

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

Our College Project originated from a luncheon with our outgoing officer team and the Horry Georgetown Technical College (HGTC) President and Vice President of Academic Affairs. We discussed ideas to improve communication with students and encourage them to obtain their degree. We expressed the need for greater involvement in clubs to foster a sense of commitment to our college. This meeting paved the way to our multi-faceted approach to improving communication between HGTC and students and inspired the “Why Graduate” theme of our project.

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

Following the luncheon, committee members reconvened and were inspired by the portion of HGTC’s mission statement that states, “to provide a student centered environment.” We brainstormed ideas with administration to fulfill this mission. Through this process, our primary goal became to create an easily navigated college experience for all students. Additional facets of our project were:

- Creating a mobile application to enhance student communication with HGTC.
- Designing upgraded maps with easy to recognize icons for frequently visited places on all three campuses.
- Writing a student-to-student letter of personal experience advising how to be-successful and providing a detailed list of college clubs.
- Hosting a C4 Signing event on all 3 HGTC campuses to encourage our fellow students to complete their programs of study.

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

Several chapter members met with the college President, Vice President (VP) and Assistant Vice President (AVP) of Academic Affairs. These key administrators expressed a need to “de-mystify” new student orientation since it is solely an online process. Our project began with our review and feedback of this process. We then informed them most new students are unaware of the many resources available on campus and of the communication gap between staff and students. We brainstormed ideas to bridge this void. Throughout the process we met with administrators from various departments including: Student Affairs, Student Engagement, Student Enrollment, Marketing, Web Services, Academic Support, Graphic Design and the Print Shop.

Several Alpha Nu Sigma members formed our College Project committee, which met weekly to plan and develop strategies to achieve our goals and delegate responsibilities. The team created specific leadership positions including Advertising Coordinator and Event Coordinators for all three campuses. Committee co-chairs met with HGTC’s Marketing Director who suggested we meet with the Student Enrollment AVP, Webmaster and the Graphics Manager to collaborate on our project. One co-chairperson met with the Graphics Manager to request approval to add icons to the campus maps, which was granted. She then researched appropriate icons and sent proofs to the Print Shop Manager. She also met with the Student Enrollment AVP to coordinate the inclusion of our new student letter and club list into the new student packet. A subcommittee was formed to write and design the letter and club list.

We realized many students are unfamiliar with campus on the first day. Committee members wore stickers imprinted with “Ask Me” and sought out students who appeared to be lost during the first two days of class. We worked with our advisors to use course schedules to determine high-traffic times where we could be most impactful. The Event Coordinators met with HGTC staff on their respective campuses before, during and after our C4 signing events. We ordered a C4 banner for the larger campus and provided digital files to the Director of Student Engagement (DSE) to print two 3’x4’ posters for signing at our smaller campuses. Our Advertising Coordinator created a poster and postcards titled “Why Graduate” to use during the signing event. The DSE also provided C4 bracelets to remind students of their commitment.

Student Support VP, Dr. Becky Boone, requested our help to beta test the HGTC mobile application for student and faculty use. She attended two of our committee meetings to discuss the application and asked us to create a survey to rate its use. Our Advertising Coordinator also created the logo for this application.

With the support and active involvement of the aforementioned administrators, our project evolved into a compilation of avenues geared toward improving communication between students and the college from the moment of acceptance.

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

Initially, we approached our Student Affairs VP to propose the creation of a mobile application for our school’s web portal. Our administration was elated at our proposal as they were already working on its creation. During an initial meeting the Student Affairs VP said, “I’m so glad we are talking, your ideas are letting us know we are on the right path and working to meet student needs.” Our beta testing results found Android users encountered accessibility issues while Apple users had no difficulty. Only 9 out of 32 people responded to our survey, making analysis statistically insignificant. However, we were encouraged by the overall positive feedback. After beta testing was complete, Dr. Boone stated, “I have a few other projects coming up that I would like Phi Theta Kappa to help with.”

Our student letter, club list and revised campus maps were included in the new student information packets beginning in December 2015. To further create a student-centered environment, ten committee and chapter members directed over 100 new students to their destinations during the first two days of class on two campuses. Noticing our involvement, Professor Christian said, “I’m glad to see Alpha Nu Sigma taking the initiative to help new students find their way.”

Chapter members and our Advertising Coordinator distributed 250 “Why Graduate” postcards to students during Welcome Week. We encountered technical challenges along the way. When our Advertising Coordinator went to Office Depot to have the poster printed, the file was not compatible with their system, forcing him to recreate his work which delayed printing. We learned through dedication and perseverance deadlines can be met even in difficult circumstances.

Our C4 signing event was our greatest success with a total of 608 signatures. The Student Affairs VP suggested we host the event to center around the first day of registration for the Spring semester. However, our college’s on-campus registration portal went down so fewer students visited campus to register. To overcome this obstacle, committee members canvassed the campus and engaged with available students to recruit their participation. One student was on her way to resolve a financial aid

Alpha Nu Sigma 2016 College Project Hallmark Award Entry

issue and said, “This is just the motivation I needed, thank you!” The DSE encountered difficulty when ordering the C4 bracelets due to our college’s procurement process, necessitating our advisor to act as a liaison between the college and Phi Theta Kappa headquarters. The Georgetown campus had difficulty obtaining the materials ordered for the event and the pizza arrived late. We overcame these obstacles by working with on-campus registration portal staff who provided other snacks until the pizza arrived. We grew as scholar-student-leaders when we learned in order to succeed in a project of this magnitude, persistence, teamwork and strong communication skills are essential.

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

We continue to collaborate with the Student Support VP to implement and promote the mobile application. Our survey will again be sent to all students shortly after its launch. We will analyze their feedback. We are dedicated to remaining an asset for new students every semester by communicating to them the many resources available at HGTC.