PI TAU SIGMA ANNUAL CHAPTER REPORT

2011-2012

University of Illinois at Chicago Alpha Sigma

A. Initiations

As a widely recognized, well-reputed, and active honor society within the university's College of Engineering, UIC Alpha Sigma is a growing and prestigious organization. The chapter leadership strives each semester to recruit and induct only the most upstanding and motivated new members from among the many qualified candidates. As the chapter's reputation has grown, the initiation requirements have become more competitive and the initiation process itself more interactive.

While invitations to the initiation process are administered according to the standards required by the national Pi Tau Sigma leadership, the UIC Alpha Sigma chapter strives to recruit members who will participate actively – not only within the society, but also in the university and professional communities. Toward that end, chapter-specific initiation requirements in previous years have included attendance at Pi Tau Sigma general body meetings during the semester prior to initiation and a minimum number of hours of participation in chapter activities each subsequent semester in order to maintain active status.

In addition to the requirements from previous years and those issued by the national Pi Tau Sigma leadership, the UIC Alpha Sigma chapter initiated an important change in the process this year by adding a candidate interview to the initiate selection. Qualified students received an invitation to schedule an interview with one or more chapter officers. The interviews were conducted relatively informally and served to acquaint the candidate with the chapter and its leadership and vice versa. After completing interviews for all interested candidates and reviewing attendance records for candidates at general body meetings, the chapter leadership formally invited the initiates from the final round of selection to become members of Pi Tau Sigma.

The initiation ceremony conforms to the process used to initiate new chapters at the national convention. After lining up in alphabetical order outside of the meeting location – in this case, a classroom – the initiates were brought into the dark room and seated in two rows in front of the chapter officers, seated opposite at a dimly-lit table. After the chapter president and vice president had reviewed the expectations, mission, values, and history of Pi Tau Sigma, the candidates repeated the initiation vow individually and shook hands with each officer.

The post initiation celebration was held at a local pizza restaurant and was open to all newly initiated or active-status members. A bent-polishing and plaque-staining day was held after initiation in the spring ceremony for all new initiates and members from the year as a chapter bonding exercise.

Fall 2011 semester
Initiation date: November 18, 2011 Members inducted: 10
Spring 2012 semester
Initiation date: April 20, 2012 Members inducted: 9

B. Chapter Activities

Fall Semester 2011

Over the past few years, the recognition and reputation of UIC Alpha Sigma has greatly increased within the University of Illinois at Chicago's College of Engineering and beyond. The opportunity to host the previous year's Pi Tau Sigma National Convention (2011) offered an excellent chance to build ties with the college, with businesses and professionals, and with Pi Tau Sigma members from across the country. This year, the chapter put this forward momentum to great effect and strove to build upon the success and experience from the previous year.

The chapter held three general body meetings open to all members and initiate candidates throughout the fall semester, which were well attended by active-status members. The chapter officers met weekly between general body meetings to organize and coordinate activities and duties throughout the year.

As an active engineering honor society on campus, UIC Alpha Sigma coordinates activities with other professional and honor societies within the college, as well as organizing stand-alone events and activities. One well-known tradition is the annual Carnot Classic, a bowling event open to all university students and hosted exclusively by Pi Tau Sigma. This event brings students and chapter members of all disciplines together for a fun social event to kick off the fall semester. The Carnot Classic is also the principal fall semester fundraising event for the chapter.

The UIC Alpha Sigma chapter is also very active academically, with tutoring sessions staffed by members offered twice a week throughout the year. While a majority of students attend for help in upper-level engineering and applied science courses, the sessions are open to students from any department for assistance with physical sciences, math, and engineering courses. The tutoring sessions also offer an opportunity for Alpha Sigma members to complete their ten-hour participation requirement each semester for active status. The tutoring offerings are an excellent chance for younger students to get to know the chapter and learn about Pi Tau Sigma in general, and also help promote academic achievement and future membership demand. Many students are introduced to Pi Tau Sigma through the tutoring program and later become members and tutors themselves.

