

Phi Theta Kappa Most Distinguished Alumni Association Award 2023 Award-Winning Entry

Summarize your association's goals and objectives for 2022. How were these goals determined? *(Regional alumni associations should create objectives in collaboration with their region's leadership, while community-based associations should do so in cooperation with two-year chapter leadership. University associations should team up with Transfer Admissions/Transfer Services offices to set mutually beneficial goals.)*

The 2022-2023 MSRAA Executive Board collaborated with Regional Leadership to debrief on the previous year to assess target regional needs and analyze the new Alumni Five Star Plan. Then, we were invited by the Middle States Regional Officers (MSRO) to discuss planning for the year; this included establishing the Regional goals and determining how our association would best support them. The MSROs then presented a draft presentation of the Regional goals to the MSRAA to elicit our feedback prior to presenting to the Region.

Following our initial meeting with the Regional Leadership Team, the MSRAA Executive Board met to create its own goals, which aligned with the Region's goals and themes for this year. Following suit, we presented a draft to the MSROs and Regional Leadership Team for revision feedback prior to presenting our planned goals to the MSRAA general membership via Zoom. A total of 32 members participated in the live session. Following the presentation, we surveyed additional alumni members who were unable to attend the live presentation, where 17 members responded.

Based upon these collaborations, the MSRAA arrived at a consensus to establish the following multifaceted goals:

1. Create and support projects and initiatives that align with the RO team's goals and themes for this year: Fellowship, Leadership, Creativity, and Increasing engagement in Society programming
2. Promote Regional and International scholarships, programs, and other initiatives through different channels and methods (e.g., social media, email, and during in-person and virtual events) in order to increase awareness, interest, and engagement among members
3. Host two transfer readiness events - a College Fair during Regional Convention and Fall Leadership
4. Continue fundraising efforts to accomplish the following sub-goals: (a) Provide funding for existing and new Regional scholarships that benefit all levels of PTK member involvement (i.e., Prospective, Current, and Graduating Members, and New Alumni Members); (b) Provide funding for the MSRO initiative, Creativity Connects
5. Develop and offer a variety of career and professional development events for members, while also leveraging PTK Programming (e.g., Edges and the Leadership Development Course)
6. Meet all requirements as a five-star alumni association through the reorganization of committees and aligning goals to address all successful components of the Alumni Five-Star plan

How did your association seek to accomplish your goals? Discuss up to three association projects conducted and how they specifically addressed your association goals.

During the 2022 Regional Honors Institute, the MSRAA created and executed an interactive general session that supported the MSRO goals of fellowship, leadership, creativity, and increasing engagement in Society programming. Alumni members and chapter advisors led members through a simulation of the College Project

using the game mechanics of Dungeons and Dragons, where chapter members created characters with stats in different skills, strengths, and limitations. Then, mock chapters collaborated on an adventure to go through the entire College Project process using the MSRAA-created script. The essence of the project was to promote societal engagement by deconstructing and gamifying the College Project. Leadership development guidance was built into the simulation, and the subsequent debrief focused on unpacking successful leadership skills and the development of creative critical-thinking. By building in different roles, it encouraged collaboration among players; with heterogeneous grouping, it promoted fellowship.

The MSRAA focused on fundraising to support regional initiatives by hosting two college fairs with regional universities. With the funds, we improved and added regional scholarships. We continued to fund regional Golden Opportunity Scholarships. We revised our Leaders of Promise Scholarship and MSR Scholar (Honors Case Study Challenge) to reflect the current HST. We expanded our Van Atter Alumni Legacy Scholarship to be offered by semester instead of annually to promote equity in opportunity for graduating members. We supported the MSRO goals through their initiative Creativity Connects by funding three talent-based scholarships. We created two regional Alumni Engagement Scholarships to encourage graduating members to remain active within the Region; winners were afforded the opportunity to attend the MSR 5 Star Academy as staff. During debriefings and working groups, the MSRAA revised our existing scholarships. Among other changes, this led to the creation of rejection emails, revision of acceptance emails, and institution of blind judging. We also developed a team that raised money for the 2022 Scholar Dash.

The MSRAA helped to plan and implement Career Readiness and Professional Development events. At the 2022 Regional Convention, we partnered with an Employment Specialist to develop an educational forum that covered resume writing, interview skills, professional etiquette, and job applications, including a Career Jeopardy game. During the 2022 Fall Leadership, we worked with an Associate Dean for Career, Professional Readiness and Experiential Learning to present an Education Forum about leveraging PTK Programming for professional development and career readiness. Also, at the event, our MSRAA production team took professional headshots of all attendees.

What were the specific quantitative and qualitative outcomes of these projects? How did these projects benefit current two-year chapter members and strengthen your region/campus/community?

For the Dungeons & Dragons event, 96 members participated. This engagement event provided opportunities for members, alumni, and advisors to practice leadership, teamwork, adaptability, and problem-solving through play. This event also helped to increase engagement with Society programming by demystifying the College Project and the HST. The MSRAA script writers further developed critical thinking, collaboration, and communication skills; MSRAA members showed significant growth as mentors through the experience of serving as a Dungeon Master. All alumni growth was unpacked and contextualized in a debrief. The project was featured on social media for a global audience as a way to incorporate play in regional programming. At Headquarters' request, it is currently being revised to be shared society-wide.

Between both College Fairs, we connected the regional members and chapters to 26 transfer partners and raised \$13,900 to support regional scholarships, including awarding nine existing regional scholarships. This year, we added new scholarships, including awarding three Creativity Connects talent scholarships for fine, visual, and performing arts. The new Alumni Engagement Scholarships waived their registration and initial dues to join the MSRAA; while serving the members, they were able to experience personal and professional growth by implementing regional programming. Both winners stayed active throughout the year, and they shared their talents with both the MSRAA and Region. Both served on the Scholarship Committee; one recipient was its co-chair. Although we strive to judge without bias, we wanted to establish a more equitable and ethical judging process, so blind judging was implemented where our advisors removed personally-identifiable information from applications. Acceptance and rejection emails were created to ensure open lines of communication with all applicants and to motivate them to remain involved in the Region and MSRAA. Internationally, we invited the general membership of the MSRAA to join our Scholar Dash team; with 25 participating members, we raised \$1,368.

The educational forums improved upon other professional skills that could be useful to members, alumni, and advisors in their academic and professional careers. Our Career Readiness educational forum had 62 attendees, and its corresponding Career Jeopardy game had 104 participants. Our Professional Development educational forum had 34 attendees. Both of these events not only promoted PTK programming, but also taught strategies to harness their power for resumes, LinkedIn Profiles, job applications, and interviews. There were 25 professional headshots taken; these were used by MSR chapter members on their resumes, social media profiles, and media announcements.