Our Own Arch of Triumph: St. Louis Convention Highlights

Within sight of St. Louis’ iconic Gateway Arch, this year’s annual convention delegates gathered at the historic Union Station Hotel for three days of presentations, workshops, addresses, and networking. The opening ceremonies Thursday evening welcomed the 485 students, faculty, and their guests representing close to one hundred chapters. One brief item of business involved a constitutional vote affecting the national student representatives; the assembled delegates overwhelmingly approved the motion so that student reps’ two-year terms are now staggered, allowing increased mentoring and consistency among the student leadership.

Dr. Dennis Richardson provided the keynote address Thursday evening. His talk underscored the convention theme, The Future of Water, by introducing the delegates to high-impact health initiatives in Bawa, Cameroon. His descriptions of his first-hand involvement with the Bawa Health Initiative, illustrating his scholarship as a parasitologist as well as his humanitarian determination to improve world conditions, motivated and inspired all listeners. Dr. Richardson was a popular and high-profile member of the convention, leading with Dr. Bill Clemente, National Council vice president, the Walk for Water fundraiser Friday afternoon, when convention delegates walked toward the Mississippi down the streets of St. Louis. All told, delegates contributed $5,600 toward the BHI’s drive to install wells and latrines in Bawa this year, and many chapters left with plans for campus-based projects for next year.

A dynamic poster forum inaugurated the student presentations Thursday evening, with delegates enjoying coffee and dessert as they mingled in the Midway among the dozens of researched and creative arts posters. The intensity of student presentations continued Friday and Saturday morning, nearly 300 students presentations total, with one new element this year: the Collaborative Research Project prize. Five campuses participated in the eight-month project, tailoring the main topic, The Future of Water, to their campus research teams. Outside evaluators Dr. Richardson and Dr. Wasit Wulamu from St. Louis University judged the papers, posters, and oral presentations of these five groups, and the team from Gardner-Webb University, with a project on “Water, Economics, Ethics, and Fracking: A Cost-Benefit Analysis of Hydraulic Fracturing” took home the $5,000 prize.

(continued on page two)
If Tennyson was right, and “all experience is an arch,” then the chapter-strengthening sessions which punctuated the Friday morning agenda, building on the campus experience of the seasoned presenters, offered a new vista for all the delegates. These sessions, generally in workshop format, have been distilled for wide distribution and will be made available on the Alpha Chi website under the chapters tab.

A highlight of any convention is hearing from the recipient of the Distinguished Alumni Award, and General Tommy Franks provided no exception. Inducted into the Texas Alpha Theta chapter at the University of Texas at Arlington in 1971, he completed a nearly four-decade career in the United States Army as a four-star general, most visibly serving as the Commander-in-Chief of the United States Central Command in the days after 9/11 during the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. The recipient of three Purple Hearts, three Bronze Stars, four Distinguished Service Medals, The Medal of Freedom, and the Order of the British Empire among many, many other military and civilian awards, he spoke in a down-home and direct manner to the delegates about the difference between their IQ, AQ (awareness quotient) and WQ (willingness quotient), assuring them that “having it” and “doing something with it” were two different things. After a standing ovation, he answered questions from the students and reiterated that receiving his award filled him with pride, since his academic journey had been filled with second chances.

The closing ceremonies Saturday morning culminated with cheer after cheer: farewells to retiring Georgia Nu sponsor Dr. Mark Stevens and National Council member Dr. Paul Michelson, introductions of new Council members and thanks to outgoing student reps, announcement of the national scholarship recipients and the 28 convention prize winners, the highly-anticipated tradition of the convention highlights reel, a tribute to Lara Noah, director of operations, on her twenty-year anniversary with Alpha Chi, and the announcement of the March 19-21 convention in Chicago in 2015. With generous research scholarships available to support chapter travel, next year’s convention can be on every chapter’s agenda.

From Region I, delegates re-elected Secretary-Treasurer Dr. Karl Havlak, professor of mathematics at Angelo State University, and student representative Colton McCoy from Abilene Christian University. Region II delegates elected two from the University of Texas at Tyler: Professor Suzanne Pundt, biology, was re-elected Region II Secretary-Treasurer, and Michael Suarez will serve as the student representative. Joshua Johnson, a student at Gardner-Webb University, will represent the members of Region III. Samantha Macht, Columbia College, will serve as the student representative from Region IV. Region V delegates chose Dr. Craig Rogers, professor of psychology at Campbellsville University, as their new secretary-treasurer, and also elected Bronwen Fetters, from Huntington University, as their student representative.

