During the biennial conference, the Board of Directors of The Honor Society of Phi Kappa Phi congratulated nineteen chapters that earned the Chapter of Excellence distinction, the highest commendation a chapter can receive from the organization. Among those selected for the honor was UT-Dallas’ Chapter 316.

Chapters of Excellence are active chapters with a nucleus of devoted faculty will to devote time to the operation of their chapter; host events and activities beyond student initiations; maintain good rapport with university administration; have students who are actively involved and assist with planning activities; maintain sufficient funds for meaningful chapter activities and operations; and use membership dues to support student scholarships and awards.

Chapters of Excellence receive:
• a commendation letter sent from the Society to chapter officers and campus administration
• special recognition on Society websites, publications and at Phi Kappa Phi’s National Convention
• a specially designed logo for use in chapter communications
• recognition advertisements in local media and educational journals
• a $500 award

Chapter 316 plans to use the award to help fund chapter activities and scholarship opportunities for its student members.
The Honor Society of Phi Kappa Phi Chapter 316 conducted its second undergraduate induction ceremony on Monday, November 5 in the Student Union. PKP chapter members attended the event in full regalia as per tradition. One hundred and thirty-nine undergraduates were inducted into the Society this year.

Other speakers at the event included outgoing chapter president Dr. Denise Paquette-Boots, president-elect Rafael Martín and PKP student vice-president Chuck Cage. Dr. Edward Harpham, chapter treasurer, announced the candidates present by school and announced the instructors who the candidates said were most influential in their academic careers at UTD. He was assisted by Dr. Abby Kratz and Dr. Susan Jerger who attended the inductees as each student ascended the stage to receive their certificate, honor cord and pin. The final event of the evening was the presentation of a plaque and certificate of appreciation to Dr. Boots who served the chapter as its first president. Mr. Martín, who presented these items to Dr. Boots, stated that the plaque will henceforth include the name of each chapter president and will hang in the Honors College beside Chapter 316’s charter. UTD Provost and PKP member Dr. Hobson Wildenthal provided the closing remarks.

With the event concluded, the inductees and their families were invited to remain for refreshments and mingle with chapter members.

Undergraduate Candidates Inducted

Dr. Roderick A. Heelis, the Cecil H. and Ida Green Chair in Systems Biology Science #2 Professor of Physics and Director of the William B. Hanson Center for Space Sciences, was also inducted as a faculty member of the Society. Dr. Heelis received his bachelor of science in mathematics and his doctorate in applied mathematics from the University of Sheffield. He is also a fellow of the American Geophysical Union, an international scientific society devoted to the research of the Earth and space. Heelis’ research interests range from planet-star interaction to the differences between planets with magnetic fields. He measures weather in space by means of sophisticated instruments that fly on satellite “space labs” and creates computer models that aim to predict space weather phenomena and to determine to what extent they will affect space-based assets.

Dr. Roderick A. Heelis
Tapping Tradition Continues

The fall 2012 student initiation process took place with what is becoming a UTD tradition: tapping. This year, Phi Kappa Phi invited 141 juniors and 421 seniors to join the organization. Graduate candidates will be selected in spring 2013 at a separate ceremony.

Executive Vice President and Provost Hobson Wildenthal and Dr. Denise Paquette Boots, both Phi Kappa Phi members, showed up in full academic regalia. They visited the classroom to invite, or “tap,” some of the juniors selected for membership; other students were tracked down via email. Other members who participated in tapping included President-elect Rafael Martin, Treasurer Ted Harpham, Doug Dow, and the PKP student vice presidents Evan Carr and Blair Flicker.

Having a Phi Kappa Phi chapter is part of UT Dallas’ effort to highlight academic achievement and continue its drive toward becoming a Tier One research university. This week the honor society extended invitations to 141 juniors and 431 seniors. Those who decide to join will be honored at a reception in November. Graduate students will be invited during the spring term.

Boots, who is the University’s founding president of Phi Kappa Phi, said the tapping tradition is a time-honored way to give top students public recognition. “It’s a really rich tradition in celebrating academic excellence,” Boots said. “We’ve had some faculty cry. It’s a wonderful way to honor our students who have sacrificed so much.”

In 2011, when the University became the 316th chapter of Phi Kappa Phi, faculty marked it by tapping every qualified junior in person.

“Last year’s inaugural tapping ceremonies generated great enthusiasm from all who participated,” Wildenthal said. “We are happy now to be perpetuating this ceremonial recognition of the respect and admiration we have for our outstanding students.”

Because of logistical constraints—it took four days and more than 90 classroom visits to track down students last year—faculty decided this time to target just a few classes with large numbers of students on the list of candidates.

Boots, who is an associate professor of criminology in the School of Economic, Political and Policy Sciences, said the honor society is starting to build a community of scholars on campus.

“Having a chapter gives us the ability to recognize individual students as well as the accomplishments of the entire UT Dallas student body,” Boots said. “We have such exceptional students, and it’s a pleasure to recognize them.”
Fall 2012 General Chapter Meeting Held
The Fall 2012 Phi Kappa Phi General Membership Meeting took place Monday, October 1 at 4:00 PM in JO 3.516. The meeting addressed fall undergraduate inductions, a fiscal report, introduced our student officers, and reported on the Bi-Annual Convention that the officers attended in early August.

Highlights from the National Convention