

Pi Gamma Mu Presidential Address
2021 Triennial International Convention

Greetings. I am Larry Heck, President of the Board of Trustees. In these few minutes, I am honored to welcome you, share information about the state of the society, and offer some thank yous.

Welcome

Welcome to the 2021 Pi Gamma Mu International Honor Society in Social Science's Triennial Convention. Our triennial was scheduled for the fall of 2020; however, due to the pandemic, the trustees judiciously postponed to this year. Then, still thinking of safety, the Trustees decided to go virtual. So here we are, pioneering a virtual convention in 2021. Interestingly, this positions us perfectly to have our next triennial in the year we celebrate our 100th anniversary in 2024. One hundred years; can you imagine? Do you think Leroy Allen, our founder, anticipated that the society would be thriving 100 years later? What a legacy for Dean Allen.

We are still Pi Gamma Mu. Our mission is to encourage and promote excellence in the Social Sciences and to uphold and nurture scholarship, leadership, and service. I consider that our mission has three pillars. We recognize scholarship in the social sciences, we seek to develop leadership among our members, and we promote service to humanity. Would you agree with me that those three pillars are important to successful social life?

In our current milieu of social life, we find ourselves in relatively tumultuous times. For some examples, consider these:

- a worldwide pandemic
- climate change
- political polarization
- threats to democracy

- potentially damaging social media

The pessimist might say, “Woe is me!” But, the optimist might say, “We can do something about this.”

We think the social sciences have something to offer in these problematic and contentious times? And that’s the spirit in which we convene this triannual convention with its title “Social scientists leading the way.”

State of the Society

Thinking about the State of the Society, I have six areas I would like to address, with a focus on developments since the 2017 triennial: 1) the Constitution, 2) fiscal issues, 3) membership growth, 4) membership services, 5) conventions, and 6) technology.

The Constitution: At the 2017 Triennial, society members approved a revised Constitution. In addition, the trustees created a first-ever set of bylaws to go with the Constitution. The Constitution is fixed and can only be changed by the body of the society. The bylaws are important because they provide some flexibility to the Trustees in fulfilling the Constitution. The trustees have successfully used the bylaws to aid the day-to-day operation of the society.

Fiscal: Pi Gamma Mu is fiscally sound. The Trustees and headquarters staff are judicious in the use of our precious funds. Student memberships remain our main source of income, and we have worked faithfully to recognize excellent social science students. Our efforts are facilitated by our investments. During our 2019 annual meeting, the trustees developed our first ever investment policy. We created three categories for our funds: one that promotes growth of our funds, a second that funds our scholarships, and a third to be used in case of emergency needs.

The pandemic affected membership drives. On some campuses, offices were closed, the flow of campus mail was stymied, processes for depositing and withdrawing from campus

accounts were disrupted. Two factors helped us weather this difficult time. First, we rather quickly established an online registration process that circumvented many of the issues confronted on campuses. Second the Society received two Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) loans from the federal government. These loans, later forgiven, made a helpful contribution to the operation of the Society.

Membership growth: Our membership numbers declined the first year (2019-20) but improved in the second year (2020-21) of the pandemic. Our online registration process was helpful. We know chapters confront very dynamic situations, and we maintain a two pronged strategy. The first is to proactively assist the continuation of existing chapters. The second is to identify potential chapters and streamline the process of obtaining a charter. Our Chancellors have worked to identify state governors to provide an additional level of support to our chapter sponsors and members.

In addition, we share the good news of Pi Gamma Mu through the use of Facebook ads and, more recently, in the development of strategically planned press releases. We have also monitored and responded to what we call honor Society deception by organizations that may questionably compete with us for potential members.

Member services: Our commitment to member services is manifested in several ways. First we have created the leadership development program for members to expand their skills in becoming leaders. Second, we have expanded the annual issues of our journal, the *International Social Science Review*, from three to four, providing more publishing opportunities for social scientists. Third, we judiciously use our listserv to keep our lifetime members informed of Society developments and opportunities. Fourth, we have added flexibility to our lectureship program, providing additional opportunities for these funds to be used by chapters.