Kathryn Herbert, Marist College, will represent the students of Region VI for the next two years, and Joshua Blagaila, alumnus of Fresno Pacific University, will serve an additional year as student representative from Region VII. Dr. Pamela Johnston, assistant professor of history, Fresno Pacific University, will complete the remaining two years of the open secretary-treasurer’s term.

Newly elected Alpha Chi National Council regional student representatives: Joshua Johnson, Gardner-Webb University, Region III; Samantha Macht, Columbia College, Region IV; Kathryn Herbert, Marist College, Region VI; Bronwen Fetters, Huntington University, Region V; Colton McCoy, Abilene Christian University, Region I; and Michael Suarez, University of Texas at Tyler, Region II. Joshua Blagaila (not pictured), Fresno Pacific University, continues to serve as the Region VII student representative through next year.
A Stellar Award

Last fall, when forty-three Star Chapter awards were announced, Anderson University, East Central University, Huntington University, and Carson-Newman University again made the list. Since the first awards in 1996, these chapters have consistently met the criteria. The chapter sponsors of those schools respond here to three questions from Dr. Trisha Yarbrough, executive director, regarding some of their best practices for encouraging successful chapter life.

How does convention attendance work into your chapter life?

Dr. Christine Pappas, East Central University:

As a firm believer in undergraduate research, I want students to have the experience of a low-pressure conference, and I also like to expose them to new cities and sights. My top budget priority for the year is conference attendance. My only other expense is honor cords for graduation.

Students are made aware of convention opportunities throughout their membership, and I put a note about conventions in the induction program. In the spring, the induction speakers are actually students presenting at the conference. I also solicit interest through emails with the chapter. My own personal rule is that students can’t attend the convention unless they present their research. Students may be hesitant to present a paper, but usually when they learn that they can create a poster instead they are eager. If the students have very little experience with presentations, I also hold a prep session during which each student presents his or her research.

Our chapter pays as much as possible. This includes all transportation, registration fees, hotel, most meals, and cultural experiences. We get support from the University with either a van or $1,000 toward plane tickets when we fly. Most ECU students literally have no spending money. They would not be able to pay any amount toward a trip like this. I tell students up front when they will have to buy their own lunch or breakfast.

Before we travel we have at least one trip meeting, to review policies and expectations with the students before leaving town. For example, I make clear that students must attend all convention events. I also emphasize that they must never go anywhere alone. It’s just not safe to travel with a group and students must never go anywhere alone. It’s just not safe to travel with a group with no cohesion at all. The Alpha Chi convention trip really sells itself. Once some students have attended they always pitch it to their friends.

Dr. Blake Janutolo, Anderson University:

Each year in the fall, during the first meeting of our Alpha Chi chapter, I tell about the convention. I tell them that for any member who will present a paper, I will pay their way so that the convention will not cost them anything to attend. I also offer any member who wants to go to the convention, but not give a paper, the opportunity to attend, and offer to pay their registration fee and, unless we are flying, provide transportation. Typically by the time I apply the subsidies, it will cost the student who does not give a paper less than $100 to attend the convention.

Usually there are two or three students who take me up on giving a paper and several who want to go without presenting. Since we are driving and the van price is the same regardless of the number of students, it will only cost those students not giving a paper $80 to cover their rooms. It might even work out to less depending on the [regional and national travel] subsidies. The University has been generous in funding the cost of the convention for those giving a paper. This has been a bonus in allowing us to use our time for something other than fundraising.

(continued on page four)
Consistently having students attend the convention provides a group of students excited to return to campus and share what a great experience the convention is. During our honors banquet, I always have a student who has attended the convention earlier in the semester tell about his/her experience and encourage those members not graduating to consider attending the next year.

How does your chapter develop academic programming?

**Dr. Kip Wheeler, Carson-Newman University:**

Most of our Alpha Chi projects locally have aspects that involve both philanthropic and academic goals. We often team up with other organizations on campus, especially for events encouraging literacy. In fact, that’s one way we encourage faculty involvement. Many of these groups are often happy to team-up with Alpha Chi when they learn that we can send 60 students to help with large-scale projects.

