

TSF19-2019-000049

Abstract for an Invited Paper
for the TSF19 Meeting of
the American Physical Society

Building a thriving SPS Chapter: strengthening the heart of a healthy physics department

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There are over 750 physics departments around the US. Most of these departments have registered chapters of the Society of Physics Students. For many of these departments, the SPS chapter serves as the hub of community building within the department, where students find the beginnings of lifelong friendships, learn to hone their study skills, and find connections to opportunities that go well beyond the walls of their own campus, whether the campus is a small liberal arts college or a robust and crowded research institution. A thriving SPS chapter can have profound influence on the ability to attract, recruit and retain students in any department, no matter the size. SPS programs, as part of the American Institute of Physics education initiatives, provide connections and opportunities that support the success of both chapters and individual students. This presentation will cover some of the practical ways that SPS chapters can grow and thrive, along with pitfalls, challenges and wondrous successes that are all part of building an SPS chapter that is a vital part of the health of any physics department.