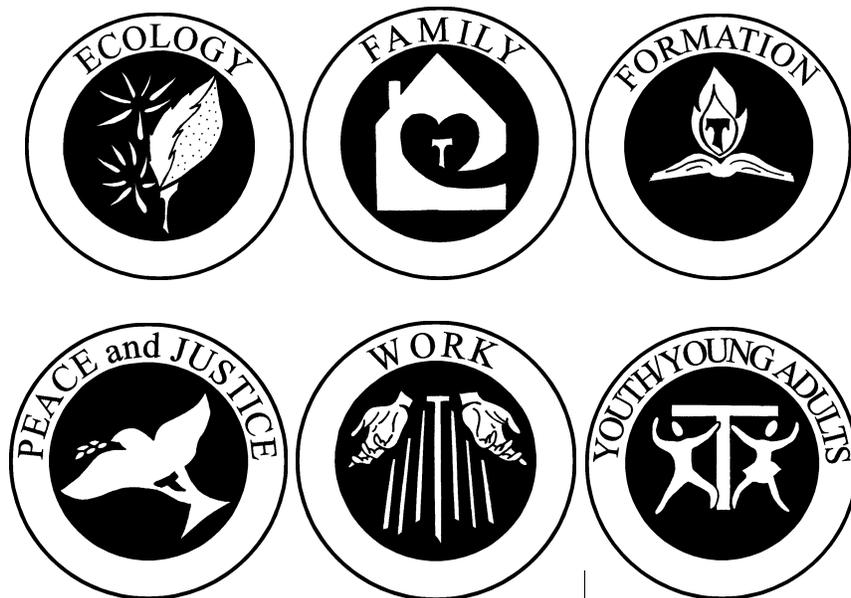


HOW TO DEVELOP AND SUSTAIN COMMISSIONS WITHIN A FRATERNITY OF THE SECULAR FRANCISCAN ORDER

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We pray that the suggestions within this document provide some assistance to regional and local fraternities as we go about BEING Secular Franciscans and going from Gospel to Life and from Life to Gospel. PAX ET BONUM!

- I. Introduction
 - A. Overview
 - 1. Background
 - 2. What a Commission IS and IS NOT
 - B. Differences between the Apostolic Commissions and the Formation and the Youth and Young Adults Commissions
- II. How to Start a Commission
 - A. Prayer
 - B. Election or appointment to serve as Commission Councilor or Chair
 - C. Defining the responsibilities/Setting goals and expectations
 - D. Finding/Selecting the people to serve
 - 1. Publicity
 - 2. Selection process (if not part of an election)
 - 3. Follow-up after the decision is made
 - E. Assisting the new chair to find resources
 - F. Commissions and the Local Fraternity
 - G. Factors that a potential candidate will want to evaluate
- III. How to Sustain a Commission
 - A. Prayer
 - B. Checking in with the Regional Commission Chairs
 - C. Affirmation and understanding
 - D. Providing assistance and encouragement
 - E. Getting others involved – training the replacement
- IV. Specifics for each of the Commissions
- V. Conclusion

Tab 1: Responsibilities of National Commission Chair and National Commission member – examples

Tab 2: Logos of the Commissions and explanation

Tab 3: Ecology Commission Information

Tab 4: Family Commission Information

Tab 5: Formation Commission Information

Tab 6: Peace and Justice Commission Information

Tab 7: Work Commission Information

Tab 8: Youth and Young Adults Commission Information

I. Introduction.

The information and suggestions included in this binder primarily deal with starting and sustaining commissions for a regional fraternity (the regional executive council plus ministers of all local fraternities in that region), but may also be applied for a local fraternity.

A. Overview.

1. Background.

The Secular Franciscan Order uses the term “Commission” to describe many “bodies” of people. For the purposes of this document, we will focus on the following: Formation, Youth and Young Adults, Ecology, Family, Peace and Justice, and Work. Here is a brief history of these Commissions.

The National Formation Commission was created under Jim Lynch's term as National Minister. It was done in response to a request from the International Fraternity to take the new (at that time) "Guidelines for Formation" and apply them to the United States. An “ad hoc” commission, with Donna Marie Kaminsky, SFO, as chair, was formed in 1984–85. The Guidelines were published for the United States in 1986, after which the Commission remained in effect in order to provide a series of nation-wide workshops to help the SFO membership come to understand the Guidelines. The original Commission membership included Fr. John Kramer, OFM; Fr. Camillus MacRory, OFM Cap.; Fr. Stephen Gross, OFM Conv.; Violet Tipotsch, SFO; and Laura Haukaas, SFO.

