

## President's Address at 2017 Triennial

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## President's Address at 2017 Triennial

### **Cover Page Footnote**

Larry Heck is a professor of Sociology and Assistant Undergraduate Dean at Newman University and President of Pi Gamma Mu from 2014-present.

## President's Address at 2017 Triennial

Welcome to Pi Gamma Mu's 2017 Triennial Convention. Our theme is "Leadership, Scholarship, and Service." These three are the pillars of our mission. Founded in 1924, we celebrate ninety-three years as the honor society that recognizes excellence in students of the Social Sciences. I am honored to convene the 2017 Convention.

As a sociologist I have been drawn to the remarkable social change observed and experienced during my career. I have seen changes in my own life, in my work, and in the society around me. I remember the first time I read about Daniel Bell's three eras—preindustrial, industrial, and postindustrial. I understood the preindustrial and the industrial, but I didn't quite understand the postindustrial era. Bell focuses on information processing in the postindustrial era. At first I didn't get it—information processing. But I have to say I'm getting it now! My guess is that we are all getting it—from the phone calls that give you automated responses to the automated teller that provides cash from a machine. But, then, who even needs the cash—you can get everything you want and need with a little plastic card. With the plastic card, I can buy what I need and want, without going to a store and without face-to-face interaction. Can you imagine what that means for a sociologist? Even the driver, who delivers my purchases and rings the doorbell, hurries back to the big brown truck without exchanging a word. Soon, I understand, the driver and the big brown truck will give way to a drone that will drop off purchases on my porch.

At a slightly more macro level my work experiences have changed. Now that we all have computers at our desks, we send an email to a colleague down the hall. And, students would rather text me than talk on the phone. In class, students who used to engage in conversation

before class are all sitting with cell phones in hand in their own information processing world. On the bright side—for me though—every once in a while, I observe one of my students break into a smile for a few seconds (do you know what I am talking about?), and I wonder what they have just read. Truly we are seeing great changes in our information processing postindustrial era, and all of this should provide new realms of study for social scientists; I conclude that we have plenty of research topics to keep us busy.

In the midst of all of this change, Pi Gamma Mu is changing also and adjusting to the change that surrounds us. I'd like to focus on change for Pi Gamma Mu. Three years ago, during the Presidential Address, I reported that we were embarking upon a strategic planning process, and I identified these five components of the plan.

- Update Constitution and develop related documents;
- Fiscal issues;
- Membership growth and member services;
- Convention;
- Technology;

We have made progress in each of these areas.

Update Constitution. After a long, involved process we have revised our Constitution. Our current Constitution is dated 2005, that is twelve years ago. We added significant components, brought the Constitution up-to-date, reflected the evolving operation of the society, provided additional specificity, and modified our mission by adding that third pillar—leadership. For the first time, in our institutional memory, we developed bylaws to compliment the Constitution.

Fiscal Issues. We have attempted to be frugal in the use of our resources, and we have worked faithfully and systematically to increase membership. I am happy to report that we are fiscally sound, and we intend to continue to be fiscally sound.

Membership Growth and Member Services. We have worked diligently to increase our membership. Thanks to the efforts of Headquarters staff and Trustees, our 2016-17 year membership is 3623—a 25 percent increase over the previous year. In addition, 150 chapters sent new members, a 14 percent increase over the past year. Both membership growth and chapter involvement are due to efforts to identify new chapters and to reactivate inactive ones. The latter, reactivation, represents an ongoing process of facilitating and supporting chapters to encourage them to remain active. Actually, we grapple with that very seriously, because if we did nothing, we would lose several chapters every year. In addition, we want to maintain membership services that keep students and sponsors engaged. We continue our scholarship program and our speaker grants program. Our online *International Social Science Review* is now available to members without any additional charge.

Conventions. We seek to develop conventions that are engaging and attractive. At this convention, paper presentations number twenty-five and poster presentations number eleven—numbers we are pleased with. Such presentations provide a marvelous way for students to share in the academic process. A significant addition to the convention is the leadership program, representing the fulfillment of a new focus for Pi Gamma Mu.

