

# Checklist for Chapters Hosting a Zone Meeting

On behalf of the Society of Physics Students, thank you for agreeing to host a Zone meeting at your institution. This is a crucial contribution to the life of SPS. Participation in Zone meetings is a necessary condition for a healthy chapter.

Hosting this meeting may involve some busywork, but along the way it will increase the *esprit de corps* within your chapter and department. The secret is to be organized, with several people involved, so the work does not fall on the shoulders of just one or two individuals.

A checklist of "Things to Do" may be helpful. Also, it makes parts of the job easier to delegate.

The items on this checklist are only suggestions, but they are written from the experience of chapters who have hosted Zone meetings. Of course, you will want to plan for your meeting in your own style, and may have better ideas than anyone else has had so far.

There are two common Zone meeting styles: a stand-alone Zone meeting, and a meeting held jointly with other Societies. Each style has its advantages. Most of the checklist items apply to both types of meeting.

Please establish regular communications with your Zone Councilor and Associate Councilor throughout the planning process, to keep them informed, and so they can help you communicate your plans to other chapters. Also, feel free to call upon the SPS National Office at any time.

## A. PUBLICITY

1. The first priority is to choose a date for the meeting. Friday evening (a social mixer) and Saturday (for presentations and a guest speaker) usually works the best.
2. As soon as your date is firm, contact Lydia Quijada or Stephanie Campbell at the SPS National Office, with an announcement to be published in the SPS Observer and the SPS national website. Perhaps you have already done this. The address is Society of Physics Students, American Institute of Physics, One Physics Ellipse, College Park, MD 20740. The Fax number to the SPS National Office is (301) 209-0839. The phone number to reach a real person is (301) 209-3007. The e-mail address is [sps@aip.org](mailto:sps@aip.org).

Be sure to announce your meeting at the preceding Zone meeting if possible.

3. As soon as the preceding meeting is over, (so as not to steal their thunder) send a mailing to all chapters in your Zone, announcing your meeting's time and location, with a call for papers, and as much other information as you care to provide. The SPS National Office will supply you with email addresses and mailing labels in whatever format you need by calling (301) 209-3007). Don't forget to invite relatively close off-Zone chapters. Also remember the local high school physics classes. Provide the SPS National Office with the Zone meeting information to be placed on the national SPS website.

Also invite other colleges that do not have SPS chapters as yet. The National Office can provide you with labels for off-Zone chapters, and labels by Zone for institutions that don't yet have SPS chapters. The most effective way to start new chapters is to get people to come to these meetings.

4. In the weeks preceding your meeting, there should be at least a couple more mailings from the host chapter to the Zone chapters to remind them of the meeting, call again for student papers, describe the events, describe lodging options, provide city and campus maps, parking information, etc. Many will pre-register if you enclose forms, but expect walk-ins on the day of the meeting. Also do not be surprised if most wait until they arrive to pay their registration fees.
5. A written program at the meeting is a nice touch. To prepare for it you need to put in a deadline for

submitting an abstract and/or title for those who want their participation documented in your program. However, keep the door open for post-deadline papers to be presented if not written up; build enough flexibility into your events that a small number of last-minute submissions can be worked in, because the main reason for SPS meetings in the first place is student participation.

6. Involve your campus community. Inform the campus newspaper well in advance, so they can give your chapter some publicity; invite the university's President, Vice-Presidents, Deans, etc., to attend (even if they cannot, the point is they will know that you are doing something that has attracted regional and national attention to your campus). Invite one of the top administrators to provide opening greetings to the group when the Saturday session convenes. Let the person in charge of your university's public relations office know about the meeting well in advance, and they will send out press releases. Tell the alumni office, so they can carry the news of your meeting to alumni through their own publications.
7. Solicit the support (moral and financial) of your department: point out to your department chair the recruitment and public relations possibilities which this meeting presents. It gives your department a chance to display what it has to offer, and accordingly, your department's administration and faculty should be eager to cooperate with you in helping make the meeting successful.