The concept of commissions that would focus on the apostolic portions of the SFO Rule originated at the October 1984 NAFRA meeting at Mt. St. Francis in Colorado Springs, CO. In the remarks from the floor, the minutes of that meeting recount:

“Fr. Matthew Gaskin, OFM, recommended that there be five commissions set up to study, animation and guidance (sic) of ourselves in the five areas of the Rule: that being Justice; Peace; Work; Family; and Life. It was moved, seconded and approved that Commissions be set up in each of the following areas: Justice, Peace, Work, Family and Environment and was approved by all.”

The 1985 NAFRA meeting minutes include a series of three reports (initial, report following initial meeting and final) from the appointed chairs for the Commissions.

First Chairs of the Apostolic Commissions (1985)	
Peace and Justice	Rev. Matthew Gaskin, OFM, Spiritual Assistant, Province of the Most Holy Name of Jesus
Family	Marie Amore, SFO, Minister, Province of St. Joseph
Work	Cynthia Loudon, SFO, Minister, Province of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus
Environment	Rev. Camillus MacRory, OFM Cap, Spiritual Assistant, Province of Our Lady of the Angels

The appointed chairs highlighted the following aspects from their commissions:

Peace and Justice:

- Focus on Articles 15 and 19 of the SFO Rule
- “The answer will be found in the Gospels.”
- “Mission Statement: The Peace and Justice Commission of the National Fraternity of the Secular Franciscan Order in the U.S.A. has the prophetic and fraternal mission to call their Secular Franciscan brothers and sisters individually and corporately to a deeper realization of our Franciscan evangelical vocation to bring the good news to the poor; to proclaim to the captives, release, and sight to the blind; to set at liberty the oppressed;....”
- “In practice, the Peace and Justice Commission will provide all members of our Secular Franciscan Order opportunities for conscious raising experiences, inviting ongoing conversion of mind and heart.”

Family:

- Focus on Article 17 of the SFO Rule
- “The Commission on the Family offers the National Fraternity a chance to be of real service to the S.F.O. in the United States, because it answers the need to focus on the primary community to which we belong.”
- “Vatican II tells us that we should develop a lay or secular spirituality, one that is aimed at the life experience of the laity; so, we are not to run from the world, but we are, through our families, to transform it.”
- “...one common difficulty that can face the Secular Franciscans with a family is the conflict that can arise between family and fraternity life. The conflict occurs when we are not including our family; when we are not sensitive to family needs and schedules, when our Rule is not applied practically to our lives and family members.”
- “We talk a lot about spirituality, Franciscan, Secular, family, but isn’t the aim of all spirituality to love the Lord with your whole heart, whole soul, whole mind, all your strength, and love your neighbor as yourself? Let us focus on that.”
- “Maybe at our Provincial congresses we could have programs for families, for children that might be accompanying the families to the conferences. Also, another goal would be to accommodate young families with children, involve them in the activities, to develop material for children, so that they could experience the Franciscan spirituality at their own level.”
- “We need to answer the needs of the extended family, single parent, neighbors.”

Work:

- Focus on Article 16 of the SFO Rule
- “The third encyclical of Pope John Paul II invites us to share in an ongoing philosophical meditation on work in all of its dimensions. The central purpose of this encyclical is to highlight the fact that human work is a key, perhaps the essential key, to the whole social question, hence the evil of any system that reduces work to a mere instrument.”
- “The major issues....are: work and man; the conflict between labor and capital; rights of workers; and elements for a spirituality of work.”
- The chair envisioned “...a conscience-raising experience for us, perhaps workshops and retreats, all of this is open to the committee for suggestions.”
- “The Pope says work is the way people help God to continue to create the world.....”
- “It’s significant to note that the first page of the Bible shows God at work.”

