2019-2020
Texas Kappa

Annual Chapter Report

A) Initiation

Selection Process
Continuing the theme from last year, the goal for the Texas Kappa Chapter was to push for revival. Our goal was to reach out to as many qualified students as possible, knowing that the response rate was extremely low. We invited the top juniors and seniors according to the national guidelines, along with sophomores in the top 20% of their class that had the credits to be juniors in the application pool. While this goes against Pi Tau Sigma national guidelines, we believed that it was necessary to preserve the Texas Kappa Chapter. Because of this change, we were able to nearly double our membership. Our goal is to continue to invite sophomores until the Texas Kappa chapter returns to its former prestige.

Fall 2019
In the fall semester, we kept the requirements that we set the previous year. In order for a candidate to become initiated they had to complete the following: attend an info-session, attend all general meetings, pay $60 dues, pass the constitution quiz, and attend invitation once invited. On November 22, 2019, we held our initiation ceremony on the rooftop, following the Texas Kappa tradition following national guidelines. Dr. Chen and two officers, Zahin Nambiar and Lauren Healy conducted the ceremony. Eighteen new members were initiated. During initiation, the initiates learned the “secret PTS handshake.” Following initiation and elections, we held a mini banquet for those who were available. We went out to Chuy’s and had dinner.

On November 25, 2019, a make-up invitation was help for one more addition member. There was one officer present for the make-up initiation.

New Members Initiated on Nov 22, 2019, for the Texas Kappa Chapter of Pi Tau Sigma

Spring 2020

In an attempt to increase activity, the leadership team decided to raise the requirements for candidates to be invited to initiation. Our team deemed that an additional three hours of outside participation under approved events could help get initiates more involved. Other than that, our requirements were the same from the fall semester. However, after spring break, all of our plans were halted due to the COVID-19 pandemic and we had decided to be extremely lenient on the requirements. We required all members to fill out a feedback form with ideas on how to run our chapter better as a replacement for approved events and general meetings. The due date to get all the required items in was April 24th.

Initiation was different this semester. Instead of doing our traditional rooftop ceremony, initiation was done via Zoom on May 1st, doing our best to maintain Pi Tau Sigma rituals in an online setting. Sixteen new members were initiated in our very first virtual initiation. As a group, we decided to defer our ceremony to the Fall semester, giving our new members to experience the Texas Kappa rooftop tradition and holding a bigger banquet. This decision is subject to change, as the university is still finalizing its on-campus plans for the fall semester.

New Members Initiated on May 1, 2020, for the Texas Kappa Chapter of Pi Tau Sigma

Over the course of the year, we were able to gain an additional 35 new members who are more committed than ever. Nearly half of these new members have taken on a leadership role and are dedicated to rebuilding our chapter.

B) Chapter Activities

Fall 2019

In the fall semester, most of our chapter activity came through general meetings, which were held every two weeks. At these general meetings, we invited professors in our mechanical engineering department and share their research with us. Each professor was an expert on different subject matters within mechanical engineering, from additive manufacturing from Dr. Seepersad to combustion engines with Dr. Hall. Our goal was to help our members build a relationship with these professors and give our members more exposure to the world of mechanical engineering research.

Unfortunately, the fall semester was not a great semester for social and volunteering activities. Due to scheduling conflicts between the members of our leadership team, not many events were scheduled outside of post-meeting study groups. Some of the socials we did host were our weekly trip to Varsity Pizza (a Texas PTS tradition!) and a bowling night.

Spring 2020

This spring semester seemed more hopeful with a new leadership team fired up to rebuild our chapter. We were able to provide more opportunities for our members to come out and socialize, which was a major issue according to the member feedback.

General Meetings

Similar to the previous semester, we continued inviting professors and graduate students to come to speak at our general meetings.

E-Week

Every year, the Student Engineering Council hosts E-Week during national engineers week. This week, E-Week was held from February 15th through February 23rd. During this week, all the engineering organizations sign up to have a week-long competition to prove which organization is the best. Our chapter decided to join E-Week for the first time in years. This was an opportunity for our members to connect with teach others through competition while networking with other students within the Cockrell School of Engineering. We volunteered and competed in many events and hosted our own Tetris tournament, as it was 8-bit themed. In our first year back, Pi Tau Sigma was able to place 5th among the small organization category.

During E-Week, our chapter was able to start developing relationships with other organizations, specifically ASME, HKN, and OXE. We plan to continue building our relationships among our fellow engineers.

Will Slater, Adrian Hernandez, and Jinwoo Kim compete in the Base Battle hosted by ASME

Texas Kappa hosts the Tetris Tournament during E-Week

Pi Tau Sigma, 5th Place E-Week

Foster Engines Volunteering

Our main service project this semester was to revive the Foster Engines. The Foster Engines include about a dozen engines that were created by Dr. Don Foster during his while career as a mechanical engineering student and professor. A few years ago, those engines were donated to our chapter. In the past, these engines were used to go out and teach elementary students about the field of engineering. This year, we teamed up with ASME under the direction of Dr. Philip Schmidt and presented a few engines on UT Girl Day, a day of service dedicated to inspiring young girls to achieve higher education. We were planned to do more service events until COVID-19 forced everyone to cancel.

Duncan McDougal and Justin Shih prepare for Girl Day

Girl Day

ASME Design Team Lead, Rebecca Lin and PTS Representative Officer Adrian Hernandez Present the Corliss Engine

Other Events

Because of the relationship formed through E-Week, we were able to plan a joint graduate student panel for all engineering students. Our chapter of Pi Tau Sigma was going co-host with HKN (Electrical and Computer Engineering honor society) and OXE (Chemical Engineering honor society). However, due to COVID-19, this event was unable to happen.

Convention

This year, I was able to attend the national convention at RIT. I attended not knowing what to expect but had a great time. I was able to meet fantastic people from all over the United States, especially the leaders from the Texas chapters. We had started to plan to have a combined joint service event, as Team Texas, but it was too late to start planning. Hopefully, in the upcoming year, we will be able to have a big service event with members of Pi Tau Sigma from all over Texas.

C) Other

Leadership Team

While the COVID-19 pandemic effectively shut down all of our operations, our leadership team decided that now was a good time to restructure and prepare for the Fall and future semesters. One of the issues that we had during the spring semester was that as a team there was a lack of structure and organization in place. This was a problem as all but one of the new officers was newly initiated members. After we had shut down, we rewrote our chapter constitution, created a leadership packet with defined roles, added new positions to offer members more opportunities and responsibilities, and reorganized our chapter Google Drive for ease of access to information. There was a lot of work done behind the scenes to prepare for the upcoming semester to give our team a foundation to utilize.

Summer Plans

Our plans for the summer were quite ambitious; however, we needed to postpone and strategize for the Fall semester, as there was a possibility for restrictions on student organization operations. However, we are continuing on with some of our major projects. The first one is to reach out to many companies for corporate support. At EXPO (UT Engineering Career Fair), I went around to different companies and gathering interest for support in our chapter. We have restructured our corporate packet so that it includes many virtual events. Another project that our team is working on is a new chapter website, under the “utexas” domain. We wanted to streamline all information to prospective members, members, potential supporters, and anyone who is interested in checking out our chapter. This project should take the whole summer and will make our lives much easier.