

EXAMPLES OF LOCAL CHAPTER ACTIVITIES

The examples of Pi Alpha Alpha activities below represent types of things MPA programs should be doing for their students and alumni – with or without Pi Alpha Alpha involvement! Why not use Pi Alpha Alpha students and alumni to help:? Doing so will take some pressure off the MPA Program staff, provide useful benefits to students and alumni, and give visibility and purpose to the Pi Alpha Alpha Chapter. It is a “win – win” approach – not “just more work” for the MPA program staff and adviser.

HONORS AND AWARDS – ACKNOWLEDGE EXCELLENCE

Present honors and awards – “Outstanding Public Administrator,” “Outstanding Alumni,” “Outstanding MPA Student,” “Outstanding Doctoral Candidate,” “Outstanding City Manager,” and/or “Outstanding Elected Official.”

Awards to public officials and students create media opportunities, and graduates and practitioners usually are attracted to the event. When the awards are presented at the Induction Ceremony, the ceremony becomes a celebration. Some chapters have named awards for highly respected public officials or faculty members. The University of Colorado at Denver chapter presents an annual Leo C. Riethmayer Outstanding Colorado Public Administrator award.

Annual “Best Student Paper” competition

Programs that require a “major paper” or an integrative case study report, can easily set up a procedure to select “best papers” or “best analyses.” A few chapters make a monetary award as well as present the recipient with a plaque. At least once chapter has endowed a “best paper” award named for a professional known for his high standards on student papers. The University of Utah chapter has an endowed fund that allows it to award about \$600 annually for the “best MPA research paper.”

After awards have been made, critically review your students’ “best papers,” ask the award recipients to revise and submit them for publication in the Pi Alpha Alpha electronic journal and/or for the annual national Pi Alpha Alpha “Best Paper by a Master’s Student” award.

Sponsor a scholarship

Use Pi Alpha Alpha alumni to establish and conduct a fund-raising campaign to endow a scholarship for MPA students (or MPA students with special circumstances). Sometimes the retirement or death of a popular professor or professor emeritus can provide the energy for fund-raising. The University of Louisville chapter awards a monetary stipend to the MPA graduate with the highest grade point average. One chapter receives an annual gift from the

statewide City Managers Association which is presented as a scholarship to an outstanding student who plans a career as a city manager.

Support student research

The University of Connecticut chapter gave a \$500 research scholarship to a Pi Alpha Alpha inductee to support presentation of his capstone research project at an academic conference.

Recognize individuals who have helped students

The George Washington University chapter hosts an annual Mentor Luncheon. After lunch, Pi Alpha Alpha graduates, students and faculty introduce their mentors who are invited to share a few words about what being a mentor meant for them.

SERVICES THAT DIRECTLY BENEFIT MPA STUDENTS

Help organize annual orientation programs for new MPA students, with the MPA program director and staff, and sometimes with the MPA student association. The Pi Alpha Alpha chapter at Grand Valley State University has found new student orientations highly useful as well as enjoyable.

Hold a public sector career forum. The CSU, Dominguez Hills chapter organizes panels of speakers from all levels of government.

Review sessions for comprehensive exams can be very useful for advanced MPA students. Consider co-hosting review sessions with the MPA student association.

Establish a mentoring program. Although we are not aware of any chapters with active mentoring programs currently, the Nova Southeastern University chapter presented a proposal in spring 2003 to do so with a county City Manager Association.

Organize picnics or reception for MPA students and alumni to meet new members of the faculty.

Part-time students may not have opportunities to meet new members of the faculty until long after they have arrived. Consider a reception or "open house" to welcome new faculty. The chapter at Pi Alpha Alpha at Grand Valley State University hosts annual receptions for new faculty.

Help with fund-raising. For example, the University of Memphis chapter helped the university's development office organize focus groups to discuss motivations for alumni giving to support the university.

