
- Clarify what employment means.
- Remove the employment requirement once elected and/or seated on the Board.
- Refocus the two Board appointed seats as "outside consultants."
- Address the mystery in the recruitment and nominations process with planned messaging.
- Revisit the Nominations and Elections timeline and date President takes office.
- Allocate one of the Board seats to prepare the President's successor.
- Provide a less restrictive pathway for Presidential candidates.
- Change title and duties of Executive Director to those of Chief Executive Officer.
- Change the President's role and responsibilities to reflect those of a Board Chair.

- Rewrite AFA Bylaw VI. F.7. should the NEC become a Governance & Nominations Committee stand under the Board.
- Require slating and voting for board candidates by specific skills and qualities.
- Expand the Board size by two to three additional seats.

3. Be Inclusive, Invest, and Add Value

- Develop the Vendor category as a trade member category.
- Invest in a formalized training and development system or governance readiness program.
- Develop programs segmented by stage of a member's career.
- Create special interest groups (SIGs) that channel their voices.
- Consider inviting SIG cohorts as guests of a board meeting or to observe board orientation.
- Chart the profession's career path(s) preparing members and the profession through education and credentialing opportunities.

4. Manage Change

- Develop a change management plan to help members adjust to changes.
- Align the name of AFA with the description of who the association serves.

These recommendations are based on the entirety of our research and experience.

The full report provides an action plan that stages implementation of the recommendations.

Introduction

In the Association of Fraternity/Sorority Advisors' 2022-2026 strategic plan, *Forward to 50: Elevating AFA into its Next Fifty Years* the opening sidebar states:

The Association of Fraternity/ Sorority Advisors (AFA) is the leading voice in creating a fraternity/sorority profession of ever increasing skill, value, and inclusion.

In the AFA's opening letter to friends and supporters, the following points are made:

- *The primary purpose of our founding was to foster collaboration amongst the multiple populations of professionals and volunteers who were committed to elevating the work of the fraternity/sorority advisor.*
- *As the fraternity/sorority experience has expanded and diversified, so has our work. As important as that work is, it has also become increasingly more complex, and is in increasing need of an association focused on building a more skillful, more valued, and more inclusive profession.*
- *This plan is about setting up our association to continue to lead into its next 50 years so that students and alumni can be transformed through higher education and the sorority/fraternity experience.*

It is important to acknowledge why the AFA was founded and also acknowledge the changing nature of the work today. These changes are crucial for AFA to address if they are to lead the profession into its next 50 years.

In September 2021, AFA's Strategy Recalibration Project, the Association announced a strengthened mission, vision, and pillars:

- The mission of AFA is to elevate the standard for effective professional practice in working with sororities and fraternities in higher education.
- The vision of AFA is *as the premier community of professional practice for those committed to enhancing the fraternity/sorority experience and is the leading voice in creating a fraternity/sorority profession of ever increasing skill, value, and inclusion.*

The mission and vision are achieved through four pillars, one of which is:

- *Creating Community - AFA builds and cultivates meaningful, professional communities that allow our members to more effectively engage with people and ideas in an inclusive and supportive environment.*

To elevate the work of sorority/fraternity professionals and lead them into the future, AFA is working to ensure board leadership represents the changing profession and reflects its diverse community.

Project Objectives

AFA contracted .orgSource to perform a high-level review of AFA governance policies and procedures designed to address:

1. How AFA identifies, recruits, and selects strong, consistent Board leadership;
2. How AFA identifies and enacts eligibility requirements for Board leadership that reflect the nature of the Association;
3. How AFA and the AFA Board of Directors selects its officers (President, Secretary, and Treasurer), and;
4. How AFA identifies and organizes its membership categories in ways that support or detract from this improved governance structure.

Two additional objectives were identified by the .orgSource consultant –

5. How the AFA board addresses its future direction and structures the governance to support it.
6. How AFA prepares its community for changes in its direction, governing structure, and processes.

