

## **SIGMA TAU DELTA, SPFRING 2021 BOARD MEETING MINUTES**

Meeting convened at 9:07 a.m. CST, 10 April 2021

**Present:** Lexey Bartlett, Natasha McPartlin, Diane Steinberg, Shannin Schroeder, Tim Helwig, Glen Brewster, Katie Mudd, Kim Kuhn, Kayla Ashbrooks, Felicia Steele, Dave Wendelin, Kaine Ezell, Amanda Ayers, Julianne Ford, Machen Olson, William Johnson, Terry Phelps, Elfrida Gabriel, Brett Iarrobino, Kassia Waggoner, Haley Powell, Leigh Dillard, AmiJo Comeford, Dana Berkowitz

Not Present: Myranda Morse, Dan Colson

### **Welcome**

Steinberg opens the meeting by recognizing how difficult this year has been but commends everyone for continuing to do great work and for holding a successful online Convention. She reads “Water in Love” by Ed Bok Lee from Minneapolis.

**(Re)Introductions:** As per tradition, all participants introduce themselves.

### **Robert’s Rules of Order & Special Rules**

The “Online Board Meeting Guidelines” file are posted to the Board website (link shared in chat).

Discussion: Steinberg gives a brief explanation of procedures and clarification of voting and modifications of Robert’s Rules for our meetings.

### **Approval of Minutes**

Discussion: Two corrections: Machen Olson left off the list of those present; correct the spelling of Olson in the body of the minutes.

**Dillard moves to accept the minutes as amended; Brewster seconds.**

**Motion passes.**

**Public Comment on Non-Agenda Items** (also a chance to propose emendations to the agenda)

Discussion: No comments or additions to the agenda.

**New Business** – All reports were submitted in writing and were to have been read by all members before the meeting. Board members will respond to any questions or comments about their reports. Questions are welcomed from voting and non-voting board members.

### **Central Office Reports & Updates**

Executive Director’s Report: Johnson directs us to #6 on the second page of his report, in order to highlight the strength and resilience of Sigma Tau Delta in spite of the pandemic. Our investments have continued to do well, which helps to support our work, although the number of new members and chapters is down, so we do have to be cautious in our actions until we see how the pandemic ultimately has affected our chapters and organization as a whole.

National English Honor Society (NEHS) Director's Report: Wendelin also notes this has been a challenging year, but communication, including webinars that provided cross-organization connections, has been a positive highlight. Next week's webinar focuses on university honor societies (including Sigma Tau Delta), which is not something most high school students know about yet. New members are joining the NEHS Advisory Council, including an effort to bring in international members. The induction fee is increasing to \$15, with accompanying grants for those who can't afford the increase. They just awarded over \$61,000 in scholarships.

Director of Society Operations Report: McPartlin responds to a question from Steinberg about the extended membership enrollment period to allow students to enroll after graduation, if they missed the opportunity due to the pandemic, stating that there have been some who used that opportunity. She adds that enrollments have been good this spring, with the direct enrollment option helping to streamline the process. There is one new chapter, at Xavier University in Cincinnati. Helwig asks about an update on enrollment numbers since the report from March 31 noting 1985 new members so far this year. Steinberg asks about the new application process for student leaders, and if they can give other faculty members as potential recommenders. The answer is that they can give another faculty name in addition to the Chapter Advisor's name. Eight applications have come in for Student Leaders, but the High Plains does not have any applicants yet. Johnson notes that Sigma Tau Delta new member numbers are always much lower when compared to NEHS numbers.

Director of Marketing & Technology Report: Gabriel states that 70-80% of our memberships come in the spring, but we are lower than we have been compared to 2019 or earlier. She plans to review the trends in chapter and member numbers as a summer project. The investment in technology allowing students to engage directly with the systems for enrollment or updates will be a major help to boosting enrollment. The webinars helped prepare the CO staff for the technology use required by the Virtual Convention. She gives kudos to the CO team for how well they worked together on that project. The aim is to do more with these tools in the future.

Director of Social Media Report: Mudd reminds us to share content with her that we come across on the internet that might be of interest to our members. Steinberg notes she especially has enjoyed the career blogs, and Mudd encourages us to have alumni reach out to her to continue that series.

Editor of Society Publications: Colson not present to report.

Schroeder commends the CO on their work with the technology necessary for all of our activities this year. Steinberg adds her appreciation.