In terms of our more-academically oriented works, we strongly encourage a number of student submissions for the national convention by coordinating with the Carson-Newman Honors Program’s director, Dr. Brian Austin. We arrange for the students to submit a copy of their proposed presentations and papers (for the Gaston Scholarships, Sledge Fellowships, etc.) to the Alpha Chi sponsors on the same day each spring that the Carson-Newman Honors Program requires them to submit their final senior honor projects and beginning junior honor project proposals. That dual submission process means when we need to select a student for the major scholarship competitions, we get a dozen applicants rather than just one or two. We try to base the nature and scheduling of our academic events to match or complement those events that are already planned by the Carson-Newman Honors Program; thus, our two schedules can enhance rather than conflict with each other.

Our local chapter also hosts a reception every semester at one of the classier spots on campus for students who have made the Dean’s List. We invite the students who made the Dean’s List and all the faculty to drop in during an afternoon. We have Alpha Chi music majors perform piano or guitar in the background, and we have well-dressed Alpha Chi students in their sartorial splendor stand in as greeters and servers. It allows us to get our name out to those freshman and sophomore students who achieve academically, but aren’t yet eligible for Alpha Chi. It also allows us to honor academic performance among all the students, even those who aren’t Alpha Chi members. Finally, since it specifically honors the Dean’s List, we ask the provost’s office for help with our supplies, which is a life-saver given our small budget.

To make effective use of faculty support, we attempt to keep a number of sponsors from a variety of fields. Because I have experience herding groups of students through airports and onto buses, I’ve made it my task recently to be the organizer for student travel to the national convention. We’ve found that the more faculty willing to act as sponsors, the easier it is to distribute responsibilities. I would recommend that other chapters take a close look at their colleagues and try to recruit co-sponsors who can divide a variety of tasks among themselves—variety not just in academic specialization, but variety in unofficial roles that could benefit the whole chapter.

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**About the sponsors...**

**Dr. Christine Pappas** is a professor of political science at East Central University in Ada, Oklahoma, a public university of about 5,000 undergraduates.

**Dr. Blake Janutolo** is professor of biology and dean of the college of health sciences at Anderson University in Indiana, a private, church-affiliated, liberal arts university with about 2,000 undergraduates.

**Dr. Kip Wheeler** is an associate professor of English, at Carson-Newman University in Jefferson City, Tennessee, a church-affiliated, liberal arts university, with about 2,000 undergraduates.

**Dr. Paul Michelson**, professor of history at Huntington University in Huntington, Indiana, a church-affiliated liberal-arts school of about 1,400 students, has been the Alpha Chi sponsor for over 30 years.

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**What has led to your chapter's successful scholarship nomination process?**

**Dr. Paul Michelson, Huntington University:**

Our chapter meets monthly, so at the first fall meeting in September we make it a point to emphasize Alpha Chi scholarships along with a look at recent successes of our chapter in these (seven national scholarships since 2004 and seven regional awards since 2008). At our second meeting, more detailed information is provided about the awards available and members are polled about their interest in applying. One of our sponsors serves as the scholarship advisor and makes contact with students who have indicated a possible interest.

We might have four to eight papers submitted from a chapter of 35 to 40 members. These are then vetted in two ways. A professor from each student's major department is asked to comment on the papers. These comments and the papers are then read and ranked by a committee of sponsors with the goal of having the two best papers/projects chosen by the end of January. The scholarship advisor then works with the students and their advisors to make final revisions on the papers in time to be submitted by the deadline. Larger chapters might want to include a prior faculty recommendation along with the paper or even a public presentation if they have too many applicants.

Another means of doing this might be to have two committees: a preliminary weeding committee of representative faculty followed by an Alpha Chi selection committee.

Regional scholarship applications are not limited except that students must attend the national convention and make a presentation of the paper. One incentive that works here is that students participating in scholarship competitions and doing presentations get more financial assistance to attend the convention if our funds are limited.

Finally, there is a Huntington University Academic Research Forum in the spring (after the convention). Many of the Alpha Chi scholarship papers are subsequently presented at this forum sponsored by the student government.

