

Leadership Connection 2018 (15-18 September)

Pursuing the Trifecta: Chapter Best Practices for Undergraduate Recruitment, Engagement, and Retention

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I. Introduction/Problem/Background:

The majority of undergraduates who join our chapter of Sigma Theta Tau International (STTI) often do so to list membership in the honor society on their resume. There is little involvement with the chapter beyond induction and rental or purchase of honor cords for graduation. Past graduation, few renewed memberships. Despite the fact that our chapter offers opportunities to join during multiple undergraduate semesters and that many members remain on campus for at least a year, there was little if any participation in chapter meetings and/or activities, and few undergraduate posts or replies on the Circle or chapter Facebook page. This was especially concerning given that our chapter is at a research-intensive university where honors-undergraduates are actively engaged in research with senior faculty members with strong records of research. We sought to intentionally recruit, engage, and retain undergraduate members actively in our chapter.

II. Methods:

Two new undergraduate members approached chapter leaders to ask how they could be more involved, but also expressed feeling intimidated to serve in leadership roles with graduate students and faculty members. Chapter leaders voted on creating an undergraduate director position and an additional leadership succession position and elected the two undergraduate members into those positions. Two chapter leaders (Treasurer and Vice-President) also intentionally engaged with undergraduates in addition to their ongoing chapter responsibilities. Undergraduate leaders conducted sixteen informal interviews of undergraduate students. Both graduate and undergraduate officers felt that undergraduate members were more likely to join if they were familiar with chapter leaders and members, or given information at a social event. Both groups met twice at off-site locations to collaboratively assess weaknesses and identify priority solutions.

III. Results:

Informal survey results of undergraduate students found that most students joined STTI for resume placement, networking opportunities, or to boost application to a Master's program. Four individuals reported joining because a favorite faculty member encouraged them. One student at a new-student orientation was aware of the organization and enthusiastic about joining.

The following problems and corresponding solutions were identified:

- Unfamiliarity with STTI and how to engage in activities before and/or after induction:
 1. Developed professionally-printed media in the form of a poster to advertise the benefits of membership for use at chapter events
 2. Purposive and strategic outreach to engage undergraduate students early in academic career to familiarize with STTI academic requirements for induction.
 3. Coordinated date of STTI cookie social in school lobby with undergraduate schedule to increase participation which led to increased membership.
 4. Introduced a second induction ceremony for Fall inductees, in addition to Spring induction

5. Collaborated with other undergraduate and graduate health-oriented organizations to raise funds for disaster relief
- Financial barriers to membership:
 1. Educated members on discounted STTI student membership and renewal.
 2. Brainstormed ideas to help with cost of membership; may consider offering established membership sponsorship and mentorship opportunities
 - Intimidated to participate due to majority of leadership being graduate students & faculty
 1. Created undergraduate director chapter leader role for equal representation of undergraduates within chapter leadership
 2. Undergraduate and graduate chapter leaders worked together create t-shirt design contest, tabulate votes, find a vendor, submitting paperwork to STTI and academic institution for logo approval, and finished t-shirts in time to unveil at STTI 2017 Biennium Convention
 - Lack of incentives for undergraduate membership besides resume placement
 1. Held a t-shirt design contest and allowed members to vote for their favorite submission
 2. Introduced “Undergraduate Travel Scholarship” or travel to conferences to present research; generated \$801 dollars in t-shirt sales to start fund for undergraduate travel scholarship
 - Ineffective social media presence.
 1. Creation of a new Facebook group to communicate with members more readily; use of giveaways to increase traffic to chapter website.
 2. Incentivized member traffic to chapter website and the Circle by providing two registration slots for basic disaster life support course
 3. Educated members on available continuing education modules on STTI website.

IV. Recommendations: The promotion of the chapter at undergraduate events and maintaining undergraduate chapter leadership roles should be a priority to reinforce the importance of undergraduate participation to nurture the future of nursing scholarship, leadership and service. The use of Facebook as an alternative method of communication should be considered for engagement with undergraduate members, and orientation to the Circle is needed. The introduction of the travel scholarship to present undergraduate research boosted chapter engagement and participation. Continually communicating the benefits of joining STTI and the available student discounts for membership renewal can ease financial concerns. These recommendations can be used as best practices to engage additional graduate students, faculty, and international students in the future.

