PI TAU SIGMA ANNUAL CHAPTER REPORT

2014-2015

Virginia Delta Xi

A. Initiations

The initiation procedure of the Virginia Delta Xi chapter follows the requirements and procedures set forth in the Pi Tau Sigma Constitution and Bylaws. Students in the top 25% of the junior class and the top 33% of the senior class are eligible for membership in the organization. The chapter advisor, Professor Gavin Garner, obtains a list from the secretary of the Department of Mechanical and Aerospace Engineering that identifies students' GPAs and class rank. From this list, the advisor selects the top students and provides the chapter president with the names of these students.

Potential initiates are hand delivered an invitation to join the organization and those interested are required to attend a mandatory information session outlining the history of the organization, the community service requirement, and the dates of important events throughout the semester. In addition, eligible members must fulfill a 4-hour community service requirement to proceed to the initiation ceremony. These initiates can either complete the service project that is organized by the chapter or they can complete an independent, pre-approved service project through a number of service-oriented organizations at the school, such as Habitat for Humanity or Madison House.

Following the successful completion of the service requirement, initiates attend an induction ceremony held at the end of each semester. All facets of the induction ceremony follow the ritual procedure outlined in the Pi Tau Sigma Constitution and Bylaws.

The Virginia Delta Xi chapter of Pi Tau Sigma has been going through a transition period over the past two years. Our previous faculty advisor, Robert Ribando, has retired and been replaced with Gavin Garner. It was the mission this year of both Professor Garner and the executive board to expand membership and help our organization grow from one that struggles to obtain members to one that people are excited to join. Because of this, we spent our fall semester mostly reorganizing and working to develop a plan of action to make our chapter more attractive to potential members. We inducted one new member in the fall semester on December 5, 2014 and then added 25 new members on April 21, 2015 for the spring induction period.

B. Chapter Activities

As stated previously, the executive board spent the fall semester reorganizing and raising money in order to make our organization more attractive to new members. We have been having very few new members joining in the past few years and it was our goal to change that. We began selling snacks to students while they were studying in the mechanical and aerospace student lounge this year and raised over $400 over the course of the year to subsidize dues for new members.

Each semester, initiates are required to fulfill a 4-hour community service requirement for membership in the organization. While eligible members are free to pursue pre-approved independent service projects, the majority of students fulfill their requirement at a service project organized by the chapter.

In the fall semester our members and new initiate were responsible for a personal service project and these included working at Camp Holiday Trails to assist with their process in closing down for the winter, and going to local elementary schools to assist with science experiments and get children interested in STEM fields.

In the spring semester we held a pizza party and information meeting for new and existing members where we outlined all requirements for membership in Pi Tau Sigma and discussed our history and traditions. This event was well-attended and I believe the combination of this and the hand delivered invitations to all eligible members resulted in the significantly larger group that we were able to induct in the spring semester.

We had two opportunities for service project in the spring semester. The first was a day of service at Camp Holiday Trails which included demolishing two cabins that the camp is replacing and hauling away all of the trash that was generated from this activity. Camp Holiday Trails is a non-profit organization that is committed to helping children with special needs. They run a summer camp for these children, allowing the kids to experience an overnight camp and many exciting outdoor activities. Our second option was to assist in the mechatronics lab during the University of Virginia's Engineering Open House. The open house attracts both members of the Charlottesville community and potential future students each year and it is a great opportunity to show off and generate enthusiasm about engineering. Members who chose this service project gave tours of the mechatronics lab and answered and questions that our guests had.

On April 19, 2015 many of our female members also participated in a new outreach event organized by two students of the engineering school called Ladies in the Lab. The goal was to get middle and high school girls interested in STEM and show off some of the interesting projects that students in the engineering school at the University of Virginia have undertaken. The event had over 100 participants and thirteen student groups had booths and activities ranging from DNA mapping to creating simple apps. Pi Tau Sigma members were present to assist with activities including giant Jenga and concrete coaster creating.

C. Other

In April 2015, the members of Pi Tai Sigma selected a student and a professor to receive the PTS Student Award and the Outstanding Mechanical Engineering Faculty Award, respectively. These individuals were selected based on their continual demonstration of the ideals of the organization and because they act in a professional manner in all their endeavors. These two awards were presented to the recipients at the annual Mechanical and Aerospace Engineering department picnic held at the end of the 2014-2015 school year for all students of the mechanical and aerospace engineering departments.

Another point of note is that Virginia Delta Xi has formed a bond with the ASME chapter and plans to participate in events together in the future. Previously, there was little coordination between the two but as our new faculty advisor, Gavin Garner, is also the faculty advisor of ASME at UVA coordination and joint activities are now very possible.

It is noted that the officer that prepared this annual report was Esther Klinger, the 2014-2015 President of the Virginia Delta Xi chapter. Responsibilities for the position of President in the chapter have been officially transferred to Wilson Ruotolo (wr2fc@virginia.edu) the newly elected President for the 2015-2016 academic year. The chapter advisor, Gavin Garner (gtg7g@virginia.edu), will remain the same for this upcoming year. Also, elections were held for all other available officer positions with 3 additional new officers for the upcoming year.