Environment:

- Focus on Article 18 of the SFO Rule

- “...the universal kinship of all creation is the operative word or phrase in that paragraph, and...this is the vision that our Catholic faith, our Christian faith, and especially our Franciscanism bring to concern for the environment.”
- “...our approach should be people to people; and, secondly, spreading reconciliation; that seems to be what we’re really cut out for in terms of working in the environment.”
- “...we have to delineate what do we mean by environment, and how do we integrate what we say about environment with the other four¹ Commissions, so that we work as a team in service to the other Commissions.”

Lastly, NAFRA approved budgets for the commissions starting with the 1986 budget. These minutes show the importance that the National Fraternity placed on commissions.

In 1993, Mary Mazotti, SFO, was appointed to research past Franciscan youth groups in the United States and to communicate with surviving leaders. On October 14, 1995, NAFRA established the Youth and Young Adults Commission and appointed Mary and Anthony Mazotti, SFO, to begin the process of formalizing the commission and building up the structure.

Many people have served as chairs of the various commissions since they were created. A list of chairs who have served the commissions may be found within the information in Tabs 3 through 8.

2. What a Commission IS and IS NOT.

A commission is a body of people called together to focus on one or more aspects of the SFO Rule to study, animate, and guide other Secular Franciscans in living out our vocations.

Each Secular Franciscan has professed to live by all 26 articles of the SFO Rule. At times, it may seem daunting to think about applying each of these articles in our lives each day. A great feature of the SFO is that we don’t have to do it all alone...the Holy Spirit is our guide and we work with our brothers and sisters to accomplish the call.

Article 22 of the SFO Rule states:

“The local fraternity is to be established canonically. It becomes the basic unit of the whole Order and a visible sign of the Church, the community of love. This should be the privileged place for developing a sense of Church and the Franciscan vocation and for enlivening the apostolic life of its members.”

“A commission represents the vision and the focus of the SFO in Gospel Living. Coming to full knowledge about each and all of these commissions makes the Secular Franciscan better formed in Gospel Living, therefore making every inch of space we occupy more like the image of Christ.”
Mary Mazotti, SFO

As part of that challenge, we can look to each other for help with fulfilling our profession commitments. The commission structure is a means for “sharing the work.” Just like each member of the human body has its own responsibilities (we wouldn’t expect an ear to do the walking for us), we each have been given special gifts to share with the fraternity and the world. When we stop to think or reflect on our brothers and sisters, we will find particular

¹ In 1984, the proposal included five commissions. In 1985, Justice and Peace were merged into one commission, so the reference to 4 other commissions was referring to the original 1984 motion. Now there are four categories for the apostolic commissions – Peace and Justice, Work, Family and Ecology (instead of Environment).

Secular Franciscans within our very own fraternities (regional or local) who have a passion for a particular commission subject.

The commissions' structure allows persons with special gifts or interests/passions to come together to study and then to suggest, animate or guide the rest of us, in fraternity, in ways to fulfill that part of our apostolic call in our daily lives.

"No one has it all together,
but together we have it all."
Fr. Charles Faso, OFM

People serving on a commission will provide information and ideas and/or a process to consider. Each Secular Franciscan is called to discern how to apply this information in his or her own life.

Commissions are not expected to reinvent the wheel or develop grand new programs or activities for the persons within a fraternity (national, regional or local). Commission members first pray individually, then gather and pray together, after which they consider and share information, so that all Secular Franciscans may grow in understanding of the applicable parts of our SFO Rule. Also, commission members reflect on what Secular Franciscans are doing and then inspire others in simple or great ways to implement a particular part of our vocation in each aspect of our lives.

"Commissions are not
'out there.'
Commissions begin
from within."
Carol Gentile, SFO

Great activities or ministries may grow out of the commission structure, but this is not necessarily the goal.

A commission is not a committee, team, or informal group brought together to perform a task. The term "commission," and not committee, was applied, in order to give the commission authority to accomplish its task – that it was sent with authority to do something and not simply to report back to the fraternity council like a committee would normally do. People who serve on commissions have an important ongoing role in the growth of the fraternity for the term of their service.

B. Differences between the Apostolic Commissions and the Formation and Youth and Young Adults Commissions.

The SFO Rule contains 26 articles, broken into three parts.

Part I – The Secular Franciscan Order (Articles 1, 2 and 3)

Part II – The Way of Life (Articles 4 through 19)

Part III – Life in Fraternity (Articles 20 through 26)

The commissions are based on various portions of the SFO Rule:

- Formation – Articles 23 and 24.
- Youth and Young Adults – Article 24.
- Ecology – Articles 11 and 18.
- Family – Article 17.
- Peace and Justice – Articles 15 and 19.
- Work – Article 16.

