

Report of the Committee on Qualifications & Membership for the Year Ending June 30, 2000

Business of the Committee

The Committee on Qualifications and Membership (CQM) met on April 1-2, 2000 in Research Triangle Park, NC. The charge for the committee that was developed at the 1996 meeting: to develop policy issues and make recommendations to the Executive Director and/or Board, with the objectives of strengthening the Chapters and increasing the Society's membership while maintaining the tradition of honor in science and engineering.

The agenda for the meeting focused on several major issues:

1. Monitoring the health of the chapters, revitalizing chapters, supporting chapter activity;
2. Discussing membership and chapter issues related to the formation of international chapters or groups under the Packard Initiative;
3. Reviewing the processes for submitting chapter annual reports, awarding certificates of excellence;
4. Discussing ways to use the annual meeting workshops to better inform / train chapter leaders about Sigma Xi, chapter programs, membership issues, etc.;
5. Developing a three-year plan for stabilizing / increasing membership, including issues relating to initiates, younger members, inactive members, etc.

Communication and Revitalization

Under the guidance of the CQM, staff have increased communication with chapter officers, primarily through e-mail and the Web site. The committee will support communication efforts by directly contacting new chapters during their first few years and by working with chapters in need of revitalization. The committee will ask the Regional Directors to serve in a similar support role for new chapters and for chapters that are in trouble. Additionally, the staff will create listservs of chapter officers by region and by constituency group. The committee will ask the Regional Directors and Constituency Group Directors to communicate with officers (1) prior to the annual meeting to request items for the regional and constituency group meetings, and (2) after the annual meeting to report the outcomes of those meetings. Special revitalization efforts will take place at the annual meeting where a few chapters each year will be invited to work with staff, committee members and other chapter officers to develop revitalization plans.

To support and encourage the development of strong chapter programs, staff will begin to build a library of chapter success stories, complete with details on how to organize specific programs. Chapter program information will be more visibly publicized on the Sigma Xi Web site, at the annual meetings and in communications with chapter officers. Additionally, the staff will develop a tool kit for chapters, including tools for revitalization, letters of various sorts that chapter officers can adapt for local use, letterhead, graphics, templates for newsletters and flyers, sample press releases.

Annual Meeting Workshops

The committee considered the format and effectiveness of annual meeting workshop and agreed that workshops should focus on educating chapter officers, exchanging information about managing a good chapter, and supporting chapter efforts. Additionally, revitalization efforts will be focused on five to ten chapters a year, with emphasis on chapters that are geographically located in the same general region as the annual meeting for that year so that representatives can attend the annual meeting to receive support and guidance. With the goal of constructing the annual meeting so that workshops could be used for "training" and support of chapter officers, the committee developed a plan for the 2000 annual meeting that includes workshops on chapter administration, chapter programs, and revitalization. The primary goal is for chapter officers to have an opportunity to share and to learn from one another, from staff and from committee members.

International Chapters

After giving a summary of the Packard Initiative, executive director Peter Blair charged the committee with considering the organizational and financial implications of establishing chapters in developing countries. The committee thought that of the four requirements for good standing, only travel to the annual meeting would pose a potential problem for the society and for the chapter or group. The committee considered the concept of "franchising" organizations in target countries, with the primary goal of recognition and elevation of science in those locations, but with the acknowledged need to protect Sigma Xi from having to absorb organizational costs once the period of the Packard grant comes to a close. The committee developed the idea of forming a separate type of group, defined similarly to a chapter but given a separate name and distinct characteristics, perhaps called "Sigma Xi [name of country]" or called an affiliate organization. Giving these entities a separate identity would allow the Society to define their qualifications without infringing on the current chapter qualification requirements. The committee agreed that these entities should not be a financial drain on Sigma Xi, that the standards of membership should be upheld, and that the staff and various committees would likely have to offer support in developing a local administrative infrastructure, local and regional programs, and communication networks. The committee felt that supporting travel to regional meetings would be more important than supporting travel to regular Sigma Xi annual meetings, though bringing representatives from these groups together occasionally would have merit.

Chapter Annual Reports, Process for Certificates of Excellence

The CQM revisited the process for reviewing annual reports and selecting chapters of excellence. The Regional Directors review the annual reports received by early August and forward nominations to the CQM for chapters of

excellence. The committee requested a few minor changes to the annual reporting form that will better inform the decision about chapters of excellence. The committee also decided to award an outstanding program award to chapters with a notable program. The first program award(s) will be presented at the 2000 Annual Meeting.

