



Spring 2014

THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT DALLAS, CHAPTER 316

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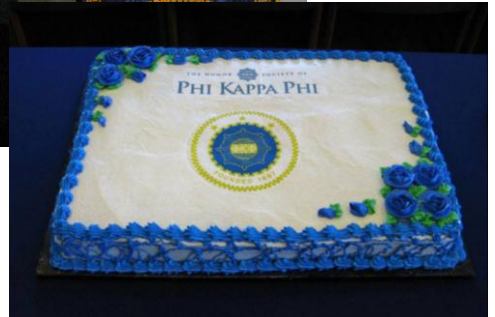
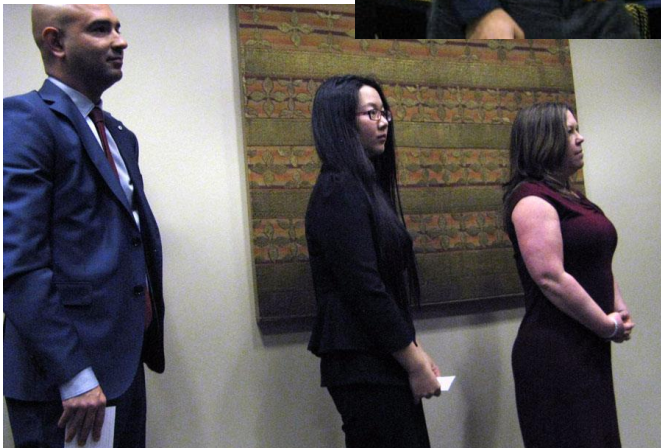
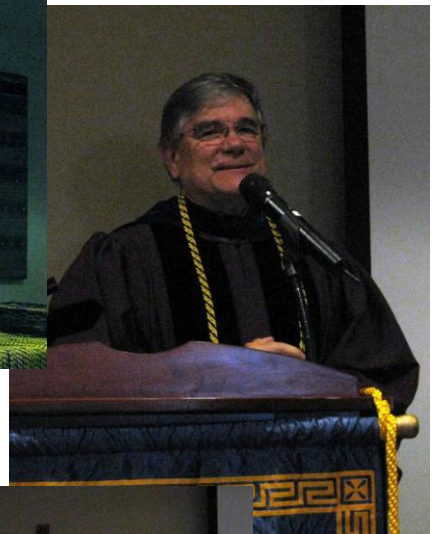
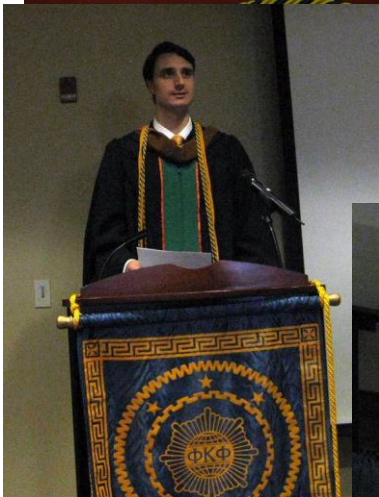
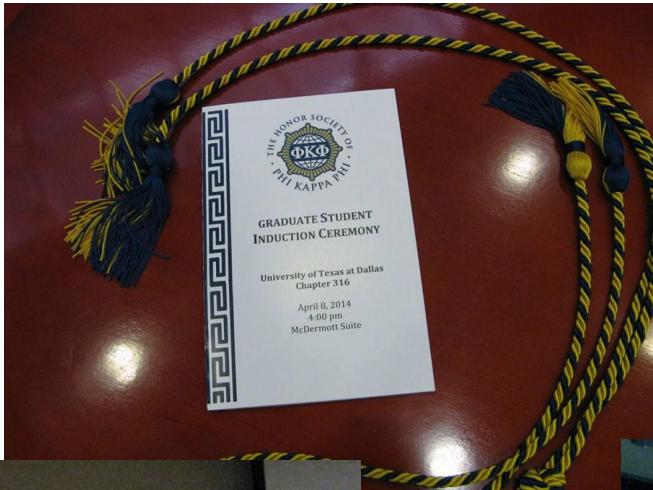
Spring 2014 Graduates Initiated

Chapter 316 conducted its graduate student induction ceremony on Tuesday, April 8 in the McDermott Suite. PKP chapter members attended the event in full regalia as per tradition. Sixty-nine graduate students were inducted into the Society this academic year.

