



SIGMA PI SIGMA

The physics honor society

Sigma Pi Sigma Chapter Project Award Final Report

Project Title	Alumni Night
Name of School	Adelphi University
Sigma Pi Sigma Chapter Number	SPS Chapter #2 Sigma Pi Sigma Chapter #124
Total Amount Awarded	\$499.50
Project Leader	James St. John, jamesstjohn@mail.adelphi.edu

Summary of Award Activity

Current and prospective students were able to meet with successful alumni from across the country through Adelphi University's Physics Department Alumni Night. This allowed alumni to share their personal experiences and show current students where an education in physics may take them. A panel of alumni joined in person and online to describe their work experience, as well as provide the audience with the advice they deemed most important for up and coming physicists. Students were then able to ask the panel questions directly. After, students and alumni were able to network and discuss research and careers in physics.

Statement of Activity

Overview of Award Activity

We had a panel of 19 alumni - some of which were shown on a screen via google hangout - at the front of the room. The rest of the main room held several tables where professors and current or prospective students sat. Food was also provided in the alcove of the room. We spent half the night with a panel discussion, beginning with the alumni introducing themselves and their professional and academic experience. This was followed by alumni presenting the advice that they deemed most important for students seeking to pursue physics. The audience was then free to ask the panel any questions they had relating to their experience or opinions on professional and academic physics. For the rest of the night, students and alumni were able to continue networking over dinner, which provided the chance for them to converse directly in a less formal tone. Alumni were also able to converse with other alumni that they had not seen for a while or previously never met.

We had a diverse body of alumni from many different backgrounds and fields, many of which are SPS members. This allowed students to inquire about various career and academic paths and obtain opinions from different perspectives. Many students with different interests were able to speak to alumni as they desired, as well as exchange contact info for future correspondence. By having Alumni Night set up in this manner, alumni were able to convey personal life stories, thereby making the possibility of a future in STEM seem more achievable to students. While this learning experience allowed for students to plan their futures, it also led them to understand the possible twists and turns that can lead them to different careers and interests. It also provided insight into what professional life from a physics background may be like.

The event was fairly successful, with 19 alumni, 34 current students, and 3 prospective students in attendance as well as four professors from the physics department. Our target audience consisted of students in or considering a future in physics. Of the current students in attendance, there was a wide range of students present-- ranging from freshmen to seniors. There were even students that are not active in the SPS/physics community in attendance that actively listened and spoke to alumni. An additional benefit was that many alumni seemed to enjoy speaking with other alumni during the event. Our chapter aims to ensure the current and future success of our members. We always want them to continue to improve their knowledge and be active in the physics community. One way to ensure this is to improve their chances of attaining a career in or pertaining to physics. To do this, they must be well equipped with the knowledge and expertise that our alumni may have from past experience. Learning how to function professionally and how to prep for a career is just as important as understanding physics concepts when working in the real world, and we want our members to be well rounded in both aspects.

Contacting the alumni was primarily handled by current professors working with our chapter, so it was not difficult getting a decent number of SPS alumni to take part in the event. Our university is small, but we have a decent sized physics department; we consider the attendance of 34 of our current physics students as a successful turnout. It is also difficult to encourage the involvement of those not yet in our field, thus the presence of 3 prospecting students was also a good achievement. Compared to other projects from our chapter, alumni night was successful in that it excited many of our students to learn more about Sigma Pi Sigma.

The event was primarily organized by the President and Vice President of our chapter, but assistance was provided by the three other executive board members. Many students that have been inducted into Sigma Pi Sigma were also in attendance, and we believe that Alumni Night greatly encouraged students to seek membership.

Impact Assessment: How the Project/Activity/Event Met the Purpose of the Award

Our goal was to reach out to students that had an interest in pursuing physics academically and professionally, and encourage them to follow this interest as well as stay connected to each other with SPS and Sigma Pi Sigma. Reassurance from alumni solidified the resolve of some students and had a strong impact on their decisions. Even if students decide to go into another field, we can know we were successful in raising awareness of what physicists go through and what the experiences and opportunities in the field can be.

