

Sigma Phi Omega

National Academic Honor and Professional Society in Gerontology



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From the President Debra Sheets, PhD, MSN, RN

This is my last message as your SPO President. I am writing this final column with mixed feelings. Most importantly, I want to convey what an honor it has been to serve you and lead this organization of individuals who are passionate about the field of aging and serving older adults. On the other hand, I am disheartened that I have not been able to fully resolve some of the pressing organizational issues facing SPO. My tenure as President can be equated to a journey down the road. As with any journey, progress is made in jumps and starts and the views change between beginning and end. This journey has provided some unexpected turns and bumps that have slowed our forward movement at times towards our destination.

It is a time for reflection on the past, present and future of SPO. We are at a "tipping point" as we explore how SPO and AGHE might work together more efficiently and cost-effectively. Malcolm Gladwell (2000) describes how little things can make a big difference. He identifies three agents of change that are "tipping points" for generating the

critical mass in which change becomes unstoppable. First, is the "Law of the Few" in which the involvement of a few persons can help ensure the success of the endeavor. Second is the "Stickiness Factor" in which every idea needs a hook so that a strategy emerges and the idea sticks. Third is the "Power of Context" in which the conditions, circumstances, times, and places in which ideas occur leads to acceptance of the idea. So, how do these agents of change relate to SPO and the decisions that lie ahead?

SPO needs the active involvement of current members to be successful in our endeavors. Become involved by serving on the Board or on standing committees. Your thoughtful input is vital as we consider strategies, assess methods and ultimately determine and implement a plan for marketing SPO to increase our visibility and membership. Next, SPO needs to find a hook to convey the message that we are THE ORGANIZATION for academic excellence and professional recognition. SPO continues to be widely perceived as primarily a student honor society. How can we attract outstanding educators and professionals into SPO? Broadening our membership will enrich our organization by providing role models, mentoring and other benefits to our student members. Lastly, our organizational context is shaped by our relationship with AGHE. Recently the idea of a merger between SPO and AGHE leadership has emerged. What would be the benefits and disadvantages of this possibility? Are the values and goals of AGHE and SPO complementary? Is the time right for this idea and if so, what will lead to acceptance of this change in our relationship?



As I step down, I want to thank the 2006-08 SPO Board of Directors who have deliberated, envisioned, made decisions, and devoted countless hours of service in carrying out their Board responsibilities. In particular, I am deeply appreciative of the leadership shown by Jan Wassel (President-Elect), Rona Karasik (Treasurer) and Scott Wright (Secretary). They have worked tirelessly on behalf of SPO to ensure that progress was made. Most of all...THANK YOU to ALL the MEMBERS of SPO.

Our organization has a long way to go but the commitment is strong and I look forward to continue working together to reach our goals. In the words of Henry Ford,

"Coming together is a beginning.
Keeping together is progress.
Working together is success."

Let's continue to find ways to promote academic excellence and outstanding educators and professionals through Sigma Phi Omega!

SPO Chapter News From...

Alpha Alpha Chapter, University of Southern California, Los Angeles, CA

The Alpha Alpha Chapter of the University of Southern California, Davis School of Gerontology has had a great semester. We have recruited additional members, completed a fundraiser for the Alzheimer's Association of Los Angeles, Riverside and San Bernardino Counties and supported one another through meetings and social outlets. Many of us attended the Gerontological Society of America conference in San Francisco which included the opportunity to share in the camaraderie of the USC reception, organized by Maria Henke. The event hosted faculty, alumni, students and other leaders in gerontology. Work is now underway for a school-wide alumni dinner to be held in spring 2008. We send greetings for a new year of service and empowerment to our fellow Sigma Phi Omega members. ~Submitted by Adria Emberson Navarro, 626-898-3415, emberson@usc.edu

Delta Eta Sigma Phi Omega Chapter, California State University Long Beach, Long Beach, CA



This semester has been an exciting one filled with opportunities to serve community elders and raise community awareness! We have mostly new officers who worked very hard to do their best to serve our chapter. Gretchen Dinger, Vice President, Barbara McClinton, Treasurer, Donnetha Wallace, Secretary, and Olivia Liu, Historian showed their cohesive motivation working in a positive way to plan our single on-campus event.

We've also benefited greatly from the direction of our SPO Faculty Advisor, Dr. Melanie Horn Mallers, who gave us invaluable advice and direction. We have a new faculty member, Dr. Maria Claver, who has taken a strong interest in our events and we're fortunate to have her motivation and energy.