Review Methodology

The discovery phase of our review included the following:

- Documentation review of AFA's key materials supporting the nominations, elections and board service process included:

- AFA Bylaws; Standard Operating Procedures Manual
 - Strategic Plan Forward to 50; materials used to support the recruitment and interview process including Nominations and Elections Committee (NEC) operating calendar
 - Call for Board Nominations
 - 2022 Board of Directors Qualifications
 - 2022 Board of Directors Candidate Submission Form
 - 2019 Board of Directors Information Session
 - 2022 Board of Directors Candidate Interview Script
 - 2022 NEC Nomination Qualifications and 2022 NEC Submission Form
 - Member categories and details about types of member categories serving on the Board over last five years and number of presidents nominated per each of last five years.
- A series of questions directed to then President Chris and ED Jason, based on documentation review.
 - 14 – 30-minute one-on-one virtual key informant interviews. These were segmented as follows:
 - 2021 – 2022 Board President
 - 2021 – 2022 and 2022-2023 Nominations and Elections Committee Chairs
 - Members engaged/employed in the fraternity/sorority profession
 - 1-3 years as member (2019 – 2022)
 - 5-7 years as member (2017 – 2015)
 - 8+ years as member (< 2017)
 - Member categories
 - 2021 – 2022 and 2022 – 2023 Foundation Chairs
 - 2 –120-minute conversations with AFA’s Executive Director
 - Touch point meetings with then President Chris and ED Jason

Findings

Our review yields the following high-level themes:

- Align Nomination’s Governance Structure to Support Strategic Direction
- Address Gaps Between Desired Outcomes and Bylaws
- Be Inclusive, invest, and add value
- Manage change

Each of the six project objectives is tied to a high-level theme. The situational analysis based on interview data drove the identification of sub-themes under the high-level theme.

1. Align Nomination’s Governance Structure to Support Strategic Direction

Objective: How the AFA board addresses its future direction and structures the governance to support it.

Objective: How AFA identifies, recruits, and selects strong, consistent Board leadership.

- Reaffirm and clarify Board direction
- Hold a forum to define the profession
- Evolve the governance structure

2. Address Gaps Between Desired Outcomes and Bylaws

Objective: How AFA identifies and enacts eligibility requirements for Board leadership that reflect the nature of the Association.

Objective: How AFA and the AFA Board of Directors selects its officers (President, Secretary, and Treasurer).

- Address the Board and Presidential eligibility requirements
- Create detailed communications plan
- Address Board President laws
- Address Board Treasurer laws
- Consider number of board seats

3. Be Inclusive, Invest, and Add Value

Objective: How AFA identifies and organizes its membership categories in ways that support or detract from this improved governance structure.

- Be inclusive with your member categories and benefits
- Invest in your volunteer workforce and future board
- Identify the career path(s) of the profession

4. Manage Change

Objective: How AFA prepares its community for changes in its direction, governing structure, and processes.

- Develop change management plan
- Ensure AFA's name reflects its profession

The top five most mentioned areas of improvement by the interviewees were:

- Provide training and development, including volunteer opportunities, for future Board Directors.
- Close the communications gap about the Board role, responsibilities and if interested, how to prepare and apply to be a board member.
- Include the full board's input in identifying the necessary board skills and qualities in board candidates, if AFA is to find the smartest, brightest, diverse, results oriented thinkers.
- Expand the eligibility requirements for President to be the same as a board member.
- Have the Board elect the President and change the title from President to Board Chair.

Analysis and Recommendations by High-Level Theme

Based on our analysis, and the sub-themes that emerged, specific recommendations were developed. These recommendations are intended to support the Board's efforts to ensure board leadership represents the changing profession and reflects its diverse professional community. The following recommendations should be evaluated and prioritized by the Board, before developing a 2 – 3-year implementation plan.

1. Align Nomination's Governance Structure to Support Strategic Direction

Situation:

- Several interviewees commented that AFA's strategic direction is not clearly informing the NEC process. Questions were also raised about AFA's commitment to board director education and preparing future Board Directors.
- We probed the definition of fraternity/sorority advisors. There does not appear to be a widely accepted definition. An interviewee mentioned the Board has tried to define the term but was unable to reach consensus. The lack of a clear definition may be the underlying cause of confusion and misalignment between the direction of AFA, the profession's career path, who the members think AFA serves and who Board Directors should be.
- The third most mentioned improvement is to include the full board's input in identifying the necessary board skills and qualities in board candidates, if AFA is to find the smartest, brightest, diverse, results-oriented thinkers.
- Interviewees stated the Nominations and Elections Committee (NEC) members should better understand the Board's role and responsibilities and the necessary Board skills and qualities to drive the strategic direction while adapting and changing an evolving industry.
- Several interviewees felt elected NEC members do not have the right qualifications due to lack of board experience or a long-term view of AFA.
- One interviewee commented it is not necessary to have a Past President chair the NEC if the Board has greater input into the Board skills and qualities.

