



SIGMA PI SIGMA

The physics honor society

Sigma Pi Sigma Chapter Project Award Final Report

Project Title	Lighting the way with Lighthouse Instruments: UVA Sigma Pi Sigma Annual Luncheon
Name of School	University of Virginia
Sigma Pi Sigma Chapter Number	153
Total Amount Awarded	\$260
Project Leader	Ethan McKeever

Summary of Award Activity

The Sigma Pi Sigma Chapter of the University of Virginia hosted a luncheon for new inductees on April 21, 2023. We invited Dr. Mike Timmins, alum of the UVA physics program and Research and Development Manager at Lighthouse Instruments, to attend this luncheon as an honored guest. Chapter members had the opportunity to learn from Dr. Timmins about different career options in physics, exploring jobs and opportunities outside of academia that require the technical skills and expertise of a physics degree holder.

Statement of Activity

Overview of Award Activity

Our Sigma Pi Sigma new inductees luncheon consisted of bringing together many of our chapter's members to congratulate new members and foster our growing community. The event consisted of catered food in one of the University of Virginia's historic gardens. Furthermore, Dr. Mike Timmins of Lighthouse Instruments was able to attend the event to demonstrate one of the many ways to utilize an education in physics to innovate and help society as a whole. The original goals of the luncheon were to introduce new inductees to our university's Sigma Pi Sigma chapter and strengthen the physics community on campus. These goals were met as sixteen Sigma Pi Sigma members were present throughout the luncheon as well as a faculty member of the physics department. Clearly, the target audience included the Sigma Pi Sigma members, and we were able to reach sixteen members through the event. The project was a success due to the work of the Sigma Pi Sigma executive board along with the help of our university's Society of Physics Students. The executive board organized the event and took care of the setup and cleanup logistics while the Society of Physics Students provided resources such as utensils.

The scale of the project was about what was expected. Since it was confined to current members of UVA's Sigma Pi Sigma chapter, we were fairly confident in how many people were going to be attending the event. Furthermore, the openness and generosity of Dr. Timmins made bringing guests from Lighthouse Instruments very straightforward. Therefore, due to careful planning and the resources provided by UVA, such as access to tables for events, the luncheon was relatively straightforward to accomplish. It came together nicely and allowed for celebration of new members with an open exchange of ideas and experiences between industry professionals and undergraduate physics students at different moments of the educational timeline.

The project was an overall success in building a sense of community among our university's Sigma Pi Sigma chapter as well as honoring the new inductees. Additionally, the luncheon served as an opportunity for mentorship. Many of the underclassmen in attendance were able to ask questions to the graduating class who had just finished the graduate school application process. For example, the graduating students gave their opinion on whether taking the physics GRE was important, how to pick the right school, and how to write a personal statement. Finally, the luncheon succeeded in building a sense of camaraderie amongst UVA physicists. Stories of the history of the department were shared between the faculty, UVA physics alumnus, and current students that solidified the impact that the department has had on generations of aspiring physicists.

Impact Assessment: How the Project/Activity/Event Met the Purpose of the Award

By inviting guests from a local business, Lighthouse Instruments, we raised awareness of our presence as a Sigma Pi Sigma chapter in the community. We hope that this will be advantageous to our students in allowing them to explore career opportunities related to Lighthouse Instruments and other industries' line of work. By holding our luncheon in one of the UVA Gardens, a popular outdoor location on campus, we also increased awareness of our club engagement in the UVA community at large. We hope that holding events like this will encourage UVA students to attend more Sigma Pi Sigma and SPS events, irrespective of their majors and educational backgrounds.

We believe that inviting Dr. Timmins to our luncheon was beneficial on many fronts: we connected new Sigma Pi Sigma members with a local alum, added distinction to new members' induction this spring with the presence of a guest at their celebratory luncheon, and contributed to SPS National's support of "hidden physicists" by demonstrating that the skills physics majors acquire are highly valuable and transferable to a variety of technical and engineering-related fields.

Key Metrics and Reflection

Who was the target audience of your project?	UVA Sigma Pi Sigma Inductees
How many attendees/participants were directly impacted by your project? Please describe them (for example “3 alumni” or “10 physics majors”).	16 attendees (both new and existing Sigma Pi Sigma members), 1 guest speaker who is also an alum, and 1 professor
How many students from your Sigma Pi Sigma chapter were involved in the activity, and in what capacity?	4 students were involved in planning the event, and 12 additional students also attended the luncheon
Was the amount of money you received from Sigma Pi Sigma sufficient to carry out the activities outlined in your proposal? Could you have used additional funding? If yes, how much would you have liked and how would the additional funding have augmented your activity?	No, the amount of money was not fully sufficient since we ended up spending an additional \$155. All of our expenses were solely on the food, so, since food was the main attraction for the event, additional funding would have been helpful. The additional funding would ensure we could invite everyone in Sigma Pi Sigma to celebrate the new inductees. Without the additional funding, we would have to limit the attendance number.
Do you anticipate repeating this project/activity/event in the future, or having a follow-up project/activity/event? If yes, please describe.	Yes, we would love to be able to provide this kind of celebratory luncheon for new inductees on an annual basis.
What new relationships did you build through this project?	We had the opportunity to strengthen connections with a local business, Lighthouse Instruments, through this event. We also provided an opportunity for new members to connect with existing members.
If you were to do your project again, what would you do differently?	We are very pleased with how this event turned out and would be happy to have it again just as it was, hopefully with more funding to be able to accommodate more students.

Expenditures

For our luncheon, the main expense we planned for was the food order. We wanted to provide a nice lunch that included an entree, a side, and a dessert. We made a catering order from a local sandwich restaurant for sandwiches (including a vegan option), chips, and various desserts. The food total was \$405.39. Getting food from a quality vendor was essential for marketing our event and properly celebrating our new inductees. We did have to pay extra for the food to be delivered which was an extra \$10. Luckily, we did not have to pay a fee to reserve our venue because it was hosted in a garden rented out for free to students. As students, we were also able to get tables for free from our student union building. Utensils and napkins were also included in the food order price.

Expenditure Table

Item	Please explain how each expense relates to your project as outlined in your proposal.	Cost
Sandwiches	The entree for our luncheon.	\$301.12
Chips	The side for our luncheon.	\$47.37
Dessert	The dessert for our luncheon.	\$56.90
Food Order Delivery Fee	The local restaurant was not within walking distance and we had a large order, so we had to pay a delivery fee.	\$10
Total of Expenses		\$415.39

Activity Photos



Sigma Pi Sigma members finishing preparations and ready to eat!



Sigma Pi Sigma members enjoying conversations with one another at the luncheon.



Sigma Pi Sigma members enjoying conversations with one another at the luncheon.



Group picture of Sigma Pi Sigma members with Dr. Mike Timmins of Lighthouse Instruments.

