RY BECK

(he/him)

Chief Executive Officer
Pi Lambda Phi

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.

As a current member of the AFA Board of Directors (appointed in 2024), I contribute to the governance and strategic direction of the association. For the 2025-26 year, my colleagues on the board elected me to serve as the association's treasurer. Prior to joining the board, I served on the Nominations and Elections Committee, and I have been an educational presenter at the AFA Annual Meeting and during Advance U sessions. I am also a volunteer for Princeton AlumniCorps, a nonprofit organization «dedicated to building a more just, equitable, and sustainable society by developing and engaging leaders and professionals of all ages to advance social change». At different periods, I have served on the program committee, event planning committee, and development steering committee, each reporting to AlumniCorps' board of directors and executive director. Outside of higher education, I recently served as a board member for the Indianapolis Symphonic Choir (ISC). In this capacity, I held fiduciary duties and contributed to both governance and strategic decisions. An individual project included helping the ISC leverage data to better understand patron demographics.

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?

AFA's board of directors are tasked with the fiduciary duties and strategic decision-making that bring our members' vision to life. Often, this work requires making decisions that position the organization for success years and decades into the future. Given the nature of the fraternity/sorority profession, where we work with student organizations marked by frequent turnover and against professional expectations for annual deliverables, the natural tendency is to address the challenges directly in front of us. Effective board leadership, however, requires the ability to elevate to the appropriate altitude so that today's systems are designed in a way that offers improved options for the next generation. For nearly twenty years, I have served as a professional, volunteer, consultant, committee member, and board member within our industry. I have worked at a headquarters and I have served a single campus community

(albeit in civic and career services, not fraternity/sorority life). I believe these experiences have collectively provided me with the temperament and the capacity to navigate the tension between immediate operational needs and long-term strategic planning. Ultimately, I believe BOD continuity may be a benefit for the association as it looks beyond the 'Forward to 50' plan. In two years of board service, I have strengthened my understanding of AFA's needs and feel my experience will allow the BODs to accelerate its decision making that is often slowed by turnover.

The fraternity and sorority profession (and higher education in general) is a complex, interdisciplinary space with many key stakeholders. Who do you see as some of the Association's primary stakeholders? What do you see as the greatest opportunities to build stakeholder alignment, consensus, and partnership? How would you effectively lead the association through this exercise in alignment?

The Association's primary stakeholder (intentionally not plural) is our membership. Yes, success will only happen by the shared effort of our broader community, but AFA must repeatedly consider and communicate how our members will benefit from every decision. Each of us understand and appreciate the complexity of a campus community, overlayed by international and intergenerational organizations, influenced by umbrella organizations, adjacent associations, vendors, and federal/state policies. AFA should lean into these stakeholder groups to build coalitions essential to advancing the fraternity and sorority movement. Practically, from a board seat, how does stakeholder alignment, consensus, and partnership happen? 1. Environmental scans, conducted through conversation, surveys, and research, should inform where the Association focuses its efforts. Our industry has matured precisely because of the network of associations that shape our work, and AFA should remain present and engaged in these channels as consistently as possible. 2. Convene stakeholders who can inform and influence decisions. The recent Senior Student Affairs Officer (SSAO) Convening at the Annual Meeting and the increased participation with community collectives and communities of practice are great examples of this in action. 3. Formalize partnerships through aligned services or comprehensive agreements. Resources across our industry are limited, so AFA should ensure that organizations are not unnecessarily duplicating services and that the strongest offerings reach our members. This often requires sharing information with trusted partners, asking for information in return, and managing competing priorities so that the best product reaches those who need it most. 4. Communicate the benefit back to members and every stakeholder group. Traversing from idea to impact can take years and people tend to forget which investments led to which results. It's essential to close the loop with partners.