The Formation Commission and Youth and Young Adults Commission are based on articles in Part III of the Rule – Life in Fraternity. The Ecology, Family, Peace and Justice and Work Commissions are based on articles in Part II of the Rule – The Way of Life.

The four commissions under “The Way of Life” portion of our Rule fit under the category: “apostolic” – which means “going out into the world.”

The Formation Commission and the Youth/Young Adults Commission both come into our Way of Life from the General Constitutions (Articles 37 – 44 and 96 – 97).

The National Formation Commission is distinguished from the "Apostolic Commissions" by precedence and by its focus. The Formation Commission exists to serve the building up of the internal life of the Order focusing on initial and ongoing Formation. The Formation Commission is charged with being a resource and guide to fraternities at all levels in matters of initial and ongoing formation.

The Youth/Young Adults Commission encompasses all the commissions. The Youth & Young Adults Commission ministers to those interested in learning more about the Franciscan way of life, usually between the ages of 14 and 24. Secular Franciscans serve as fraternal and spiritual assistants to the Franciscan Youth. These youth are usually not permanently or temporarily professed, but may be professed and participatory in the Franciscan Youth and the SFO simultaneously.

Each commission is distinct and yet all of the commissions are interconnected by virtue of the Gospel of Our Lord, Jesus Christ. Therefore, the commissions help and inspire us to “be formed” each day as “Gospel People” – through fostering the spiritual growth of professed Secular Franciscans in continuous ongoing formation.

“Requests for admission to the Secular Franciscan Order must be presented to the local fraternity, whose council decides upon the acceptance of new brothers and sisters. Admission into the Order is gradually attained through a time of initiation, a period of formation of at least one year, and profession of the rule. The entire community is engaged in the process of growth by its own manner of living. The age for profession and the distinctive Franciscan sign are regulated by the statutes. Profession by its nature is a permanent commitment. Members who find themselves in particular difficulties should discuss their problems with the council in fraternal dialogue. Withdrawal or permanent dismissal from the Order, if necessary, is an act of the fraternity council according to the norm of the constitutions.” Article 23 of the SFO Rule.²

“To foster communion among members, the council should organize regular and frequent meetings of the community as well as meeting with other Franciscan groups, especially with youth groups. It should adopt appropriate means for growth in Franciscan and ecclesial life and encourage everyone to a life of fraternity. The communion continues with deceased brothers and sisters through prayer for them.” Article 24 of the SFO Rule.

² Note that the Statutes of the National Fraternity of the Secular Franciscan Order in the United States of America as revised on July 4, 2003 state in Article 19.2.b.: “*Candidacy – The period of Candidacy, which begins with the Rite of Admission [cf. Ritual, page 11], shall consist of not less than eighteen (18) months and not more than thirty-six (36) months.*”

II. How to Start a Commission.

A. Prayer.

The fraternity must be ready to grow deeper in the SFO vocation, willing to have a deeper call to Gospel–living. It is valuable to take time to pray for guidance on commissions. This is the Holy Spirit’s Order, so let us open our hearts to that inspiration. We ask for guidance on the process for developing the Commissions, selecting the people who will serve, and choosing the issues to be addressed by each commission.

B. Election or appointment to serve as Commission Councilor or Chair³.

The first question to ask is whether the fraternity has already developed procedures for selecting the commission chair either by election or by appointment. Some regions or local fraternities have election guidelines or norms that state that commission councilors or chairs are to be elected to the positions. Other regional fraternity guidelines do not require election or do not address the election of councilors, so the regional fraternity could then appoint persons to serve as commission chairs. Sometimes a region will elect a Formation Director (or Councilor) and appoint the chairs for the other commissions.

This detail will most likely already be set. If your region doesn’t specify election of councilors for the commissions, this may be something for the regional council to discuss in the future. The fraternity may choose the best format to fit its needs.

C. Defining the responsibilities/Setting goals and expectations.

Often questions arise about getting started or what’s required of a regional or local commission councilor or chair.