I think Huntington's experience has shown that if you establish a local tradition of participating and work from an expectation that you will have candidates for national and regional awards, students will gain valuable preparation for applying to graduate school or for a job and in some cases will actually win regional and national awards.
Presentation Prizes Awarded to 29 Students

Twenty-eight Alpha Chi members received prizes for making the best scholarly, creative, or artistic presentations in their fields at the society’s national convention in St. Louis, March 27-29. The cash prizes were funded through discipline-specific endowments established by supporters of the society. Among more than 260 students making presentations, the following received prizes:

Walden S. Freeman Prize in American History: Jacob Ashley, Mars Hill University, “A Canine Conundrum: The Treatment of Military Working Dogs in World War II and the Vietnam War”

Ellen Millsaps Prize in American Literature: Jennarae Niece, St. Catharine College, “An Ecocritical Literary Criticism of Dillard’s Holy the Firm”

Avery Grenfell Church Prize in Anthropology & Sociology: Daniel Binkoski, Huntington University, “The Context and Impacts of Land Reform in China”

Alexander Bendazzi/Strayer University Prize in Art/Music/Dance Papers: Charles Castanon, Fresno Pacific University, “Music as Transcendental Order: The Connection Between Mousikē and Logos in Ancient Greek Education”

Robert Blake Prize in British Literature: Elisa Wyrick, Abilene Christian University, “A Dialogical Discourse: Gaskell’s Social Commentary on a Divided Culture”

Gayle Webb White Prize in Business Administration: Zachary Sprung, Grand Canyon University, “Home Safe”

Joseph E. and Bessie Mae Pryor Prize in Chemistry: Timothy Horton, Ouachita Baptist University, “Inhibiting Recognition of the B-Cell Receptor by the Tyrosine Kinase Syk”


Floyd Tesmer/Strayer University Prize in Computer Science & Engineering: Jessica Sikula, Indiana Institute of Technology, “Human Forearm Myoelectric Signals Used for Robotic Hand Control”

Phillip A. Holcomb Prize in Contemporary Bioethical Issues: Alexis Kaiser, Anderson University, “The Relationship Between Personal Ethical Norms and Attitudes Towards Science”

Thelma Hall Prize in Creative Writing: Tiffany Lee, Hawaii Pacific University, “Love|Lust”

Patricia A. Williams Prize in Education: Christiana Snyder, Milligan College, “El Sueño Americano: A Study of Why Latinos are Underrepresented in Higher Education?”


Two Kathryn Hoyle Bradley Prizes in Health Sciences: Tricia Haley, Anderson University, “The Effects of the Diabetic Milieu on the Development of Nephropathy,” and Stephanie Allen-Winters, Christian Brothers University, “Hair Cortisol as a Predictor of Retrospective Outcomes in Infants and Young Children”

Joseph E. and Bessie Mae Pryor Prize in Mathematics: Brandi Haliscek, Texas Lutheran University, “The Necessity of Primes in RSA Encryption and Probable Primes”

Bonnie Revelle Prize in Molecular & Cellular Biology: Akimasa Iijima, Hawaii Pacific University, “Mechanism of Inhibition of Recombinant GABAA Receptors by Pentylenetetrazole and Alleviation by Anticonvulsants”

Blake and Trish Janutolo Prize in Organismal & Ecological Biology: Tina Johnson, Abilene Christian University, “Edaphic Specialization in the Neoendemic Plant Mentzelia monoensis”

Floyd and Rosana Tesmer/D.C. Gamma Prize in Original Visual Art: Chin-Yee Chew, Lyon College for her art collection titled “Survivor Series”

Johnny and Frances Williams Prize in Performing Arts: Timonthi Williams, West Liberty University for her performance titled “Loewe and Schumann—Contemporaries in Comparison: Frauenliebe und -leben”

Political Science/Economics Prize: Jennifer Zarek, Hastings College, “Impact Assessment of Fundación Mujer: The Role of Microcredit Institutions in Developed Countries”


Michael Flachmann Prize in Shakespeare: Veronica Garrison-Joyner, Bowie State University, “Shakespeare’s Feisty Couples”

Patricia Graham Prize in World History: Ge Huang, Colby-Sawyer College, “Democracy After Tian’anmen”

Bill Short Prize in World Literature: Anthony Fredette, Fresno Pacific University, “Prosimetrical and Popular Philosophy: Boethius and the Effective Communication of Truth”

Dennis M. Organ Prize for the Top Presentation by a Graduate Student or Alumni Member: Jesse Morrow, Texas A&M University-Texas College Station, “Identity Formation and the Element of Essential Divisibility”
Alpha Chi honored many of its chapter’s valued faculty sponsors at the national convention in St. Louis. Most notably, Dr. Carl Malinowski received accolades for 32 years of sponsor service at Pace University Westchester. For 10 years of service, sponsors are awarded a silver pin. After 15 years, a gold pin suspended from a matching horizontal bar is awarded. At 20 years, a sapphire is added to either end of the bar, emeralds upon 25 years, and diamonds at 30 years.