As part of a new high-school outreach program, Pi Tau Sigma partnered with educators at Whitney M. Young Magnet High School to introduce students in physics courses to careers and opportunities in mechanical engineering. Additionally, the chapter was able to offer support and guidance to the high school's FIRST® Robotics Competition team through chapter president Garrison Buss, who devoted many hours each week to his role as a mentor for the team throughout the school year until the competition in the spring semester.

Another fundraising and networking opportunity for Pi Tau Sigma members was the annual UIC Diversity Career Fair, held each year in November. The university recruits honor societies to provide volunteers for set-up and hosting the employers and company representatives attending the event. Involvement with the career fair behind-the-scenes gives Alpha Sigma members an exclusive opportunity to interact candidly with recruiters one-on-one throughout the event. Employers and companies are very interested in hiring student members of professional and honor societies, and are happy for the opportunity to meet and work with such students during and after the fair. The chapter itself is compensated by the university according to the number of members able to volunteer for the event.

The wrap-up events for the semester were the new member initiation ceremony and celebration for all new and currently active members. The UIC Alpha Sigma chapter added another rank of outstanding members to its roster and prepared for the start of another new semester.

Spring Semester 2012

The spring of 2012 was another very busy time for UIC Alpha Sigma. The tutoring program continued on an expanded schedule during the spring in order to accommodate increasing attendance and scheduling conflicts. The chapter officers continued to meet weekly, and general body meetings were also held three times throughout the semester.

The spring was an excellent time for fundraising and publicity opportunities, as the chapter provided volunteers for the university's Part-time Job and Internship Fair, held early in the semester, as well as the College of Engineering's exclusive Career Fair in late February – a major opportunity for students and alumni of the college, as well as area employers and recruiters. As before, these student volunteers are given a unique opportunity to network with company representatives "off-the-clock" and really make a strong, positive first impression of the candidate and of the college's recruiting pool overall.

Leading up to the Engineering Career Fair in February was the college's annual Engineering Week (E-Week), during which professional and honor societies partner with the college to attract speakers, students, and recruiters to opportunities available in engineering. The UIC Alpha Sigma chapter actively partnered with the Engineering Council, an umbrella organization coordinating activities between engineering societies on campus, to organize, advertise, and host E-Week events. After the Engineering Career Fair, the week was capped off with a free bowling event hosted exclusively by UIC Alpha Sigma, presenting a great publicity and community-building opportunity for the chapter and the college as a whole.

The UIC Alpha Sigma chapter was very proud to send five members to represent the chapter at the 2012 National Convention in sunny San Jose. After hosting the previous convention, attending as guests was a welcome change for the officers and members who attended. The convention was also a great time to catch up with friends and partners from chapters around the country and to continue growing relationships from the previous year's convention.

In April, the chapter inducted its second round of new initiates after completing the required application, interview, and selection process. The chapter officers were happy to welcome another generation of academically rigorous and professionally motivated members to the ranks of Pi Tau Sigma. The traditional pizza dinner celebration was held after the ceremony at a local restaurant, as in the fall semester. As a chapter bonding activity, a bent-polishing and plaque-staining ceremony was held the following day, open to all members and new initiates. This half-day activity gives new members a chance to get to know other members and officers informally, and builds teamwork and interpersonal relationships in the chapter for the coming year.

The final event for the year was the chapter's annual Year-End Department Social. The college's Pi Tau Sigma chapter has routinely hosted the event and it is quickly becoming a memorable tradition in the lead-up to the finals week each spring. This event brings students, professors, staff, and guests of the college's Department of Mechanical Engineering together for a celebration of another successful year for the department. The social is a great way for students to interact with and get to know professors in a less formal setting. It also is a good

opportunity for the chapter to get its name out to the department, and the continued success of the event speaks to Pi Tau Sigma's active and continued presence within the college and department.

C. Other

Chapter president Garrison Buss continued to guide the W. M. Young Magnet High School FIRST® Robotics Competition team to a successful team performance in the competition during the spring. Mr. Buss's participation required a very large and involved time commitment throughout the year, and the chapter was very grateful to have been represented in partnering with the team. Such opportunities build the positive reputation of Pi Tau Sigma members, promote engineering as a profession and inspire young students to careers and further education in engineering, and build goodwill and positive relationships between different learning institutions.