2017 – 2018

Clemson Phi Kappa

A. Initiations

For the academic year, Clemson Phi Kappa hosted one initiation for the year, that being held in the spring semester. The Clemson University Mechanical Engineering department is quite large in terms of number of undergraduate students. Therefore, the academic requirements for eligibility to join the chapter are very selective. Eligible students were selected from the top 5, 10, and 15 percent of the sophomore, junior, and senior classes, respectively. The Clemson Phi Kappa chapter also requires that mechanical engineering students eligible to join have successfully completed the Statics & Dynamics course with a B letter grade, as it is the basic introductory course of the major, and the most important to establish the foundation for other courses. This class is generally taken in the fall semester of sophomore year, which is one reason as to why hold the initiation in the spring since many new students were currently enrolled. Students that met these requirements were extended an invitation to attend a meeting where dinner was supplied and they had the opportunity to meet with the chapter officers and some current members to learn more about the organization and get to know members. Initiation was held two weeks after this meeting, allowing the initiates enough time to acquire signatures from two professors (at least one of those being a mechanical engineering professor), endorsing the academic ability and character of the eligible students. Students were asked to bring their signature sheets as well as chapter dues to the initiation meeting.

The initiation ceremony followed the structure presented in the Pi Tau Sigma Chapter Manual. The initiates met in the mechanical engineering building and were gathered outside the ceremony room, where they were given blindfolds to wear and were led in to the room. Once sat down, the initiates removed their blindfolds to see a dimly lit room with the Pi Tau Sigma officers standing at the front of the room. Also at the front of the room, the crest and key were displayed on a table to be used during the ritual. The ceremony was led by the chapter president and vice-president, with each of the initiates individually making their pledges. After the ceremony, a presentation was made to highlight a few of the important notes that the new members needed to be aware of. The, both new and old members celebrated with food and drinks to end the night.

The spring initiation took place on March 1, 2018, where six new members were initiated into the chapter. All of the newly-initiated members were undergraduate mechanical engineering students.

B. Chapter Activities

At the beginning of the year, an officer election was held to replace the former vice president who had graduated. The officers from the previous year remained in their positions

along with other members volunteering to help when some officers were away from campus while on a work co-op experience.

Throughout the year, Pi Tau Sigma members were invited to several departmental meetings. In these meetings, the department head and other faculty and staff met with students to have a real back and forth conversation to help make improvements to the department. Students throughout the department worked to help make improvements to the major, including starting the process to the major having concentrations available in the near future.

Each of the officers also attended several informational meetings to meet with the candidates interviewing to become the new Mechanical engineering department head. Officers from each of the Mechanical Engineering professional organizations as well as faculty and staff helped to hire a new department head to begin their job at the start of the next school year.

The major event put on every year by the Clemson Phi Kappa chapter is the Pi Tau Sigma Mechanical Engineering Awards Banquet. This banquet is put on by the Pi Tau Sigma chapter alongside the mechanical engineering department, including the other professional student organizations. Throughout the year, sponsors and donors were found to help provide awards and scholarships. This event recognizes the achievements of those in the mechanical engineering department, including undergraduates, graduate students, and faculty and staff. Each year, a speaker is invited to talk about a topic of their choice during the dinner. The speaker for this year was Dr. Sez Atamturktur, former professor and current director of the Office of Research and Development at Clemson University. She had recently been accepted to the Higher Education Research Services (HERS) Institute at the University of Denver, a program to help lead the advancement of women in STEM. Her presentation centralized around her research as well as her interest of women in STEM. The night was very successful and many students, their families, and faculty and staff had a fun night where they all were able to interact and enjoy a great dinner together recognizing the hard work of all those within the department.

C. Other

The major focus of this schoolyear was to establish a larger social presence within the mechanical engineering department, working with the other student organizations within the department more involved. There seemed to be a lack of interaction between mechanical engineering students outside of the class and lab space. Other majors in the college seem to be a lot more tightly-knit, and there are continuing hopes to have more social interactions within the major, something difficult to do with such a large major.

Social events like a department game night with free bowling, billiards, and food were held to have students come together for a good time. Departmental student organizations also worked to organize nights to see local minor league baseball and hockey games, but ultimately fell through due to a lack of committed interest.

Work for the future will focus on continuing this social network to hopefully improve student involvement in organizations, as well as place more of an emphasis on community engagement.