Pi Tau Sigma Annual Chapter Report

2009-2010

South Dakota State Tau Chi

A. Initiations

The selection process for new candidates started by obtaining a list of eligible Mechanical Engineering students based on a minimum of around 60 credits and is within the top 25% or so of their respective class. Once a list was generated by the department secretary, the president and advisor met to discuss the candidates one by one to ensure each is worthy of invitation. At which point, letters of invitation were drafted and meeting for current members was scheduled. At this meeting current members decided upon a date to have the "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. Towards the end of this meeting, bents and plaques are provided to those candidates that would like to be initiated. Finally, an initiation date is set, and also a night is scheduled to have open our student work shop so that initiates can gather to work on their bents together and become more well acquainted.

The initiation procedure begins by preparing our department meeting room 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 accepted quality and are signed my all active members of the chapter. 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 log book for the organization to keep record of all initiations.

Finally, our celebration comes in the form of a "game night". The organization provides some money for games and appetizers at a local establishment. This night allows the new members to meet in a social setting and get to know each other on a more casual basis. This event has proved to be quite valuable and more importantly, fun. It seems that initiates are more likely to continue their participation once the pressure of a new organization is removed and a more relaxed atmosphere is presented.

This academic year initiations were held November 4th, 2009 and April 12th, 2010.

B. Chapter Activities

Our organization undertook a new responsibility this past year by agreeing to conduct five workshops for the Flandreau Indian School Success Academy. This program brings groups of 10-20 ninth grade students from a local Indian boarding school. The intention is for each college, in this case engineering, to provide a workshop for the students to get a better understanding of the college's opportunities and the steps necessary to succeed in higher level education. These workshops typically last around 90 minutes and employed a few different activities to keep the students active and attentive. Typically a brief

introduction of our chapter members was given and a short summary of the intent of the workshop. The first activity was splitting the group into teams of 3-4 and having a competition to see which group could suspend a person from a wall for the longest period of time using only duct tape. The intent of the activity is to challenge the students to work together to form a strategy, make quick decisions, and utilize the tape in the most efficient manner. Some teams work hurriedly and sloppily, while others took more controlled approached; the latter usually being more successful. After the first activity was completed, the entire group was reassembled for a discussion on college majors, courses, dorm life, and steps to prepare for college. This discussion was always left open ended so that students could ask their own questions and allow us to address any of their concerns. Lastly, we had another small group activity during which teams are given a bag of supplies (straws, spoons, rubber bands, wood sticks, etc.) to create an impromptu catapult mechanism to shoot a ping pong ball onto a target. Again organization and planning were stressed so that teams worked in a logical manner. It was quite surprising how many different designs we ended up with, some simple, others more complicated, but all were fairly successful in the end. Finally, we went to supper with the group and would answer any more questions they may have for us.

As in previous years, a peer tutoring schedule was organized so that members could provide a valuable service to other students. On average, we had a member available in the student study area for six hours per week. Although attendance was sometimes low, I think it will gain popularity as younger students become more aware of this opportunity.

Our chapter also maintained four miles of interstate highway (I-29) with the Adopt-A-Highway program. Each semester we gather and walk four miles while picking up all trash in the ditches near the highway. Although members aren't overly excited about picking up trash, 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.

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, present an overview of their group to inform others about their intent, participation, and membership opportunity.

Finally, both the chapter president and chapter advisor attended the national convention in Lubbock, TX this spring. The convention was a phenomenally 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, our large initiate class from 2009-2010, totaling 23 new members gives hope to the organization to grow in number, participation, recognition, and enthusiasm. The new officers are quite young and should be able to serve for more than one year and also provide a smoother transition for the officers to follow.