Membership Surveys

A recent survey on Sigma Xi programs to a sample of 1000 members yielded some interesting results about members' views of what Sigma Xi's priorities should be. The committee agreed that it would be useful to do similar surveys on various subsets of the membership to address these questions: Who are our members? Why do they belong to Sigma Xi? What can Sigma Xi be offering that they can't get from other organizations? The committee developed an outline of a survey that could be moderately adapted and sent to various cohorts, including students, non-student initiates, emeritus, reactivated, at-large and inactive members. Staff will draft surveys and distribute to committee for review.

Goals: Three-Year Plan for Committee

The committee developed a list of goals for the next three years. They are enumerated below and will be revisited by staff and the committee periodically throughout the three-year period. They will also be shared with other committees either electronically or via the Intercom.

1. Identify more succinctly the goals of Sigma Xi members by where they are in their careers.
2. Identify issue groups of interest to our members and find ways to develop useful programs and services around them (example: diversity, globalization, science literacy). Find ways to connect members through issues.
3. Build or strengthen connections with other organizations, women and minorities.
4. Build a toolkit for chapters to support their planning efforts and their every-day administrative requirements.
5. Build a library of successful chapter programs, complete with enough detail and information that chapters can use as an instruction book.
6. Define and develop criteria for a chapter program award.
7. Develop and implement the various mentoring programs that have been started.
8. Refine/define a successful annual process for revitalizing chapters.
9. Re-engage inactive members.
10. Encourage a Society-wide re-emphasis on our bedrock programs like GIAR and Distinguished Lectureships.
11. Engage the regional and constituency directors as a resources for chapters.
12. Communicate to the members and Sigma Xi leadership what the committee on qualifications and membership is doing and solicit feedback.
13. Develop a more coherent program of chapter-focused workshops for the annual meeting.

Certificates of Excellence

Chapters that received Certificates of Excellence at the November 1999 Annual Meeting in Minneapolis were as follows. All members of each chapter of excellence received a letter of congratulations:

Alaska
Ball State
Baylor College of Medicine
Clemson University
Grove City College
Howard University
Kansas State University
McGill University
Middle Tennessee State University
Ohio State University
Pace University
Quinnipiac
Rice University/Texas Medical Center
Southern Illinois-Carbondale
Tifton
University of Michigan

Honorable Mention chapters were nominees for certificates of excellence.

Abbott Labs
Central Arkansas
Charleston
Dartmouth
East Stroudsburg of Pennsylvania
Idaho State University
Illinois Institute of Technology
Louisiana State University
Nalco
Northwestern Pennsylvania
Princeton
University of Calgary
University of Central Oklahoma

University of the Sciences in Philadelphia
University of Wisconsin-Green Bay
Vermont

Certificates of Recognition

Certificates were awarded in Minneapolis to the following 15 chapters which initiated the most new members last year.

Arizona State University
Brown University
Carleton College
Claremont Colleges
Dennison University
Georgetown University
MIT
Mount Holyoke College
Ohio State University
Princeton
Smith College
Swarthmore College
University of Connecticut Health Sciences Center
University of Texas at Austin
Washington University (St. Louis)

Approved New Chapters and Name Changes

Between July 1, 1999 and June 30, 2000, the following chapters were installed:

Kennesaw State University
Fairfield University

Between July 1, 1999 and June 30, 2000, the following name changes were approved by the committee:

Portland State University (187) and Oregon Health Sciences University (112) merged to become Columbia-Willamette Chapter (112)

Membership of the Committee

For the year ending June 30, 2000, the Committee on Qualifications and Membership consisted of the following members:

Chair: Penelope Padgett, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
Howard Ceri, University of Calgary
Meredith Mason Garcia, Tulane University
Lynn O. Lewis, Mary Washington College
Virginia Lyons, Trinity College of Vermont
Jeanne Trinko Mechler, IBM Microelectronics
Graham Peaslee, Hope College
Daniel Rubenstein, Princeton University
Ronald Weinberg, Lawrence Livermore National Lab.

Acknowledgments

The committee wishes to thank the staff for their hard work and dedication. Particular thanks go to:

Sharon Davis (formerly Sharon Murry), members services manager, for her exemplary member service; Paulette Harmon, data services manager, for her exceptional management of the membership records; Kathy Massenburg, Administrator, Chapter Services and Membership, for her outstanding support of chapters; Lisa Rhoades, chapter programs manager, for her energy in developing and supporting chapter programs; Dee Windley, meetings manager, for her meticulous organization of the forum and annual meeting.