

Summer 2019

## GETTING ORIENTED

My first “official” role was to meet with Stefan and Sean, the regional manager for our food service contractor, Upper Crust. Again, Stefan took the lead on the construction and contract issues, but I had the chance to spend some time with Sean and he impressed me with his confidence, experience and professionalism. We spoke about his interview expectations and he made a great point. He said, “Most chefs don’t like their customers and almost all hate their staff... we need someone who understands that being a part of the house is essential to doing this job.” That statement left me with great confidence in his selection process.

During dinner with Stefan and Faculty Adviser Rocco Manzo ’88, we had a wide-ranging discussion of the current house, the issues in relating to today’s undergraduates and some of the problem’s in Miami’s fraternity system that have created the need (and requirement) for my new role. Last year, one house was thrown off campus for their extreme hazing of a new recruit (we aren’t supposed to call them “pledges” anymore) that included paddling him so bad that he had to go to the emergency room. While that has not been one of our problems, we do have issues with house management, finances, cleanliness and participation. In addition, both the university and the city are “on the warpath” establishing rules, inspections and penalties that demand an ever-increasing level of attention and documentation. Those are all part of my new job... and the most common thought of the evening was “we’ll / you’ll work it out”. No pressure!

Saturday morning found me at a very interesting Alumni College Seminar... “Drunk, Drunker, and Drunkest: Recent Trends and Insights on College Students and Alcohol”! Now despite the irony of this session being presented at 8 am on a Saturday morning (yes, I commented on that!), I was thoroughly impressed by the presence and presentation by Dr. Rose Marie Ward, Professor of Kinesiology and Health and Associate Dean of Miami’s Graduate School. Dr. Ward and her students are continuously researching student drinking habits and patterns, including breathalyzers and interviews in Uptown Oxford. Several of her insights were surprising (i.e., 33% of college students never drink, engineering students drink the least and business school students drink the most) but just about all were relevant to my new role. All percentages of drinking, blackouts and issues caused by drinking are higher in fraternities and sororities. I approached Dr. Ward after the session about speaking either to the house or as part of our required social service program. Stay tuned!

After lunch with fellow Glee Club members (my other favorite Miami association), I made it back for our Alumni Open House where we spent the afternoon providing tours, reminiscing and discussing my new role. To say that the Alums that showed up were pleased with the condition of the Old House would be a major understatement... they were delighted! I particularly enjoyed the opportunity to explain what I expected (although I am trying to keep my expectations to a minimum) and their interest in how I would fit in with those almost 50 years younger than I. But part of the answer for that came from the outstanding presence of Chapter President Logan B. This young man was impressive in his presentation, confidence and readiness for the challenge. One of our major points of discussion and agreement (and there were many) was “The more Logan talks and the less Ross has to talk, the better the Chapter is doing!” Really looking forward to working with him.

Also enjoyed a prolonged discussion with Jeff Pettitt and his family. Jeff will have 2 daughters in Oxford this fall; one is Natalie, a Senior who also works at CJ’s, a bar in Uptown that is owned by relatives of

mine. I found her bright and opinionated and with a pretty good understanding of the Alpha Delt members. The other is Molly (?) who will be a freshman... looking forward to meeting her!

Jeff was very enthusiastic about the house and willing to get involved in work sessions and other activities. As a classmate of Rocco, our faculty advisor, I have hopes for him to add to the Alumni presence in the new school year.