Assessments were made by observation and verbal confirmation. Observation of students during the panel discussion showed that everyone in attendance was actively listening without phones or other distractions out. We did not get the opportunity to send out an online survey about the event due to time constraints, however we hope to implement this in the future. Several students asked important questions pertaining to the subject matter. Alumni were also active in that they were typically able to provide clear and comprehensive answers to questions as well as respond to the advice of other alumni and discuss differing opinions. Some of the alumni addressed the benefit of being in SPS and Sigma Pi Sigma and how various colleagues or employers were a part of them.

During the dinner and networking half of the event, all students spoke to alumni at some point during the night, and alumni were evenly distributed amongst the various tables. Verbal discussion after Alumni Night confirmed that many students felt that they learned a lot and found the discussions both interesting and informative. Current students have the opportunity to learn from alumni they may have previously taken classes with, which is a powerful illustration of the big changes students face after leaving their undergraduate careers. Several alumni commented on the benefit of the Adelphi chapter's tight knit alumni community, largely revolving around SPS and Sigma Pi Sigma, has contributed to their success.

Key Metrics and Reflection

Who was the target audience of your project?	Current and prospective students interested in pursuing a future in physics.
How many attendees/participants were directly impacted by your project? Please describe them (for example “3 alumni” or “10 physics majors”).	3 prospective students, 19 alumni, 4 professors, and 34 students currently enrolled as Physics Majors at Adelphi University. Many of the alumni and students in attendance were also SPS members.
How many students from your Sigma Pi Sigma chapter were involved in the activity, and in what capacity?	The five SPS officers organized the event working with professors from the department to connect with alumni. 34 students from the physics department composed a majority of the audience.
Was the amount of money you received from Sigma Pi Sigma sufficient to carry out the activities outlined in your proposal? Could you have used additional funding? If yes, how much would you have liked and how would the additional funding have augmented your activity?	The money we received from SPS for this event was sufficient and the event was a great success.
Do you anticipate repeating this project/activity/event in the future, or having a follow-up project/activity/event? If yes, please describe.	We have this event once every two years. Planning typically begins during the Spring semester, and alumni are contacted months in advance to find a date that ensures the highest attendance. Considering the success of this alumni night, we will likely have the same set up with minor changes.
What new relationships did you build through this project?	Students and alumni were able to network during the event, thereby opening up opportunities for the new students to have an advantage in various professional fields, and giving alumni potential workers.
If you were to do your project again, what would you do differently?	There was some difficulty contacting the alumni that participated through a google hangout call. For the future we will need to test our mics or find a way to communicate to them non-verbally so that they can hear the questions given to the panel. It would also be nice to have better recordings of the panel discussion for future reference.

Activity Photos



1.
 - a. Our diverse panel of alumni introducing themselves and their work.
 - b. Credit: Professor Matthew Wright



2.

- a. Tables of students listening intently to the alumni.
- b. Credit: Professor Matthew Wright



3.

- a. More tables with our eager students as well as some of the department's professors.
- b. Credit: Professor Matthew Wright



4.

- a. View of our alumni answering questions from the audience.
- b. Credit: Chloe Leigh Ong



5.
 - a. One of our alumni introducing himself and his work.
 - b. Credit: Chloe Leigh Ong



6.
 - a. A table of our senior physics department students listening to the panel.
 - b. Credit: Chloe Leigh Ong



7.

- a. A mixed table of sophomore, freshmen, and prospective students listening to an alumni speaking through google hangout.
- b. Credit: Chloe Leigh Ong



8.

- a. Getting connected to our alumni through google hangout.
- b. Credit: Chloe Leigh Ong



9.

- a. Alumni listening to each others' advice.
- b. Credit: Chloe Leigh Ong



10.

- a. Our panel of alumni.
- b. Credit: Chloe Leigh Ong

