Pi Tau Sigma Annual Chapter Report

2010-2011

Texas Kappa

A. Initiations

To be eligible to join the Texas Kappa chapter, the candidates were required to be in top 25% of the junior class or in the top 35% of the senior class as outlined in the Pi Tau Sigma constitution. In addition to excelling high academically, the candidates were also required to complete ten pledge points in addition to attending all general meetings. A minimum of five of the pledge points were to be from service events and a maximum of five of the points were to be from social events. Therefore the students were able to complete more points by doing service activities if they so wished. Once all of the points are satisfied, each candidate must take a quiz which covers mechanical engineering topics but also UT Austin trivia type questions. The engineering questions are similar to what might be seen in a technical interview. By exposing our members to technical interview type questions beforehand, we believe it helps them to be more marketable to potential employers. Also, a new candidate requirement was added this year (or rather reinstated), the old Texas Kappa tradition of obtaining signatures of all the PTS candidates, officers and advisor. These signatures were to be kept in an engineering textbook belonging to each candidate. Texas Kappa reinstated the signature requirement in order to encourage camaraderie within the chapter, to which it did.

The candidates who completed all the requirements were initiated near the end of each semester. Prior to conducting the initiation ceremony, all the candidates were given a tour of the mechanical engineering building. Our long standing tradition has been to conduct the ceremony on the roof of our mechanical engineering building. However, due to construction we were unable to gain access to the roof for the past couple years but we are proud to announce that this spring we returned the initiation to the roof. The initiation ceremony followed the guidelines as set forth in the rituals of Pi Tau Sigma but we also had the initiates read the ASME Code of Ethics aloud. Once the initiation was completed each pledge and officer signed their name in our Initiation Record Book that contains names from each pledge class and officer team from many decades past. To celebrate all the new initiates each semester, a banquet was held in a true Texas fashion at the famous Salt Lick BBQ restaurant in Driftwood, TX. The fall initiation took place on November 30th, 2010, while the spring initiation took place on April 21st, 2011.

B. Chapter Activities

During this academic year, our chapter increased its activities substantially as compared to previous years. The activities are broken down by semester below.

Fall 2010 activities:

The fall semester started off with information sessions for eligible candidates. The information sessions aimed to describe the advantages of joining Pi Tau Sigma for those unfamiliar with the organization and also describe our requirements for membership.

The Texas Kappa chapter held five general meetings during the fall semester. In each meeting, we had a variety of presentations from several companies and one pertaining to graduate school by our chapter advisor, Dr. Taleff. The companies that presented were KBR, Foster Wheeler Corp., Pointwise and Space-X. Our general meetings serve as our main chapter events and therefore they are the most attended. Free food and drinks are always served to our candidates, members and guests.

Social activities our chapter engaged in this semester were multiple “signature parties” at local restaurants, tailgates and game nights. The signature parties provided an informal atmosphere for chapter members and candidates to get know each other better. Signature parties have free food and drinks available so they are a favorite amongst current active members which helps to encourage candidates to complete their chapter requirements.

Our most involved social events for the fall were tailgates. For these, Texas Kappa teamed up with ASME to throw some of the most extravagant tailgates seen this past football season at The University of Texas at Austin. At each tailgate we hosted 40-70 students and fed them mesquite smoked brisket, ribs and chicken until there was no food left.

As is custom within our chapter, we host an advising table during the registration period to give underclassmen a perspective on what classes might be beneficiary. Since all PTS members and candidates are upperclassmen and because we have already experienced the classes firsthand, we are very qualified to provide this service. This event pays dividends for our chapter because it gets our name out to underclassmen before they become potentially eligible to pledge to PTS.

Other service events that our chapter undertook during the fall were an engineering outreach festival, assisting a local animal shelter, a park clean up and assisting meals on wheels. Compared to previous years our chapter took on a more diverse and numerous package of service events this semester. With more service events this semester, our candidate to member conversion rate increased.

Spring 2010 activities:

Similar to the fall semester, the spring semester started off with information sessions for eligible candidates. During the semester our chapter held six general meetings with presentations from the following companies: Cameron, Applied Research Laboratories, Lockheed Martin, Southwest Research Institute, Caterpillar and Exxon Mobil. Texas Kappa originally scheduled five general meetings this semester but corporate support was higher this semester so we added another general meeting.

