PI TAU SIGMA ANNUAL CHAPTER REPORT
2011-2012
South Dakota State Tau Chi

A. Initiations

When selecting potential candidates for entrance into the Tau Chi chapter of Pi Tau Sigma, the first step in the process is to obtain a list of eligible mechanical engineering students based on a minimum of 60 credit hours and within the top 25% of their respective class. The department secretary generates this list of eligible members and delivers it to the lead advisor upon his request. The advisor and president then meet to discuss the candidates in order to ensure each is worthy of invitation. Typical issues to evaluate include:

- have the students with 60 credit hours taken enough difficult courses to have proven themselves consistent enough to retain their high scholastic standing until completion of their degree
- is the student's character evident both in and out of the class room
- will the student be loyal to the organization through their participation in the organization's activities

Once sorted, the potential candidates remaining receive letters of invitation hand-delivered from current PTS members. This letter includes the date and time of a meeting for current and prospective members as well as contact information of the chapter president should there be a time conflict. This meeting serves as an "informative meeting" to which the candidates are invited 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. After this meeting, bents and plaques are provided to those candidates that wish to become initiates. Finally, an initiation date is set that is appropriate for all potential initiates, and a mandatory night is scheduled to have the student workshop open so that the candidates can gather to polish their bents together in order to introduce them to one another and build camaraderie. Each initiate is also required to participate in highway clean-ups or other character-building events before they are initiated in order to demonstrate their dedication to the organization.

The initiation procedure begins by preparing the department meeting room by dimming the lights, closing the blinds, and setting up the candles. Once this is completed, the current members are welcomed into the initiation room while the initiates wait in another room ignorant of the actual ceremony room. Then, led are the initiates, eyes closed, for a short walk around the building by a PTS member and delivered to the ceremony room. Initiation will then proceed. Upon full acceptance of the initiation rites, all the new members sign a logbook for the organization to keep record of all initiations. Following the signing, the bent and plaque of each new member is judged on appearance and completeness of signatures and the winner awarded some piece of PTS memorabilia (t-shirt, graduation stole, etc).

Following initiation, a celebration is held for the new members in the form of a "game night". The organization provides some money for games and appetizers at a local dining 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 serves as an excellent way to build relationships within the

organization and is enjoyable for everyone in attendance. Many initiates seem more likely to continue their participation once the pressure of being a new member in an organization is removed and a more relaxed atmosphere is presented.

This academic year, initiations were held on November 9, 2011 for nine new active members and on April 25, 2012 for six new members.

B. Chapter Activities

As in many previous years, a peer tutoring schedule was organized so that members could provide a valuable service to other students. Last year, PTS was instrumental in organizing a new format for the program that involved various other honor societies across the College of Engineering, and that program was further developed this year. The group members petitioned the college to match any money the honor societies were willing to spend providing refreshments to those students attending the tutoring session. The sessions continued this year, two nights a week, for two hours each night. Through this collective tutoring effort, tutors are available during that time to cover over twenty engineering-related courses. The program continued to flourish this year with average attendance around ten students per night.

The Tau Chi chapter maintains five miles of interstate highway (I-29) just south of Brookings with the Adopt-A-Highway program. Each semester, the members gather one Saturday morning and walk the stretch of interstate while collecting garbage throughout the ditches and median. This activity is the most commonly recognized effort of the organization outside of campus and members are often surprised by the rewards of community service. Typically, this activity also serves as an excellent team-building activity and allows another chance for potential initiates to get to know current members.

During the fall semester, a fundraiser for the organization was held at the local Pizza Ranch. PTS members bused tables, did dishes, and talked with customers in an effort to both fundraise and increase the visibility of the organization. As part of the fundraiser, a member was required to stand in front of the establishment dressed as a large, yellow chicken dressed as a cowboy to promote the fundraiser. It was an enjoyable experience for each of the members who had to dress up and one they remember to tell potential members when they ask about the organization.

Each year, the mechanical engineering department holds a banquet to honor graduates and scholarship winners as well as invite alumni and donors for an evening of food and entertainment. The Tau Chi chapter always provides MC's for the banquet and assists in the planning of the event through menu selection and program production. This year's MC's provided the highlight of the evening with an engineering rap including a tribute to each faculty members and staff. Also 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.

Finally, both the future chapter president and chapter advisor attended the national convention in San Jose this spring. The convention continued to provide an enjoyable environment and valuable experience for the attendees. The future president will now have the benefit of the

convention under her belt as she leads the organization next year, and continues the new tradition of sending the organization's future leaders to the convention.

C. Other

The organization was unable to repeat the giant teeter-totter fundraiser this year due to scheduling conflicts and construction around the student union, but student feedback informed us of the positive impact the fundraiser had last year so the teeter-totter has been preserved until it can be used again next year. The tutoring efforts of the organization saw better organization and increased support through direct member interaction with the dean of the college. The organization will see many new officers next year, but many of the previous officers will be around campus as active members until their graduation in December. Their leadership and knowledge will provide the necessary support and continuity to provide the organization with a strong academic year.