In addition to Dr. Malinowski, 16 other chapter sponsors were awarded pins for 10, 15, 20, 25, or 30 years of service. These volunteer sponsors contributed to their students and campuses a combined total of 285 years of loyal service.

10-year pins:
Dr. Kerry Bruns, 11 years, Southwestern University, Texas Alpha
Dr. Paul Frisch, 10 years, Our Lady of the Lake University, Texas Nu
Dr. Randall Hanson, 12 years, Colby-Sawyer College, New Hampshire Alpha
Dr. Lori Hensley, 10 years, Ouachita Baptist University, Arkansas Beta
Dr. Randel Price, 10 years, Christian Brothers University, Tennessee Theta
Mrs. Misti Reisman, 11 years, Tarleton State University, Texas Alpha Kappa
Mrs. Syble Shellito, 10 years, Chowan University, North Carolina Phi

15-year pins:
Dr. Malinda Fitzgerald, 19 years, Christian Brothers University, Tennessee Theta
Dr. Jacquelyn Kegley, 15 years, California State University, Bakersfield, California Iota
Dr. Chris Tiahrt, 18 years, Brescia University, Kentucky Delta

20-year pins:
Dr. Lillian Cummings, 21 years, Shaw University, North Carolina Eta
Dr. Patricia Nwosu, 21 years, Shaw University, North Carolina Eta
Dr. Carolyn Owens, 20 years, University of Mary Hardin-Baylor, Texas Beta
Dr. Maxwell Rollins, 20 years, Charleston Southern University, South Carolina Zeta
Dr. Linda Wade, 20 years, Tarleton State University, Texas Alpha Kappa

25-year pin:
Dr. Charles Smedley, 25 years, Charleston Southern University, South Carolina Zeta

30-year pin:
Dr. Carl Malinowski, 32 years, Pace University Westchester, New York Mu
Three Alpha Chi Chapters Receive ACHS Advisor Grants

The Association of College Honor Societies awarded grants to Alpha Chi sponsors and students at three Alpha Chi chapters for projects planned under the ACHS theme of "Social Responsibility." The chapters and their creative ideas are listed here:

Saint Vincent College, Pennsylvania Nu, Prof. Alice Kaylor, Chapter Sponsor

Creating a Community through Meals — The project collaborators were Alpha Lambda Delta honor society and the Visionaries of H.O.P.E. student organization. The project addressed food scarcity experienced by elderly and low-income families in the community and built a strong and affirming fellowship among attendees who were served a full-course meal. The project also provided goodie bags of food and toiletries for the elderly and families to take home.

Oklahoma City University, OklahomaEta, Dr. Tony Stancampiano, Chapter Sponsor

Earth Day Water Conservation Fair — Collaborators for the project were Beta Beta Beta honor society and Oikos Scholars Program. The project focused on water sustainability, promoted the Oklahoma City water program, Squeeze Every Drop, and educated citizens about the importance of conserving water.

Texas State University, TexasIota, Dr. Ron Brown, Chapter Sponsor

Bobcat Blend composting project — The project collaborators were Pi Alpha Xi honor society and Bobcat Blend Composting Club. The plan involved students in directing the waste audits, collections, and management of the composting site, as well as expanding campus education of students.

As you are filling out your Annual Chapter Report for the 2013-2014 academic year, keep in mind that there are now two levels of awards for chapter achievements! To broaden the scope of recognition, the Notable Chapter Award was created this spring by the National Council to commend chapters who exhibit the benchmarks of healthy chapter life. The checklists for both Star Chapter and Notable Chapter awards are below:

Star Chapter Criteria

A Star Chapter will fulfill the following:
- Induct and register new members
- File an Annual Chapter Report by the deadline
- Send at least one sponsor and one student to the annual national convention
- Have at least one student presentation on the annual national convention program
- Nominate a student for a national fellowship or scholarship
- Host an academic program on campus

Notable Chapter Criteria

A Notable Chapter will achieve these benchmarks of healthy chapter life:
- Induct and register new members
- File an Annual Chapter Report by the deadline
- And any three of the following:
  - Send at least one sponsor and one student to the annual national convention
  - Have at least one student presentation on the annual national convention program
  - Nominate a student for a national fellowship or scholarship
  - Host an academic program on campus

Additional current news and information at www.AlphaChiHonor.org

Honorary Member Nomination Deadlines

March 31, June 30, Sept. 30, Dec. 31
(One nomination per year allowed for each chapter or National Council member.)