

National Council of The Society of  
Sigma Gamma Epsilon



NATIONAL HONORARY SOCIETY in the EARTH SCIENCES

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DATE: January 18, 2012

TO: Active Chapters of Sigma Gamma Epsilon  
Members of the National Council of SGE

FROM: Jim Walters, SGE Secretary-Treasurer

RE: Start of the Spring 2012 semester

The purpose of this letter is to welcome all Chapters back to their respective campuses for the start of the second half of the 2011-2012 academic year and to provide details on some of the many things taking place with Sigma Gamma Epsilon.

1. SGE electronic membership database

Don't forget that we are no longer using the Initiate Data Cards! Starting fall 2010, SGE began using new forms for Chapters to report on returning members, new initiates, and Chapter officers. These forms are to be completed electronically and can be found on the SGE Website under the Officer Resources link or on the Home Page under New Forms. The SGE Website is located at <http://www.sigmagammaepsilon.com>. Once you have completed these forms, save them as files under your Chapter name and e-mail as an attachment to [even@sigmagammaepsilon.com](mailto:even@sigmagammaepsilon.com). Then print out and snail mail copies of these electronic lists to the National Office of SGE along with dues and fees as appropriate. (Please do not submit hand-written lists---we often have a very difficult time deciphering handwritten names.) Please note that it is preferable to submit total dues and fees as one check.

2. Spring half-year dues

If your Chapter conducts an initiation ceremony this spring, after February 1<sup>st</sup>, in addition to the one-time initiation fee of \$25, new members will pay half-year dues of \$8, for a total of \$33. This is sometimes misunderstood by Chapters. The Constitution specifies that half-year dues be assessed **only** for those members initiated after February 1<sup>st</sup>. So, for new members initiated in the fall and for all returning members (even if graduating that fall) it is necessary to pay full year (annual) dues of \$15. If you have yet to send in your list of returning members, new initiates, appropriate dues and fees, and your chapter officers list, please do so as soon as possible.

3. Old checks

Another thing we continue to have a problem with is old checks. Fortunately most Chapters provide a check for dues and fees in a timely fashion. However, we sometimes receive checks from Chapters that are more than 6 months old! These checks bounce when we attempt to cash them and it creates all sorts of problems with the affected Chapter. Please make sure you submit your payments as promptly as possible.

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4. IRS tax information requests (this is a repeat from previous welcome back letters)

Small tax-exempt organizations (SGE Chapters) whose annual gross receipts are normally \$25,000 or less may be required to electronically submit Form 990-N, also known as the e-Postcard. If your Chapter receives such a request, you should file the form so that you do not lose your tax-exempt status. It only takes a few minutes to file the e-Postcard. The form asks for your Taxpayer Identification Number (EIN), which will be located in the upper right corner of the letter of request. It also asks for your Chapter's address, SGE website (<http://www.sigmagamaepsilon.com>), and we are also suggesting that the Principal Officer (incidentally, type of name is "person") for Chapters be the Chapter Advisor at the same address. That's all the information it requests.

5. Losing your Chapter's tax-exempt status

Some Chapters have lost their tax-exempt status because they have not filed the IRS 990-series form for three consecutive years. Although we sympathize with these Chapters, the IRS informs us that we, as the parent organization, cannot simply add them back to the SGE list of tax-exempt Chapters. In fact, they explicitly state that subordinate organizations (Chapters) included in a group exemption letter (SGE National Office) must submit an application for reinstatement of its tax-exempt status on its own behalf. They suggest we direct such Chapters to the IRS site [www.IRS.gov/eo](http://www.IRS.gov/eo), where you should look for the topic "Automatic Revocation of Exemption." Clicking on that link will provide some background information, and near the bottom of that page under "For more information, see:" you can click on the bullet • Reinstatement of Tax-Exempt Status After Automatic Revocation and Deductibility of Contributions.

We will, of course, still retain all active Chapters on our list of Chapters, but we will have to differentiate between tax-exempt and non tax-exempt Chapters. Non tax-exempt Chapters will not be able to receive tax-deductible contributions and would have to pay taxes annually on any income.

6. The COMPASS

Volume 82, which covers the 40<sup>th</sup> Biennial Convention at the University of Northern Iowa, was sent out in December 2011. Vol. 83, which will cover the 41<sup>st</sup> Biennial Convention held at Indiana University, is currently in preparation and should be published this spring. This will be the last of the printed issues. Dr. Larry Davis, Editor, has moved the COMPASS into the 21<sup>st</sup> century, and it is now being published as an e-journal and is available at <http://digitalcommons.csbsju.edu/compass/>. It is also accessible as a link from the SGE Website.

7. Quality Chapter Award

The **Quality Chapter Award** is available to all Chapters that meet the qualifications. These qualifications consist of things such as having submitted the Chapter Officers form, New Initiates form, and Returning Member form and appropriate fees and dues to the National Office by the deadlines. Guidelines and applications for this award are available on the SGE Website under the Awards link.

8. W. A. Tarr Award

Each **active Chapter** of SGE has the option of granting the W. A. Tarr Award to an outstanding student in the Earth Sciences. The Tarr Award consists of a certificate and a check for \$50 and is normally given to a graduating senior on the basis of scholarship and activity in the department. Regulations are noted on the form and may be used as a guide in your selection process. Please note that it is important that we have the recipient's full name, date of presentation, and your Chapter name. The form is available on the SGE Website under the link to Awards.

Also note that **only active Chapters can grant a Tarr Award**. Active Chapters are those that submit annually the New Initiates form, Returning Members form, and Chapter Officers form along with appropriate fees and dues by November 1<sup>st</sup>. Last spring, because of changes necessitated by the move of the National Office, we allowed Chapters an extended period of time to submit materials in order to be considered an active Chapter for the Tarr Award. We now need to honor the published date of Nov. 1<sup>st</sup> as stated in my spring 2011 Welcome Back letter.

9. **Vote on Petition from SUNY New Paltz**

In October the National Office received a petition from the Department of Geology at the State University of New York College at New Paltz to establish a Chapter of SGE on their campus. Vice President of the Northeastern Province, Dr. Mark Noll, has conducted a site visit and prepared a letter in that regard. His letter is included with this mailing. All active Chapters and members of the National Council of SGE are invited to vote regarding the granting of a charter for a new Chapter at SUNY New Paltz. Please cast your Chapter's vote electronically by e-mailing your response to [even@sigmagammaepsilon.com](mailto:even@sigmagammaepsilon.com). Please place "(Your Chapter name) Vote" in the subject line. **Votes must be submitted by February 29<sup>th</sup>.**

10. **Honor cords**

Order forms for honor cords can be found on the SGE Website under SGE Products. We try to send out the cords as soon as we receive the order, but Chapters should keep in mind that we need at least three weeks to process orders due to slow campus mail systems and the fact that our SGE Office Administrative Assistant is only part time.

11. **42<sup>nd</sup> SGE Biennial Convention, Fall 2012**

The SGE National Council met during the Geological Society of America Annual meeting in Minneapolis last October and decided to hold the 2012 Convention in conjunction with the GSA Annual meeting in Charlotte, November 4-7. Tentatively, the meeting will be held just prior to the GSA meeting. Details are currently being arranged.

We wish you all the best for a productive and enjoyable Spring Semester, and we look forward to hearing from you whenever we may be of assistance. You can contact Paula Even, our Administrative Assistant, at [even@sigmagammaepsilon.com](mailto:even@sigmagammaepsilon.com) or call 319-273-3818 or fax 319-273-7124.

Sincerely,

James C. Walters  
SGE National Secretary-Treasurer