Whether the person is elected or appointed, the person should have a passion for the particular ministry and will need to know the goals, objectives and responsibilities that come with the position. In addition to having the regional council determine the best process for selecting the commission chairs, the regional council should prepare a job description, including goals and expectations, for the person who will serve in that commission. The regional council should set the term of service for these positions as well.

Typically, if the position is elected, the election guidelines for the region will specify the responsibilities and length of service for the positions. If the regional council appoints persons to these positions, then this is the opportunity for the region to spell out all the details. NOTE: The responsibilities, goals and expectations may differ for each commission position.

To develop the responsibilities and set some goals and expectations, the regional council may wish to review the responsibilities for the chairs of the national commission (Tab 1) and the mission statements for the particular commission (Tabs 3 through 8). The list of responsibilities of a national commission chair is offered to regional fraternities as a guide, not as a requirement.

Responsibilities for the regional commission chair may be as simple as: “to share information about what the national commission is doing with local fraternities within the region.” An

³ The term “councilor” often refers to a person who is elected to the position. The term “chair” is often used to denote a person who is appointed to the position. Either term may be used to indicate the leader for a fraternity commission.

example of more elaborate responsibilities would be: “develop a regional program for the commission based on the national commission program; share information with local fraternities by newsletter, email and workshops; ensure that local fraternities are participating in commission activities.”

The goals and expectations should include any details about what the regional council would like this person to achieve within a certain period of time. For example, the goals may include the following:

- within first six months, form the regional commission – find people to serve as members for the commission;
- Months 6–12, develop a plan (involving local fraternity input) to address pertinent issues, including a plan for disseminating information to local fraternities;
- Months 13–36, implement plan, provide workshops, develop newsletters, etc.

The regional council needs to ensure that the goals are clear and measurable – something that can be realistically accomplished within the time period provided.

Also, if the regional council appoints the commission chairs, the regional council should decide how it wishes to select the persons. Simply, the process may involve:

- the regional council soliciting formal applications to serve on the commission, interviewing and selecting the chair, OR
- the regional council decides based on nominations from members of the regional fraternity without a formal application or interview process.

Either approach or a hybrid approach is acceptable. The regional council needs to agree upon the selection process and follow it.

Process the NAFRA Executive Council Uses to Solicit Applications for Commission Chair Positions

The NAFRA Executive Council appoints one person to solicit applications. (e.g. the Apostolic Commissions Coordinator will manage the process for advertising and soliciting applications for Commission Chairs.) The person responsible for managing the process:

- places an advertisement in the TAU–USA to announce the request and to solicit applications from qualified individuals interested in serving in the position. The notice should specify qualifications for applicants and the type of information that needs to be submitted with the application.
- interviews all candidates.
- after the interview process, presents the information to the NAFRA Executive Council with a recommendation.

The NAFRA Executive Council then considers the information and recommendation and makes a decision.

The National Executive Council appoints commission chairs for all six commissions. The term is three years, the first year being a probationary period. After the three years, if the National Executive Council and the commission chair agree, there is an option of serving for another three years.

D. Finding/Selecting the people to serve.

Regional fraternities are made up of very busy people from different locations – some many hours apart by car. The geographic distances between homes can make it difficult to know our brothers and sisters with the God–given gifts, talents, personalities, interests and skills who may be interested and qualified to serve in the various commission capacities. The regional council may not know how to find people with the interest and skills, along with a passion for the subject, to chair or to serve on a particular commission. Here are some suggestions to follow in order to locate those people to serve.

1. Publicity.

Now that the regional fraternity has the list of responsibilities, the goals and expectations for the regional commission chair, the regional fraternity is ready to seek names of interested persons. How to go about it?

It's just like looking for someone to serve on the regional council. You need to be continually looking for someone who is first, willing to serve, second, who has the gift/talents and skills for the position – noting sometimes, a person just needs a little guidance and that person's skills blossom, and third, has the passion for the subject. Simply, it is to tell people through all forms of communication that the regional council is looking for someone to serve as commission chair. Forms of communication include:

- Person–to–person – personal invitation is the most–powerful means of getting people involved. (Opportunities include: regional gatherings, fraternity visitations, or fraternity elections, to name a few.)

- Ask previous chairs about persons who participated in the activities of the commission in the past.
- Ask local fraternity ministers to suggest persons and to share information about the need with members of his/her fraternity and get back to the regional council by a certain date.
- Newsletter – place a notice of the opening in the regional newsletter.
- Send emails to all possible local fraternity ministers and ask them to forward to others.

