Student Advisory Board Convention Report

To:
Tau Beta Pi 2016 Convention Delegates
Tau Beta Pi Collegiate Chapter Officers
Tau Beta Pi Association Officials

From:
Maryssa Mercer
Chair, Student Advisory Board

Greetings Tau Bates!

I hope everyone is enjoying the fantastic weather here in San Diego and that you all are having a very productive, exciting, and fulfilling Convention experience thus far. 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 and our goals for the future.

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. However, we understand that the current edition can be incredibly overwhelming and sometimes difficult to fully digest since it is 100+ pages long. Therefore, The President’s Book Committee has been tasked with streamlining and reorganizing this document. We plan to roll out a new and improved President’s Book that will serve as a useful reference that is easy to navigate- not something that is meant to be read cover-to-cover. We hope that our efforts will produce a trusty guide that collegiate chapter presidents will continue to refer back to throughout the year. In the meantime, we have created an abridged pamphlet (located on our SAB website) that contains key information for those preparing for their new role as a Collegiate Chapter President.
Inter-Chapter Relations Committee (ICR)

Tau Beta Pi has over 245 collegiate chapters spread across 16 districts and 49 states (plus Puerto Rico and Washington, D.C.), with a total initiated membership of approximately 575,000. 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 annual Convention. The goal of the Inter-Chapter Relations Committee is to develop solutions to promote activities, mentorship, and best practices among chapters, rather than solely within. We are in the process of designing a survey to match local collegiate and alumni chapters with shared interests. We are also engaged in identifying ways to foster effective inter-chapter communication through social media (LinkedIn, Twitter, etc).

Small Chapter Support Committee

The committee tasked with improving the support of and resources available to small chapters has outlined three main goals this year. The first goal is to recruit mentor chapters that would be interested in helping smaller chapters. From the 2015 National Convention Survey, only eight chapters expressed interest in mentoring other chapters, whereas thirty-two chapters expressed interest in being mentored. Thus, one primary focus is to increase the number of mentor chapters. This will be done by contacting chapters that attended last year’s Tau Beta Pi Convention. It would be ideal for the mentor chapters to consist of both large and small chapters. Once enough mentor chapters have been enrolled, the next goal will be to assign the mentoring chapters with smaller chapters that need support. The committee will then contact all of the mentoring chapters for some advice on good practices, which plays into the second goal of the committee.

The second goal is to create a video series of best practices for succeeding as a Tau Beta Pi chapter. The committee is working to put together a team of model universities and alumni chapters who have demonstrated leadership among the chapters in their region. With this core team of collegiate and alumni chapters, the committee will work to build a video series to answer questions about how to succeed in Tau Beta Pi. Possible topics include ways to fundraise and how to network with professionals.

The last goal is to help increase advisor participation in small chapters. Up until now, the process for becoming a “good” advisor has been based on abstract steps. The committee would like to standardize the responsibilities of all advisors, such that there is a consistency in what is expected from an advisor. Within the upcoming year, this committee would like to create a brochure for advisors, including their responsibilities, benefits of being an advisor, and some advisor testimonies. This brochure can then be used to create a standard advisor activity at district conferences. This activity would allow for advisors to get together and share more abstract/personal ideas for how to be a good advisor, as well as refreshing each of them on their concrete responsibilities from headquarters.
Finally, we would like to ask the convention presenters to encourage any and all chapters, no matter their size, to reach out to the Student Advisory Board (tbp.sab@tbp.org) if they are interested in becoming a mentor chapter.

Template Transition Reports Committee
The committee was tasked with creating and disseminating transition materials for chapter officers. The Student Advisory Board understands that starting transition material from scratch is difficult, and can be a daunting task for officers who are busy running chapter events and submitting reports. How do you know what to write down? What would be helpful for your successor? Many chapters struggle with inadequate or nonexistent transition reports, forcing new officers to start from scratch and reinvent the wheel year after year. With your help, the SAB is looking to fix this problem by creating a series of template transition reports that collegiate chapters can use to jumpstart their transition process.

