

Sigma Tau Delta Board of Directors
MINUTES of the 93rd MEETING
Friday, March 27, 2020
Virtual Meeting

VOTING MEMBERS PRESENT: President **Glen Brewster**; President Elect **Diane Steinberg**; Immediate Past President **Carrie Fitzpatrick**; Officer at Large **Terry Phelps**; Secretary/Treasurer **Shannin Schroeder**; Eastern Regent **Felicia Steele**; Far Western Regent **AmiJo Comeford**; High Plains Regent **Lexey Bartlett**; Midwestern Regent **Tim Helwig**; Southern Regent **Leigh Dillard**; Southwestern Regent **Kaine Ezell**; Student Advisor **Kaitlyn Sass**; Student Advisor **Amanda Ayers**

NON-VOTING MEMBERS PRESENT: Executive Director **William C. Johnson**; Director of Society Operations **Natasha McPartlin**; Director of Marketing and Technology **Elfi Gabriel**; NEHS Director **Dave Wendelin**; Director of Social Media Strategies **Katie Mudd**; Eastern Student Representative **Alex McCarron**; Far Western Student Representative **Julie Handy**; High Plains Student Representative **Jessica Trad**; Midwestern Student Representative **Apryl Moore**; Southern Student Representative **Madison Whatley**; Southwestern Student Representative **Claire Seale**; Alumni Representative **Jessica Heller**

NOT PRESENT: Managing Editor **Dan Colson**

Friday, March 27

President **Brewster** calls the meeting to order at 10:04 a.m.

- **Brewster** foregoes typical introductions.
- **Brewster** mentions our modified Robert's Rules of Order. We will have to be patient with each other, and with technology.
- **McPartlin** will be moderator.

Public Comment on Non-Agenda Items Approval of Minutes

Steele Moves, Steinberg seconds, to approve minutes. Motion carries.

New Business

Regent & Student Representative Reports (Eastern, Far Western, High Plains, Midwestern, Southern, Southwestern)

- **Helwig** has one additional Common Reader (CR) Award; **Steele** has two..

Alumni Representative Report

- **Heller** appreciates the efforts of her fellow alumni.

Editor's Report

- Not present; extensive written report included.

Executive Director's Report

- **Johnson** did not include a "Part II" with his report, which he would have shared at our Board meeting.
- We were doing very well; he notes in particular the work of Regents, SLs, officers, and taskforces. Compliments to all.
- We were pushing two million dollars total assets at the point of **Johnson's** report one month ago.

- **Johnson** warns that enrollments will continue to go down nationwide, at least till 2026, when more than 285,000 fewer students will be graduating from high school.
- Without chapter meetings, we will not have traditional inductions or membership additions. This time of year, we bring in 60-70% of our income each year. We also do not want to take out money from investments, given its recent devastating hits.
- $\Sigma\Delta$ is sending out materials to help chapters think about how to meet, induct, and even present locally or regionally. Sometimes the most creative solutions come out of such times.
- Many students are missing out by not attending the Convention.
- **Brewster** has reached out to committees; we're already brainstorming for how to pare down our events and expenses because of reduced numbers of students, funds, and investments. **Johnson** urges the Board to continue to think about what each of us can do. This is a great opportunity for us to be creative.

National English Honor Society (NEHS) Director's Report

- **Wendelin** reports that NEHS has gone through the scholarship process and has identified 40 students who will be receiving scholarships; they have suspended the dispensing of funds until we know the situation of the finances.
- The Southern Nevada Writing Project still receives its grant.
- Inquiries about virtual meetings and inductions are still coming in.
- The reminders about annual fees for chapters may not be reaching the right people. The grace period will be extended until the end of September.

Director of Society Operations' Report

- **McPartlin** emailed information yesterday regarding enrolling members, particularly invitation enrollment. Virtual enrollment allows students to continue applying for opportunities, including scholarships.
- **McPartlin** and **Mudd** talked to the virtual chapter at Southern New Hampshire University.
- The process for student leadership and elections changed. The Eastern Region applications for student leaders, when not tied to Convention attendance, resulted in a larger crop of applicants from which to select SR and ASR.
- **Steinberg** wonders if there's a date by which we will have selected SLs. The deadline for recommendation forms is Monday; **McPartlin** should be able to send a list of candidates to Regents by Tuesday.

Director of Marketing & Technology Report

- **Gabriel** notes that her work has not allowed her to create a written report. She will submit one soon.
- We had cut the Convention program from 88 pages to 28 pages, saving on costs of printing and shipping.
- Crowd Compass, our app folks, will extend our app usage into next year.
- Scholarships: AwardSpring will allow for overlapping cycles now. This lets us be more flexible.
- Internships: Penguin is working to orient candidates online. Our candidates "interviewed very well," said Penguin.
- Imagination Library swag came in; we will share that with chapters who participate.
- NEHS enrollment will shift to a system more like the self-enrollment allowed on the $\Sigma\Delta$ site.
- Marketing strategies, working on an upgraded website, seeking technology for conventions, and developing robust advertising are work **Gabriel** will be doing in the future.

