Professional organizations can offer faculty, nurses, and students a unique environment face-to-face and virtually to collaborate, educate, and provide leadership. As Esmaeili, Dehghan-Nayeri, and Negarandeh (2013) explain, professional organizations can bring about social change by improving the quality of nursing services, increased knowledge and skills for better patient care, and an opportunity for members to become empowered to exercise their professional rights. The philosophy of our local chapter of Sigma Theta Tau International (STTI), Nu Zeta, expresses a continued need to improve the quality of nursing services through evidence-based practice, education, and leadership.

Despite Nu Zeta efforts to recruit, engage, and sustain growth, the chapter membership declined over the past 10 years. The chapter officers were alerted, and responded by working collaboratively to better understand the unique needs of our membership. The chapter board decided that an earnest effort was needed to overcome barriers to member recruitment, engagement, and retention. Initial findings identified the cost of yearly dues, inconvenient location or times for monthly meetings, and that professionals did not perceive the professional purpose or benefits of being a member in our local chapter.

The Nu Zeta Chapter board responded using a three prong approach. First and foremost, the chapter board worked on being authentic related to person and finances. Given our rural location, people know one another, and taking the time to acknowledge fellow members socially and in formal settings was important. The chapter board also decided to maintain membership dues and work more on fund raisers to cover increasing budgetary demands. Additionally, the chapter amended meeting times to lunch hours and evenings, and we are providing members a zoom online meeting option. Secondly, Nu Zeta utilized social media. As Gruenberg (2015) mentioned, members tend to develop closeness through daily networking, and therefore board members worked on developing the website and local Facebook association to communicate and display benefits for continued membership.

The third and most intense work was focused on the value of being a member of Nu Zeta for direct access to sources of information and standards based on evidence that keep nurses informed and educated (Hopkins, et al., 2016). The Nu Zeta Chapter decided to focus on concentrated efforts to provide its members with opportunities to attend professional programs. The audience is informed of these presentations through social media, the chapter’s website and the local university and hospital.

The latest program presented in April 2017, Looking Beyond the Surface: Human Trafficking and the Healthcare Response, was presented by Tina Peck MSN, RN SANE-A, SANE-P. The audience for this presentation included Nu Zeta members, local nursing professionals and nursing students. The purpose of the presentation was to inform nurses and nursing students of how human trafficking victims may
present, how the person may be transported, and areas where human trafficking occurrences are high. A tool developed by the presenter along with her facility was provided as a pocket guide that professionals could have on them at all times to assist with implementation of the next steps should human trafficking be suspected. This program was offered free to all members, Registered Nurses and nursing students.

Upcoming plans for Nu Zeta programs include a leadership presentation at the induction banquet empathizing ways to help new registered nurses tackle and thrive in new leadership roles, as well as how others can help encourage leadership in all areas. The chapter’s board member in collaboration with another faculty member will present this presentation. A program that is planned for June includes a hot topic in healthcare currently concerning opioids. This presenter will be presenting over a tool that she has developed to help with the opioid crisis as it pertains to family medicine. This program will also be available to Nu Zeta Members, local nursing professionals and nursing students, providing continuing education credits for attending.

The Nu Zeta Board is proud to announce that our collaborative efforts to address membership recruitment and engagement is being positively impacted. In the recent statistics provided to the chapter, we discovered that our fiscal year chapter retention rate for 2017 is 72% (compared to 66% in 2016) and the fiscal year chapter acceptance rate for 2017 is 72% (compared to 30% in 2016). We acknowledge that our efforts to recruit and engage members is only beginning, but Nu Zeta is proud to be making a difference with our membership. Nu Zeta believes in the value of STTI, and we are striving to make an impact on our membership for improved nursing services, increased knowledge and skills for better patient care, and a membership that is empowered to exercise their professional rights.

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**Title:**

Encouraging Meaningful Engagement of Professionals

**Keywords:**

Engagement, Recruitment and Retention

**References:**


from induction through transition to professional practice. *Journal of Nursing Education and Practice*, 6(12), 18-23. doi: 10.5430/jnep.v6n12p18

**Abstract Summary:**
Recruiting and retaining members are not the only important parts of a chapter’s success. Engaging members in professional and valuable programs that foster educational tools that will help members in their practice are also successful tools that keep members active within a chapter.

**Content Outline:**

I. Introduction

Engaging, Retaining and Recruiting Members of Nu Zeta.

II. Body

Main Point #1 - Understanding the unique needs of our members.

Supporting Point #1 - Initial findings identified the cost of yearly dues to be prohibitive

Supporting Point #2 - Inconvenient location or times for monthly meetings.

Supporting Point #3 - Professionals did not perceive the professional purpose or benefits of being a member in our local chapter.

B. Main Point #2 - Three prong approach to address membership needs.

i. Authenticity

a. Related to member identification.

b. Meeting times altered and variable locations including virtual meetings.

c. Maintain membership dues.

ii. Social Media

a. Initiated Facebook Site.

b. Increased website traffic.

iii. Professional Value of being a Nu Zeta Member

a. Engagement Program

1. Human Trafficking
2. Opioid Epidemic

3. Fostering Leadership

III. Conclusion

a. Continued to work on membership recruitment and engagement.

b. Statistical Findings:

1. Fiscal year chapter retention rate for 2017 is 72% (compared to 66% in 2016)

2. Fiscal year chapter acceptance rate for 2017 is 72% (compared to 30% in 2016).

First Primary Presenting Author

Primary Presenting Author

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Fort Hays State University
Department of Nursing
Assistant Professor
Hays KS
USA

Professional Experience: Masters of Nursing Education Graduate in December 2014. Since graduation two peer reviewed poster presentations, and submitted abstracts that were accepted at Nurse Educator conferences.