### **Other Board Member Reports**

Officer Reports:

President: Steinberg opens by mentioning the impending retirement of Johnson and Wendelin and the processes that are beginning to hire new Executive Directors for STD and NEHS. Steele asks about the archive of materials for the centennial celebrations and notes some concern about adding to the CO's workload. Steinberg mentions adding a part-time position to help with that.

Steinberg mentions that there will be an ad hoc committee for the hiring of the new Executive Director.

Vice President: Schroeder mentions that much of her work focused on strategic planning, so she will comment during that Committee report.

Immediate Past President: Brewster says he has nothing to add.

Secretary/Treasurer: Bartlett has nothing to add. Steinberg comments on Bartlett's work with the Convention this year.

Officer at Large: Phelps has nothing to add to his report, but he notes his appreciation and enjoyment in working with the Board and CO this year.

Steinberg calls a short break at 10:15 a.m. The meeting resumes at 10:31 a.m.

## **Regents & Student Representative Reports**

### **Regents**

Eastern: Steele adds that the first Literary Spotlight is forthcoming pending the author's approval. Johnson asks about the roadmap Steele is developing for encouraging NEHS chapters in her area, with help from a local Sigma Tau Delta Chapter. Steele mentions that New Jersey schools have gone virtual and that urban populations have been hit hard by the pandemic, but she has been trying to keep in touch with her contact and they will restart efforts in the fall. The high school she is working with has many students that attend HBCUs, where we have many Sigma Tau Delta chapters. "Woof! Woof, woof," reports the Eastern Region's Canine Representative.

Far West: Comeford does not add to her report but asks about an email security issue through WriteAway. McPartlin says they are working on the issue with NIU IT and that if Regents want to send emails, they can have the CO send them. Gabriel notes some possible alternatives and complications, but that they are working on it.

Far West SR: Kuhn: [Report moved because of a schedule conflict.] Nothing to add. Steinberg expresses sympathy over her earlier illness. Steele asks about the logistics of their Halloween food distribution event. Comeford comments that they got approval of the process, and Kuhn adds that they were careful to wear gloves and document the process of putting their packages together to ease recipient concerns. Johnson commends Kuhn and Iarrobino on their author interviews for the Convention.

High Plains: Waggoner expresses thanks to Bartlett for mentoring and Olson for her hard work. She explains how she is working with participants from the Regional conference to see if they might like to apply for Student Leadership. Schroeder encourages her to contact seniors in case they plan to attend graduate programs or might still have some time left in their programs.

Midwestern: Helwig reiterates that their Regional conference will take place in October and mentions the end of his term. He is working on recruiting a replacement. The Missouri Southern University hosted a very successful Regional conference, with kudos due to Myranda Morse.

Southern: Dillard remarks on the notable success of their virtual Regional conference, with thanks to Powell and Ayers, as well as ASR Jacey Sherman.

Southwestern: Ezell mentions that virtual events allow wider participation and should be carried forward. Comeford suggests that Regents who hosted successful virtual conferences could share their expertise in a webinar.

Alumni Representative Report: Berkowitz adds that the Alumni Epsilon elections wrapped up last week, with Peggy Wood for President, Jamee Larson for Treasurer (also the new Advisor at North Dakota State University), and Machen Olson for Historian. Steinberg asks about the exquisite corpse activity mentioned in the report, and Berkowitz explains that it is a writing activity where each new participant adds to what has been written before.

Student Advisors: Ayers and Ashbrook: Nothing to add to written report. Steinberg asks about how the online open mics went in the High Plains. Olson adds that the first wasn't well attended, but the second was very successful, including chapters from outside the Region.

#### Student Representatives:

Ayers notes that the Student Leaders conferred in advance in order to save time and agreed that since none of them have anything to add to their reports, they will pass on individual reports during the meeting. Steinberg comments that this year's Student Leaders have done a superlative job with their detailed reports and with all the activities they have done this year.

#### **Committee Reports:**

##### Communications Committee

Report: Phelps directs us to the committee's ongoing work with revising the ByLaws. First is an addition to the section on induction fees stating that membership fees will not be refunded, and second is a clarification of the conditions for terminating membership, including an addition that the fees for removed members will not be refunded.