Chapter president and Associate Vice President for Research Rafael Martín welcomed the assembled inductees and their families. Dr. Denise Paquette-Boots, Associate Professor, Criminology and the chapter's past-president informed the audience of the selection criteria for invitation. Next, Dr. Bert Moore, Dean of the School of Behavioral and Brain Sciences and PKP chapter member, introduced the keynote speaker, Dr. Susan Jerger, Ashbel Smith Professor in the School of Behavioral and Brain Sciences and charter member of the chapter.

Blair Flicker, Assistant Provost and chapter secretary, took the podium to explain the values of Phi Kappa Phi as symbolized by the gifts of membership. Dr. Edward Harpham, chapter treasurer, announced each candidate by school while Mr. Martín and Dr. Andrew Blanchard presented each inductee with their honor cord and pin. The inductees were then asked to rise and recite the Phi Kappa Phi oath. Dr. Blanchard, Dean of Undergraduate Education and president-elect of the chapter, provided the closing remarks.

Spring 2014 Initiation



Achieving and Maintaining Excellence in a Fluid World

Susan Jerger, Director of Undergraduate Honors Program
School of Behavioral and Brain Sciences



We live in a rapidly changing world. This has created a “knowledge revolution”, raising important questions about how we achieve and maintain excellence—superiority or eminence—in such a fluid world? In the past, a college degree was sufficient to see you through your professional lifetime with some minor continuing education updates. This is no longer true. For example, Robert Brown, Dean of the Continual Learning Program at the University of North Carolina, notes that the total written knowledge in the world is doubling at an ever increasing rate. The U.S. human genome project illustrates Dr. Brown’s observation. Completed in 2003, this project required 13 years and 2.7 billion dollars; today, mapping a human genome requires only a few hours and, at most, a few thousand dollars (Manyika, et al., 2013).

The impact of this knowledge revolution has been compared to that of the industrial revolution. Striking transformations have already occurred, creating a fundamental shift from producing things to creating and using knowledge (Hargreaves, 2003). An important point is that a knowledge economy is a learning society. It needs critical thinkers and independent learners, not knowers. It needs individuals who can achieve and maintain excellence by coping well with change; creating, organizing, and applying information; and learning, unlearning and relearning independently.

What a privilege to belong to Phi Kappa Phi in such a world. It is more than an emblem and a line on your resumé; it is a network of accomplished people who are dedicated to excellence and learning. Phi Kappa Phi forms a support group for you now and after you leave UT Dallas. And your leaving the university raises another important question. After you leave the support structure of a university, how are you going to achieve and maintain excellence independently? Let me share what the experts say you should know. One opinion may surprise you—talent *per se* is over-rated. If you think people are successful because of their innate talents (i.e., genetics), you have what Carol Dweck (2006) of Stanford calls a “fixed mindset.” You think people succeed because they are smart and fail because they are not smart. By contrast, Dweck’s research reveals the importance of a “growth mindset,” which is the belief that your talents grow with hard work, persistence, and effort. Individuals with a growth mindset feel smart when they are working hard and learning, not when they are succeeding. A growth mindset is the secret to maximizing and maintaining excellence.

According to David McClelland (as cited in Robinson, 2013) of Harvard, you should study and learn where you have about a 50-70% chance of success—that is the sweet spot for world class performers. When you learn this way, you will fail 30-50% of the time. But notice, with a growth mindset, you do not see yourself as failing. You see yourself as learning, and you value the opportunity because it gives you information for figuring out what you should do differently when you try again. Sarah Lewis (2014) of Yale calls this “the gift of failure.” The mode of learning is called “deliberate practice”—I call it deliberate learning—based on research by Anders Ericsson (1993) of Florida State. And as an aside, notice that this approach takes you out of your comfort zone—that rut we enjoy living in because we can do things without paying attention. The

good news, however, is that with this approach, your comfort zone actually keeps getting larger. Research (e.g., Draganski et al., 2004) has shown that the brain actually changes and that we can literally grow our brain from this kind of intense learning due to neuroplasticity, a mechanism that strengthens the brain areas and pathways involved in learning. According to research popularized by Malcolm Gladwell (2008), a writer popularizing research particularly in psychology and sociology, 10,000 hours of this deliberate learning can make you excellent in anything no matter where you start.



