PI TAU SIGMA ANNUAL CHAPTER REPORT

2012-2013

University of Florida Sigma Omicron

A. Initiations

At the University of Florida, initiates are chosen from the top 35% of students in the mechanical engineering department who are in their third year or have the equivalent 90 credits. These eligible candidates are contacted by the current vice president and are informed of their selection and invited to an introductory meeting. Our chapter receives the list of candidates during the first month of the semester from the undergraduate student program assistant for the mechanical and aerospace engineering department.

Candidates who attend the introductory meeting are briefed by the current officers with a slideshow on Pi Tau Sigma and are told how the chapter members interact amongst themselves, with the university and with the engineering community as a whole. Officers introduce themselves and describe their roles in the chapter. All candidates who attend the introductory meeting, who attend events, or who send an email of interest are noted and have their attendance throughout the semester recorded.

Initiates are required to go to five events over the course of the semester, but are encouraged to attend more and socialize with the other members and initiates. They must attend: one Pi Tau Sigma sponsored lab tour, one service project, one fundraising event, one chapter social, the end of the semester Kick-Ball game, usually placing the officers against the initiates in a fun way to end the semester, and the initiation ceremony. Initiation is mandatory and is usually held during reading days at the end of the semester. If an initiate cannot attend a certain event and would like to substitute another, e.g., an initiate cannot attend the last service event of the semester and instead wants to attend two lab tours; they must obtain permission from the president, vice president, or the membership chair. A one-time dues payment is required before the initiation ceremony. If any of the requirements are not met or if the initiate cannot attend the initiation ceremony, they must wait until next semester to be initiated, assuming they are still eligible. When an initiate pays their dues, they receive a Pi Tau Sigma bent. Initiates are encouraged to polish their bents. At initiation, the initiate who has the best looking bent, as voted by the officers, receives a prize.

The initiation ceremony follows tradition. Initiates are brought into a room with the current officers at the front of the room. A table decorated with Pi Tau Sigma coat of arms and other memorabilia is in the middle of the room, if a table is available. The president and vice president follow the Pi Tau Sigma initiation handbook and describe the coat of arms and the values of Pi Tau Sigma. Once the initiates pledge to uphold the ASME code of ethics, they are congratulated and are welcomed as members. To signify this, they are taught the chapter's secret handshake and each initiate shakes hands with the officers.

At the end of the spring semester's initiation, officer elections are held. All members, including those who were just initiated, can run for a position. Only current officers can run for the president and vice president offices. After elections, food and beverages are usually brought in as a way for the new officers to socialize.

Our chapter held two initiations this year. The fall initiation was held on Thursday, December 6th and ten new members were inducted into the Sigma Omicron chapter. The spring initiation was held on Thursday, April 25th and saw six new members inducted. Of all these new members, six of them ran and were elected to be officers for the next academic year. The four leaving officers welcomed the new officers and congratulated them, offering to assist with any part of the transition.

B. Chapter Activities

The Sigma Omicron chapter is part of many activities and events that promote involvement in the local mechanical engineering department and that introduce students to excellent opportunities for them to take part. The Undergraduate Research Symposium is an annual event where undergraduate students can share their research with faculty, students and other leaders in their respective departments. The best presenters are invited to an awards banquet and dinner where many professors, students and alumni will attend. Our chapter organized the mechanical engineering department's presentations. The top presenters were awarded by the department and given the opportunity to talk with prestigious alumni who are currently working in the mechanical engineering field.

The annual E-Fair is a well-recognized event at the University of Florida. At the E-Fair, groups from all engineering departments come out and demonstrate the fundamental ideas of their core learning to elementary and middle school students, as well as faculty, visiting alumni and fellow students. The Pi Tau Sigma display this year demonstrated the mechanics of a robot performing an overhead golf swing along with the controls mechanisms needed to perform the action. The robot was provided by Dr. Gloria Wiens and was a graduate research project from a former student. For safety reasons, the robot was not powered and was a static display. Pi Tau Sigma representatives demonstrated some of the robot's motion, how the joints worked and were controlled. The booth was well attended by excited children and curious adults, all eager to ask questions about the device.

Several of our chapter's officers attended the annual Mechanical and Aerospace Engineering Department Banquet at the University of Florida. These officers represented our chapter and presented awards to distinguished guests. Five of our officers attended the Pi Tau Sigma National Convention this year. One officer could not attend due to other obligations. At the convention, the absent officer was awarded the Ward O. Winer Scholarship and a present officer was awarded the Ed and Faye Griggs Scholarship for their contributions to Pi Tau Sigma. Additionally, the Sigma Omicron chapter was awarded the Secretary's Commendation award for its activity in the engineering community.

Collaboration with other engineering societies happens often due to our close bonds with them. One of our service chairs this year was also the president of the local Tau Beta Pi chapter, which greatly helped the two groups collaborate on events. One such collaboration is GatorTRAX, a program that introduces many engineering related skills and ideas to elementary, middle and high school students. The Sigma Omicron chapter works together with Tau Beta Pi in teaching these young minds new concepts. Officers and members explain to the students, through physical examples, basic concepts of physics, such as velocity and acceleration. Another collaboration is SECME, which is a strategic alliance to renew and strengthen the professional capacity of young educators, motivate and mentor students and empower parents so that all students can learn and achieve at higher levels. At SECME, students participate in fun activities, such as team tower building or designing a mousetrap car. Our chapter also competes with ASME, Tau Beta Pi and AIAA in an Intersociety Kick-Ball game, promoting camaraderie amongst the engineering groups.

In addition, our chapter holds many fundraisers and social events. Our polo shirt sales over the course of the academic year bring in a healthy amount of sales, allowing us to expand our inventory into more sizes, colors and women's shirts. Our social events range from frozen yogurt at the local Mochi to trivia night at a restaurant. These events are always well attended by members, officers and initiates. Initiates attending these socials are given the chance to personally find out who their officers are and have a great time. The end of the semester Kick-Ball game is another great social event, as described before.

Members of the Sigma Omicron chapter receive email updates of events happening in the local mechanical engineering department. Graduate students and professors contact our advisor and ask for any Pi Tau Sigma members who are interested in working in research workshops or labs. In February, our officers arranged for an alumnus who currently works as a field engineer for Schlumberger to share her experiences in the field after graduating with our members and initiates. Members are invited to seminars and department lectures being held by professors and those working in the mechanical engineering field. Our officers arrange tours of engineering professors' laboratories that are open to all members and initiates. These laboratory tours are a great way for members to meet professors and have a chance to talk to them about research opportunities.

The Sigma Omicron chapter arranges for officer meetings biweekly in the fall and spring semesters. At least once a week, members can expect to see an email from our chapter about the latest events happening in the mechanical engineering world and at the University of Florida.