



DEE HAWKS

(she/her)

Director, Fraternity & Sorority Life
Kansas State University

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.

Over the past decade, I have remained engaged in volunteer leadership within the fraternity/sorority profession and organizational spaces. Across these roles, I have helped lead educational initiatives, facilitate leadership experiences, support volunteer and member development, contribute to nominations and elections processes, and create spaces where professionals and students feel connected, supported, and challenged to grow. My volunteer leadership has consistently focused on building trust and helping organizations think strategically and intentionally about their future.

Association of Fraternity & Sorority Advisors - 2024 Graduate Student Experience Committee; 2023-2025 Project Job Search Lead; 2020 Chi Epsilon President; 2019 Nominating & Elections Committee Member (Region I Elected Representative); 2018 Educational Programs Critical Review Team Lead Volunteer; 2023 - Present Professional Development Committee Volunteer. Delta Gamma Fraternity - 2023-Present Fraternity Director: Programming; 2020-2022 Region One Representative, Fraternity Nominating Committee. AFLV - 2026 The Gathering Co-Lead Facilitator. Circle of Sister - 2026 Grant Review Team Member. Kentucky Association of Housing Officers - 2015 Governing Board Member.

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 role of the AFA Board of Directors as one rooted in stewardship, long-term vision, and care for our future. The Board is responsible for ensuring AFA remains financially sustainable, strategically focused, and responsive to the evolving needs of the profession while remaining grounded in our mission and values. Effective governance requires balancing innovation with stability, supporting staff leadership, and prioritizing the long-term health of the organization over individual interests or agendas. As a leader, one of my strengths is my ability to build trust while navigating complexity. Throughout my career, I have consistently

worked in environments requiring relationship-building, strategic thinking, and thoughtful change management. At K-State, I led the reintegration of 35 organizations into full university recognition after a seven-year disaffiliation. That work required rebuilding trust across students, volunteers, alumni, campus partners, and senior leadership while creating sustainable systems for the future. Professionally, I remain committed to helping people feel connected and challenged to grow. I believe effective Board members must be collaborative, self-aware, and willing to engage difficult conversations with both honesty and care. My leadership has always centered on people, but never at the expense of accountability or organizational progress.

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?

I believe one of the greatest challenges facing both higher education and the fraternity/sorority profession is that many of our stakeholders no longer experience the work from the same place. Students want fun, belonging, and authenticity. Campus professionals are navigating burnout and increasing institutional pressure. Volunteers and inter/national organizations are trying to preserve traditions while adapting to changing student expectations. Senior administrators are focused on risk, retention, and institutional reputation. Too often, these groups are speaking about one another instead of with one another. That is where I believe AFA has both responsibility and opportunity. AFA is one of the few spaces in our profession capable of bringing people together across institutional type, functional role, organizational affiliation, and ideology. The Association has an opportunity to help stakeholders move beyond transactional relationships and back toward shared purpose. Not consensus on every issue, but enough trust to stay in conversation with one another. I believe alignment starts with honesty. We cannot build strong partnerships if people feel unseen, dismissed, or afraid to engage difficult conversations openly. Some of the most meaningful work in my career has happened in spaces where trust was fractured and relationships needed to be rebuilt. In my current role at K-State, our reaffiliation required radical transparency, unending patience, and a lot of time spent helping people reconnect around a future they could collectively begin to believe in, again. As a Board member, I would want AFA to continue creating spaces where people feel challenged, connected, and reminded that our profession works best when we choose relationship over retreat.

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.

One of the most significant financial responsibilities I have held is overseeing the FSL annual budget of \$600,000, with the majority of those funds existing outside of direct university support. Managing those resources has required strong collaboration, transparency, and long-term thinking, particularly while working alongside accountants and foundation partners to ensure responsible financial oversight and tax compliance. Early in my time at K-State, I recognized that many of our organizations were operating year-to-year without sustainable educational funding. Rather than continuing to rely solely on annual budgeting cycles, I worked with our K-State Foundation to establish 35 chapter-specific Excellence Funds designed to support the long-term future of leadership and educational programming within the community. In addition, within my first six months, I secured a donor commitment providing \$50,000 annually for community programming support, alongside a deferred estate gift of \$1.25 million. What mattered most was not simply securing the funding, but building a relationship grounded in trust and a shared belief in the future of the community. Maintaining that relationship continues to require intentional stewardship and communication. These experiences reinforced for me that financial leadership is not just about managing numbers. It is about aligning resources with mission and making decisions that strengthen an organization long after we have move on.