Develop a short advertisement describing what the position is and what the person needs to provide in order to demonstrate qualifications (such as profession certificate, references from SFO, statement or verification that the person is active in fraternity life). Qualifications may include:

- Interest in the commission focus (ask applicants to provide examples).
- Ability to relay thoughts and ideas in writing and orally.
- Ability to deal with people with a variety of personalities, backgrounds, interests.
- Having the time to dedicate to this effort including holding meetings of the commission and/or attending regional council or fraternity council meetings (if so desired by the council).
- Ability to maintain a budget for the commission.
- Ability to manage/facilitate meetings.
- Knowledge of national commission mission statement.
- Ideas for how to implement national commission mission statement with the local fraternities.

Don't forget to give people a due date for submitting the applications for chair.

2. Selection process (if not part of an election).

If the commission councilors are elected on the regional level, the election nominations committee reviews each candidate's qualifications and the regional fraternity is responsible for electing the person to the position.

If the commission chairs are appointed, the regional council or delegate is responsible for soliciting, accepting and reviewing the applications. The regional council may decide the best process for selecting the person to serve, including whether the regional council wishes to interview each candidate or rely on an appointed person to screen the applications for the regional council.

In any case, before a decision is made, the regional council should ensure the person has read the job description and knows about the activities of the national commission.

3. Follow-up after decision is made.

The regional council needs to notify the following persons about the election or appointment:

- person selected to serve,
- the members of the regional fraternity,
- the national commission chairs, and

- any other party interested in the election or appointment.

In addition, if applications were solicited, the regional fraternity should notify the other persons who applied for the position but were not selected at this time. Notification by letter is nice, but phone calls or emails⁴ may be acceptable. This should be done as soon as possible after making a decision and the selected person has accepted the appointment.

E. Assisting the new chair to find resources.

Typically, the regional council may get more people to serve if the potential candidates see that the regional council will provide some support for these efforts.

As mentioned above, it is critical that the regional council specify its expectations for the person serving as commission chair. The national commissions will provide goals for the regional or local fraternity commission chair to consider applying on the regional or local level. These goals are often general as opposed to prescriptive (extremely rigid). The goals will offer a process or general topic areas for the regional or fraternal commission chair to work within. The regional council may wish to add to or modify these goals.

The regional council or regional commission chair may wish to look at regional or local issues that pertain to the commission. Many activities will be applicable across the country. Other activities will be applicable only to certain localities. (e.g. What's happening in the East Coast may not also be a problem or a concern or of interest in the Midwest.)

If the region has had commissions in the past or currently, the outgoing or former regional commission chairs are often great resources for the new chair.

The new chair may need some suggestions for all aspects of this position:

- what types of expenditures he or she may make.
- a list of local fraternity ministers and, if available, local fraternity commission chairs/contacts.
- Names of previous commission chairs/members.
- Names of national commission members (also direct to the NAFRA website – www.nafra-sfo.org).
- Local resources – such as departments within the local diocese (Social Justice, Family, Environmental Justice, etc.) or local activities that fit within the commission theme.

Sometimes the best resource is just to know that the regional council supports the person's efforts no matter how simple or grand.

F. Commissions and the Local Fraternity.

The big question is – “Do commissions work for the local fraternity?”

Each local fraternity must elect a person to direct formation (Formation Director) within the fraternity and it is often very useful to have others who assist in those efforts. This combination of people on the local level could be viewed as a Formation Commission. This

⁴ Recognize that email is not perfect (emails do get “lost” sometimes), so follow-up is critical to ensure that the communication was received.

person or group dedicated to formation is essential to sustain life in a fraternity. (Under certain circumstances, it is possible that two or more local fraternities in close proximity could share a Formation Commission, if necessary, but each fraternity must elect its own Formation Director⁵.) But what about the rest of the commissions?

If you have people who go out into the world to perform apostolic works – then your fraternity is “doing the commissions.” It’s just a matter of publicity and time to reflect with the rest of the fraternity. Sharing the current apostolates with others can definitely have an impact. There is always more to learn about serving God’s world as Secular Franciscans.

