FULL ANNUAL CHAPTER REPORT

2019-2020
Worcester Polytechnic Institute Tau Tau

A. Initiations

Selection and Initiation Procedure

Our chapter selection process begins with our chapter advisor obtaining the names of ME students that fulfill our class standing requirement. Last year, our chapter voted to expand our criteria to accept the top 12.5% of ME Juniors and the top 15% of ME Seniors in order to increase our chapter size. More recently, our chapter voted in November to further increase these percentiles to the top 15% of ME Juniors and the top 17.5% of ME Seniors. These criteria also exclude second-semester seniors.

After receiving the list of eligible students, we notify them via email of their eligibility and invite them to apply to join Pi Tau Sigma. We also explain the initiation requirements for our chapter, which are as follows:

- Attend our eligibles info session and social, during which we talk about Pi Tau Sigma, go over the eligibility requirements, and give eligibles the opportunity to meet the exec board and current members
- Pass a review of their judicial record without having any record of academic dishonesty at WPI
- Obtain a letter of recommendation from a ME or AE faculty member at WPI
- Complete 3 hours of community service by the end of the academic year
- Pay one-time dues

The eligibles that meet these requirements are offered acceptance into PTS and are initiated into our chapter. The initiation ceremony is held in the mechanical engineering department conference room, and the exec board members arrive early in order to setup. The initiation is also open to current members and our advisor, who are seated in the room along with the exec board. The initiates are asked to wait outside before the ceremony begins, and are led into the room together once initiation begins. The initiates sit along one side of the conference table, and the president and vice president are seated on the other side, with other attendees seated behind them. The ceremony is then carried out as outlined in the "Rituals of Pi Tau Sigma" document. A wooden emblem and coat of arms are shown to initiates when discussed, along with printed color versions of each. After the acceptance of pledges and discussion about PTS traditions, initiates are asked to sign the roll book and shake the hand of all present members with the PTS handshake. An informal social is held after the initiation ceremony, during which new members can talk with the exec board and current members.

Due to the coronavirus pandemic and shift to online learning, we have made adjustments to our initiation practices in order to accommodate an online application process and initiation ceremony. The info session is now held remotely via Zoom, and all documents are accepted digitally. The initiation ceremony is held over Zoom, during which all attendees are asked to dress in business casual and use their webcam if possible. The ceremony itself is conducted similarly to the in-person ceremony, with the emblem and coat of arms being shown via screenshare and the roll book being signed digitally.

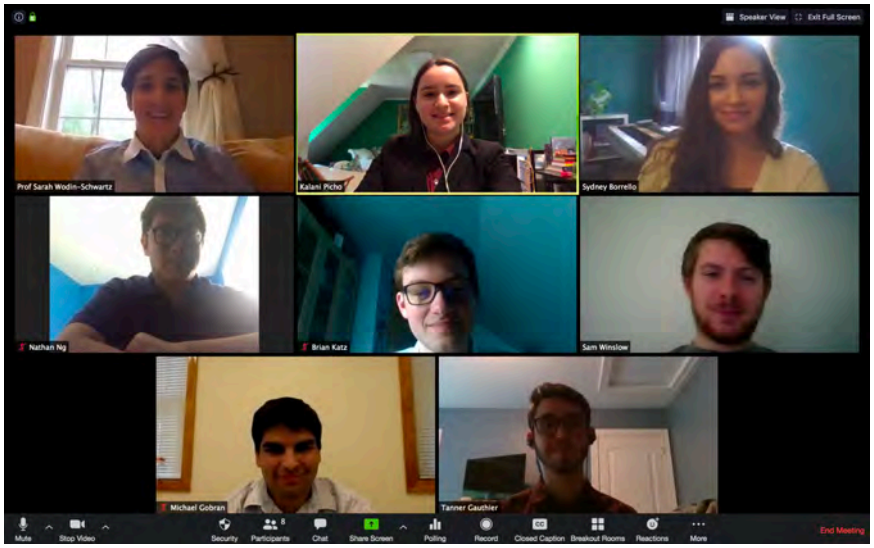
Fall Initiation Summary

Our Fall initiation was held on November 5th, 2019. We initiated 12 new members following the in-person procedure described above. We did not take a picture of the newly inducted members and officers present, but will adjust our procedure to include this step in the future.

Spring Initiation Summary

Due to the coronavirus pandemic, the second half of our Spring semester was transitioned to online learning. The chapter exec board decided to delay the Spring initiation ceremony to the Fall with the hopes of holding an in-person ceremony. We would like to ensure that the initiation ceremony is meaningful for new initiates, and felt that the ceremony would be best conducted in-person. However, we continued with the selection and application process in the Spring, and accepted 26 new members for initiation in the coming Fall semester. We plan to hold an initiation ceremony for these members at the beginning of the Fall semester, separate from the usual Fall initiation.

In addition, we fully initiated one new member into our chapter under special circumstances. One eligible student was completing his undergraduate degree this year and staying an extra semester to complete his master's degree. Because of this, he would not be present on campus in the Fall to be initiated as a graduate student, and after consulting with Nationals Secretary-Treasurer, our chapter was able to initiate him as an undergraduate member in the Spring. We held a special virtual initiation for this student on May 4th, 2020 and made adjustments for the online ceremony as discussed above. The below picture shows our Zoom meeting, with the new inductee, our exec board members, and advisor.