Elite levels of performance appear to be mediated by acquired skills, acquired knowledge, and physiological changes in the brain associated with deliberate learning, a process where you not only approach learning differently but you stick with it, making an unflagging commitment. Research by Angela Duckworth (e.g., Eskreis-Winkler et al., 2014) of the University of Pennsylvania has stressed the importance of this latter point, which she calls grit. I think of GRIT as that ability in a Growth situation to have Resilience, Industriousness, and Tenacity—abilities strongly linked to the important process of self control. Sarah Lewis (2014, p.170) views grit as "focused moxie." Duckworth has found that grit trumps talent when talent does not have grit.

If spending hours and hours of deliberate learning to become world class seems overwhelming, I have a great rule to help you. It is the 80-20 rule, sometimes called the Pareto Principle (e.g., Koch, 2008). An economist, Vilfredo Pareto, formulated this principle after observing that, in his garden, 20% of the pea pods produced 80% of the peas. And notice another important principle here—Pareto didn't compartmentalize his knowledge; instead, his gardening informed his professional pursuits. Subsequent research by many has established the generalizability of this idea—80% of our results come from 20% of our efforts. In my data sets, for example, I have often observed that 80% of the most useful information comes from 20% of the data.

I have found this rule really insightful; it applies to almost everything I do. It also provides a great practical guideline; divide a task into its components and determine the important 20% of components that will create the most value in terms of the outcome. Then to become a world class performer, focus deliberate learning on this important 20%. For the remaining 80%, I work only to be competent—good enough to avoid problems. A common question from students is how to determine the 20%? If you have trouble identifying the 20%, ask your role models who have years of experience doing the task. If you generalize this principle outside of your professional life, i.e., to your personal life, and are having trouble defining the most important 20% of components, harness the wisdom of the crowd. Canvass a crowd of friends. Although their individual rankings may vary wildly, the means of their rankings will usually be close to the correct answer. And finally, during a knowledge revolution, remember that the most important 20% will change and then what you deliberately learn and keep improving will also need to change.

Three other quick points. First, make all of this a habit. This is how world class performers live their days. Their habits work for them, not against them, to boost their excellence. This is not only advice from one of our greatest thinkers, Aristotle, but is also supported by the current research of Susan Whitbourne (2012) of the University of Massachusetts Amherst. Your excellence comes from your habits.

Second, remember the importance of play. It helps us avoid tunnel vision and promotes our creativity. For example, at the University of Manchester, they have “Friday Night Experiments” (Lewis, 2014, p. 146) where they research outlandish ideas with no restrictions other than the building must remain intact. One of these nights led to the development of graphene, a new material that is one million times thinner than a piece of paper, stronger than steel, and conducts electricity more efficiently than silicon (e.g., Smith, 2013). The idea of Friday Night Experiments reminds me of another very important point for achieving excellence—knowledge without borders.

Finally, create a mission statement. Leonard Bernstein, the American composer and conductor, and many others have attributed their ability to achieve excellence to a well-formed plan (e.g., Bernstein, n.d.). This idea is based on the principle that all things must be created mentally before they can be implemented physically (Covey, 2000). Just as a business needs a business plan, you need a well-developed plan of who and what you wish to be. Without a clear mission statement, you empower people, places, and circumstances to determine who you will become. Be proactive. Make a mission statement and empower yourself to create your own destiny.

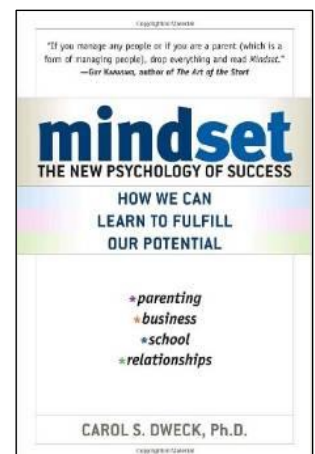
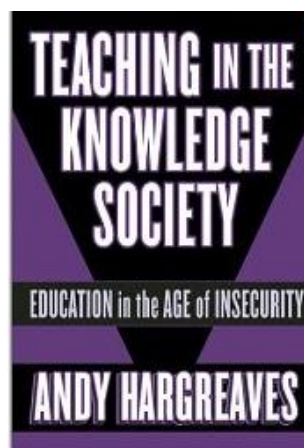
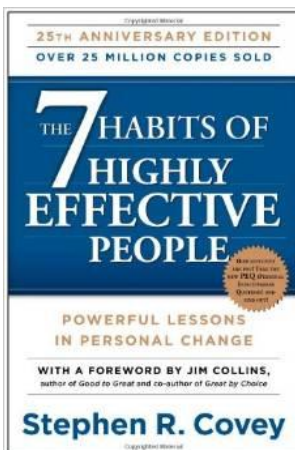
Congratulations on your election into Phi Kappa Phi and remember that how you learn is as important as what you learn.