Some of the community fall events Delta Eta chapter participated in were the November 3rd, 2007 Alzheimer's Association sponsored "Memory Walk"! It was an inspirational experience to be a part of a movement to support those afflicted with Alzheimer's disease, we also had a blast with all of the participants! This semester Delta Eta enjoyed participating in raising awareness of our events in campus classes.

"The Faces of Aging Aged to Perfection –Highlighting Dynamic Individuals" on December 3rd, 2007, was truly a success! Our panel of older adults age 65 and older shared their visions of successful ageing as well as their feelings of their past experiences related to successful ageing. We also requested the individuals on the panel to impart advice as to their wisdom related to future ageing candidates.

We were happy to have a turnout of approximately 45 attendees and their feedback on the event was more than positive! Also, the head of the event space was so impressed by the experience; he invited us back next year!

Delta Eta chapter looks forward to a busy time next semester when we will be sponsoring our 4th Annual Intergenerational Reading Day, where older adults will read to 5-6 year-old groups of children (early childhood learning on CSULB campus) promoting intergenerational activities! We also will be holding a Careers in Gerontology Fair, and participating in the annual Relay for Life event held on campus! We have our work cut out for us, but it promises to bring many rewards in helping to raise awareness of older adults. ~Submitted by Kelly Sydow, 562-234-7008, ksydow@csulb.edu

Gamma Psi Chapter, University of North Carolina at Charlotte, Charlotte, NC

This semester the Gamma Psi chapter, at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte, co-hosted with the Gerontology Program a reception for Dr. Ismail Tufan, a Fulbright Visiting Scholar. Dr. Tufan is from Antalya, Turkey, where he is the chair of the Gerontology Department at Akendiz University and also the founder of the Association for Social and Applied Gerontology. While in Charlotte, he is studying different models of care for older adults, particularly those with dementia. We enjoyed being a part of this event, and getting to know Dr. Tufan a little better!

We also had the opportunity to participate in the annual Santa-to-a-Senior program, which is organized by HomeInstead. HomeInstead collects items from several local locations and hosts a huge wrapping event. This was our second year helping wrap gifts. There was plenty of holiday cheer, and Santa even made a surprise appearance! We hope to participate in this event again next year. ~Submitted by Denise Bordeman, bdrawli@unc.edu

SPO Chapter News From...

Delta Gamma Chapter, University of North Carolina at Greensboro, Greensboro, NC

UNCG would like to recognize Dr. Jan Wassel's new role as Sigma Phi Omega President. Members of the Delta Gamma Chapter have made a contribution to the President's Award fund in her honor. ~ Submitted by Ann Stringfield, infocrofters@triad.rr.com

Epsilon Epsilon Chapter, Orlando-Webster University, Orlando, FL



We would like to inform you that we had a wonderful "High Tea" fundraising on December 16, 2007 hosted generously by The Peabody-Orlando. This event has benefited VNA-CCE (Community Care for the Elderly), a non-profit organization which assists the low income, frail elderly in our community and help them with bathing, homemaking, companionship, day-care, respite for caregivers, incontinence supplies, home delivered meals, etc... They thrive to keep our seniors in their own home as long as possible, allowing them to 'age in place' with independence and dignity.

We cannot thank enough Mr. Alan Villaverde, general manager at The Peabody for his dedication. Our chapter's goal is to make a difference in the life of the elderly in our community. Therefore without hesitation we have chosen VNA-CF-Community Care For the Elderly.

We are extremely proud to say that 100% of the proceeds went to alleviate the long waiting list that Orange and Seminole counties in Florida are facing. Actually, CCE has more than 1900 people waiting for services; and this increase in numbers is due partially to the fact that people live longer; also, chronic diseases have been prevalent in the past century and still are; moreover, to add to these statistics, the regular and sharp decrease in social services' fund challenge our state more than ever!