Technology. We have endeavored to use any aspect of technology that will strengthen Pi Gamma Mu. The Trustees have made regular use of conference call meetings—that has mostly happened during the triennial we are just finishing—conducting business numerous times a year—quite a change from the annual meetings of the past. Moving the *International Social*

*Science Review*, our journal, online is a significant change, ending the era of hardcopy (that some of us lament) to an era of increased accessibility. Headquarters staff has begun in-house printing of membership certificates, reducing the cost and providing greater efficiency. Staff has implemented an online application, making access easier for potential members. The last technology change I wish to mention is the use of Facebook “advertising” that expands the reach of Pi Gamma Mu in our contemporary world of social media.

The Trustees have made significant progress with our strategic planning. We consider the Triennial we are ending to have been productive and transformative, but we know our work must continue to keep Pi Gamma Mu relevant in a changing world. We worked on our strategic plan to update it for a new triennial, and I would like to report that an energetic, committed, and unified Board of Trustees is ready for the new triennial.

You will remember that Pi Gamma Mu is a society of esteemed social scientists—that is all of you. But I would like to remind you that Pi Gamma Mu is also a society of volunteers. While we have a paid staff at headquarters and two contracted members of the Trustees—all others, student members, sponsors, and Trustees, volunteer their time and energy to achieve the ideals of the society; they volunteer their time and energy to achieve our mission. The revised mission of Pi Gamma Mu is to encourage and promote excellence in the Social Sciences and to uphold and nurture scholarship, leadership, and service. In our revised mission we have retained scholarship and service from the past and augmented with the addition of leadership. I would like to offer thanks to our staff and volunteers for their contributions to our mission and ideals.

First our staff, Suzanne Rupp, our Executive Director, Beth Biddle, our Associate Director for Chapter Services, and Quinlan Stein, our Chapter Development Officer, work

tirelessly at Headquarters. We know they are always on task and acting in the most professional and productive manner.

Next, students, (if you are a student member of Pi Gamma Mu please stand) you are what our society is about. You have distinguished yourselves with your academic, service, and leadership accomplishments. We are proud of you and what you do. We exist to recognize you. Thanks for being here with us (you may be seated).

Sponsors, (if you are a sponsor please stand) you are the volunteers “in the trenches.” That is the way I think about sponsors; I am one! You are the ones who identify these outstanding students. You promote their academic and service activities. The Trustees know the many demands that academic institutions place on sponsors. We live in an era of high expectation of your energy and time—we know the chapter sponsorship is another commitment to fit into busy days, and we appreciate your contributions (you may be seated).

Trustees, my special colleagues, your efforts during this triennial have exceeded expectations. Our past presidents have been exceptionally active. Jean Karlen worked tirelessly on Constitution revision and chaired the convention committee. Gordon Mercer worked faithfully on chapter reactivation and identification of new chapters. Secretary/treasurer Janet Adamski joined Jean Karlen as a partner in the Constitution review and worked alongside Chancellor Allison Knox in development of the leadership program. Our two vice presidents have been stellar in guiding their respective committees—First Vice President, Susan Kinsella, chairing the Communication Committee and Second Vice President, Clara Small, chairing the Awards Committee. Our Chancellors, Allison Knox, Yongsheng Wang, J. L. Kemp, and Charles Hartwig, have responded time-after-time to conduct site visits. Site visits provide information about potential chapters that the Trustees use in decisions to charter new chapters. In addition,

Chancellors support the chapters of their regions. Jerricha Griffin and Mark Mabry, our student representatives, have helped to keep the Trustees in tune with the needs and concerns of students. Candace Quinn, our journal editor, has assumed responsibility for our *International Social Science Review* and deserves special mention. I also acknowledge the contributions of Michele Price, our Legal Counsel, who offers us advice and assistance in all of our efforts.

Thanks to all of you. You all make Pi Gamma Mu and our mission possible.

Now I wonder, in closing, if you would join me in repeating our Motto? Let me say it first, just in case your memory needs jogging, and then we will say it all together. The Motto is: Ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free. Now say it with me, just like you did on your initiation day: Ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free. Very good!

Thank you ever so much. I hope you enjoy the convention and have a wonderful time while you are here.