Next Steps: Planning a Grad School Event to Help Transition Your University’s Undergrads

Presented by Texas Iota Chapter
Texas State University
Alpha Chi National Convention 2015

Session Overview:
  o How can Alpha Chi chapters help their members successfully enter graduate school
  o Suggestions from students’ perspective
  o Survey of other chapters
  o Group brainstorming session
  o Wrap-up session to share best ideas

Are your members thinking about graduate school?
  o Are they asking:
    o Why would I attend?
    o How does graduate school differ from my undergraduate education?
    o How do I choose a program?
    o How do I apply?
    o How do I finance my education?
    o Will there be a return on my investment?

How can Alpha Chi chapters help:
  o Texas Iota hosts annual scholarly events
    o Small-scale
    o Large-scale
  o Send email invitation to undergraduate students
    o Alpha Chi members
    o Juniors and Seniors with 3.0 or higher GPA
    o Honor College students
    o All undergraduate students
  o Campus newspaper advertisement
  o Fliers

Is Graduate School the next step?
  o Reasons to attend:
    o Increased earning power
    o Gain qualifications for employment
Desire to expand knowledge

Contributions in research

Love of the subject

Personal achievements

Selecting a Graduate Program:

- Identify your goals then find the right graduate school for you
  - Know what you want to study
  - Discuss programs with current faculty and peers
  - Search the web
- Ask yourself
  - Does it fit my goals?
  - Do I think I will be accepted?
  - Relocation – am I willing?
  - Cost – can I afford it?

Application Process:

- Determine what is required for application
  - Transcripts (GPA)
  - GRE scores
  - Personal statement
  - Letters of recommendation
  - Commitment from faculty member to serve as research advisor
- Determine all deadlines
  - Application, scholarships, financial aid, request for assistantship
- Make application competitive
- Submit application materials
- Follow-up

Now that you have been accepted:

- Evaluate the offer
  - Financial support and benefits
    - Type of assistantship and time commitment for employment
    - Scholarships
  - Tuition
    - Out-of-state tuition
  - Cost of living

Financing Graduate Education:

- Master’s students:
  - 44% student loans
- 26% employer support
- 18% assistantship/fellowship
  - Average $7,600
- Ph.D. students:
  - 32% student loans
  - 77% assistantship/fellowship
  - Average $11,600

**Trends in Financial Debt:**

- Students with no debt at graduation:
  - 42% master’s degree and 45% Ph.D. students
- Students with debt at graduation
  - Master’s students
    - $40,208 average total debt
  - Ph.D. students
    - $58,967 average total debt

**Return on investment:**

- Job market projections
  - 22% increase in jobs requiring master’s degree
  - 20% increase in jobs requiring Ph.D. degree
- Earning power
  - Increases in lifetime earnings
    - For those with master’s degrees
      - 18% increase over a bachelor’s degree
    - For those with Ph.D. degrees
      - 43% increase over a bachelor’s degree
- Compares median debt accrued by people pursuing specific degrees and median salaries earned by people in professions with those degrees
- Ph.D. in biological sciences and working as a postsecondary teacher (life sciences field)
  - Median debt = $35,114
  - Median annual salary = $80,250
- Ph.D. in arts and humanities and working as a postsecondary teacher (non-STEM field)
  - Median debt = $60,000
  - Median annual salary = $63,130
**Graduate Programs Event:**

- Social to meet faculty and graduate students
- Door prizes given away

**Survey of chapters:**

- Sent survey to 327 chapter advisors
- Survey consisted of four program questions
- Identified region and whether the institution was public or private

**Chapter survey results:**

- Sent survey to 327 chapter advisors
  - 39 responded (12% response rate)
- Question 1: Does your Alpha Chi chapter currently offer any programs for undergraduate students interested in attending graduate school?
  - 27 responded yes
  - 12 responded no
- Question 2: If you do offer programs, what is the approximate number of undergraduates that typically attend a program?
  - 23% stated that 51-100 students attended
  - 15% stated that 26-50 students attended
  - 62% stated that 11-25 students attended
- Question 3: If you do offer programs, do you partner with any of the following offices on campus to help with the program?
  - McNair Program: 1
  - Honors College: 5
  - Graduate College: 2
  - Career Services: 6
  - Advising Center: 1
- Question 4: If your chapter does offer programs, please indicate the topics you cover?
  - All the topics covered the application process and what areas of study are the students interested in
Group brainstorming sessions:

- What kinds of activities does your chapter currently offer to prepare undergraduates for graduate school?
- What ideas for new programs have you developed by attending this session?
- What partnerships might you form on your campus to assist in offering programs?
- What partnerships might you form with nearby campuses to assist in offering programs?
- How might you seek funding for programs?