Recommendations:

- Reaffirm and clarify Board direction.
 - The Board should **reaffirm AFA's identity and direction and clarify its intent** to invest in its current and future Board Directors through a series of high-level generative discussions. These board discussions will provide a key starting point and the rationale for pursuing any changes to the nomination's governance structure.

Conversations should include:

- What type of association should AFA be - professional only or combination professional and trade organization?

- What purpose does AFA want to accomplish in serving the profession? E.g. Advance skills of profession
 - Who should AFA serve in advancing the work of fraternities and sororities?
 - What kind of investment can AFA make to educate our current Board Directors?
 - What is the best approach for AFA to prepare its future Board Directors for board service?
 - Should AFA use the governance education series as an ROI in volunteer talent development/member benefit or to generate revenue?
- Hold a forum to define the profession.
 - A standard definition of fraternity/sorority advisors will remove the confusion and misalignment with who should serve on the Board. We recommend AFA **hold a forum of allied organizations and AFA representatives to define the fraternity/sorority advisors' profession**. This high-profile meeting should acknowledge the various roles the allied organizations play in the industry and ask for their input in defining today's profession.

A forum can expand how AFA views itself, provide evidence to support the definition of the profession, position AFA as a convener and “catalyst” in the industry, and pique the interest of future Board Directors.

- Evolve the governance structure.
 - Board Source's Leading with Intent 2021 Report cites 71% of all nonprofit organizations have evolved their Nominations Committee to a Governance & Nominations standing committee. <https://leadingwithintent.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/2021-Leading-with-Intent-Report.pdf> page 33
- In general, it is time to ramp up effectiveness by recognizing the need for an ongoing board succession process rather than an independent committee concentrating on one-off recruitment to fill a board vacancy. <https://www.kornferry.com/content/dam/kornferry/docs/article-migration/The-New-Nominating-and-Governance-Committee.pdf>
- Based on AFA governance interviews and recent governance literature, we recommend **AFA evolve its NEC (AFA Bylaw X.) to become a Governance & Nominations standing committee of the Board**.
- This governance structure creates direct accountability of the standing committee to the Board. The Board will create the charter and scope of work, set the goals and measures, identify the qualifications needed, appoint a chair and committee members, and evaluate their performance.
- The charter and scope of the Governance and Nominations standing committee should state their ongoing role is to plan board succession and recruit, vet, and slate candidates according to the AFA bylaws. Their focus should be on identifying, cultivating, and recruiting next level leaders and developing new leaders with training opportunities. Other responsibilities could include identifying and setting expectations for good governance practices; onboarding Board Directors and Officers their duties and expected behaviors; providing board member development and education. <https://www.bdo.com/insights/assurance/nominating-and-governance-committee-priorities-for-2022>

- We recommend the operations of the Governance and Nominations Committee include at least one annual conversation with the full Board. The conversation focuses on the needed skills and qualities, who the Board suggests as immediate candidates, and who may be a future candidate.
- Annually, the Board, with the Governance and Nominations Committee, should develop an inventory of skills and qualities currently on the Board and those skills and qualities needed.
 - There should be a documented system to search for future Board Directors - today and tomorrow.
 - Perhaps Regional Directors can identify future Board Directors for board development.
- A position description for chair and committee members should be created. Duties would include Governance & Nominations Committee issuing report of progress against board developed measures.
- An annual evaluation of each committee member's performance should be undertaken by the Board and used to guide the next cycle of Governance & Nominations appointments.
- Staff should develop the nominations communications plan and timeline for the election process, allowing additional time to let the membership know in advance when the nominations process will begin.
- The Executive Director or a person of their choosing should support the Governance & Nominations Committee.

2. Address Gaps Between Desired Outcomes and Bylaws

Situation:

- Korn Ferry's The New Nominating and Governance Committee report² states, *"The strategic board is a diverse team representing a richness of different talents and backgrounds, thoughtfully and deliberately assembled. The team should be capable of world class insights and forward-looking decision-making."*
- Such talent requires a different view of AFA's eligibility requirements, particularly because one third of AFA's membership is a member for less than three years and one third of the membership do not work on a college campus.
- One of the AFA interviewees said, "It has been a challenge finding qualified individuals with the time and interest to serve on the Board while also trying to diversify skill set and background." AFA has expanded its board criteria to allow for diversity and inclusion, however, AFA and the business environment are demanding more experienced board skills and abilities. This is causing a gap in the preferred skill set and number of members with that skill set. The gap is further exacerbated by the size of age cohorts, AFA's young membership, and where members work.
- Almost half of all interviewees, regardless of years as member or AFA volunteer experience, found the member criteria limiting. They state if AFA wants to reflect the changing profession and address the

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higher education issues impacting the profession, the Board criteria should be broadened. They add it is important for a variety of professional experiences and voices, beyond those in a fraternity or sorority, to be at the Board table. Variety of professional experiences was defined as “substantial experience in the profession or other life experience that enhances the profession.”

