PI TAU SIGMA ANNUAL CHAPTER REPORT
2014-2015
South Dakota State University Tau Chi

A. Initiations

The selection process for new candidates started by obtaining a list of eligible Mechanical Engineering students that are within the top 25% of their class and have a minimum of 60 credits if a junior (60-90 credits), or within the top 35% if a senior (> 90 credits). The president, advisor, and several officers then met to discuss the candidates in order to ensure each was worthy of an invitation. Following this meeting, letters of invitation were drafted and distributed to the prospective members. Then a meeting between current and prospective members was held. This serves as an "informative meeting" to which we invite the candidates for their first introduction to the organization. The informative meeting begins with the president giving a brief presentation to summarize the goals, requirements, and activities of the organization. One of the requirements for each new member is that they provide four hours of tutoring through our peer tutoring events. At the end of the meeting, bents and plaques are provided to those candidates that would like to be initiated.

The initiation ceremony begins by preparing a classroom by dimming the lights, closing the blinds, and setting up the candles, etc. Once this is completed, the current members join the waiting initiates in another room adjacent to where the ceremony will take place. Then the initiates must present their plaques to verify they are of acceptable quality and are signed by ten active student members and two faculty members of the chapter, as well as our chapter's faculty advisor. When all plaques are accepted, the initiates are lined up single file and have blindfolds placed over their eyes. One current member leads the initiates for a short walk around the building while the other members gather in the ceremony room. At this point, the standard ceremony is performed and all members sign a logbook for the organization to keep record of all initiations.

Finally, to end the night, the new members and current members go out to eat at a local restaurant, complements of the organization. This night allows the new members to meet in a more social setting and get to know each other on a casual basis. This event has proved to be quite enjoyable as well as important for the vitality of our organization. New initiates are more even more eager to participate once they have spent time with current members in this relaxed atmosphere.

This academic year, the fall initiation ceremony was held on December 12th, 2014, and the spring initiation ceremony was held on April 1st, 2015. We inducted five members in the fall semester, and five members in the spring semester. At the spring initiation, we also elected an entirely new officer team. To ensure a smooth transition, the current president will be available to guide the new team as they figure out their roles.

B. Chapter Activities

As in previous years, the organization offered peer tutoring sessions to provide an additional resource for students. The Pi Tau Sigma group worked in conjunction with Tau Beta Pi and Eta Kappa Nu engineering honors societies to provide tutoring services for students on Wednesday and Thursday evenings for two hours. Courses covered in these tutoring sessions ranged from basic introduction level physics courses to more advanced courses such as thermodynamics and fluid mechanics.

Our chapter maintains six miles of interstate highway I-29 with the Adopt-A-Highway program. Each semester we pick up all trash in the ditches near the highway. Although picking up trash may be somewhat repulsive, we have always had good results with the activity. Typically, there is a lot of discussion and joking around that allows students to have a little fun while still doing a service to the community. Due to ongoing construction, we held the cleanup event in the fall semester, but were not able to do it in the spring.

In addition, our chapter provides MC's for our department's annual banquet and also assists in some of the planning. At this event, each of the department's organizations, including Pi Tau Sigma, presents an overview of their group to inform others about their intent, participation, and membership opportunity.

A new activity that the chapter has started is hosting review sessions for the Fundamentals of Engineering exam. Tau Beta Pi has held general review sessions for all engineers in the past, but our officer team thought it would be beneficial to hold sessions specifically for mechanical engineering students. The officer team worked with ME faculty to organize review sessions throughout the fall and spring semesters. So far, there has been a small increase in test scores so we hope to continue these sessions.

Finally, the chapter president attended the national convention at the University of Illinois in Champaign, Illinois, this spring. The convention was a good time and also a valuable experience. It provided a great opportunity to meet students from all over the country, discuss chapter matters, and gain a better sense of the organization on a national scale.

C. Other

In closing, we continue to make improvements to our chapter. The tutoring program and the FE review sessions make the organization visible within the college of engineering and the university itself. We have a fresh officer team for the next year, all excited to add ideas and energy to the chapter. We hope to continue building the organization to the best of our ability.