**Motion: The Communication Committee moves that the ByLaws be amended as shown in the Communications Committee report.**

**Discussion:** Mudd clarifies that these proposed changes arose after a conflict with a member who made some problematic commentary on the Black Lives Matters statement issued by the Society. Helwig asks where the community standards are for social media and the Convention; Mudd responds that the social media standards are on the website and the Society's community standards are drawn from the mission statement and about us statements on the website. Steele adds that the MLA and Linguistics Society of America have begun to be more explicit about standards of behavior at events and we should consider doing that. Steinberg notes a difference between posting as a private individual and in the Society's social media platform and as

members or representatives of the Society. Schroeder suggests possibility sending these back to the Communications Committee, but McPartlin notes that the standards could be revised and clarified later, but that the ByLaw amendments could be voted on now since they simply refer to the standards. Steinberg agrees that the committee should revisit the community standards. The ByLaw amendments are contained in Appendix A.

**Vote: The motion passes.**

Phelps also reports on the committee's work with the Outstanding Literary Arts Journal award competition, but that there were only four submissions this year and they would like to encourage more submissions. Schroeder notes that many chapters may have missed a year. Mudd adds that this year's competition was a year behind—that is, the submissions were for the prior year. Steinberg adds that we can consider these issues and other changes with communications going forward.

**Convention Committee**

Report: Brewster notes that the committee met after the convention and reflected on what worked and what might be carried forward. Brewster reiterates the quality of the SL interviews with the authors and their usefulness as a promotion. The SL social was also very successful, and Ayers mentions how the early placement of that activity let participants get to know the SLs from the beginning of the convention and make friends and connections for the upcoming events. Brewster notes the success and the quality of the roundtables this year, perhaps even higher than in the past. He also mentions that the committee discussed ways to foster multi-chapter roundtables and that some events (scholarship presentation, Advisor workshops, etc.) might be moved to online formats outside of the Convention or earlier in the year (useful for scholarships, especially). Suggestions were also made for Regional virtual meetups for Advisors led by Regents.

Brewster notes this year's writers were very easy to work with, but that some future featured writers may not be as available for events outside of the Convention. Brewster remarks on all the work done by the CO with practice sessions and prerecording materials. We had 485 registrants, and about 75% logged in, but it seems that this is a general trend with online events (a lower participation rate versus registration). We will send a reminder that access is still available to view recordings.

Planning for the 2022 Convention, chaired by Dillard, is underway. Dillard notes that the 2022 authors, Nic Stone and Richard Blanco, both have a range of projects extant and underway. The negotiations have focused on onsite activities, so we have not planned for the kind of advance interviews we did this year as they may entail additional costs, but we will look for ways to build enthusiasm for those speakers. Steinberg commends Schroeder for agreeing to assist Dillard on the 2022 Convention. Wendelin mentions that the virtual convention made it possible for NEHS students, including international members, to participate and would like to see future opportunities like that. Johnson asks about a breakdown of categories of registrants for the Convention (NEHS, SKD, alumni, etc.). Gabriel says she will create a report on that but notes that in particular there were many more SKD participants than usual because it was their 25th anniversary. Brewster notes that SKD did capitalize on the low cost of a virtual event and the anniversary to promote the event. Steinberg mentions that alumni who missed opportunities to present papers last year and this year should be encouraged to submit for 2022. Gabriel

mentions that the survey shows the largest draw for conventions are the student presentations, whether papers or roundtables.

Comeford reminds us to keep the role of alumni in the convention as a focus in future planning, especially in terms of ways that they might differentiate their participation from the student cohort. One possibility is an alumni convention with events that happen in tandem or in parallel at the Convention, such as their own panels.

Meeting adjourned for a one-hour lunch break at 11:42 a.m. CST. Meeting reconvened at 12:47 p.m.

By consent, the agenda was amended to allow a revision of the order of the agenda so the Student Leadership Committee could present earlier.

### **Student Leadership Committee**

Report: Ayers notes that most of their information is in their report. She commends this year's SL for their great work, as well as the CO, and especially Katie Mudd for her work with them. Feedback from the SLs is that the Regions are a great place for more virtual events, given the success and level of participation in virtual events in this year. Ayers notes that they are doing some evaluation of the process for SLs coming in and their orientation, and she and Mudd made some significant edits to the SL Handbook. Ashbrooks seconds the kudos to this year's SLs and the CO. Dillard thanks the SLs for their participation in the webinars, so that students could have their questions answered by fellow students. Steele asks about the DPIL partnership and what the SLs see as the most important new directions. Ayers mentions she is excited about the new internship and also ways for chapters to get involved on a local level with DPIL to support the literacy aspect of the organization, not necessarily as a financial contributor.

