

ΦΑΘ NEWS

APRIL 2023

A MESSAGE FROM OUR ADVISORY BOARD CHAIR



Greetings from the Old Dominion! My name is Clay Drees, and I am honored to address you today as chair of the current Phi Alpha Theta advisory board following terms as national VP (2016-18) and president (2018-20). First off, let me thank all those chapter advisors and students who helped make our recent Biennial Convention in Albuquerque such a grand success! We were treated to nearly 170 student and faculty paper presentations, some wonderful local food, and a great deal of warm camaraderie among our fellow historians from around the country. I'd also like to commend the many hundreds of Phi Alpha Theta students and faculty members who will present their work and chair panels at sixteen regional conferences this spring. It has been my privilege to represent the national PAT organization at regional meetings in nine different states since 2016, experiences that have yielded fresh historical insights and a host of new friends each and every time. I have always believed that regional conferences are the "beating heart" of Phi Alpha Theta because it is at such gatherings that future historians most often launch their scholarly careers!



On this occasion, I'd like to share with you some of the many ways the students of my home chapter, Omega-Pi at Virginia Wesleyan, are able to explore history and have fun doing it all year long. We at Omega-Pi are among the most active chapters in the nation, thanks to the spirit and energy of our student "history-chasers" who participate in 8-10 events and excursions each year.

Let's begin with one of our bread-and-butter activities, something we simply call "movie night." Each academic year, despite the glut of children's films and superhero explosion-fests, a certain number of movies with historical content will show at local theatres, thus providing an opportunity to learn some history and build community among our chapter members at the same time. Having selected the film we'll see together, a member of our history faculty gives a 30-minute talk on the essential historical background, what's accurate and what's not, and things students should look for on the big screen. Then we go to the theatre and view the film (our treasury pays the cost of the tickets), after which we share a meal and discuss what we saw and what we learned. It's an easy field trip to organize, and it's popular among our students because they enjoy getting off campus to learn history in a creative new way. The Covid-19 pandemic forced us away from movie nights for two years, but we're back watching for new history releases coming soon. Pre-Covid movie nights we enjoyed included "The Birth of a Nation" (the 1831 Nat Turner slave revolt), "Darkest Hour" (Winston Churchill in 1940), and "Mary Queen of Scots" (the 16th-century Scottish monarch).



To help pay for these activities, the students of Omega-Pi hold a giant annual used book sale right on campus. During the year I accept book donations from faculty colleagues, used bookshops, and VWU retirees and store them in a lock-up cage in the physical plant building. Then when February rolls around, we have the physical plant folks set up 12 large tables in the main lounge, a high-traffic area of our student union. The sale runs for three days, and we charge discount prices (\$1 for paperbacks, \$2 for hardcovers) designed to help the books “fly” off the tables. We often make as much as \$500 on this sale, which includes checks from the VWU provost and president whom I pester and shame into making donations. The books left over from the sale are either re-boxed and taken back to storage for next year, or (if we think they’ll never sell) donated to a charity or thrift store.

Speaking of books, another way for Phi Alpha Thetans to spend a fun day together and begin to build their personal libraries is the ever-popular used bookshop “crawl.” Although good used bookshops are fast disappearing everywhere, there are still enough left in most areas to warrant an excursion to visit two or three of them on a Saturday. For this activity we’ll “front” each student \$20-\$30 from our Omega-Pi treasury to get them started, then we’ll go to one bookshop, have lunch together, and visit the last two stores before we return to campus by mid-afternoon. Students love books—who doesn’t?--and it’s exciting to watch them run between the stacks picking out titles on interesting historical topics or by favorite authors. If chapters are due to host their PAT Regional meeting in the near future, a used bookshop crawl can target nice, clean but inexpensive hardcover volumes to use as “best paper” awards at the conclusion of the conference.

Of course, we visit historic houses, battlefields and museums in our area as well, the same as other PAT chapters around the country. We also initiate new members once per year in a lovely outdoor garden on campus, usually in early May before graduation, but we’ve added a little wrinkle to our ceremony. After our current honor members have read the “ritual” and our president (we like historical titles like “Madame Pharaoh” or “Your Imperial Excellency”) has sworn in the new initiates, I take the medieval broadsword from its wall-mount in my home and dub each new honor member into the



Society with the Greek words “Philia, Anthros, Theos,” or “love, humanity, divinity.” This nod to medieval knighthood was the brainchild of Omega-Pi students over 20 years ago, and remains a chapter tradition today that lends extra “gravitas” to our initiation ceremony. We always try to make our encounters with history fun at Omega-Pi; I hope your various chapters will do the same this spring!

Clayton Drees

PRIZES & AWARDS

Share your best work with us & apply for one of our awards!
Applications are due July 1, 2023 so learn more [here](#).

FACULTY ADVISOR RESEARCH GRANT
NASH HISTORY JOURNAL PRIZE
PAT PAPER PRIZE AWARDS
BEST CHAPTER AWARDS
BOOK AWARDS

HAPPY RETIREMENT, DR. CLAYTON LEHMANN!

Professor Lehmann has been a history professor at the University of South Dakota since 1988 and will be retiring at the end of this term. Along with accepting the duties of his position, Dr. Lehmann became involved with the Zeta Mu chapter of PAT at the very start of his time at USD! He planned and hosted his first PAT Regional Conference in 1989 and has been an important part of our organization ever since.

Thank you for your years of dedication to PAT, Dr. Lehmann!

REGIONAL CONFERENCES

Learn more about Regionals here: phialphatheta.org/regional_conferences/

GEORGIA

COLUMBUS STATE
UNIVERSITY

APRIL 14-15

NEWHALL_CAROLINE@
COLUMBUSSTATE.EDU

HAWAI'I

UNIVERSITY OF
HAWAI'I MĀNOA

APRIL 1

PATMANOA@HAWAII.EDU

MIDWEST

UNIVERSITY OF
WISCONSIN-
WHITEWATER

APRIL 21

BROWNK@UWW.EDU

NEW JERSEY

NEW YORK

DOMINICAN UNIVERSITY
NEW YORK

APRIL 29

CHRISTOPHER.LIBERTINI@DUNY.EDU

NEW YORK

WEST/CENTRAL

LE MOYNE COLLEGE

APRIL 15

ZENSRW@LEMOYNE.EDU

PENNSYLVANIA

EAST

MARYWOOD UNIVERSITY

APRIL 25

JRICH@MARYWOOD.EDU

TENNESSEE

EAST TENNESSEE
STATE UNIVERSITY

MARCH 31 & APRIL 1

PHIALPHATHETA@ETSU.EDU

VIRGINIA

UNIVERSITY OF
LYNCHBURG

APRIL 1

CRUTCHFIELD_LL@LYNCHBURG.EDU

TEXAS

TEXAS STATE UNIVERSITY

APRIL 22

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