In terms of ongoing formation of the apostolic activities of the fraternity, it only takes one person per commission to make it work on the local level. That person would just need to be willing to share information and to provide opportunities for reflection to the local fraternity members on a particular portion of the Rule. It could be once a month, or once a year or just in fraternity newsletters. There are many correct ways to implement commissions on the local level. Fraternities just need to pray and to customize a plan that matches the make-up of its members.

G. Factors that a potential candidate will want to evaluate.

Here are some factors the potential candidates will want to evaluate before applying for any position:

- Be open to going through a process of “ongoing conversion” with regard to your attitudes and appreciation of the commission topic. Be willing to unceasingly continue your ongoing formation in a Franciscan, Catholic understanding of the commission.
- Seek out resourceful and active people both within and outside the Order. Don’t go it alone. There is not only strength, but also wisdom in numbers.
- Once appointed to a commission, collect names, addresses, phone numbers, and e-mail addresses of local fraternity members with interests in the commission. Create a mailing list. Obtain names through the outgoing regional commission chair or by contacting local fraternity ministers.
- Regional commission chairs are obligated to copy and distribute National Commission mailings to local fraternities within their regions. Some national commission chairs use the national newsletter, TAU–USA, as its primary communications vehicle. (TAU–USA should be mailed to all active members of a fraternity. You may want to distribute TAU–USA articles to those who aren’t receiving it.) Others send out frequent newsletters to local fraternities. Regional commission chairs should feel free to enlist time- and money-saving ideas in disseminating the information.
- Send reports of local and regional commission-related events, accomplishments, etc. to the regional fraternities and national commission chairs.
- Regional and local commissions are free to develop their apostolates. Invite local experts to speak. Take it one step at a time. Don’t underestimate your impact. Follow inspiration but keep everyone informed.
- Contribute something on a regular basis to your regional newsletter. Highlight current issues that those in the region would be familiar with and ask questions about the issue from a Franciscan perspective.
- Encourage fraternities in your region to dedicate at least one meeting a year to a discussion of the Commission.

⁵ See General Constitutions Articles 49 and 52.3 and National Statutes Article 19.5.C.

- Prepare and present an annual budget to the regional/fraternal council, including projected expenses for phone calls, travel, postage, copies, resources, supplies, etc.

If the above sounds overwhelming, remember those are suggestions. Also, the chair wouldn't necessarily have to accomplish the actions/tasks on his or her own. Take time to reflect on your gifts and your situation. Let the Holy Spirit inspire you. If you are the one called to serve at this time, you should be able to customize your plan to meet your needs and the regional council's criteria. Sometimes the simplest plans are the best because the actions or activities can be accomplished.

III. How to Sustain a Commission.

A. Prayer.

This cannot be overemphasized! Prayer is the most powerful tool we have. So we pray for guidance for the commissions, for raising our awareness of areas to address, activities to accomplish, and information to share with all regional and local fraternity members. Commission chairs are encouraged to pray the ACC prayer at the beginning of each commission meeting.

B. Checking in with the Regional Commission Chairs.

If the commission chairs are elected as councilors, then these persons already serve on the regional or fraternity council. If these persons are appointed, then the council has to make an extra effort to check in with the commission chairs on some regular frequency. The regional council may want to invite the commission chairs to regional council meetings or assign a member of the regional council to oversee the commissions. (Some regions have the Vice-Minister oversee the commissions – others appoint a Commissions Coordinator to take on that type of responsibility.)

If the chairs are not invited to the council meetings and there is no one designated as coordinator, the regional minister will want to request reports from the chairs on some regular basis (quarterly or every six months).

C. Affirmation and understanding.

Feedback is critical for anyone with assigned responsibilities. The regional council should provide feedback to the commission chairs at some regular interval, especially to affirm their accomplishments or when trying to deal with any potentially problematic issue that may arise.

D. Providing assistance and encouragement.

There are times when the commission chair will need assistance – guidance, helping hands, or financial support from the regional council. The regional council should ensure that it is open to such requests and try to listen to the commission-related needs of the commission chair. It is also important to communicate feedback with the commission chair, no matter the council decision.

E. Getting others involved – training the replacement.

Although it is viewed as a benefit for someone to serve in a position for many years, there are some drawbacks also for both the person and the region or fraternity. It is important to have an expectation that a person will not serve indefinitely. So, to alleviate the fear of “Who’s going to take that job over?” – we should always be about “training our potential replacements.” This is a matter of sharing information on the leadership details with others so they will be ready and willing to someday take over as commission chair(s), God willing. It’s really a way to make sure that people are invested in the process by helping it to succeed.