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.

I believe AFA is being called to serve the profession in a very different way than it did even five years ago. Higher education, and our industry in particular, is increasingly fragmented, professionals are burned out, and many people are struggling to find spaces where they feel genuine connection and purpose. At the same time, our work is becoming more publicly scrutinized and politically complex. The tensions continue to grow without real resolution or acknowledgment. I also believe AFA will need to help the profession navigate growing ideological divides on our campuses. Research continues to show shifts in how students are engaging politically and socially, and I think our profession will need to wrestle honestly with how we support students whose beliefs and experiences may not always mirror our own. That does not mean abandoning our values. It means learning how to lead with curiosity, humanity, and enough trust to remain in relationship across difference. When approaching strategic planning, I believe prioritization begins with clarity of purpose. Not every good idea can become a priority. I tend to focus first on what most aligns with mission, what creates meaningful long-term impact, and what is realistically sustainable for the organization and staff. I see the Board's role as helping define vision, priorities, and accountability measures while remaining grounded in member needs and organizational sustainability.

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	5	The Annual Meeting is deeply important to member connection and professional identity, but I believe the Board's role should remain focused on broader strategy and oversight rather than operational event planning.
Educational Program Selection	0	I believe educational content is best led by staff, volunteers, and educators closest to the emerging needs of the profession. The Board should help define priorities and outcomes via the AM planning process and the strategy for developing members' professional competency, not curate individual programs.
Budget Oversight and Financial Management	25	Financial sustainability is probably the Board's most critical responsibility. Without strong stewardship, long-term planning, and thoughtful resource allocation, the Association cannot effectively serve its members or sustain its future.
Developing Strategy for Members' Professional Competency and Mentorship	10	Considering critically what the future holds and what our members will need, AFA plays an important role in helping professionals grow, stay connected, and remain in the field. I believe mentorship and competency development are essential to the long-term health of the profession.
Stakeholder Outreach & Partnership (NASPA, ASCA, FSL Umbrellas, etc.)	10	The profession is increasingly interconnected. AFA has an opportunity to strengthen relationships across higher education, inter/national organizations, and allied associations while helping reduce fragmentation within the field.
Communication Strategy	5	Communication strategy matters, particularly during moments of change or challenge, but I view the Board's role as helping establish vision and messaging priorities rather than leading day-to-day communication efforts.
Personnel and Association Human Resources	15	Healthy organizations require healthy staff cultures. The Board has a significant responsibility to support, evaluate, and invest in Association leadership and personnel structures in ways that promote long-term organizational health.
Creating Professional Community through Technology and Identity/Affinity Spaces	5	I believe this work is important, but much of the implementation and cultivation should remain volunteer- and staff-driven. The Board's role is helping ensure these spaces remain aligned with broader organizational priorities and member needs.
Advancing Research	5	Research should inform the profession's understanding of students, trends, and emerging challenges, but I do not believe the Board should spend a disproportionate amount of time directing research initiatives themselves. Identifying trends and helping professionals in meeting the needs identified within the research through strategic planning is more aligned with the Board's responsibilities.
Policy and Position Statement Development	5	Policy and position statements are important governance tools, but I believe they should be developed thoughtfully and selectively rather than becoming a primary focus of the Board's work.
.Other (Please describe in the appropriate field)	15	Long-Term Org Sustainability & Strategic Planning: As AFA's Forward to 50 comes to a close, strategic planning is one of the Board's most important responsibilities. Shaping AFA's future strategic direction, the 2027 Board must balance member needs, organizational capacity, financial sustainability, and the evolving realities of the profession. The Board should spend meaningful time thinking beyond immediate operational concerns and focusing on AFA's long-term health, relevance, and impact.