Also at the beginning of the spring semester Texas Kappa hosted our first “Undergraduate Research Night”. This event essentially served to encourage mechanical engineering undergraduates to get involved in research. Since a lot of PTS members are already involved in research we felt that it was important to reach out to undergraduates early in their college career. The event was open to anyone and we even had engineers from disciplines other than mechanical attend. The format of the event was a panel of several faculty, graduate, and undergraduate

researchers who detailed their experience in research and explained why it is important to get involved. Our chapter wisely planted questioners spread throughout the crowd which encouraged others non-PTS students to ask questions. The event was a huge success and it also increased the reputation of PTS within the department. We intend to continue this event in the future and make it one of our signature events.

Texas Kappa also participated in the 2011 Pi Tau Sigma national convention held in Chicago, IL. The convention attendees from our chapter were President Derek Bass, Treasurer Thomas Shaw, and Activities Chair Mara Sweeney.

Our chapter also competed during the National Engineers Week at The University of Texas at Austin. Engineers Week (EWEEK) within our engineering school is a big deal. It involves one week of competitions organized by various engineering student organizations. Many of the competition require variety of knowledge and quick thinking skills.

This spring Texas Kappa made and effort to reach out to other organizations such as ASME and Tau Beta Pi. We organized or participated in several competitive events such as mini golf, dodge ball and capture the flag. Against Tau Beta Pi we dominated 2 out of 3 events but against ASME we ended in a draw. In the future, we're hoping to encourage a friendly rivalry between these 3 societies.

Other social events that we held during the spring semester were multiple "signature parties" at local restaurants, game nights and bowling. We also continued the tradition that we started last spring of hosting the "Engineering Honors BBQ". For this event we invited engineering honor societies from all disciplines to join PTS for a day out at nearby park for some BBQ and field games. We started cooking just before midnight the day before and started serving around 2 in the afternoon and of course, there was no leftover smoked meat by the end of the day. With a turnout of more than 60 students from several engineering disciplines, the event was an even bigger success than the previous year. Last year the societies that attended were mainly PTS and Tau Beta Pi but this year nearly every discipline's honor society attended. We also intend to continue this event in the future and make it one of our signature events.

For service events during the spring, we hosted an advising table similar to the fall, volunteered for Introduce a Girl to Engineering during EWEEK, held seminars for Explore UT, helped out with MATH COUNTS, a high school mathematics completion, participated in Relay for Life, and hosted a booth at the Spring Spectacular engineering outreach event.

Introduce a Girl to Engineering is a program which aims to increase the interest of elementary age girls in engineering through fun but engineering based activities. Our chapter participates in this every year.

Explore UT is a university wide open house which serves to increase the interest of children of all ages in higher education. Typically each spring Texas Kappa hosts a solar car workshop which involves assisting young children to construct a solar car out of a solar panel, chassis, motor, axles, and wheels. However, in addition to the solar car workshop we held another seminar which displayed our new miniature gas and steam engine collection.

This year one of our alumni members, Don Foster (BSME 1948), donated his collection of hand built miniature gas and steam engines to our chapter. Since then we had been working on

cleaning and maintaining the engines so we could proudly display them in the ME building and at outreach events. A 1916 Case Steam Tractor, a Corliss Steam Engine, and a Hit and Miss gasoline engine are just a few examples of the more than ten different engines. These working engines are a sight to see and during Explore UT, our engine display was one of the favorites. We also displayed the engines another time at the Spring Spectacular, an outdoor engineering outreach event. The spring spectacular was likely our favorite service event; we even drove our miniature Case tractor across the intramural fields under its own power. The children were amazed.

This year in Texas Kappa should be written off as one of the most active in recent history. Not too long ago we were an underperforming society with very few events. Now, we have nearly doubled the number events that we host along with some special events such as the "Undergraduate Research Night". We have built a better foundation, so now we hope to continue rebuilding our chapter's prominence for years to come.

C. Other

The Texas Kappa officers for the 2010-2011 academic year are as follows

Fall 2010:

President	David Zummo
Vice President	Joanna Tsenn
Treasurer	Prasad Joshi
Secretary	Darlene King
Corporate Rep.	Matt Kijowski
Service Chair	Sally McMenamin
Activities Chair	Derek Bass
Webmaster/Historian	Mikko Ponkala

Spring 2011:

President	Derek Bass
Vice President	Darlene King
Treasurer	Thomas Shaw
Secretary	Sally McMenamin
Corporate Rep.	Matt Wright
Service Chairs	Stacey Chan & Barret Hendricks
Activities Chairs	Alex Breckel & Mara Sweeney
Webmaster/Historian	David Zummo

Report Compiled by: Derek Bass