



DR. KATE BUTLER DENHART

Director of Fraternity and Sorority Life
University of Cincinnati

Candidate, AFA Board of Directors

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.

- AFA Board of Directors 2023-Present
 - Personnel Committee, Audit Committee, Resolutions Committee, Governance and Nominations Committee
- Chi Omega Wellness and Safety Committee 2021-Present
- AFA Nominations and Elections Committee 2018, 2019, 2021, 2022
- AFA Professional Development Committee 2023
- AFA Educational Programs Committee

Describe your understanding of the roles and responsibilities of the AFA 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 serves as the strategic leader of the Association. In this role, the board must work to understand the needs of a diverse membership, consider financial limitations, and envision a path forward. The work of previous BoDs has established the Forward to 50 Strategic Plan which outlines the priorities of the association. While serving on the Board, I have participated in the Board work to steward these priorities with particular consideration for changing contexts and serve as guideposts for AFA staff and volunteers who ultimately execute specific initiatives. In my role as a Director of Fraternity and Sorority Life, I establish goals and priorities by understanding the experiences of our students, identifying areas of alignment with institutional priorities, and managing the resources available to our team. I then must communicate these priorities to various campus and community partners to increase engagement and work with staff who directly implement initiatives. This leadership requires strong communication, long term thinking, and the ability to balance needs and resources. As a member of the Board, I have had the opportunity to focus on specific initiatives such as professional development for new and aspiring directors. By working collaboratively with staff, we were able to gain a better understanding of member needs and ultimately, AFA staff are now leading work to develop additional professional development opportunities.

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 believe that the AFA Strategic Plan provides us a strong foundation on which we are engaging stakeholders. The Board has used the pillars to guide strategic outreach with external stakeholders, such as Professional Development and Advocating for the Profession in conjunction with other professional associations. The pillars also help us to identify areas where AFA may be uniquely positioned and will need to better focus on internal stakeholders, such as creating community in partnership with volunteer leaders. As we look forward, I believe we can build on the foundation that we have established by nurturing the partnerships that currently exist, such as with ASCA, and strengthening emerging partnerships, such as with AVPs and VPs through NASPA. It will be important that as we work externally to build and strengthen our partnerships that we are also communicating internally, so the membership understands the collaborative work that is taking place. As a current board member, I work to participate actively in strategic alignment conversations, both to support thoughtful decision making and to best advocate for the Association within our membership. I aim to help the membership understand the goals of our partnerships so that they can benefit from this strategic work.

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.

When I started my first professional role in higher education, I was told that the functional area I oversaw had been operating significantly over budget for each of the past 4 years. I was told that my first measure of success would be to operate those programs at the same level of experience without going over budget. To fulfill this expectation, I reviewed previous budget expenditures to identify areas of significant cost, identified areas of overlap between programs that could be scaled to reduce cost, reviewed assessment results to identify non-impactful elements that could be reduced or eliminated, and created detailed planning timelines that reduced costs of rushed items. Additionally, I met with my supervisor and other invested stakeholders to discuss my proposed changes in an effort to avoid changes that would create a negative impact. This experience taught me to look holistically at expenditures and program offerings in order to increase efficiencies within operations. Within board service, I work to understand individual elements of the budget, as well as, how each contributes to the greater goals of the Association in order to recommend changes or reallocation.

AFA's strategic plan, 'Forward to 50', will be coming to a close in 2026, and the AFA Board of Directors will be called to think about AFA's future strategic direction. Looking forward into the next five years, in what ways you see AFA being uniquely called to serve our profession? 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 believe that the future of the work of the Association remains strongly rooted in our mission and vision of elevating the standard of effective professional practice to enhance the fraternity/sorority experience. As the Forward to 50 Strategic Plan comes to a close, it will be important for the Board of Directors to consider the who, what, and when of this purpose moving forward. For example, the current board has participated in strategic prioritization exercises to balance the needs of new professionals and emerging leaders within our field (who). While both groups must be supported, I have advocated that the Board consider where we have significant gaps in service (what) and where we can maintain current offerings with a timeline for future enhancement (when). By establishing clear priorities based on time, resource availability, and member need, the Board enables the staff to remain focused on mission critical duties. As we continue to professionalize the field of fraternity/sorority advising, it will also be important for the Association to consider how we support research and informed best practice education that is able to enhance the work of our members. To meet our mission of elevating the standard, we must understand the current standard and establish clear and meaningful goals for the industry.

As you reflect on this allocation exercise (see next page), please provide some brief commentary on how you approached the allocation of time/energy/resources. Please share any frameworks or perspectives you used in how you allocated your time.

In this exercise, I considered our current work as a board and how the priorities shift as initiatives are implemented (ie Community Collectives). For low scoring items, I aimed to reflect the need for awareness without action and/or high level decision making. For higher scoring items, I demonstrated a stronger need for more detailed knowledge and oversight. It is important to note that these priorities may shift as requested by the Executive Director or as specific incidents occur.

Allocation Exercise

You receive 100 points, each of which can be spent to prioritize the board's time. Allocate these 100 points based on what priority areas you think the board should spend their time on. Allocate more points to those areas that you think are more important.

Priority Area	Points Allotted	Remarks
Annual Meeting Planning	2	When significant changes that impact member experience are considered, the BoD should discuss potential implications and communication strategy, but should not be involved in detailed AM planning.
Educational Program Selection	2	When significant changes that impact member experience are considered, the BoD should discuss potential implications and communication strategy, but should not be involved in selecting specific Educational Programs.
Budget Oversight and Financial Management	20	Financial accountability is one of the main responsibilities of the BoD. This should be an ongoing conversation within the BoD.
Developing Strategy for Members' Professional Competency and Mentorship	20	Member professional development is the core of the Association and should be a central principle for all decision making.
Stakeholder Outreach & Partnership (NASPA, ASCA, FSL Umbrellas, etc.)	10	When individual board members are uniquely positioned to support outreach, that can foster stronger partnerships. Additionally, it is important for all Board members to be aware of strategic relationships to help support those efforts.
Communication Strategy	15	Communication to the membership continues to be a need area for the BoD. Developing communication strategy is often key to successful implementation.
Personnel and Association Human Resources	9	While this mainly falls to the Personnel Committee, it is important that all board members actively participate in requested personnel processes.
Creating Professional Community through Technology and Identity/Affinity Spaces	8	This priority has a strong foundation and now requires less BoD involvement, but is important to maintain general awareness.
Advancing Research	8	While this is not a direct action of the BoD, understanding how AFA supports researchers is an important board priority.
Policy and Position Statement Development	6	This is not a consistent need, but it is important to prioritize when/if the need arises.
Other (Please describe in the appropriate field)	0	N/A