- GMerch is working with **Gabriel** closely to help with increasing sales despite COVID-19. Students seem to be planning celebrations in late August.

Director of Social Media Report

- **Mudd** notes that the organization (especially SLs) is working on virtual options. If you're doing anything, send ideas to **Mudd**.
- She will be doing a series of video chats for training of the new SLs. This won't include Regents this year. Then **Mudd** will try to arrange Regional video chats.

Brewster gives the CO staff special thanks for the incredible work they do. **Johnson** builds on what **Brewster** says. The work that goes on in the CO is astounding. The staff has to help with the direction the Board decides the organization will go.

Our process for replacing Office Manager Karen Larsen, who is leaving after fifteen years with the organization, is delayed by NIU's HR being shut down.

Task Force Updates

- **Brewster** notes that the new president, **Steinberg**, will decide what the task forces do going forward, especially if new task forces are created, as per the Strategic Plan changes.

Committee Reports:

Executive and Board Development Committee

- **McPartlin** will share the motions from this committee via screen share.
- **Steinberg** moves the "by acclamation" motion for the slate of Board positions, as there was only one applicant per position. Motion carries.
- The Committee moves that Dana Eckstein Bercowitz be elected as Alumni Rep. Motion carries.
- The Committee moves to appoint Kayla Ashbrooks to the SA position. Motion carries.
- **McPartlin** notes that the applicant not appointed to SA will be in the running for the SR/ASR position.
- **Johnson** brings the conversation around to Convention refunds. The Executive Committee moves that we will refund each participant's registration, less \$5 in fees. Discussion includes how reimbursement works. Motion carries.

Officer Reports

President

- **Brewster** thanks the Board profusely but has nothing to add to his report.

Vice President

- **Steinberg** similarly thanks the Board and has nothing to add to her report.

Secretary/Treasurer

- **Schroeder** reads notes from her conversation with our financial advisor, Leslie Evans-Dunn.
- Last year, **Johnson** adds, we used the gains from our finances to cover our expenses. We took out \$95,000 in interest money.

Board Member at Large

- **Phelps** has no additional report.

Immediate Past President

- **Fitzpatrick** has nothing to add to report.

Convention Committee

- The Committee took its charge to reduce future costs very carefully. The first idea is reducing the amount chapters get at the General Business meeting--\$300 to \$200 (\$600 to \$500 for chapters outside the lower 48 states).
- The President's Reception will be a smaller event, and the Committee is considering whether alumni will be invited. There was discussion of moving the food budget to snacks or continental breakfast and reducing drink tickets.
- The Committee recommends a specific budget for speakers, as well as limiting to one major keynote, looking for local speakers/writers to save travel funding, and using alumni and Advisors.
- According to **Comeford**, next year's convention chair may be cutting back on workshops and starting paper presentations earlier, so that those events would take place mostly on Thursday and Friday.
- We might want to host a luncheon event as the gala/award ceremony. Students might be able to leave Saturday without missing the closing event. Moving to no gala would also open up hotel options, as the chosen hotel would no longer need to have a banquet space big enough for 600 or more.
- The Committee also considered moving Wednesday events; **Schroeder** says moving events, rather than canceling everything, would be preferable.
- Money making ideas include opening up for vendors, like book vendors, without harming our support of local bookstores. We might even invite regional presses to attend.
- Area chairs worked very well.
 - Realigning some (larger) areas will be helpful in the future. We would realign awards in the future as well, given where the numbers came out.
 - Adding an additional category might have meant that we had a greater number of papers (multicultural or world lit).
- Our provisional category worked as planned—two students hadn't been inducted but had submitted. One of the two had planned to attend Convention.
- **Schroeder** adds that the Convention chair often shifts the convention awards based on the numbers coming in for her or his particular convention.
- **Heller** asks not to exile alumni from the President's Reception. Doing away with other alumni marketing means that alumni would be harmed by that change.
- **Johnson** expresses appreciation for how much work this Committee did in thinking about future budgets.

Communications Committee

- **Ezell** addresses **Brewster's** charge to conserve costs. The cost for printing and shipping is \$25,000.
- He quotes editor **Colson**: "Maybe this was the kick in the a** we needed to get that done."
- **The Committee moves to set the amount for printing and shipping Society publications at \$11K.** Journal would still have an ISSN, confirms **Steele** in discussion. **Motion carries.**
- Regarding journal awards—one submission was not creative, so a judge hadn't given comments. Academic student journals haven't always been included. Qualifications have been vague. **Ezell** believes they should be allowed and treated equally. We shouldn't be adding a new award right now. **The Committee moves to add language regarding the mission and fostering multiple aspects of the discipline to the criteria for the Outstanding Literary Arts Journal Award.** Discussion amends "all aspects" to "multiple aspects." **Motion carries.**
- The Committee discussed ways of keeping lines of communication open locally, regionally, and nationally.

