

“Sigma Pi Sigma Induction Ceremony, Connecting Alumni to Undergraduate Physics Students”

2013 Sigma Pi Sigma Chapter Project Award Report

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On behalf of the University of Southern Mississippi’s Chapter of the Society of Physics Students, I would like to thank Sigma Pi Sigma and SPS National for giving our chapter the opportunity to use the 2013 Sigma Pi Sigma Chapter Project Award, allowing us to implement the “Sigma Pi Sigma Induction Ceremony, Connecting Alumni to Undergraduate Physics Students.” It has been an honor and a privilege for our chapter to use this award.

During the poster session at the 2012 Quadrennial Physics Congress, Dr. Alina Gearba and I had the opportunity to meet Samwel K. Sekwao, a physics alumnus from the University of Southern Mississippi. After Samwel expressed his desire to return to USM to visit the Department of Physics and Astronomy, we extended an invitation for him to revisit his times at USM and speak at the 2013 Sigma Pi Sigma Induction and SPS Awards Ceremony. Through funding from the 2013 Sigma Pi Sigma Chapter Project Award, Samwel’s visit was made possible.

After much planning, the Sigma Pi Sigma Induction and SPS Awards Ceremony was held on April 12, 2013. The day began with an intimate luncheon with Samwel and nine SPS members where students were able to conduct a group discussion with Sekwao. SPS members

were very interested in learning about his experiences as a student at the University of Southern Mississippi, which proved to be very similar to the experiences of today's students. Samwel continued sharing stories about his love for traveling and extended advice to the members about being a physics graduate student. SPS students benefited greatly from the luncheon, and Samwel enjoyed his trip down memory lane.

Following the luncheon, three USM Department of Physics and Astronomy faculty joined the SPS Members and Sigma Pi Sigma candidates for the induction and award ceremony, which was followed by a reception. Dr. Alina Gearba hosted the Sigma Pi Sigma reception and presented the official power point. Students learned what it means to be a part of Sigma Pi Sigma, and the mission of the society resonated with the attendees. Students learned the importance of honor, encouragement, service, and fellowship within the society. The last induction ceremony was held in 2011, and this year five undergraduate physics students were inducted into Sigma Pi Sigma. After the signing of the book, Dr. Gearba transitioned into the SPS Awards Ceremony.



Dr. Alina Gearba presenting Sigma Pi Sigma official power point.



Erica Bloor, SPS Treasurer, being inducted into Sigma Pi Sigma



2013 Sigma Pi Sigma Inductees

Nominated by SPS Members and selected by USM Physics and Astronomy Department Faculty, Amanda Palchak (SPS President and Associate Zone Councilor) was awarded *SPS Member of the Year*, Erica Bloor (SPS Treasurer) was awarded *Physics Student of the Year*, and Steven Kirkup was awarded *The Outstanding Research Award*.



SPS Award Recipients: Amanda Palchak (SPS Member of the Year), Erica Bloor (Physics Student of the Year)

Following the Sigma Pi Sigma reception and SPS Awards, Samwel lead a seminar for the USM Department of Physics and Astronomy graduate students and faculty. Samwel discussed his Ph.D. research in graphene conducted at the University of Illinois. After the seminar, graduate students spoke with Samwel to learn about his experiences in a Ph.D. program.

On behalf of SPS members, new Sigma Pi Sigma Members, and USM Physics Department faculty, I would like to thank SPS National and Sigma Pi Sigma once again for awarding our chapter with the 2013 Sigma Pi Sigma Chapter Project Award, allowing the idea for “Sigma Pi Sigma Induction Ceremony, Connecting Alumni to Undergraduate Physics Students” to become a reality. Our entire department found this event to be highly beneficial

among students and faculty alike, and it is our hope that future Sigma Pi Sigma induction ceremonies can continue to connect alumni to our undergraduate students.



USM Physics Department Faculty and SPS Members gather for Sigma Pi Sigma Induction Ceremony and SPS Awards (Samwel K. Sekwao pictured second from left)



Amanda Palchak (SPS President) and Dr. Alina Gearba (SPS Advisor) thank Samwel Sekwao for attending the Sigma Pi Sigma Induction Ceremony and SPS Awards

Expenditures

Sigma Pi Sigma

Airfare	502.6
Lodging (2)	185.28
Reception	149.6
Luncheon	56.9
Dinner (2)	89.97
Plaque	28.5
Total	1012.85