### **Executive Committee**

Report: There is nothing to add to the report, but Steinberg comments that the Executive Committee will have to create some ad hoc committees to provide focus for alumni and the Executive Director search. She also calls for Board members to share areas of interest for future committee assignments. Steinberg adds that we may need to amend the ByLaws to reflect the new method for Student Leadership selections if new processes carry forward.

### **Regents Committee**

Report: Steele comments that they have revised the Regents Handbook, with a collective committee effort. Steele requests attention to the committee report and minutes as the committee charges are revised for next year. Steinberg assures Steele that those documents will be reviewed for the process. Steele thanks all the Regents for their work during this very difficult year.

### **Scholarships and Academic Awards Committee**

Report: Dillard mentions the numbers included in the report and provides an update on the submission levels for this year, which are comparable to other years, as well as a good response for evaluators.

### **Service and Partnerships Committee**

Report: Helwig refers everyone to the report for details on the Penguin, NCTE, and DPIL internships, as well as all the work the committee did on stipends and project grants. They also moved the application date for internship stipends later in the fall to help students apply. Helwig is working on a Sigma Tau Delta roundtable at NCTE with Sarah Dangelantonio and Carl Miller. He asks if there might be a possibility of some travel support for those participants if the NCTE conference is in person this year. Gabriel mentions that would be requested in the fall, and Wendelin notes that they get some reduced or free registrations. Gabriel adds that she is working with NCTE on additional partnership elements, like a membership connection for Sigma Tau Delta members; there will be some presentation on NCTE at the Atlanta Convention. Helwig, in response to a question from Steinberg, notes that this committee may be doing too many different things, so a committee restructuring may be in order. Schroeder notes Strategic Planning will have some input on this issue.

### **Strategic Planning Committee**

Report: Schroeder commends the consistency and quality of the committee's work, with the help of the CO in particular and larger Board during the retreat. The most current version of the Strategic Plan is shared, and Schroeder notes that particular attention was paid to streamlining goals and focusing outcomes. These will set the priorities for what should be delegated to committees and what should be directed to the CO for immediate attention. Steinberg notes that this revised and tighter plan will help to develop committee charges and updates to committee structures, which she will work on with Schroeder and the CO.

### **Budget Review and Approval**

**Discussion:** Bartlett mentions the new accounting procedures in the CO, and McPartlin mentions the \$11,000 for publication expenses left off the 2020 approved budget, so we will need to pass an amended budget. McPartlin notes the change from a cash basis to an accrual basis, which also affects the appearance of the budget, as well as the many adjustments due to the canceled 2020 Convention. Schroeder mentions that our Constitution or our ByLaws may state that we have to show a balanced budget for approval, so we may need to review those for possible amendments. Steinberg reviews the Constitution and notes that it no longer requires a balanced budget. Johnson adds that our investment account contained \$1,835,000 at the end of 2020 and has only gone up since then. Johnson also applied for funds from the federal Payroll Protection Plan (PPP), after finding out that all the other college honor societies had applied for funds, and we received \$27,300 as a loan. There is a loan forgiveness application that Johnson will apply for shortly. He also plans to apply for the second phase of the PPP, which will preserve our funds for other purposes. McPartlin adds that the previous accounting system relied on a high volume of manual entries, and now the accounting information for separate systems for membership and GMerch can be imported to improve the speed and accuracy of recording transactions. Gabriel notes that the new system will also allow the kind of direct enrollment for NEHS that Sigma Tau Delta has initiated.

**Motion: Schroeder moves to approve the budget as presented; Dillard seconds.**

**Vote: The motion passes.**

Bartlett reiterates the kudos due to McPartlin and other members of the CO for the project of modernizing the accounting procedures going forward.

### **Other New Business**

Gabriel mentions that the DPIL welcomes other suggestions we have for affiliates, whether they might be an organization like UNICEF or a local library. Some discussion ensues regarding the possibility of saving the chat as a transcript if needed.

### **Announcements**

- Johnson remarks again on the quality of the reports from Student Leaders and committee reports. He adds that the Fall Board Meeting is scheduled for September 16-18, 2021, but that we should not purchase tickets yet. He also reminds incumbents whose terms expire in the spring to look for additional positions or for people to recruit for the Board.
- Steinberg explains that they are working on a statement to address the issue of holding an event in Atlanta to support people there while also opposing legislation that limits voting access.
- McPartlin reminds us to encourage students to apply for Student Leadership positions.