- AFA bylaws allow two individuals to be appointed as Board Directors. Typically, these appointments fill the needed skills of Treasurer and a world class thinker. AFA is not benefiting from succession planning for its Treasurer or world class thinkers. Nor is AFA accessing the breadth of skills nonmembers offer. Interviewees acknowledge while they want member representation on the Board, when it comes to finding the needed skills, AFA should be creative in their approach.
- The second most mentioned improvement is to close the communication gap about the Board role, responsibilities and if interested, how to prepare and apply to be a board member. Other comments relate to better socialization of the Call for Nomination process and recruitment process and detailing what skills and qualifications the Board is seeking and why.
- The fourth most mentioned improvement is to expand the eligibility requirements for President to be the same as a board member. AFA should celebrate strengthening the Board and successfully pulling in different voices through different membership categories. One interviewee stated, “We have narrowed the path to President and limited the Presidential candidates.” This interviewee shared, “After considering all requirements, there are only 13 people who are currently members eligible to be President. That pool is too small.”
- Bylaw requirements, the elections timeline, and date the President take office make it difficult for a President to prepare for their term, for the Board to quickly replace a President who resigns or is terminated, or for the President to complete their term if changing jobs. One interviewee suggests AFA must do a better job of succession for the Office of the President and help members understand those they elect to the Board could become the next AFA President.
- The fifth most mentioned improvement is to have the Board elect the President and change the title from President to Board Chair. A policy governing board has moved its attention from day-to-day work to focus on direction setting, oversight and establishing policy. This shift demands different responsibilities and skills from the Office of the President. Today, a board president is sometimes referred to as a board chair or chair of the Board. They are the person elected to serve as the head of the association’s board of directors <https://www.onboardmeetings.com/board-portal-glossary/board-president/>
- AFA appears to be experiencing a gap in Presidential leadership because of its Presidential eligibility criteria. AFA may also experience a capacity gap if it pursues changing the NEC to a standing committee. Comments suggest the Board would benefit from adding up to two additional seats.

Recommendations:

- Address the Board and Presidential eligibility requirements
 - We recommend AFA **allow all member categories to be eligible for the Board and for President.** Such inclusion becomes a recruitment advantage.

Being a member representing a professional membership organization is important. How AFA thinks about recruiting the word class thinker and the specific skills and qualities needed to support the direction of AFA and the profession is equally important.

Eligibility should balance the competing demands of skills, qualities, and professional representation. It should allow for natural career changes of the candidates and those elected to the Board.

Additionally, the eligibility requirements must work as a system to develop and allow candidates most worthy to rise to the position of President.

- To further guide recruitment, the procedures supporting a bylaw change to Governance & Elections standing committee should consider demographics including career stages, employment segments and aspects of diversity such as race, age, and gender.
- Other current eligibility requirements of a board candidate require being a member for three years prior to nomination (AFA Bylaw V.D.) and a Presidential candidate being a member for five years (AFA Bylaw VI.C. and X.D.4.iii.). This criterion does not consider the prior years of experience in the profession.

We recommend AFA **restate the eligibility requirements for Board Directors and President as “is a member of AFA.”** This is where creativity comes to bear. AFA could expand its recruitment outside the membership, requiring a qualified prospect to become a member prior to nomination.

- We believe AFA Bylaws V.I. complicates the nominations and elections process. We recommended AFA keep the employment requirement to run for board election and **clarify what employment means**. We recommend AFA **remove the employment requirement once elected and/or seated on the Board**. Every competent board member should be allowed to complete their term of office despite life transitions.
 - AFA should **refocus the two Board appointed seats as “outside consultants”** (AFA Bylaw V.B.). These appointments could be members or nonmembers who bring an expertise such as marketing, real estate, training and development to help the Board achieve its future direction. Both seats may not be appointed each year. The type of skill needed would be expected to change as the focus and direction of the association evolves.
- Create detailed communications plan
 - Take the mystery out of recruitment and nominations
Communications was a repeating theme. For many interviewees, the recruitment and nomination process is a mystery. One said AFA should provide greater transparency about the preparation for, recruitment of, and nominations of Board Directors. They also want the NEC to provide rationale for how they chose the slate.