V. Limitations: This was an informal project conducted by ambitious undergraduates and chapter leaders at one academic-based chapter. Results are informal and we do not claim to have conducted a rigorous study representative of the eligible STTI undergraduate population at our institution.

VI. Conclusion - Overall, collaborative efforts between undergraduate, graduate, and faculty members increased undergraduate awareness of STTI. Outreach to encourage new undergraduate members to join through social events was effective for spreading awareness and chapter-member designed t-shirts spurred involvement of those who were already members. Involving undergraduates in chapter leadership roles early in their career promotes professional growth and leadership qualities. Undergraduates want to engage with the chapter but are not always sure how. STTI provides a bridge connecting undergraduates not only to local chapter leaders, but to global nursing leaders as well. After graduation, new nurses can use STTI to continue to grow in leadership roles and enhance their nursing career through continuing education.

Title:

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References:
N/A submitting chapter relating poster.

Abstract Summary:
This poster describes dynamic strategies utilized to increase recruitment, engagement, and retention of undergraduate chapter members. Common reasons that undergraduates felt disengaged with membership in our chapter are addressed, and strategies such as active collaboration and providing leadership opportunities are described.

Content Outline:

- I. Introduction/Problem/Background
- II. Methods
- III. Results
 - Problem listed: _____
 - i. corresponding solution: _____
 - ii. corresponding solution: _____
- IV. Recommendations
- V. Limitations
- VI. Conclusion

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Professional Experience: I am a recent graduate nurse of the University of Texas at Austin. I have 2 years of experience in the Epsilon Theta Chapter at UT as a Leadership Succession Committee member and employment as a registered nurse at the Intermediate Care Unit of Dell Children's Medical Center in Austin, TX.

Author Summary: I am a recent graduate nurse of the University of Texas at Austin. I have 2 years of experience in the Epsilon Theta Chapter at UT as a Leadership Succession Committee member and employment as a registered nurse at the Intermediate Care Unit of Dell Children's Medical Center in Austin, TX.

Second Author
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Professional Experience: Have been involved with new graduate nurse preceptorship and mentorship for the past 10 years within clinical unit. Brought passion for transition to practice for new graduate nurses from the clinical setting to a teaching assistant position working with undergraduates at the University of Texas at Austin School of Nursing. As part of leadership role with the Epsilon Theta chapter of Sigma Theta Tau at The University of Texas at Austin, engaged and collaborated with undergraduate students to

include them in chapter leadership and activities to support the chapter and mentor undergraduate student in leadership roles throughout their academic career and as they transition to practice discuss future pursuit of nursing research.

Author Summary: Davika Reid is President of the Epsilon Theta chapter of Sigma Theta Tau International at The University Texas at Austin School of Nursing. As a neonatal nurse, she has precepted and mentored new graduate nurses as they transition to practice, co-leading the New Nurse Mentoring Project to improve retention in her unit at Seton Medical Center, Austin. Her doctoral research focuses on nurse-provided recommendations for care of the newborn during the postnatal period in Kenya.

Third Author
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Professional Experience: I have served as a teaching assistant for undergraduate and alternate-entry masters students at The University of Texas at Austin's School of Nursing since 2015 so I am in regular contact with our undergraduate nursing students. Additionally, I am the treasurer for Epsilon Theta chapter and have designed materials for engaging membership, such as an informative poster for events and a t-shirt for members.

Author Summary: Lisa Geshell, MSN, RN, a Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Future of Nursing Scholar, is interested in improving advance care planning in people with early dementia. Geshell is passionate about providing appropriate, high quality care to older adults that respects their autonomy and protects their dignity. She earned her BSN from Arizona State University, MSN from The University of Texas at Austin, and is currently a PhD student at The University of Texas at Austin.