Author Summary: This section is not applicable to our chapter as we have requested to do a chapter poster presentation only for the Nu Zeta Chapter at this conference.

Second Author

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Professional Experience: I have two bachelor degrees, one in criminal justice and one in nursing. I also hold a master's degree in nursing and am currently working on my doctorate. In my career in criminal justice I was tasked with providing training opportunities for staff. In my nursing career I have served as a charge nurse, hospital educator and faculty member. All of these roles have required skills in fostering engagement in professionals.

Author Summary: Alicia Arias is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Nursing at Fort Hays State University. She holds two bachelor degrees, one in criminal justice and one in nursing.

Third Author

Christine Hober, PhD, MSN, RN-BC, CNE
Fort Hays State University
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**Professional Experience:** Dr. Christine Hober has worked at Fort Hays State University for 14 years in both undergraduate and graduate nursing studies. Dr. Hober has served on Nu Zeta, the Fort Hays State University's Chapter of Sigma, since 2005. Over the past few years, the educational activities of the presentation that were reported in 'Encouraging Meaningful Engagement of Professionals' unfolded. The Nu Zeta Chapter Board worked collaboratively with interdisciplinary professionals to provide the educational experiences for chapter membership, calling upon the expertise of content experts including board members. The goal of Nu Zeta was to improve the quality of nursing services through evidence-based practice, education, and leadership.

**Author Summary:** Dr. Christine Hober has worked at Fort Hays State University for 14 years in both undergraduate and graduate nursing studies. Dr. Hober became a Sigma member originally at Chico State University, and then opted for dual membership upon moving to Kansas. After beginning employment at Fort Hays State University, she completed her PhD in Nursing at the University of Kansas Medical Center. She has served in the Nu Zeta Chapter of Sigma since 2005.

Fourth Author

Kathleen Ward, MSN, BSN, RN  
Fort Hays State University  
Department of Nursing  
Associate Professor of Nursing  
Hays KS  
USA

**Professional Experience:** As one of the members of the first Nu Zeta Chapter and as the faculty counselor for the past three years I have devoted over 25 years to the membership recruitment and engagement process. I promote STTI in all of my classes in an effort to generate interest in this prestigious organization to students from freshman level on. Also, promote STTI at all prospective student visits and during our Summer Nightingale Experience for high school Students.

**Author Summary:** Kathleen Ward is a member of the nursing faculty at Fort Hays State University. Ms. Ward received her BSN, MSN in nursing administration and post-masters in nursing education from FHSU and worked in Obstetrics and NICU for over twenty years. Innovative pedagogical teaching strategies are her passion, especially in the area of obstetrics, research, and international nursing experiences. Ms. Ward has presented extensively on these topics both nationally and internationally.

Fifth Author

Rebecca Sander, MSN, RN  
Fort Hays State University  
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Hays KS  
USA

**Professional Experience:** Rebecca Sander has a nursing education for over 35 years at the ADN, BSN and MSN levels with clinical practice in Med/Surg, Oncology, Hospice, and Community/Home Health.

**Author Summary:** Rebecca Sander MSN RN is an Associate Professor of Nursing at Fort Hays State University in Hays Kansas. Ms. Sander has taught nursing education at the ADN, BSN, and MSN levels.
for over 35 years and has been working with simulation over the last 12 years at Fort Hays. Ms. Sander currently teaches in the undergraduate, RN to BSN and Masters in Nursing Education at FHSU.

Sixth Author

Carolyn Insley, MSN, MSEd, RN
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USA

Professional Experience: Carolyn Insley has been a member of Nu Zeta Chapter of Sigma Theta Tau International for 22 years. She is currently the chapter president. The board of our chapter has tried various activities designed to attract the active members to participate in the chapter. Providing professional presentations seem to attract the most attendance. Nu Zeta has had programs on timely topics including: human trafficking and the opioid crisis.

Author Summary: Carolyn Insley has a total of 48 years of nursing experience. Part of those years were in the acute care hospital setting in various areas including: psych, medical-surgical, ICU, perioperative. Ms. Insley has been a nurse educator for 25 years teaching in the undergraduate program of the Fort Hays State University Nursing Department. She has taught a variety of subjects including medical-surgical, health assessment, healthcare ethics, professional development, gerontology, fundamentals, and community.

Seventh Author

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Fort Hays State University
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Hays KS
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Professional Experience: I have 20 years of nursing experience including 10 years of acute care; 5 years of management; and 5 years of nursing education. I currently teach leadership and management in the undergraduate and graduate programs at a local university.

Author Summary: Tanya Smith is an associate professor at Fort Hays State University. She serves as faculty for the Undergraduate and Graduate nursing programs and as assistant chair for the department of nursing. Ms. Smith is currently pursuing her PhD in Nursing through the University of Kansas Medical Center. Ms. Smith research interests include mentoring and student success.

Eighth Author

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Ninth Author

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HMC
Director of Peri Operative Services
Professional Experience: Sarah is a native of Hays, KS. She completed the ADN program in 2005, BSN in 2010 and MSN in 2017. She is currently the Director of Peri Operative Nursing Services at Hays Medical Center.

Author Summary: Sarah is a native of Hays, KS. She completed the ADN program in 2005, BSN in 2010 and MSN in 2017. She is currently the Director of Peri Operative Nursing Services at Hays Medical Center.