To demonstrate our support of membership diversity of Pi Gamma Mu, and indeed, diversity of all of society, we developed and shared our “Statement Against Racial Injustice and All Forms of Discrimination.” That statement was followed later by our “Statement Against Hate Crimes Affecting AAPI Communities.”

Convention: The Trustees postponed the 2020 convention to 2021, and, then, made a decision to go virtual. While we would rather be in person, the virtual convention still provides our members with opportunities to present papers and posters, participate in the leadership development program, join in roundtables, and interact with other social scientists.

Technology: We are committed to the adaptation and use of technology to facilitate the operations of our Society. I have already mentioned our use of the online registration, the use of the listserv, and the development of the virtual convention. We have moved the journal and the Society newsletter online, broadening the availability of our publications and reducing the costs of printing and postage. We will continue to seek and adapt to technological developments that promote the success of the society

That brings closure to the state of the society portion of my address.

Acknowledgements

Now I would like to offer some acknowledgments.

First, I would like to acknowledge our student members. You are the reason for our existence. We seek to recognize you for your academic excellence, and we hope to contribute to your development as social scientists.

Second, I want to acknowledge our sponsors. Sponsors are volunteers who undertake their quest out of appreciation for their students, the well-being of the social sciences, and their own professional development. We are absolutely dependent upon them.

Third, I want to acknowledge our governors who support and encourage the chapters within their states.

Fourth, I acknowledge our headquarters staff: Suzanne Rupp, our incredible Executive Director; Beth Biddle, our faithful Associate Director for Chapter Services; and McKelvie McMurry, our Chapter Development Officer. Together, they are flexible and faithful in carrying out their duties. They are the ones who respond to you and serve you with your day-to-day questions and issues. And, they are always gracious, maintaining a “can-do” attitude to any issue presented to them.

Finally, I want to acknowledge the trustees. Trustees are also volunteers, they give tirelessly of their time and energy because they are committed to the mission of Pi Gamma Mu. We are an exceptionally active Board. In the past Trustees met once a year; now, using first phone conferences, then Zoom meetings, we meet three to four times a year. Identifying all the contributions of the trustees would be a challenge, but I can offer some highlights. Past President Gordon Mercer is stellar in his leadership of the Chapter and Membership Growth Committee. Past President Jean Karlen makes significant contributions through her work on the Constitution and coordination of long-range planning. First Vice President Susan Kinsella is outstanding in her leadership of the Convention Committee. Clara Small, Second Vice President is faithful as chair of the Scholarship and Awards Committee in identifying scholarship recipients and outstanding chapters. Mari Plikuhn, Secretary/Treasurer, is an excellent steward of our fiscal resources. Katherine Im, Charles Hartwig, Brad Tennant, and Allison Knox, Chancellors of their respective regions, diligently care for the chapters, sponsors, and governors they look after. Our Student Representatives, Emma Grace Thompson and Elizabeth Ruiz, serve on committees and share their student perspectives. Candice Quinn successfully takes on the Editorship of our journal so that we are confident in expanding the number of annual issues. And Michelle Price

our Legal Counsel provides us with judicious advice and support. The Trustees are incredible and as First Vice President Susan Kinsella once said, “The trustees work well together.” These five words say it all.

As president I am grateful for the students, the sponsors, the governors, the staff, and the Trustees. You all are what makes Pi Gamma Mu great. I consider the society to be well-positioned as we move toward our 100th anniversary.

And, as I have ended my two previous reports I have shared with you the society’s motto which is: Ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free. Unsure of how this will work virtually, I’m wondering if you would say it with me? Let’s try it on the count of 3—1,2,3: Ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free.

Thanks to all of you. We have a wonderful convention in store for you and I hope you find it most enjoyable.