## B. LOGISTICAL MATTERS

8. Early in your planning reserve the rooms on campus that will be needed. One large lecture hall is usually adequate for the paper presentations. Typically there will be on the order of 60 people present, and a dozen papers or so to be given. In a stand-alone SPS meeting parallel sessions probably will not be needed, but you will be able to get a better feeling for what to expect as pre-registration forms start coming in.
9. Have someone responsible for making sure the room has the audio-visual capabilities needed. You might mention in your call for papers what audio-visual equipment you will have, and tell authors to inform you well in advance of their additional needs. Have a couple of students ready to run last-minute errands! There is always something that needs doing unexpectedly-getting change, finding an extension cord, etc. Have a "gopher" standing by, they are important!
10. Line up a chapter officer to preside over the paper presentations. About 20 minutes per paper is an appropriate schedule for a few papers and 10 or 12 minutes (including time for questions) if there are many. Make sure the room has a clock which the speaker can see. Instruct the one presiding to stick to the schedule.
11. Decide how much responsibility your group wants to assume for the attendees' lodging and meal arrangements. Some chapters arrange for some "crash space" to be available, where host students will let visiting students roll out sleeping bags and stay in their dorm or apartment at no charge. If you can do it, even in a small way, it may help some who are on a tight budget. Whether or not you offer "crash space," you will need to let the chapters know about local motels, their rates, telephone numbers, etc. Sometimes you can get special conference rates, if in return you mention them in your meeting announcement literature.
12. At some meetings, the host chapter has arranged for everyone to have lunch together on Saturday, with the cost included in the registration fee. Again, that is up to you, but it is an opportunity to build a sense of community. Such a luncheon offers a chance for introductions, announcements, and collective discussions. A list in your mailings of nearby restaurants and fast food places will also be appreciated.
13. As people gather on Saturday, they generally expect something like coffee and donuts, and a coffee break during the Saturday morning session.
14. You will need to organize some sort of social get-together on Friday evening as people arrive. These are times to get acquainted and have some fun. At some meetings we played volleyball;

some chapters have organized a "Physics Jeopardy" tournament with t-shirts for prizes; at one meeting there was a contest to see which chapter could build, in 15 minutes, the highest tower out of toothpicks and small marshmallows, that would stand for ten seconds (prizes were physics toys, like yo-yos). One chapter featured a talk on physics and Star Trek; another had a "Demonstration Derby." So plan whatever sounds interesting and fun to you.

15. Also on Friday evening, most people will register and pay their fees, so you need to have someone lined up to handle those details, provide nametags, keep the cash box, give receipts to those who request them, etc.
16. You will need to decide whether you want to have a panel of judges award a prize to the best student paper. Again, this is not always done, but it has been done at many meetings, to give an added incentive and element of interest. The prizes have been things like a book, calculator, pen/pencil sets, etc. Sometimes local businesses or the host department will donate the prizes.

It is fun also to give a prize to each member of the chapter that has the largest number of person-miles for their journey to the meeting. The prizes here can be things like 3-ring notebooks with your university's emblem, t-shirts, certificates, etc. Again, this is up to you

Do not forget to schedule time in the meeting for the awarding of any prizes, and to announce the next Zone meeting. This could be done at the end. It is also a good idea to allow a few minutes for announcements, any brief Zone business, etc.

17. People generally expect a featured guest speaker. The topic should be on something that is not too specialized but is of wide interest. If you must bring the speaker in from out of town, you should arrange their lodging, meals, and transportation. The better known the speaker, the greater the number of people that will come.
18. After all the speakers have spoken and awards have been awarded, this can be a good time to schedule a lab tour, open house, etc., because many may want to browse around a bit before heading home. Here you will have to play it by ear. Plan for something where you can accommodate either a small number or a large number of people. You might also mention local attractions (e.g., museums, historic sites, etc.) they might wish to see before going home.
19. Do not forget the follow-up after the meeting: either someone from the local chapter, or if you wish, the Zone Councilor, should write an article/report to send to the National Office, for publication in the SPS Observer and the SPS national website. For that purpose, take some photos during the meeting which will be displayed on the SPS website as well. **For those chapters who received funding from the National Office, a report and photographs are required in order to receive the full amount of funding.**

Also, it is very important to send thank-you letters to the featured guest speaker and any judges of student papers. Also send a note of thanks to each person who presented a paper.

20. Part of the job of the Zone Councilor and Associate Councilor is to help you publicize the meeting and help you pull it off successfully. Keep in close communication with them. Do not hesitate to contact the National Office at any time. We are in this together.
21. If given sufficient notice, the SPS National Office may be able to send a representative to the Zone meeting.

Again, thanks to all of you for making this important contribution to the professional experience of members of the Society of Physics Students.