### **Reminders/Closing Thoughts/Formal Adjournment**

Committee minutes should be sent to the Central Office as soon as possible after the Board meeting, if they have not already been submitted. Steinberg closes by telling us to stay safe and carry on with actions to defeat the virus so we can be back in person soon. Bartlett reminds continuing Board members to review airline accounts for any credits from the canceled in-person Fall 2020 Board meeting in Denver that could be applied for fall travel to Atlanta.

**Schroeder moves to adjourn; Steele seconds. Motion carries.**

Meeting adjourned at 1:58 p.m. CST.

## APPENDIX A

### Communications Committee ByLaw Amendments

Bylaws are first identified.

Then the original wording is given.

Then the suggested revision, highlighted in red.

#### **Bylaw X, Section IV. A**

Original:

#### **Section IV. Membership Fees.**

- A. **Society Induction Fee.** The one-time Society induction fee entitles each chapter member to receive a membership certificate and to wear the Society pin. The fee must be paid prior to induction and confers life membership in the Society. The amount of the Society induction fee shall be determined by the Board.

Revised:

**Section IV. Membership Fees.**

**Society Induction Fee.** The one-time Society induction fee entitles each chapter member to receive a membership certificate and to wear the Society pin. The fee must be paid prior to induction and confers life membership in the Society. The amount of the Society induction fee shall be determined by the Board. **Society induction fees are non-refundable.**

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Bylaw X, Section VII

Original:

- A. **Cause for termination of membership.** Induction into Sigma Tau Delta carries with it lifetime membership in the Society. Duly-inducted members may, however, be removed from the Society for just cause. Just cause for removal includes offenses violating the Society's stated mission to "promote exemplary character and good fellowship among its members" (Article I, Section 3, Subsection D) and to "exhibit high standards of academic excellence" (Article I, Section 3, Subsection E). Specific causes for suspension and/or termination include:
1. Dismissal from the sponsoring institution or program for failing to maintain minimum grade point averages or similar performance standards;
  2. Violations of approved academic codes of conduct and/or institutional honor codes or flagrant acts of academic dishonesty (e.g. plagiarism, cheating, manufacturing and/or falsifying academic records or experimental data) that result in disciplinary actions being taken by the sponsoring institution or program against the member;
  3. Conviction in a court of law of a felony violation.

Suspension of membership shall result automatically from and occur simultaneously with the disciplinary action being taken against or the suspension, dismissal or conviction of the member and become permanent upon the member's accepting the judgment entered against him or her or when all appeals have been exhausted. It will be the Chapter Advisors' duty at the conclusion of any such action being taken against a member of their chapter to notify the Central Office and the member of the termination of membership and the causes thereof. The Central Office will then remove the former member from the lists of enrolled members. The national Board of Directors shall at no time and in no way be involved in the termination process or be held responsible for the outcome.

- B. **Appeals of termination of membership.** Revocation of membership can be appealed. Appeals must be filed in writing with the national Board of Directors within 60 days after the termination of membership has become final. Appeals,

with any supporting materials and documentation, must be addressed to the Society's Executive Director and mailed to the Society's Central Office. The Executive Committee of the national Board of Directors will review the appeal within 30 days of its receipt and can, by a three-fourths majority vote of the committee, rescind the termination of membership. The Executive Director will notify the appellant of the committee's findings. All decisions are final.

Revised:

1. **Cause for termination of membership.** Induction into Sigma Tau Delta carries with it lifetime membership in the Society. Duly-inducted members may, however, be removed from the Society for just cause. Just cause for removal includes offenses violating the Society's stated mission to "promote exemplary character and good fellowship among its members" (Article I, Section 3, Subsection D) and to "exhibit high standards of academic excellence" (Article I, Section 3, Subsection E). Specific causes for suspension and/or termination include **but are not limited to:**
  1. **Violations of community standards at Society events, such as the international convention, as well as on virtual Society platforms, such as Society-operated social media accounts.**
  2. Dismissal from the sponsoring institution or program for failing to maintain minimum grade point averages or similar performance standards;
  3. Violations of approved academic codes of conduct and/or institutional honor codes or flagrant acts of academic dishonesty (e.g. plagiarism, cheating, manufacturing and/or falsifying academic records or experimental data) that result in disciplinary actions being taken by the sponsoring institution or program against the member;
  4. Conviction in a court of law of a felony violation.

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**C. Membership fees.** In the event of membership suspension or termination, Sigma Tau Delta will not issue membership fee refunds.

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