B. Chapter Activities

Academic Year Recurring Activities

Our chapter holds general body meetings at least twice per semester (once each quarter), during which we discuss upcoming events and conduct voting for any bylaw changes or exec board elections. In addition, we run tutoring sessions once each quarter in order to assist the ME community at WPI. WPI runs on a quarter system, and thus finals for classes are held at the end of each quarter; once in the middle of the semester and once at the end. Before each finals week, our chapter holds tutoring sessions to assist students in core ME classes with exam preparation. PTS members are available at the sessions to provide one-on-one assistance for students in classes that they have completed. These sessions support ME professors by supplementing in-class review, and give PTS members a way to apply the material they have learned to give back to the ME community. Our tutoring efforts have expanded and become better organized with the addition of the new Tutoring Chair officer position last year. Since appointing this new position, we have expanded the number of classes being tutored. We now assist students in statics, stress analysis, thermodynamics, fluid mechanics, and heat transfer, and rotate based on the classes being offered. These sessions have enabled us to increase our presence on campus and broaden our connections with ME faculty members.

Fall Semester Activities

During the Fall semester, our chapter conducted new member initiation as discussed in the previous section, including holding an eligibles info session & social and conducting initiation. We also voted to approve multiple by-laws changes at our GBM in the latter half of the term. The proposed by-laws updates dealt with the following changes:

- Expanding the class percentile requirement for eligibility in order to increase membership: change from the top 12.5% of ME Juniors to the top 15% of ME Juniors, and from the top 15% of ME Seniors to the top 17.5% of ME Seniors.
- Formally add new Tutoring Chair and Social Chair positions to the executive board.
- Add a new Business Chair position to the executive board: this officer would be responsible for filling in for any officer that is off-campus and temporarily accepting their duties.

All changes were voted on and approved by the general body, and were added to our chapter by-laws.

Our chapter was involved in a couple of social events on campus this term. We had a table at WPI's Fall activities fair, during which students had the opportunity to learn about the different clubs and organizations on campus. We had the opportunity to talk with current students about the role of PTS on campus and helped to increase interest in joining our chapter. We also held a social event to restore a PTS landmark. Our campus has a cement monument depicting the PTS Key located outside of our ME department building. The Key had become worn down and was no longer recognizable to students passing by, so we decided to restore the monument by holding a Key painting social. Our exec board purchased paint and supplies, and invited PTS members to come by and assist with cleaning and painting the PTS Key. We had good member turnout for the social, and we were proud of the restored monument. It is now more noticeable outside the ME building and provides a better image for PTS on campus. A before and after picture is below:

In addition, we held a networking event for our members at the beginning of the semester in order to assist with career fair networking and job searching. In collaboration with our Career Development Center, we held an info session with Gem Sensors and Controls, a local sensor manufacturing company. Members had the opportunity to hear from the Engineering VP and a Mechanical Engineer at the company to learn about what the company does and potential openings for internships and full-time positions.

Spring Semester Activities

The first half of our Spring semester was held on campus, and we transitioned to online classes mid-March. During our first GBM of the semester, we voted on a new executive board and appointed new officers for each position. We also informed members about the opportunity to go to the PTS national convention and encouraged them to let us know if they would like to attend. While we had member interest in going, we were ultimately unable to send representatives from our chapter because no executive board officers were available to accompany a group to the convention. This was caused in part by a few of our exec board members being off-campus during the first quarter of the semester. We hope to send a group from our chapter in future years.

While on-campus during the first part of the semester, our chapter collaborated with another honor society to provide a networking opportunity for members. We collaborated with our campus chapter of Omicron Delta Kappa (ODK), the National Leadership Honor Society, to organize a tour of a local MathWorks facility. This event gave members from both honor societies the opportunity to experience the work environment at MathWorks and to network with current engineers.

During the second half of the semester, we shifted to remote learning and moved our chapter activities to an online format. We conducted the eligibles application process and acceptance online, as discussed in the initiation section. This included an online eligibles info session over Zoom, and afterwards we held a social during which members and eligibles played online Pictionary together. Later in the term, we held another social for members during which we played Trivia games. We also continued to offer tutoring by shifting our session to a Zoom format with different break-out rooms for each subject. These events helped our members to stay connected despite social distancing and continue to remain active in the ME community.

The shift to online learning and cancellation of large gatherings occurred during a crucial part of the WPI admissions season and resulted in the cancellation of accepted students days and info sessions. In order to give prospective students a chance to connect with WPI faculty and learn about different major programs, WPI shifted to an online chat platform for department-specific info sessions. The ME department held two of these chat sessions in the Spring, and reached out to PTS for assistance with answering questions and sharing student experiences in the ME program. Our members were happy to help, and we had a strong PTS presence at both sessions. The prospective students at the sessions were engaged and seemed to value the opportunity to talk with current students about academics as well as the culture at WPI. These sessions were a great opportunity to promote WPI's ME department as well as PTS, and to support our ME department during the challenging shift to online admissions.