Student Advisory Board Convention Report

To:
Tau Beta Pi 2015 Convention Delegates
Tau Beta Pi Collegiate Chapter Officers
Tau Beta Pi Association Officials

From:
Michael Hand
Chair, Student Advisory Board

Hello,

I hope everyone is having a very productive and fulfilling Convention experience thus far and that everyone’s travel was suitably uneventful. It is my pleasure to share with you the following report on the activities of the Tau Beta Pi Student Advisory Board over the previous year.

1 COMMITTEE REPORTS

Our efforts have been focused on five key areas:

1. Reworking the President’s Book
2. Developing increased and improved inter-chapter relations
3. Improving support for smaller chapters
4. Developing and disseminating template transition reports for chapters
5. Investigating and recommending improvements to the role of graduate students in Tau Beta Pi

The sections that follow highlight some of the key activities of each of these subcommittees.

President’s Book Committee
The President’s Book is considered the main source of information about Tau Beta Pi programs and expectations for new chapter presidents. While it is full of important information, it is also long and sometimes difficult to fully digest. The President’s Book Committee is working on streamlining the current book. In the meantime, they have created an abridged pamphlet (included on the flash drive) that contains key information for those preparing for their new role.

Inter-Chapter Relations Committee (ICR)
Tau Beta Pi has over 240 collegiate chapters spread across 16 districts and 49 states (plus Puerto Rico and Washington, D.C.). There is even an international branch chapter. In addition, there is a continually increasing number of alumni chapters popping up in cities around the United States. Nevertheless, for many of those chapters, their interactions with fellow Tau Bates are limited to those individuals who are members of the same chapter, or who happen to attend their District Conference or the annual Convention. The goal of the Inter-Chapter Relations Committee is to investigate and recommend improved means of encouraging and facilitating greater interaction among chapters, rather than solely within.
In service of this mission, the committee has developed a plan to connect chapters based on their shared interests and (where necessary) their geography. Included as part of the survey linked at the end of this report are questions to assess chapters’ interest in various activities. Based on the results of this survey, chapters can be put in contact to help facilitate some of these activities.

Small Chapter Support Committee
The committee tasked with improving the support of and resources available to small chapters has outlined three main goals for this year. The first and most important goal is to organize a more consistent and sustainable interaction between small and large chapters. In particular, we want to create more opportunities for small chapters to be engaged in Engineering Futures sessions and MindSET modules, possibly by partnering with a nearby larger chapter. The first step will be to find chapters that are interested in participating. In our survey linked below, you’ll be able to indicate your chapter’s interest in participating and to also get more information. Following completion of the survey, we’ll be organizing a follow-up activity to connect chapters with each other so they can get started on planning collaborative events that would be of interest to them. Another outcome we’d love to see from this is more, smaller chapters being involved in hosting District Conferences.

The second goal is to help increase advisor participation in small chapters. Having a healthy number of engaged, passionate advisors can be the difference between a smaller chapter that is thriving and one struggling to initiate enough members to ensure its own continuity. To that end, we’re working on developing our list of recommendations on how to encourage more engaged advisors. Some ideas include having district directors engage more with advisors, facilitating opportunities for advisors of various chapters to meet and brainstorm outside of the Convention, and better publicizing means for chapters to find advisors, especially leveraging local alumni and alumni chapters.

The final goal is to increase small chapter awareness of funded TBP programs, which include MindSET grants, Engineering Futures, and others. We’re working on brainstorming ways to better convey this information, such as sending a special communication to each newly elected chapter president.

Template Transition Reports Committee
Starting transition material from scratch is hard; we know that. How do you know what to write down? What would be helpful for your successor? Many chapters struggle with inadequate or nonexistent transition reports and have to reinvent the wheel (or the bent) year-after-year. With your help, the SAB is looking to fix that problem by creating a series of template transition reports chapters can use to jumpstart their transition process. We’re assembling example guides from chapters across the country and extracting the common points to serve as a starting point for chapters that don’t have established transition reports for each officer. An example is included on your flash drive. This is a template transition report for chapter presidents. To get started, work through the guide filling in the blanks with any chapter-specific information. Much of the material that is common across chapters has already been included for you. All you need to do is make it your own!

You can help by sending us your chapter’s transition reports. In order to make these reports as useful to as many chapters as possible, we need to know what chapters are doing now. If you have any transition reports you think would be useful as source material for future reports, send them to mhand1@tbp.org.
Graduate Students Committee
At the time of its founding, Tau Beta Pi was an organization of undergraduate men and alumni who had completed their studies. Over the last 130 years, the nature of higher education (and that of Tau Beta Pi) has changed considerably. Unfortunately, this has led to graduate students often being caught in the middle of somewhat conflicting definitions. Are they students? Are they alumni? Are they both? The SAB Graduate Students Committee is seeking to answer these questions by working on three main goals.

The first is to survey every collegiate chapter on their interactions with graduate students. Do they invite them? Do they initiate them? How involved are they? This is included as part of the survey linked below.

The second is to survey graduate student members about their desired role in the Association. Do they identify more with their undergraduate fellows? With the alumni? Would they want to serve as district directors or Engineering Futures facilitators? Having information about how graduate students see themselves in the organization, and about how they are seen by chapters, will help us to craft recommendations about changes that could be made to best serve the needs of this particular group of members. The survey should be available sometime in the next few months.

The final goal is to analyze and make recommendations on the eligibility requirements for graduate students. While many graduate students who graduated from an undergraduate institution that had a TBP chapter would be eligible as alumni, many graduate students come from institutions without chapters. Moreover, tracking the eligibility status of every potential alumni initiate would be an infeasible task. Ultimately, our goal is to ensure the Association is doing the most it can to invite and initiate every graduate student member who has duly “conferred honor upon their Alma Mater through distinguished scholarship and exemplary character as students in engineering.” We are investigating ways that other honor societies address eligibility of graduate students, determining what corollaries would logically exist to the top-fifth of undergraduate institutions, and looking into any other items which may be of benefit in recommending any changes to the eligibility requirements for graduate students.

2 WHAT YOU CAN DO TO BE ENGAGED
The Student Advisory Board is most effective when we can be continuously engaged with the experiences of the collegiate chapters around the country. We have a number of ways for you to keep us apprised of your activities, ideas, and concerns.

1. Fill out our survey: https://goo.gl/51Bs4x
2. Like us on Facebook: https://www.facebook.com/TBPSAB
3. Send us ideas, inquiries, etc. at: sab.info.g@tbp.org
4. Apply to be a member: Look for information in The Bulletin. You can also email us of your interest.

Student Advisory Board members will be around throughout the Convention, so if you have any questions about the board or how you can be involved, please don’t hesitate to ask.

Regards,