“Trusting the Father, Christ chose for Himself and His mother a poor and humble life, even though He valued created things attentively and lovingly. Let the Secular Franciscans seek a proper spirit of detachment from temporal goods by simplifying their own material needs. Let them be mindful that according to the gospel they are stewards of the goods received for the benefit of God’s children. Thus, in the spirit of the Beatitudes, and as pilgrims and strangers on their way to the home of the Father, they should strive to purify their hearts from every tendency and yearning for possession and power.” Article 11 of the SFO Rule.

“Let them individually and collectively be in the forefront in promoting justice by the testimony of their human lives and their courageous initiatives. Especially in the field of public life, they should make definite choices in harmony with their faith.” Article 15 of the SFO Rule.

“Let them esteem work both as a gift and as a sharing in the creation, redemption, and service of the human community.” Article 16 of the SFO Rule.

“In their family they should cultivate the Franciscan spirit of peace, fidelity, and respect for life, striving to make of it a sign of a world already renewed in Christ. By living the grace of matrimony, husbands and wives in particular should bear witness in the world to the love of Christ for His Church. They should joyfully accompany their children on their human and spiritual journey by providing a simple and open Christian education and being attentive to the vocation of each child.” Article 17 of the SFO Rule.

“Moreover they should respect all creatures, animate and inanimate, which “bear the imprint of the Most High,” and they should strive to move from the temptation of exploiting creation to the Franciscan concept of universal kinship.” Article 18 of the SFO Rule.

“Mindful that they are bearers of peace which must be built up unceasingly, they should seek out ways of unity and fraternal harmony through dialogue, trusting in the presence of the divine seed in everyone and in the transforming power of love and pardon. Messengers of perfect joy in every circumstance, they should strive to bring joy and hope to others. Since they are immersed in the resurrection of Christ, which gives true meaning to Sister Death, let them serenely tend toward the ultimate encounter with the Father.” Article 19 of the SFO Rule.

IV. Specifics for each of the Commissions.

Tabs 3 through 8 include information on the specific commissions. In particular, we've provided:

- a list of characteristics of a person who may be well-suited for serving on that particular commission – particular gifts/talents, interests, experience, knowledge, etc. (for example, although we were all children once, an adult person without children should have a sustained, demonstrated interest in young people in order to be considered for the Youth and Young Adults Commission);
- the current mission statement and membership of the national commission;
- a list of resources for the commission; and
- a list of persons who served as chair of that particular national commission.

“Then the king will say to those on his right,
‘Come, you who are blessed of my Father.
Inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.
For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink,
a stranger and you welcomed me, naked and you clothed me,
ill and you cared for me, in prison and you visited me.’
Then the righteous will answer him and say,
‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink?
When did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothed you?
When did we see you ill or in prison, and visit you?’
And the king will say to them in reply,
‘Amen, I say to you, whatever you did for one
of these least brothers of mine, you did for me.’”
Matthew 25: 34–40

V. Conclusion.

It is leadership's responsibility to set a tone of interest and activity within a fraternity, regional and/or local. If a regional or local commission tends to be idle, our Franciscan brothers and sisters are likely to be idle as well. Regional councils and potential candidates need to discern about a person's role. A potential chair should not accept a position unless seriously intent on, and committed to, making a difference. Pray about it, remembering St. Francis' words at his Transitus: "I have done what was mine to do, may Christ teach you what is yours to do." (Celano, Second Life, 214) We should be able to feel, to some degree, as St. Francis did upon hearing the Gospel reading in the Portiuncola in 1208 at the beginning of his journey into God: "This is what I've wanted, this is what I've been longing for with all my heart." (St. Bonaventure, Major Life, 3:1)

"You are the salt of the earth; but if salt has lost its taste,
how can its saltiness be restored?
It is no longer good for anything, but is thrown out and
trampled under foot.
You are the light of the world. A city built on a hill
cannot be hid.
No one after lighting a lamp puts it under the bushel
basket, but on the lampstand,
and it gives light to all in the house.
In the same way, let your light shine before others,
so that they may see your good works and give glory to
your Father in heaven."
Matthew 5: 13–16