Alpha Iota Mu: Past, Present, and Future

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ABSTRACT

Alpha Iota Mu is the only honor society dedicated exclusively to students of information systems. This paper traces the history of Alpha Iota Mu, describes the current state of the society, and sketches plans for the future of the society. The goal of this paper is to increase awareness of and interest in the establishment of chapters of Alpha Iota Mu.

KEY WORDS

Alpha Iota Mu, honor society, information systems

HISTORY

The International Academy for Information Management (IAIM) was founded in 1986. The purpose of IAIM is to foster and promote educational issues associated with information systems. IAIM members are dedicated to improving the quality of information systems curricula and teaching methodologies and to produce the best possible students of information systems at both the undergraduate and graduate levels.

The idea for an honor society for students specializing in information systems was discussed at length by members of IAIM in 1996. At that time there was no honor society in existence for Information Systems majors. The primary goal of the honor society is to recognize academic excellence in students of information systems.   In addition to academic excellence, the concept of an honor society which emphasized "character" and "ethical actions" was championed by the originators of this honor society.

The President of IAIM, Sheila Pechinski, supported the proposal for such an honor society and Indiana State University held its first induction ceremony in 1997.   The thought at the time was to develop an honor society for the Information Systems area that would be well respected and that a line on a vitae signifying membership would be widely recognized both nationally and internationally. However, admittance would not be simply based upon some grade point or percentage where membership could easily be determined just by running a computer program but that some aspect to insure only individuals of good character are admitted. The structure and bylaws initially were modeled after Beta Gamma Sigma. For instance, academic requirements for membership in Beta Gamma Sigma include a grade point average ranking in the top ten percent of the class for seniors, or a ranking in the top five percent of the class for juniors.   Because Beta Gamma Sigma is open to all business students and because the pool of information systems candidates is a much smaller subset of business students, the initial chapter accepted juniors in the top ten percent, and seniors in the top twenty percent of their class.

Beta Gamma Sigma requires that chapters be established only at schools accredited by AACSB. Once again, the founders determined that it would be in the best interest of the honor society to be less

restrictive. Johns Hopkins, not accredited by the AACSB, is nevertheless a highly respected institution with an outstanding information systems program. Flexibility in structuring the local chapter was allowed, but an insistence on academic excellence and integrity of the candidates remained the core principles for granting charters. John Hopkins University became the Beta chapter and Alpha Iota Mu started to grow slowly.

Subsequently, IAIM determined to closely associate with AIS, and became AIS SIGED: IAIM and a formal relationship with AIS emerged. In 2002 the AIS Council discussed having a role in supporting an honor society. However, the concept of an honor society is not indigenous to many of the international members of AIS. AIS ultimately left the sponsorship of the honor society in the hands of IAIM.

PRESENT

ALPHA IOTA MU has gone through some growing pains but is alive and well. Development of the international constitution and bylaws has been a slow process. A number of issues were not resolved until 2007. For example, some felt that the honor society should include a social component, with local chapters charged with incorporating social responsibilities into the charters, with members responsible for engaging in, for example, community service. The makeup of the governing board of Alpha Iota Mu was another issue for which many different models were discussed. In April of 2008, IAIM Board members will be voting on the proposed constitution. The proposed constitution sets the governing board as representatives from both IAIM and chapter sponsors. Another important issue was whether or not the honor society was designated solely for students, or whether membership would be broadened. The current proposal calls for membership among faculty and professionals who have distinguished themselves in the field of information systems. Noteworthy information systems alumni are also eligible for induction.

In December of 2007 Dennis Bialaszewski was appointed as Director of Alpha Iota Mu at the SIGED:IAIM Board Meeting. A smooth transition is in progress as James Buffington had done the work virtually singlehandedly in the past. In 2008 Delta State will hold their first induction ceremony for Alpha Iota Mu as the Lambda chapter. Other universities with chapters are: University of South Alabama, Georgia Southern University, Quinnipiac University, George Washington University, Robert Morris University, University of Idaho, University of Tampa, and the University of Central Florida. Inductees have been proudly wearing their ALPHA IOTA MU pins at various functions and also displaying their blue and white Alpha Iota Mu cords as they go through their graduation ceremonies.

There also has been a long history of faculty inductions. At the 1998 Helsinki conference, many members of the IAIM Board were inducted into the society. Also, Eli Cohen was inducted at the Kozminski Academy of Entrepreneurship in Krakow, Poland.

FUTURE

Alpha Iota Mu has been run as a pilot project for the past ten years. Honor societies can be a vibrant and exciting part of the information systems field. There is much potential for growth in membership and programs. Beta Gamma Sigma provides a role model. There are a number of services Beta Gamma Sigma offers members, such as discounted books, credit card, and insurance services. Also offered are test and certification preparation, student leadership forums, and recognition of outstanding chapters. There are numerous other services and features which would help Alpha Iota Mu to become a more mature organization.

We believe that with the adoption of the constitution and the revitalized leadership that we will have a reenergized approach to making colleges and universities aware of Alpha Iota Mu. The intent of this paper is to increase awareness of the potential of the honor society. As pioneers in the establishment of

Alpha Iota Mu, our purpose is to honor outstanding contributions to the field of information management; to further the IS profession, our community, and our planet by promoting excellence in education and in business.