We are pleased to mention that we have raised within two months of hard labor, public awareness, radio shows, e-mails, word of mouth, publicity, etc., more than \$13,702.00. Our team composed of Dr. Barbara Seifert (our SPO program adviser), Marie Kay Villaverde (Treasurer), Janice Ingrando (CCE Community Relation), Marsha Lorenz (CCE-CEO) and I, Alexandra Mercier (SPO President), worked long hours to achieve and reach our objective. Volunteers from our classes and our neighborhood assisted us at the event. We would like to do better next year! ~Submitted by Alexandra Mercier, 407-514-1810, merciera@elderaffairs.org

Delta Epsilon Chapter, California State University at Northridge, Northridge, CA

Delta Epsilon and the City of Los Angeles, Department of Aging hosted a "Festival of Fitness for Seniors" on December 8, 2007 at California State University, Northridge. More than 200 older adults attended this free all-day event and participated in exercise and other activities to help them maintain and improve their well-being. Community organizations and programs were highlighted at exhibit tables where they provided information on health and fitness resources. SPO members volunteered at registration tables and helped seniors with any needs they had. ~Submitted by Debra Sheets, 818-677-2344, debra.sheets@csun.edu

Epsilon Chapter, Virginia Commonwealth University, Richmond, VA



The fall semester was busy for SPO which included two bake sales (totalling over 80 dollars!) at the MCV hospital. Looking at new sources for funding, bake sales have been decided as an easy and fun way to make money. The fall semester ended with an End-of-Year Brunch Party in December with a fun gift exchange. Everyone had a wonderful time enjoying good company and a fabulous brunch menu. The highlight of the event was the "White Elephant" gift exchange game. All who participated appeared happy with their gifts when all was said and done despite some unwanted taking after the giving. 2008 will bring in first year students to train under current SPO officers who will be graduating in May. We are looking forward to a great spring semester! ~Submitted by Patricia Bonwell and Kristi Dudash, 804-828-

1565, pbbonwell@vcu.edu, dudashkl@vcu.edu

SPO Chapter News From...

Gamma Kappa Chapter, California State University at Fullerton, Fullerton, CA



The Gamma Kappa Chapter of Sigma Phi Omega initiated 8 new members this 2007 fall semester. We are happy to welcome Linda Ormes, Janet Levy, Candi Dale, Lisa Paquet, Nancy Just, Shawn Shieh, Nia Nakamura, and Lauren Anderson to our Chapter!

At the start of the fall semester, the officers discussed involvement in the Alzheimer's memory walk in Irvine, California. In addition, SPO President Maura McAnnany joined Dr. Joseph Weber at Cal State University Fullerton's 50 Year Open House Anniversary Celebration. Maura, Karen Wong, Josephine Martinez, Erika Downs and Dr. Weber manned the Gerontology Program Booth answering questions and recruiting new students who are interested in the Gerontology Program at CSUF.

Chapter membership has increased as current members recruit and encourage new students to attend our Sigma Phi Omega meetings. It seems the new students are eager to hear from our faculty such as Dr. Pauline Abbot, Dr. Edythe Krampe, Dr. Joseph Weber, and Professor Peggy Weatherspoon.

The Gamma Kappa Chapter invited students, recent graduates and faculty to our November meeting to discuss upcoming classes, as well as the thesis/project experience. The event was informative and well received as past graduates Karen Wong and Chris Moore shared their graduate experience with new student members. The chapter looks forward to future meetings to disseminate this much needed information about the journey of completing a thesis or project to current students. The Gamma Kappa Chapter looks forward to the holiday season and planning future events for the 2008 spring semester. Submitted by Maura McAnnany, 949-675-5429 and Dr. Joe Weber, 714-278-7043.

Kappa Chapter, The University of Georgia, Athens, GA

Six new members, Juliette Christie, Aloise McNichols, Helen Schimke, Marilyn Schroeder, and Tamar Shovali were inducted into the chapter this year at our 2nd annual Student Recognition Celebration for Gerontology Students.

In October, our team the G(erontology) Dawgs participated in the Alzheimer's Memory walk raising \$2,400! The Kappa Chapter also held its first annual "Meet and Greet" event in November where Gerontology students met with faculty and peers. Attendees were invited to share their research interests and projects to bring those interested in Gerontology together from across the UGA campus. This winter we are once again participating in the community service program, "Be a Santa to a Senior," organized by Home Instead Senior Care. The gifts will be distributed to older adults in need. We look forward to continuing our active involvement in the community this year. In fact, our chapter is planning to organize a volunteer service offering our companionship to older adults in nursing homes, adult day care centers, and assisted living homes in the Athens area. This service is scheduled to begin during the upcoming spring semester. ~ Submitted by Tamar Shovali, shovali@uga.edu

Gamma Omicron Chapter, University of Hawaii at Manoa, Honolulu, HI



This past year has been a year of many accomplishments, a few of which were firsts for the SPO-Gamma Omicron Chapter. We held the state's first job fair that focused solely on careers in gerontology. At the job fair, there were two panels that consisted of professionals in the field who explained the importance of studying gerontology. We also had chapter t-shirts made. From the job fair and t-share sale, we generated about \$1,000 for our chapter. The money will be used towards future activities and workshops. We also did our annual paper goods drive and were able to donate 14 carts full of paper goods and over \$150 to the Lanakila Meals On Wheels program. At our July general membership meeting, the current board members were re-elected to serve another term. They are Michelle Sagucio and Samantha Tsoi, Co- Presi-

dents; Pauline Lynch, Vice President; Harumi Karel, Treasurer; Carolyn Ballou, Membership Chair; Dawn Urabe, Program Chair; Cullen Hayashida, Tony Lenzer, and Jodi Shaw, Members-at-large.

