2016 – 2017

Clemson Phi Kappa

A. Initiations

For the academic year, Clemson Phi Kappa hosted two initiations, one each in the fall and spring. Due to the large number of students in the Mechanical Engineering department at Clemson University, the academic requirements for eligibility to join the chapter are strict. Eligible students were selected from the top 5, 10, and 15 percent of the sophomore, junior, and senior classes, respectively. Clemson Phi Kappa also requires that mechanical engineering students eligible to join have successfully completed the Statics & Dynamics course as it is the foundational course of the major. Qualified students were extended an invitation to attend an informational meeting, where students got to enjoy dinner with the chapter officers and some current members to learn more about the organization and get to know the people involved in it. Initiations were held a week or two after this informational meeting, giving the eligible initiates enough time to acquire signatures from two professors, one of which must have been in the mechanical engineering department, endorsing the academic aptitude and character of the eligible students. These signatures, as well as chapter dues, were brought to initiation.

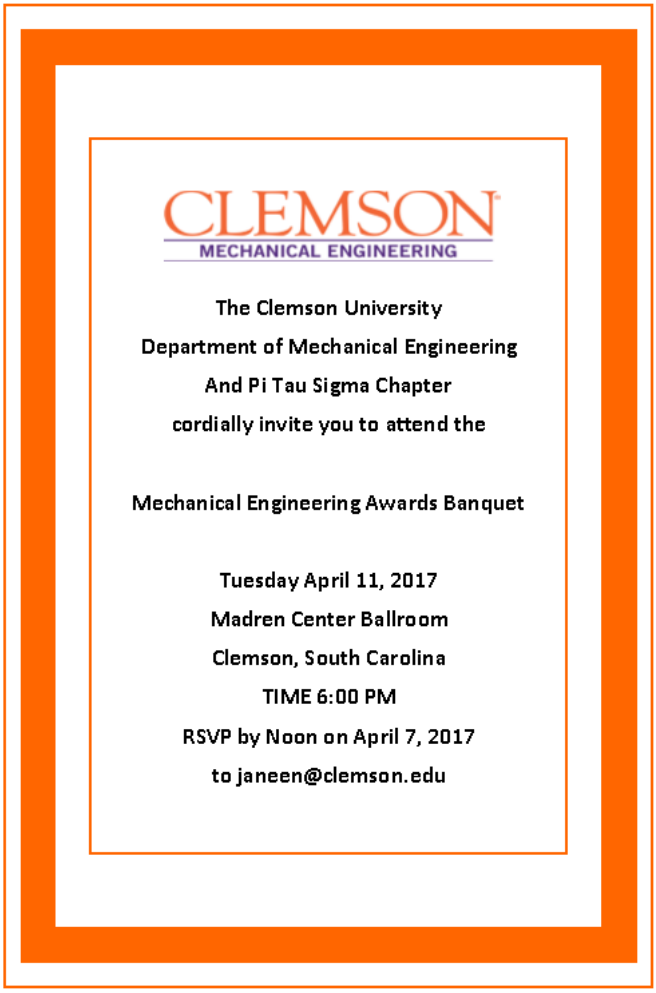
Each of the initiations followed the structure presented in the Pi Tau Sigma Chapter Manual. Soon-to-be initiates were gathered outside the ceremony room, where they donned blindfolds and were led in to the ceremony space. Upon removal of the blindfolds, the students' eyes opened to a dimly-lit room with the chapter officers standing in the front of the room, alongside framed images of the Pi Tau Sigma crest and key, and current members in the back of the room. The ritual was performed by the President and Vice President, with each of the initiates individually pledging to uphold the values of Pi Tau Sigma. After conclusion of the ceremony, the new initiates were celebrated with food and drinks as new and old members got to know each other.

During the fall initiation on October 26, 2016, three students were inducted into the chapter. In the spring, initiation took place on March 16, 2017, and five new members were initiated into the chapter. All eight of the newly-initiated were undergraduate mechanical engineering students.

B. Chapter Activities

One of the main activities of the year was the election of new officers to run the Clemson Phi Kappa chapter. For this academic year, all previous officers were slated to graduate in the winter and subsequent spring. Five new officers were elected by the current members of the chapter at the end of the fall semester. At the start of the spring semester, due to unforeseen circumstances, the newly-elected president of our chapter had to step down from his position. At the beginning of February, the vice president assumed the role of president.

The major event put on by the Clemson Phi Kappa chapter was the Pi Tau Sigma Mechanical Engineering Awards Banquet. This banquet at the end of the spring semester is a year-long project planned in conjunction with Pi Tau Sigma and the Mechanical Engineering department. This great event recognizes the hard work and achievements of those in the mechanical engineering department, awarding prizes and recognition for undergraduates, graduate students, and faculty and staff. Throughout the year, Pi Tau Sigma officers work to find private and corporate sponsors to help fund the event and these awards. Each year, a speaker is invited to present a popular-level science-based talk. This year, at the discretion of the Pi Tau Sigma officers with endorsement from the department, chose a speaker outside the realm of mechanical engineering. The speaker for this year was Dr. Sean Brittain, an astrophysics professor and the leading global expert in the study of the birth of exoplanets in our universe, gave an engaging presentation on how engineering and technology, in recent history, has led to great developments in the field of science and humanity, leaps that had not been made in thousands of years. The night was a great success and allowed for fun, casual interaction between students, their families, and professors in our department. Pictures and the program from the event have not been published to the department's website, but the invitation is provided below.



C. Other

A major hurdle for this year was the election of the new officers. With the old officers leaving, and the struggle of getting new officers situated, the participation of our chapter in the Clemson community was hindered. Most of the monthly meetings for current members in the spring semester involved planning for the upcoming schoolyear, getting ideas to help boost the impact of our chapter.

In recent years, the Clemson Mechanical Engineering Department has seen a decline in student participation in events and organizations sponsored by the department. At the end of the spring semester, the presidents of our university's five professional mechanical engineering organizations along with graduate students and the department head formed a student advisory board for the department to boost participation of our department's students in the organizations, in the classroom, and the community.

Pi Tau Sigma is also represented in a newly formed, college-wide, engineering leadership program where the presidents of the engineering honor societies meet to take action to increase the interaction between the students and faculty as well as get everyone involved in engineering-related events and activities. The goal is to help the Engineering College have a greater impact on campus outside of the classroom.

Over the summer, the president of our Phi Kappa chapter has been in contact with other leaders in the mechanical engineering organizations to help lead collaborative efforts on campus for the upcoming schoolyear. The president is also meeting with professors on campus during the summer to assist in preparations for the upcoming year to improve the dynamic between the department and the students.