Scholarships and Academic Awards Committee

- **Dillard** wants to add to the conversation about cost-saving measures. We should be encouraging students still to apply. Looking ahead to a time when we're out of the current situation, we want to be giving money to students.
- Some cost-saving will come from programs that have been canceled.
- Fewer Regents Scholarships will be offered for the coming year.
- At the last Board meeting, we added the second opportunity for classroom library grants. We'll defer the launch of those additional grants until next year.
- **Steinberg** stresses that we may have more students in financial need than ever before. So, being miserly would be bad.
- **Bartlett** points out that Regents Scholarships are smaller amounts. Maybe we shift and do fewer runners-up and more, smaller Regents Scholarships?
- **Dillard** notes that the conversation did address students in dire situations. We will do our best to give money to a lot of students. The Committee respects **Steinberg's** points and position—the organization wants to save money in ways that don't hurt students.

Service and Partnerships Committee

- We may need to extend deadline to Imagination Library applications.
- Chapters are doing project grants—a record number—some chapters may need extra time to get things done.
- Lots of reviewing was required for the Penguin internship. The Committee tweaked internship stipend guidelines.

Strategic Planning Committee (Steinberg)

- Eighteen people will be part of the Strategic Planning: voting members of Board, CO staff, and **Fitzpatrick**.
- Meetings for the Board will then start Thursday night.
- Brewster asks for the date of Strategic Planning. September 24 would be the Board meeting, and we'd meet till the 26th, **McPartlin** confirms.
- Transferring airfare has been an option. Be in touch with **McPartlin** separately.

Regents Committee

- **Bartlett** says Regents talked about ways to replace the work they'd have been doing at Convention. The conversation touched on networking opportunities.
- We're demonstrating that being faster in the Board meeting is possible—and that allows Regents to be freed up for mentoring and recruiting opportunities.
- **Heller** was especially helpful in what the alumni might do. Alumni could talk about how they're coping.
 - **Heller** notes the conversation can include the 2008-09 recession. Perspectives from now and ten years ago would be helpful.
- Not much spending from Regents, so they had few cost-cutting discussions.
- They discussed the succession plan for Regents. The Committee nominates **Steele** for the next chair.

Student Leadership Committee

- **Sass** talked about cost-cutting measures with group, but they don't spend much.
- Finding local donors for prizes might be helpful. Continuing with game night is a low budget way to include a successful event.
- Current SLs discussed training for incoming SLs.
- **Sass** says thank you for letting her be part of the Board.
- **Ayers** thanks **Sass** for her work but has no additional information.

Past Presidents Advisory Council

- We should be asking past presidents when we need judges—the group is always willing to help!
- **Bartlett** says Board recruitment from the Past Presidents Advisory Council worked, helping to secure our next High Plains Regent.

Brewster calls for a break at 12:02 pm and reconvenes at 12:15 pm.

Budget Review and Approval

- **Schroeder** walks the Board through the end-of-year budget. **Gabriel** notes that money for our app will apply to the 2021 convention.
- **Motion to approve the budget.** **Ezell** asks whether we look at changing the Adopted budget, based on the cost-changing measures. **Steinberg** asks about the balancing of the budget. **Dillard** moves, **Bartlett** seconds, to approve the budget as presented. **Motion carries.**

Other New Business

- **Dillard** has been looking at moving their Southern Regional Conference. Her school will host.
- **Helwig** hopes that the Midwestern Regional Conference goes smoothly.

Closing Thoughts

This is not the way **Brewster** thought his final meeting would go. He considers himself lucky for having the support of the CO and the work they've done.

Regarding travel, do reach out to **McPartlin** if you need information about airline reimbursement.

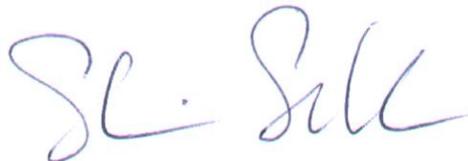
Remember: all committee chairs send minutes to **McPartlin** within two weeks. She thanks those who've already sent them.

We're playing musical chairs, says **Johnson**, as people move to different positions. **Fitzpatrick** is leaving the Board entirely. Were we meeting in person, he would be presenting her with a beautiful mahogany box that says "Carrie Fitzpatrick, Sigma Tau Delta, Transforming the World with Words." Instead, that gift will be shipped to **Fitzpatrick**.

Brewster thanks the Board members again for our work.

Steinberg moves to adjourn. Phelps seconds. Brewster concludes the meeting at 12:44 pm.

Respectfully submitted,



Shannin Schroeder, ΣΤΔ Secretary/Treasurer

March 27, 2020

Revised draft submitted August 23, 2020

Submitted for Board approval September 14, 2020