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.**

In my executive role with Delta Sigma Phi, I have made countless decisions essential to our organization's sustainability and growth. Financial responsibility, in my experience, grows alongside professional responsibility. Over twenty years, my financial scope has progressed steadily: from a personal budget, to a team budget, to an organizational budget, to an inter-organizational budget spanning a partner foundation and housing corporation, and finally to board-level finances, where the work shifts from operational to governance through quarterly statement review, policy improvement, and investment oversight. Operationally, I have had the privilege of promoting employees, expanding benefits, and growing programs. I have also carried the burden of cutting professional development, reducing headcount, and canceling projects. Both have taught me how directly financial planning shapes an organization's mission and results. Strategically, I have worked with an organization to build a multi-year financial forecast, including pro forma projections for the initiatives that most heavily influenced its solvency. That work directly informed changes to the organization's pricing model, fundraising strategy, and strategic priorities. I understand, and genuinely enjoy, the story that financial records and policy can tell about an organization's health. Finances are as much a tool for advancing our mission as any program we design, and I would bring that perspective to my board service.

Editor's Note: At the time these responses were written, Ry served as the assistant executive director for Delta Sigma Phi.

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 development.

Over the next five years, AFA must become more intentionally about our training pathways and we must build tools that help professionals become markedly more effective in their practice. We should pursue this work alongside others in our field, while never shying away from our ambition to be the very best association for the work we do. People and organizations have invested in AFA because they believe we are uniquely positioned to elevate professionals at every level. If asked to prioritize (using existing pillars for familiarity) I would choose developing competency. This is not to downplay community building, research, or advocacy, each of which I believe should remain central to a post-'Forward to 50' plan, however, I believe professionals who feel effective stay in the profession longer and do great work, which in turn demonstrates our value in real and measurable ways. How do I typically approach prioritization? I could list frameworks, Porter's Five Forces, PESTEL, SWOT, elements of design thinking, all complementary approaches to strategic planning. Or, I could simply ask: what will help the most people, at the right time, using the fewest resources? Ultimately, the board's role is to inspire a vision for the association and provide a sound business foundation. If the board creates an environment for success, staff and volunteers can do their best work, and members receive the greatest return on their investment.

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	15	As AFA's flagship program, the board should be involved in shaping the annual meeting's objectives. The board should not spend significant time with logistics, rather, on the financial impact of the meeting and the ways in which it facilitates the success of the broader strategy.
Educational Program Selection	0	The board should not allocate time to educational program selection. This work is better suited for staff and, to a larger extent, volunteers.
Budget Oversight and Financial Management	25	From my point of view, this is where the board should spend the majority of its time. Without financial margin, it is nearly impossible to deliver on our mission. Programs and services are the visible result, but neither is possible without the funding behind them. Appropriate budget oversight ensures the organization remains viable and that funds are used effectively and appropriately.
Developing Strategy for Members' Professional Compentency and Mentorship	20	The key phrase here is "developing strategy for...", not developing the competencies themselves. The board's role is to convene experts in our field, draw on a deep understanding of the work and how it is applied, and then think critically about how research, the broader environment, and the sentiment of those we serve can be translated into a cohesive strategy.
Stakeholder Outreach & Partnership (NASPA, ASCA, FSL Umbrellas, etc.)	10	The board, or the staff and volunteers it designates, should communicate with stakeholders regularly. That ongoing relationship-building creates the trust essential to sharing the ideas and resources that ultimately benefit our members.
Communication Strategy	10	Again, the key word is "strategy." The board does not need to edit newsletters, but it should understand our broader communication channels, gauge their effectiveness, and consider the appropriate voice for our association. Without insight into the feedback loop with our members, the board cannot accurately identify their needs or make sound decisions on their behalf.
Personnel and Association Human Resources	15	The board is responsible for hiring, evaluating, and developing the association's executive director and entrusting that individual with building the team that delivers on the association's strategy.
Creating Professional Community through Technology and Identity/Affinity Spaces	0	Board engagement in community building should be encouraged. While I placed a 0 here, that is likely rounded down as a limitation of the exercise. Of course, the board should be present in spaces where appropriate.
Advancing Research	0	It is critical that the association advance research and the board should ensure resources are allocated to make this possible. I do not think it is essential for board members to complete research as part of their responsibilities.
Policy and Position Statement Development	5	Policy and position statements should have a relatively long shelf-life (multiple years). For this reason, the board should be informed and involved in the development of these statements, not only for their immediate message, but for the strategic implications they might have for future member expectations and strategic priorities.
.Other (Please describe in the appropriate field)	0	