Over the past year, we have been assembling guides from chapters across the country and extracting the common points to serve as a starting point for chapters that don’t have an established record for each officer position. The first template transition report has been published for chapter Presidents, and is available for download today on the SAB website. To get started, work through the guide filling in the blanks with information specific to your chapter. Much of the material that is common across chapters has already been included for you, so all you need to do is make it your own!

Based on the results from the 2015 National Convention Survey, three key duties were identified as the most significant need for better transition materials across chapters of all sizes: Corresponding Secretary, Initiation (Vice President), and Treasurer. The Template Transition Materials Committee has been developing model reports for each of these positions based on your feedback. As each of these new templates are published, they will be made available for download and use by your chapter on the SAB website, so stay tuned! The committee will also be working with HQ and your District Directors to distribute these new transition report guides through officer training sessions at upcoming District Conferences.

You can help by sending us your chapter's existing transition reports. In order to make these templates useful to as many chapters as possible, we need to know what chapters are doing now to communicate key information necessary to perform officer duties between outgoing and incoming officers. You can help by sending us your chapter's existing transition reports. If you have any transition materials that you think would be useful as source material for future templates, or any other thoughts or suggestions that you think would be beneficial, please send them to tbp.sab@tbp.org. The Template Transition Materials Committee greatly appreciates any feedback that is received from all chapters.

Graduate Students Committee
The committee tasked with improving the recruitment and retention of graduate students has outlined three main goals this year. The first goal is to increase the success of recruiting efforts for graduate students. According to the 2015 Convention survey, only 28 chapters actively recruit graduate students. In an effort to increase that number, the committee proposes that headquarters makes notifying all eligible graduate students a requirement for chapters, similar to the current process for undergraduate students. In addition, the committee considered the possibility of reaching out to both headquarters and chapters that actively recruit graduate students in order to create a document of best practices for recruiting and retaining graduate students. This document would be made available on the Tau Beta Pi
website. Lastly, within the next year, the committee would like to create a brochure for graduate students. Similar to the current undergraduate brochure, this new brochure will include eligibility requirements, benefits of becoming a graduate member, and testimonies from current active graduate students and/or alumni in Tau Beta Pi. Ideally, this brochure would be added to the material available from headquarters free to all chapters.

The second goal is to simplify the process of recruiting alumni who were eligible as undergraduates but did not join. The current process makes it difficult to accomplish this. One idea is to collect a list of recent graduates from each chapter and have headquarters return the alumni eligibility list to each chapter. This would allow chapters to reach out to recent graduates more easily, which in turn aids in the recruitment process. Additionally, the chapters may want to work with local alumni chapters to reach out to recent graduates.

The last goal is to bring together the graduate students from different chapters. Some ideas for accomplishing this are hosting an annual poster presentation, creating a LinkedIn or other social network page to share research, and creating a “graduate spotlight” opportunity to be featured in The Bulletin and/or The Bent.

Finally, we would like to ask the convention presenters to determine if there is any interest in starting an annual poster session or another way to connect graduate students such as a LinkedIn page or graduate student spotlight in Tau Beta Pi publications. If necessary, the committee can put together a survey to determine where the most interest lies.

2. WHAT YOU CAN DO TO BE ENGAGED

The Student Advisory Board is most effective when we are be continuously engaged with the experiences of the collegiate chapters around the country. When you return home from the 111th Annual Convention, please discuss this report with your fellow chapter officers and make a point to download the resources we have created for you. In addition, we have a number of ways for you to keep us apprised of your activities, ideas, and concerns.

1. Visit our Website: https://www.tbp.org/about/studentAdvBoard.cfm
2. Like us on Facebook: https://www.facebook.com/TBPSAB
3. Email us your ideas, suggestions, or inquiries 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.

Best Regards,

Maryssa L. Mercer