To help build greater awareness **address the mystery in the recruitment and nominations process with planned messaging.**

Messages can address board roles and responsibilities, how future Board Directors are identified, what skills are being sought, how to apply. Preparing members in advance of the nominations and election period would be helpful.

A call to action in AFA's communications, inviting members to learn more about what it takes to be a board member or to take board training, will further help.

- Address Board President bylaws
 - Presidential succession
Preparing the next President is important to the Board's success. To ensure greater preparation **revisit the Nominations and Elections timeline and date President takes office** to allow more time to onboard the next President.

AFA Bylaws XI.I. requires if the Office of the President becomes vacant the next available board member assumes office as Acting President. The order of succession is Treasurer, Secretary and longest serving Board member.

The membership elects the Board Directors and the President. To ensure quality succession of the President, we recommend AFA **allocate one of the Board seats to prepare the President's successor.** The position may be called a President-elect or a Vice President. This shifts the focus to electing the person who succeeds as President a year later. The President-elect or Vice President should be able to continue into the role of President even if they have completed their third two-year term.

Planned President succession among the Board removes the strain of a sudden transition, in particular to an Officer who is there to perform their role. It will also ensure the skills and qualities needed to perform the Presidential duties.

- Number of Presidential candidates
AFA Bylaw X.D.4.iii. requires only two candidates run for President. We recommend AFA **provide a less restrictive pathway for Presidential candidates.** The position should be open to all those who qualify and are slated. There is a voting mechanism known as preferential voting that addresses multiple candidates. Revisiting this requirement may expand interest from the Board, especially if AFA decides to enlarge the number of Board Directors. In the case of candidates for President, more is better.
- Board elects its chair
Almost half of those interviewed think it is time for AFA to evolve the Office of President to align with their policy governance model. The interviewees are proposing the Board elect their leader

or Board Chair rather than the membership electing the President. One interviewee pointed out if the membership elects everyone to the Board, then they are electing the potential slate for the next presidential election.

When recruiting Board Directors this change will require careful consideration of who has the skills to become Board Chair (among all the other needs) and ensure board education to prepare interested Board Directors for Board Chair duties.

It will take a great deal of focus to build up the quality and number of board and presidential candidates and convert an independent committee to a standing committee. At this time in AFA's governance evolution, and based upon the current eligibility requirements for President, we recommend this change be delayed and considered with the next round of governance reviews, in three to five years.

In the near term, we recommend the Board:

- **change the title and duties of the Executive Director to those of Chief Executive Officer** to signal them as the top executive responsible for managing the association's operations and performance.
- **change the President's role and responsibilities to reflect those of a Board Chair** (AFA bylaw VI.F.6.). For example, this bylaw may be reworded to reflect the President partners with the Executive Director in representing AFA to external constituents and organizations.
- **rewrite AFA Bylaw VI. F.7. should the NEC become a Governance & Nominations Committee stand under the Board.**

- Address Board Treasurer bylaws

- Better plan for Treasurer succession

It is recommended there be better succession planning for the position of Treasurer. This will require intentional selection of board candidates with financial skill.

The procedures supporting the bylaws for Board nominations and member voting could be written to **require slating and voting for board candidates by specific skills and qualities** rather than members voting for x board of director candidates.

This change will help members understand the skills needed, create a purposeful succession plan for Treasurer, and free up the two appointed positions for other expertise.

- Remove Treasurer and Secretary from line of Presidential succession

As mentioned on the previous page under Presidential Succession, AFA Bylaw XI.I. should be modified to reflect a smoother Presidential succession that does not include the Treasurer or Secretary.

- Consider number of board seats

- With 7 Board Directors, the AFA board is on the smaller side of association boards. *“According to Leading with Intent, the average size of a nonprofit board is 15 members; the median board size is 13 members. [] When determining the size of your board, start by thinking about what your board needs to accomplish. Optimal board size may vary according to the stage in the board’s lifecycle, its mission, its fundraising necessities, and whether it is a national or a local board.”* <https://boardsource.org/resources/nonprofit-board-dynamics-processes-faqs/>

While a small board helps to ensure all voices at a board table are heard, it limits the resources available for board work.

