

Trip Report

Beta Alpha Psi Annual Meeting; Baltimore, MD August 1 – 4, 2012

The Beta Alpha Psi annual meeting was held at the Marriott Hotel in the Inner Harbor of Baltimore from August 1st, to August 4th, 2012. I had the pleasure of attending this event with 7 of our undergraduate students. These students were attending the meeting in two different capacities: 4 of the students were members of our team who won first place in the Best Practices competition at the Regional BAP conference held at UWB in April. They would be competing now at the national level. The remaining 3 students are the executive officers for our chapter for the upcoming academic year. The individual students were:

Best Practices Team:

JC Hauchecorne
Chris Harbert
James Forinash
Caroline Boktour

Executive Officers:

Aaron Moretti – President
Jay Lazaro – Vice President – Professional Activities
Wendy Kwan – Vice President – Community Service

We travelled on Wednesday the 1st, arrived in Baltimore about 3pm, had a nice dinner in Little Italy, and then hit the sack early (at least I did) ☺ so as to be ready for a full weekend of events.

Thursday – Project Homeless

The conference kicked off on Thursday AM with an all-day community service event. There were approximately 1,000 student participants at the conference from across the US. Deploying this many bodies in an all day event in a productive and efficient manner had to be a real challenge. I was very impressed with the following event that was organized by BAP and the City of Baltimore:

The community service event was called Project Homeless and you can think of it as a major trade show that was designed to offer every conceivable service that would be needed by a homeless person. The event was big – it was held at the NFL stadium in Baltimore. Approximately 1,000 homeless persons were bussed to the event from shelters throughout Baltimore and the surrounding area. There they were given access to a wide array of Not-For-Profit organizations, government agencies, and other service providers that were offering services for these unfortunate clients. Examples of the services offered included health care (HIV testing, diabetes testing, oral health screening, haircuts, free toiletries, etc.); financial assistance (free credit reports, food stamp applications); low cost housing options, a food bank, child care options, educational

programs and scholarships, vocational training, etc. And of course all participants received a healthy free lunch.

The students were trained in the morning on the various services that would be available and the event, and where the providers for such services would be located inside the stadium. The Mayor of Baltimore gave a short address to kick off the training session. Each student then was paired with a homeless client and essentially became their “personal shopper” for the event. The student would first interview the client to determine what services were needed, and then escort this client to the various stations to get help.

I think this was an unforgettable experience for the students, and one that was viewed as a big success by the community. We even made the 2nd page of the Baltimore Sun. A link to that article, including a video interview with a BAP participant, follows.

<http://www.baltimoresun.com/news/maryland/baltimore-city/bs-md-ci-homeless-fair-20120802,0,1253192.story>

Friday/Saturday Morning

The professional phase of the meeting kicked off on Friday morning. The meeting featured various competitions, as well as concurrent breakout sessions that focused on professional development, emerging technical issues, and sessions dealing with successful BAP chapter operations. Some of the highlights from this phase of the conference are discussed below:

“Best Practices” – Sponsored by Deloitte.

The primary reason we were in attendance at this meeting is that we were competing in the National Best Practices event under the category “Strategies for Dealing with Change”. We won this category at the Regional BAP conference that was held at UWB in April. In total there were three Best Practices competitions; the other two categories were “Thinking Outside the Box”, and “Social Networking”.

Our presentation featured a consulting project that several of our Beta Alpha Psi members have been working on at the American Legion Post in Snohomish. Their presentation focused on how they were able to overcome some initial reluctance from the Post to modernize their accounting systems and other internal accounting controls. We were competing against the 7 other regional winners from across the country. To cut right to the chase:

WE WON 1ST PLACE!

I think we were all in shock when the words “University of Washington, Bothell” were announced, but in retrospect, I think we really deserved it. This team put in countless hours of hard work on the project itself, and then spent several hours every day leading up to the conference preparing their presentation. Look elsewhere on the website for

photos of our team receiving the award. It will soon be on display somewhere prominent at UWB. Congratulations again to JC Hauchecorne, Chris Harbert, James Forinash, and Caroline Boktour.

Winners in the other categories were the University of South Florida (Thinking Outside the Box) and the University of Nevada – Reno (Social Networking).

“Project Run With It” (“PRWI) – Sponsored by Moss Adams

PRWI is a very unique aspect of the annual meeting. First of all students must apply to be selected for a PRWI team, and the application process is very competitive. We were lucky (or deserving?) enough to have Jay Lazaro selected as a PRWI participant.

Students selected for PRWI are randomly assigned to 4-person teams, and then these teams conduct a real-time consulting project for a Not-For-Profit organization in the Baltimore area. Multiple teams (about 5) conduct consulting projects for the same organization, and then a panel of judges that includes representation from the NFP organization selects the winning team. During the project the PRWI participants are given direct and frequent access to the executives of the NFP agency.

Jay’s team worked on a project for a NFP organization called “Identity”, whose mission is to provide services to at-risk Hispanic youth in the Baltimore area. Specifically Jay’s team was to develop strategies for delivering vocational training programs for Identity’s members.

Jay himself delivered the opening remarks and an overview of their team’s strategic recommendations. Unfortunately their team did not win, but we all were impressed with the thoughtfulness of their research and recommendations.

As a side, the PRWI experience is rewarding, but it also is intense. Immediately on arrival at the conference on Wednesday Jay was assigned to his team, and other than about 6 hours for sleep on Wednesday and Thursday night, and another 6 hours to attend the Project Homeless, Jay’s team worked non-stop on this project.

“Diversity Project” – Sponsored by Ernst & Young

Many of you may be aware that we had a team of students working on the Ernst & Young diversity project during the past year. This team was led by Alyssa Simek and had participation by JC Hauchecorne, Nic Ditzler, and Jon Cho. Their specific area of interest was age diversity and careers in accounting, and they sponsored several events throughout the year such as a risked based simulation conducted by Alyssa in various class sections, as well as a diversity panel discussion that was hosted by JC.

We had previously been identified as one of the 10 national semifinalists for this award. At the annual meeting we learned that we won **3rd place** in the EY diversity project. If you see Alyssa, JC, Nic or Jon, please congratulate them on this outstanding performance.

Professional Sessions.

Finally, when not competing in competitions, working on PRWI, or watching our teammates, we all had the opportunity to participate in various professional sessions at the conference. I attended an interesting session on the status of adoption of IFRS, Aaron, Jay and Wendy were able to attend sessions designed for new BAP officers, and we all were treated by to a very exciting speech at the closing session by Dr. Kevin Elko, a motivational speaker who works for many of the top NFL and collegiate football teams in the country.

In Closing

The session ended at noon on Saturday. Our flight wasn't until 9:30pm Saturday night, so we were able to take a quick trip to DC to visit the monuments and some of the other tourist attractions. After a very long, but rewarding day, we arrived safe and sound back in Seattle about midnight on Saturday night.

I want to thank all of the students who participated in this conference for conducting themselves in a very professional manner over the weekend. I also want to thank the leadership and all of the participants in Beta Alpha Psi during the last year. True, we have achieved some great success during the year; but personally I'm most proud of the teamwork and camaraderie that we are developing in the accounting program at UWB. Let's keep all this positive momentum going!

Ron Tilden