At our annual chapter meeting that was held on October 20, 2007 at the Honolulu Yacht Club, we started planning for our 2nd annual "Careers in Aging" Job Fair. It will be held at the University of Hawaii at Manoa campus sometime in April 2008 to coincide with the national "Careers in Aging Week."

To end the year, we will be having our annual Christmas Caroling at Kuakini's Hale Pulama Mau Geriatric Center on Saturday, December 8, 2007, which will be followed by our end-of-the-year gathering at Hanaki Restaurant. ~Submitted by Michelle Sagucio and Samantha Tsoi, 808-372-6712 or 808-382-2083, spo.hawaii@gmail.com

Informational Interviews: A Student's Right

Camille Brown, MSG Student & Lisa Riehl, MSG Student– Epsilon Chapter

Virginia Commonwealth University Department of Gerontology encourages students to become familiar with the aging network. As students we go into the community and conduct Informational Interviews in different facilities and organizations serving older adults. Conducting such interviews not only provides students with knowledge about services available for older adults, but also provides students with the opportunity to ask questions in a non-threatening manner (I mean, hey, we aren't asking for a job—yet!). We have been able to effectively network throughout our community, and felt you may be able to benefit from our experience. Below is a list of questions Camille Browne compiled to help students conduct Informational Interviews:

1. What is your educational background?
2. How long have you worked for ____?
3. How long have you worked in this field ____?
4. Please describe a typical life in your day at ____.
5. In what way if any, does your work relate to or focus on Richmond city or the state of VA?
6. In what way do you or have you addressed issues on a national or international level?
7. Do you encounter many moral issues, and ethical dilemmas or problems in your daily work life? If yes, please provide 2 examples and describe how you addressed them.
8. What factors and/or experiences led to your decision to pursue a career at ____?
9. What qualifications are required of someone choosing a career path similar to yours?
10. What do you love best about your career choice?
11. What is the least appealing about your career choice?
12. Do you see yourself doing this kind of work for the remainder of your career? Why, or why not?
13. Do you feel that you have a tangible impact on the elder community? i.e. can you see where your work has a positive impact on the daily lives of the average senior citizen who needs assistance?
14. What social challenges do you think exists for the average senior citizen?
15. How does your organization address this/these challenge(s)?
16. Do you have the time for a personal and social life, or does your career consume most of your life?
17. Does your organization have a committee, group or task force that addresses various issues related to the aging population? If yes, how does the committee/group function? Can students participate in, and/or provide support/resources (such as doing research, making calls, etc.) to this group.
18. Since our population is changing and there are many different cultures and languages within the community, do you recommend learning a second language such as Spanish? If yes, in what situations do you see the need for learning a second language?
19. Since I am in the process of changing careers and am trying to become involved in an environment that caters to the elder population, and you are successful in your chosen career, do you have any advice, suggestions, or recommendations for me?
20. Do you have any questions for me?

I mean, hey, we aren't asking for a job—yet!

Our advice— take advantage of your student status, and have fun!

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Be on the lookout for the upcoming Membership Drive!

Information will be coming your way in December, please take the time to promote your chapter and help increase membership.

President's Award

Sigma Phi Omega's President's Award was initiated in 2005. The purpose of the President's Award is to recognize outstanding SPO student presentation submissions at the annual AGHE meeting.

The SPO President's Award is funded solely by donations from SPO members and other interested parties. We would like for the SPO President's Award to be offered for years to come, and would appreciate your generous donation toward recognizing outstanding, 'up-and-coming' students in gerontology. We need your support! We are recommending a \$25 donation in recognition of SPO's 25th anniversary, but will gladly accept any amount.

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Send us your news!

We love to share your chapter news, pictures, ideas, and events. Please send your submissions to Newsletter Editor, Katie Young, at youngka@vcu.edu. Please include your chapter name, college or university, submitter's name, email, and phone.

Looking forward to hearing your news!

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