Currently, a portion of the Board’s work is carried out through four standing Committees. Board members are assigned as follows: Audit (2 board members), Finance (Treasurer), Personnel (3), Resolutions (Secretary). All told these four committees currently require the labor of 7 board members; that could expand if another one or two board members were assigned to the Finance Committee.

As the Board considers how to assign board labor to its standing committees, and should the Board expand the standing committees to include a Governance & Nominations committee, the Board will want to think about what additional board labor is necessary to properly support this work.

Additional board seats allow AFA to obtain the diverse views and different skills in the profession while increasing the number of current Board Directors eligible for President. For these reasons, we recommend AFA **expand the Board size by two to three additional seats**, taking the Board to a total of 9 or 10. While still on the smaller side of association boards it may better reflect the budget size of AFA at this point in its life cycle.

3. Be Inclusive, Invest, and Add Value

Situation:

- The interviewees felt the member categories are appropriate. As of Dec 12, 2022, Professionals comprise 79.5% of AFA members, Affiliates 8.2%, Graduates 7.2%, Vendors 1.9%, and Emeritus .6%.

A few think AFA treat the Vendor member category as a transactional relationship and should be more inclusive of Vendor members. For example, when a Vendor member employee chooses to volunteer, AFA requires them to join the Affiliate member category, potentially reducing Vendor engagement and bringing into question AFA’s value.

- Early career Professionals are the largest percentage of AFA’s membership. The interviews revealed AFA struggles with early career Professionals changing their career after their third year. This churn denies AFA from reaping the rewards of developing their future professionals and volunteer leaders. Early career members interviewed were excited to be/become involved with AFA but do not understand their options or how to access them. Such thinking led to one interviewer’s observation “Equity is developing everyone for the ultimate role of board member.”

- The number one area of improvement is to provide training and development, including volunteer opportunities, for future Board Directors. A couple of interviewees pointed out no program has been formalized, yet AFA has considered board training, development of future Board Directors and identified training topics.

Age cohort demographics support the case for investing in early career members as future leaders. *“The pattern of projected population aging is most consistent with rising shares of 50-to 59-year-olds and 60-to 69-year-olds relative to the broad group in their 20s, 30s, and 40s...”*

<https://read.dukeupress.edu/demography/article/57/1/1/168084/Relative-Sizes-of-Age-Cohorts-and-Labor-Force>

A number of interviewees pointed out early career members are the largest percent of membership. This segment expects AFA to develop their professional skills...adding value to their membership. There is an opportunity for AFA to stabilize member retention, develop the profession through career path(s), and provide support for navigating those career path(s).

Recommendations:

- Be inclusive with your member categories and benefits
 - AFA has worked hard to build its diversity, equity, and inclusion practices. Our recommendation is to **develop the Vendor category as a trade member category** and structure the member fee and benefits accordingly. Typically the member fee is based on the size of revenue or number of employees. Benefits, including a vote, would be allocated to each Vendor member. All employees could take advantage of AFA member pricing and volunteer opportunities because the Vendor has paid a member fee based their size. This structure would not preclude AFA striking sponsorship or advertising arrangements with them.

By including the Vendor category as a voting member, AFA can avail itself of the expertise and capacity that lies in this category.

- Invest in your volunteer workforce and future board
 - Membership is a pipeline to the volunteer workforce and the Board. Preparing members to be future Board Directors provides value to the member and to AFA. It is important to recognize and address the labor force cohort of prime/middle-aged workers (aged 25 – 49) is smaller than the older cohorts of 50-59 and 60 69. What does this mean for membership, value, engagement, and board service?

We recommend AFA **invest in a formalized training and development system or governance readiness program**. Members are seeking value, direction, community and learning how to be resilient – coping, adapting, and anticipating.

AFA can offer these benefits to members while identifying who has the potential to be a great association board director. AFA can develop them, like a sports camp where hundreds of athletes are training and developing over years, with a few rising to the top of the sport.

One approach is to **develop programs segmented by stage of a member's career**: graduate student, early career, and mid-career. Programmatic segmentation can be enriched if AFA **creates special interest groups (SIGs) to channel their voices** and listen to those voices to evolve AFA. And as part of governance readiness, **consider inviting SIG cohorts as guests of a board meeting and/or to observe board orientation**.