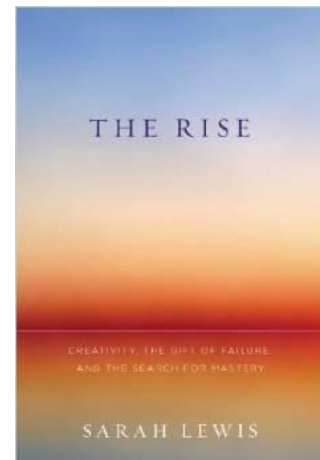
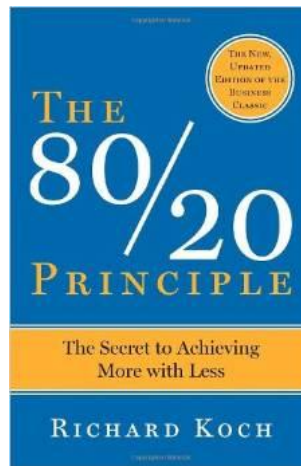
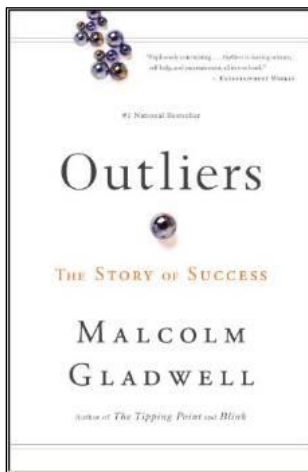
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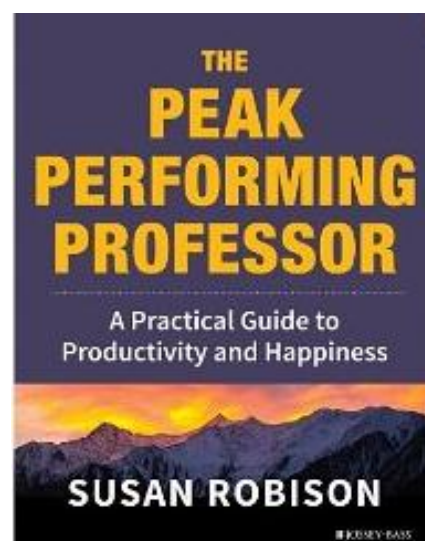
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PKP Chapter 316 General Meeting

A Phi Kappa Phi general assembly meeting was held on Monday, April 21, 2014, at 4:00pm in Room 2.208 of Founders Hall. One of the main agenda items was the nomination and selection of Student Vice Presidents. Updates were provided on the state of the chapter's membership, finances and scholarship opportunities. Chapter 316 received Chapter of Excellence status from the national organization once again. Upcoming events were discussed which included the Honors Convocation on May 15, a PKP Cluster Meeting at UT Arlington on May 15, and the national convention in St. Louis on August 7-9. Initial plans regarding the undergraduate student induction on November 4 and another special PKP luncheon event in November were also discussed.

Student Vice Presidents Elected

Four new student vice presidents were elected by Chapter 316 for the 2014-15 academic year:

- J. Michelle Abuda – undergraduate student in Management Information Systems and Supply Chain Management, with a minor in Computer Science
- Ananya Banergee – graduate, ECS and JSOM
- Cristina Garcia – graduate student in Political Science, Legislative Studies
- Taylor Nguyen – undergraduate student in Biology, with a minor in Psychology

Each of these students brings a wealth of experience, ideas and enthusiasm to the chapter and will work vigorously to promote the chapter's profile at UT Dallas and the Society's service goals. The student vice presidents intend to meet with chapter president Rafael Martín to discuss what initiatives they would like to pursue in the coming year.



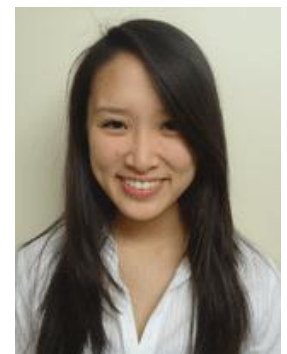
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