

Alpha Nu Sigma 2013 College Project Hallmark Award Entry

1. Briefly describe your College Project and who from the chapter and the college administration was involved in determining it?

The Alpha Nu Sigma College Project, “Don’t Hesitate, Graduate!” was based on the Commit to Complete initiative. Chapter members and officers developed a diverse and multi-faceted approach to inform students and faculty of the benefits and importance of graduation. Chapter officers developed the idea while meeting with College President, Neyle Wilson, who emphasized the college mission “To provide a student centered environment and inspire lifelong learning.” Under his advisement, chapter officers and advisors subsequently met with the Senior Vice President of Academic Affairs and the Assistant Vice President of Academic Affairs to brainstorm additional ways to share information with students and faculty. Ultimately, the chapter organized three signing events for students and one for faculty; distributed 600 brochures and postcard sets about college completion; and filmed a commercial promoting college completion.

2. Summarize your objectives for the College Project and the process by which the chapter and college administration set these objectives.

Chapter officers worked closely with administration to determine objectives for the College Project. Our first objective was to provide readily available information about the significance of college completion to students on all three campuses. Our second objective was to film a commercial about the importance of obtaining a college degree. During our meeting, President Wilson suggested we meet with Senior Vice President Dr. Marilyn Fore and Assistant Vice President Rene Smith to seek additional ideas for our project. Specifically, they proposed that we meet with faculty to gain their support for the completion initiative during the Fall semester full faculty meeting, encourage newly enrolled students to use academic support services, and share financial aid facts to prevent

Alpha Nu Sigma 2013 College Project Hallmark Award Entry

economic difficulties from impacting college completion. We took their proposals to the chapter and set three additional objectives: secure faculty support for college completion; create a letter to new students; and inform students of important facts about financial aid.

3. Describe the planning process and strategies developed to the complete the College Project.

“Don’t Hesitate, Graduate!” aligned with the college mission “To provide a student centered environment and inspire lifelong learning.” Once our goals were redefined, we brainstormed the project name and how to meet our objectives in a series of committee and chapter meetings. Volunteers contacted administrators to set up appointments for guidance as we drafted brochures, postcards and signs. As the process continued, we discovered that all elements of the project required review for accuracy and approval from various administrative departments. For example, in order to print postcards with college completion information, the office of Admissions, Financial Aid, Student Affairs and Marketing had to review them and give final approval for placement on campus and distribution to students. Additionally, officers met with advisors several weeks prior to the full faculty meeting to rehearse their presentation and to receive coaching on public speaking and professionalism. Student Affairs staff attended a chapter meeting to collaborate with us in planning our multi-campus signing event. For the final objective of filming a commercial, we contacted the Marketing Director for ideas and assistance. She fully supported the idea and arranged for a professional videographer to film one of our signing events.

4. What were the quantitative and qualitative outcomes of your project, including the lessons learned by your chapter members and others?

Four officers designed three postcards entitled “Fast Facts to Keep You Paid,” “How to Survive College” and “Warning: Don’t Get Withdrawn!” Additionally, two officers designed “The Importance of College

Alpha Nu Sigma 2013 College Project Hallmark Award Entry

Completion” student brochures. Overall, 600 postcard sets and brochures were distributed in four high-traffic locations on all campuses and at the signing events. During the full faculty meeting on August 20, 2012, three officers gave a presentation to 140 faculty members about the importance of graduation and improving communication between faculty and students. Three additional officers hosted a signing event immediately following the presentation where fifty pledges were signed by professors and administrators. English professor Sean Glassberg thanked chapter officers for their information and stated, “It served as a nice reminder of why we are really here.” To reinforce the information conveyed at the meeting, officers designed a “College Completion” brochure that was placed in 140 faculty mailboxes. During the three simultaneous student signing events, twenty members distributed goodie bags containing the three postcards, student brochure, pencils embossed with the “Don’t Hesitate, Graduate!” slogan, pledge stickers, graduation application information and candy. Across three campuses, 450 students signed banners and pledges committing to complete their college degrees. A former student, from the Georgetown campus, shared that she stopped attending classes one year ago and signing our pledge motivated her to complete her final three classes and obtain her degree. At the signing event on the Grand Strand campus, chapter officers worked directly with Marketing Director Mary Eaddy to organize and film our commercial. The videographer filmed fifteen students in front of a “green screen” and directed students to state their names and why they committed to complete their degrees. Chapter President Jonathan Fignole, Vice President of Scholarship Andy Whipple and two chapter members were among those featured. The preliminary footage appears on the Alpha Nu Sigma Facebook page and YouTube. We shared our signing event success with the Senior Vice President of Academic Affairs who replied, “Outstanding! I heard on the news this morning the job market would be better for bachelor prepared individuals that possess associate degrees. Please congratulate the students for setting admirable goals. And thanks to all of you.” Finally, our “Don’t Hesitate, Graduate!” slogan was featured on the electronic sign in front of the Conway campus, and the Georgetown campus

Alpha Nu Sigma 2013 College Project Hallmark Award Entry

featured a bulletin board decorated with “Don’t Hesitate, Graduate!” and all of our informational brochures. We grew from the process of planning simultaneous events on multiple campuses. It compelled us to work directly with administration and heightened our professional communication abilities. Our leadership skills were strengthened during this process, particularly goal setting, completion of objectives, flexibility to adapt, and time management. Ultimately, we empowered 450 students to take ownership of their scholastic journey.

5. What is left undone or what opportunities remain for the future?

According to Marketing Director Mary Eaddy, the audio of our commercial will be broadcast on the radio in February, and the edited commercial will be on the college website and on local television in the near future. Another opportunity is to design a PowerPoint or Prezi slideshow displaying facts promoting college completion to be shown in the Financial Aid office. We intend to expand our promotion of college completion by providing brochures for the admissions office to be distributed to new students. Finally, we will contact the print shop to fabricate signs to be placed in advantageous positions on our three campuses. The signs will be large enough to be seen by drivers on campus and will display motivational slogans such as “Don’t Hesitate, Graduate!” and “Get Your Degree from HGTC!” With our continued efforts, we believe more students will complete their degrees and have financially rewarding futures.