- Identify the career path(s) of the profession
 - Associations often see high erosion of members after year three. We recommend AFA **chart the profession's career path(s) preparing members and the profession through education and credentialing opportunities**.

Although this recommendation is outside the scope of this governance review, it is important to consider the larger picture of AFA's and the profession's viability.

4. Change Management

Situation:

- Younger interviewee comments indicate a gap in knowledge about participating in greater volunteer and leadership roles, and how things are done for board nominations, board interviews and elections. Young members think AFA is still operating under the system of the volunteer who chaired the annual meeting becomes eligible for the Board.
- Beyond a communications plan, more must be done to help members get onboard with the Board's direction, AFA's identity and the opportunities AFA offers in their career advancement.
- It is possible if AFA decides to call a forum of allied organizations and AFA representatives to define fraternity/sorority advisors, another name may emerge to better describe the profession. AFA will want to be ready for this possibility.

Recommendations:

- Develop change management plan
 - As an organization takes on a long-range plan to change, we advise they manage the change proactively. Given the number of recommendations resulting from this governance review, AFA should **develop a change management plan to help members adjust to changes**. Preparing the membership for change, educating them on the rationale for the change, identifying the measures of success, enlisting champions for the plan of change, reporting on progress and successes, and celebrating with AFA's members are fundamental to achieving the recommendations in this report.

- Ensure AFA’s name reflects its profession
 - Defining the profession and the term fraternity/sorority advisors is a crucial step to successfully achieving the recommended governance changes. Today, AFA Article II. A. 4. indicates the Association’s purpose is to serve the fraternity/sorority advising profession. Once the recommended forum comes to a consensus and the Board determines whether to accept the forum’s recommendations, it may be necessary to **align the name of AFA with the description of who the association serves.**

Taking Action

This section summarizes the recommendations by the four high-level themes with an action plan that stages implementation of the recommendations.

1. Align Nomination’s Governance Structure to Support Strategic Direction

Recommended Action Plan

Short term action:

- Reaffirm AFA’s identity and direction and clarify its intent.
- Develop the rationale for change to the nomination’s governance structure.

Longer term action:

- Hold a forum of allied organizations and AFA representatives to define the fraternity/sorority advisors’ profession.
- Evolve the NEC (AFA Bylaws X.) to become a Governance & Nominations standing committee of the Board.

2. Address Gaps Between Desired Outcomes and Bylaws

Recommended Action Plan

Short term action:

- Address the mystery in the recruitment and nominations process with planned messaging.
- Clarify what employment means.
- Change title and duties of Executive Director to those of Chief Executive Office.
- Change the President’s role and responsibilities to reflect those of a Board Chair.
- Require slating and voting for board candidates by specific skills and qualities.

Longer term action:

- Allow all member categories to be eligible for the Board and for President.
- Restate the eligibility requirement for Board Directors and President as “is a member of AFA.”
- Remove the employment requirement once elected and/or seated on the Board.
- Refocus the two Board appointed seats as “outside consultants.”

- Allocate one of the Board seats to prepare the President's successor.
- Provide a less restrictive pathway for Presidential candidates.
- Rewrite AFA Bylaw VI. F.7. should the NEC become a Governance & Nominations Committee stand under the Board.
- Expand the Board size by two to three additional seats.

3. Be Inclusive, Invest, and Add Value

Recommended Action Plan

Short term action:

- Develop the Vendor category as a trade member category.
- Invest in a formalized training and development system or governance readiness program.
- Develop programs segmented by the stage of a member's career.

Longer term action:

- Create special interest groups (SIGs) that channel their voices.
- Consider inviting SIG cohorts as guests of a board meeting or to observe board orientation.
- Chart the profession's career path(s) preparing members and the profession through education and credentialing opportunities.

4. Manage Change

Recommended Action Plan

Short term action:

- Develop a change management plan to help members adjust to changes.

Longer term action:

- Align the name of AFA with the description of who the association serves.

Summary and Next Steps

There is no shortage of ideas, only resources. This report provides high-level recommendations to reach optimal board performance. As it considers the recommendations before it, AFA will want to:

- align their nominations governing structure with its policy governance model and its strategic direction.
- evaluate and prioritize the recommendations before developing a 2 – 3 year implementation plan.

The Board should keep in mind it is recommended to conduct a governance review every four to five years.

.orgSource wishes you well on this journey and stands ready to step in and help should you need further support.