

Leadership Connection 2018 (15-18 September)

Many Hands Make Light Work: The History and Development of an At-Large Sigma Chapter

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Sigma Theta Tau chapters are often “stand-alone” chapters meaning that their chapter is associated with only one academic institution. Although this can mean the development of a tight knit group of members it also can result in limited resources within that group. In Oklahoma in 1982, charter members had the forethought to develop an at-Large chapter within Sigma composed of three academic institutions, Oklahoma Baptist University, the University of Central Oklahoma, and the University of Oklahoma resulting in the Beta Delta-at-Large Chapter of Sigma. Since that time, the chapter has grown to represent five total academic institutions; Oklahoma City University joined in 1999 and Southwestern Oklahoma State University joined in 2007. This presentation will include interview information from two charter members about their intentions for an at-Large chapter. Membership has grown with over 6,000 members being inducted since that time and currently 673 active members representing these five schools. With that added membership, both benefits and challenges have resulted. Benefits result in increased resources which include money, room space, and varied membership background. Challenges include communication, meeting individual needs, and scheduling conflicts.

When chapters join together, finances from these chapters can allow for increased allocation of scholarships, grant awards, support of other initiatives and general meeting expenses. Scholarships have been a focus for the chapter since chapter inception. Although the exact amount of scholarship money that has been given out over time cannot be determined, it can be estimated that in the last ten years over \$80,000 has been given in scholarship money to both undergraduate students and graduate members. In addition, \$2000 has been offered annually in research grant awards to both students and members. These research grant awards have led to research on the topics of mothers and babies, nursing education, and sepsis identification. At least one of these research grant awards went on to be awarded with national recognition from the National League for Nursing and Midwest Nursing Research Society. Besides supporting scholarships and research grant awards, the chapter has been able to support other successful initiatives. One of these is an annual evidence-based practice conference with the Veteran’s Administration Hospital. The other was support in development of a nationally recognized website for nurses and nursing students on immunizations (the Nursing Initiative Promoting Immunization Training, NIP-IT.com). Finances from pooled resources also allows for the coverage of general meeting expenses such as catering. In addition to these benefits, varied room space is an added benefit. General and board of directors meetings are rotated across membership sites. Two chapters graciously host fall and spring induction ceremonies. The fall induction, which is smaller, occurs in a beautiful chapel on one of the campuses, whereas, the spring induction, which can require seating for up to a thousand people, occurs in a spacious, well-appointed ballroom on another one of the campuses. Another resource is varied membership background which allows for diversified speakers at meetings as well as a large pool of participants eligible for chapter officer positions.

Challenges for at-Large chapters exist which include communication, meeting individual needs, and scheduling conflicts. Most of these challenges, however, can be resolved. To remedy communication challenges, members developed a quarterly newsletter mailed to their homes. In the 1990’s, one of the academic institutions hosted a webpage where the chapter could post information to members. Once the Circle became available, all information from this webpage was transferred. Another resolution for communication challenges is a Facebook page, a twitter account and an e-mail listserv. All serve as places to remind members of ongoing activities within the chapter as well as local and state activities they might be interested in knowing about. Meeting individual needs in at-Large chapter can be a challenge. To help with this, committee representation is sought from many different schools. Members are also

surveyed annually to find out their particular needs. Scheduling conflicts are resolved in many different ways. Chapter leader board meetings are scheduled monthly at the same time with the location varying by academic institution. The calendar for the year is set at the annual meeting in May. This allows everyone to plan ahead to avoid scheduling conflicts. The annual survey guides the selection of dates for membership meetings since there are series of questions regarding scheduling. Committee members schedule meetings with members as needed based on their own schedules.

Although challenges exist, there are always solutions which can resolve them. The benefits to being an at-Large chapter easily outweigh the challenges. We have found that being an at-Large chapter truly exemplifies the phrase, Many Hands Make Light Work. We recommend that other stand-alone chapters consider this option as one that is not only viable but successful.

Title:

Many Hands Make Light Work: The History and Development of an At-Large Sigma Chapter

Keywords:

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References:

N/A

Abstract Summary:

This poster presentation will include information about the history and development, as well as benefits and challenges of a Sigma Theta Tau International at-Large chapter since the 1980s.

Content Outline:

I. Introduction

A. History and Development

B. Successes and Challenges

II. Body

A. Main Point #1 Successes

1. Supporting point #1 Increased Money

a) *Scholarships*

b) Research Grant Awards

c) Support of Other Initiatives

d) General Meeting Expenses

2. Supporting point #2 Room Space

a) General Meeting Space

b) Specialized Induction Space

3. Supporting point #3 Varied Membership Background

a) Diversified Speaker Pool

b) Diversified Chapter Officer Pool

B. Main Point #1 Challenges with Resolutions

1. Supporting point #1 Communication

a) The Circle

b) Facebook, Twitter, email Listserv

2. Supporting point #2 Meeting Individual Needs

a) Committee Representation

b) Annual Needs Survey

3. Supporting point #3 Scheduling Conflicts

a) Development of Annual Calendar

b) Meeting Dates based on Annual Survey

c) Committees Independently Schedule Meetings

III. Conclusion

A. Successes Outweigh Challenges

B. Many Hands Make Light Work

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Professional Experience: Dr. Buckner has been a member of the Beta Delta-at-Large chapter since 1991 and has served in various capacities since that time. She is currently President Elect of the chapter and will serve as President from May 2018 to May 2020. Dr. Buckner is a fellow in the Academy of Nursing Education.

Author Summary: Dr. Buckner has been a nurse educator since 1997 at the University of Oklahoma and is a member of the Beta Delta-at-Large chapter of Sigma since 1991. She is currently President Elect of the chapter and will serve as President from May 2018 to May 2020. Dr. Buckner is a fellow in the Academy of Nursing Education.

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Author Summary: Kathlynn Smith is a Nursing Instructor at the University of Central Oklahoma. She has been a member of Sigma Theta Tau Beta Delta at-Large Chapter since 2012. Kathlynn has served on the board for the past 5 years (3 years as AVP for University of Central Oklahoma and 2 years as Social Media Chairperson. In addition, she has assisted in helping plan chapter meetings and chapter inductions. Kathlynn has also presented at local conferences.