

Committee Reports, Spring 2025
(September 2024 – March 2025)

Committee: Service

Committee Chair: Kelly Taylor and Kevin Stemmler

Committee Members: Kevin Stemmler, Kelly Taylor, Chris Lockwood, Katie Mudd, Tiffany Nolde, Isaiah Russell, Sonia Mae Brown, Felicia Steele, Zach Brady, Carie King and Emily Palmisano

Summary of Committee Activities:

As a joint initiative with Convention Committee, Student Leadership, and Service Committee, we launched the Book Club Kit project. As SL began work on many of the writers doing webinars for NEHS, Convention Committee co-chairs requested that we work on abbreviated versions of Book Club Kits for as many of the Convention speakers/LitFest participants as possible. We helped to highlight the service element of using books in chapter meetings (the original intention for creating a Common Reader at the initial meeting of the Service Committee in September 2000) and provided suggestions for service projects as well as links to organizations related to each Book Club Kit.

To further our commitment to using books for service projects, we decided to highlight the use of books in prisons. We proposed a Thursday professional development panel for the convention program, alliteratively, inviting attendees/vendors Arlan Hess from City Books and Adlai Yeomans from White Whale Book Store to present. Both book sellers will discuss the various ways they use their independent bookstores to support community service, including books to prisons, encouraging emerging writers, and developing events to highlight community members and their work (i.e. White Whale's meTamorphosis: a queer and trans led reading series, Read the Room open mic nights, and author readings). Additionally, we worked with Lambda Literary to obtain boxes of books from last year's Lammy Award winners and short-listed authors. The University of North Georgia chapter arranged to pick up the books (thank you, Sophia!) And deliver them to Pittsburgh for various uses. Some of the books will also be used for UNG's service partnership with Books for Keeps in Athens, Georgia. It is important to note that the two Little Free Libraries at the UNG Gainesville campus is a nice complement to the work NEHS has done with Little Free Libraries. This partnership inspired other chapters to create Little Free Libraries on their campuses, which was evident in the applications for this year's Service Project Grants. Members of the Service Committee were responsible for reading those submissions and awarding the grants.

Speaking of Project Grants, Felicia suggested that project grants could be used for chapters who are able to translate their book club activities into service projects and we encouraged chapters to do this (hence the abbreviated Book Club Kits). Katie advertised project grants in the Footnotes for October. Kelly provided information on how the book club kits work. We continue to work with Autumn and Kelly to promote the newly created Book Club awards for chapters that are housed in Student Leadership.

In terms of service partnerships, Kevin and Chris worked with Lambda Literary to gather Sigma Tau Delta volunteers to judge for the Lammy Awards. We had 90 applications and 27 members of our Societies were selected to serve as judges for this prestigious award. In addition to serving the profession of English by helping to provide professional development opportunities for our judges, the Service Committee arranged to have our judges donate their honorariums to the Society as an act of service to the organization. These donations to Sigma Tau Delta help fund Lambda Literary's partnership with us,

making it another service project to come from this committee. Kelly, Chris and Kevin judged the many submissions we received for the first Lambda Literary Lammy Awards Internship and we are happy to report that we have had all positive feedback from our contact. We are currently reading for the second Lambda Literary Internship for the Lambda Emerging Writers Retreat. As an aside, to show our Society's commitment to both service and to support "one of ours," the committee assisted with a Pittsburgh based program called VolunTOTS, designed to have children from ages 2 and up participate in community service projects. One of our alum is instrumental in planning and coordinating VolunTOTS events and fundraisers. Our personal support (books for children) helped raise money to provide funding for a communication device for a child with limited communication skills.

We continue discussions with the Jane Austen Society for potential Sigma Tau Delta service or to create a service-based internship. Similar projects are in the works as well. Chris and Kevin worked with Girton College, University of Cambridge, to establish opportunities for alumni/retired faculty advisors to apply for the Life Long Learning summer program. As a Girton alum, Chris was instrumental in setting up the contact. We had 65 applications for this summer's program, providing a chance to reward eight Sigma Tau Delta alumni for their service to the organization. As a result, we are in talks to establish a summer 2026 study abroad program at Cambridge for our Sigma Tau Delta undergraduate members.

In partnership with LULAC (The League of United Latin American Citizens) we successfully launched the first LULAC/Sigma Tau Delta co-sponsored writing contest to celebrate Hispanic Heritage Month. We had amazing participation from Sigma Tau Delta and NEHS members.

Recommendations or Resolutions: Continue to explore service projects, awards, and opportunities. Continue to launch additional Book Club/Book Club Kits in the next few months. Continue to promote Society webinars. Continue to advertise LULAC sponsored contests for Sigma Tau Delta/Sigma Kappa Delta/NEHS students to celebrate Hispanic Heritage for Fall 2026. Continue to assist the co-chairs of the New Orleans Sigma Tau Delta Convention on service oriented programs that will allow us to continue to receive funding from LULAC and Lambda Literary.

Special Concerns: We need to work on creating additional crossover opportunities between committees. Although we have already been working with Partnerships & Internships, Scholarships & Awards, Convention, and Student Leadership committees, there is always room to expand. This continued crossover will help us to promote the work being done by our Society's membership. Also, we would like to find more ways to highlight the accomplishments of Society members and continue to promote the work being done that supports the spirit of "one of ours."