PROGRAMS – “BROWN BAG LUNCHES,” GATHERINGS, TALKS, AND CONFERENCES

Occasional “brown bag lunches” or evening “pizza gatherings” for students, faculty and graduates.

Speakers could include, for example, visiting faculty, guest lecturers, new MPA faculty members, graduates who are in interesting jobs, MPA students whose papers have won national awards or been published in the Pi Alpha Alpha electronic journal. Talks may be longer and somewhat formal or short and used mostly to stimulate discussion.

Parties with a speaker

Gather in a home prior to the holidays to celebrate the season, network, and perhaps engage in lively dialogue with a public official or advocate. The Boise State University chapter hosts an annual Christmas party for students, faculty, alumni, and staff. The University of Utah chapter and the MPA Student Association co-host an annual “holiday party” in the home of a well-liked faculty member. Finger food and beverages are brought in “pot luck.”

Co-sponsor conferences for students and area public administrators

Many leaders in public administration organizations and associations are Pi Alpha Alpha members. Take advantage of these relationships to co-sponsor area “public administration conferences” that might also include the local chapter of ASPA, the MPA program, and other public-serving groups such as the city manager association, associations of cities and/or counties, and the state government employee association as co-hosts.

Offer other types of learning experiences for wider audiences. For example, the Kansas State University chapter with the MPA student body co-sponsored a public sector simulation laboratory under the auspices of the Mid-America Intergovernmental Forum, the U.S. General Accounting Office, and the Kansas Legislative Division of Post Audit.

Co-host annual or semi-annual “MPA Alumni Conferences” with the Pi Alpha chapter. Alumni conferences provide continuing education, support continuing program-alumni relationships, create networking opportunities for students and graduates, and occasionally open development opportunities.

The University of Utah chapter co-hosts a biennial lecture series on “Public Law and Ethics,” with the MPA program, the MPA student association, and the local chapter of ASPA. The lecture, on a Thursday evening, serves as the kick-off event for a day-long conference on Friday that builds from the lecture topic.

JUST HAVE A PARTY

Just throw a party. Several chapters organize parties during the holidays or following final exams or graduation ceremonies.

ASSIST WITH REACCREDITATION

Mission-based accreditation requires regular input from alumni and employers of students and graduates. Pi Alpha Alpha chapter alumni include your “best and brightest” – who often also are in responsible positions. They may be key in influencing their organizations to take interns and to hire students and graduates. They may teach courses as adjuncts. Why not use chapter alumni in the input process? It will improve program decision making and help immensely with program accreditation.

Most chapter alumni are bright, active, and more than willing to become involved when the purpose is reaccreditations of *their program*.

GRADUATION CEREMONIES

Loan medallions or honor cords to graduating Pi Alpha Alpha to wear at commencement and convocation exercise.

Chapters may purchase medallions or honor cords and loan them to graduating Pi Alpha Alpha members to wear with their regalia at university commencement and convocation ceremonies. The medallions are impressive when worn over the black robes! Doing this will require a “system” for ensuring they are returned, however.

Recognize graduating Pi Alpha Alpha members in the Commencement and Convocation programs

Most universities and colleges list graduating honor society members in printed commencement and convocation programs. Be certain that Pi Alpha Alpha graduates are included. It costs nothing.

At the University of Maryland – College Park, Pi Alpha Alpha graduates receive a standing ovation during the graduation ceremony. It can be arranged!

SERVICE PROJECTS

The University of Memphis chapter of Pi Alpha Alpha conducts a professional clothing drive for individuals who are attempting to enter or re-enter the area workforce. Collected clothing is donated to the local “Dress for Success” program, a nonprofit organization that works with Welfare-to-Work and other job training programs.

Chapters contributing information for Appendix H include: Boise State University, CSU – Dominguez Hills, University of Colorado – Denver, University of Connecticut, George Washington University, Grand Valley State University, Kansas State University, University of Louisville, University of Maryland – College Park, University of Memphis, Nova Southeastern University, University of Texas – Arlington and University of Utah.