

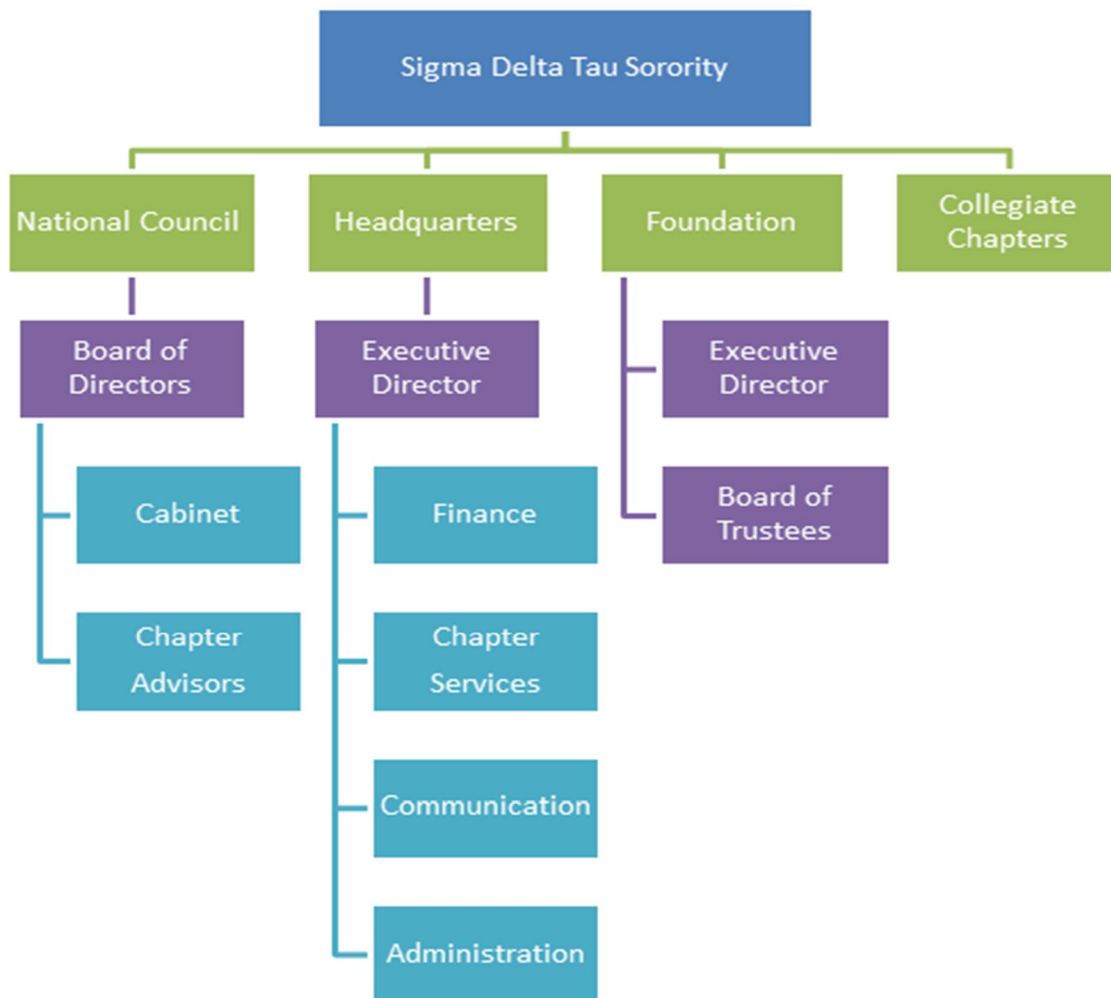
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EME601 Intro to Instructional Design
System Analysis
Sigma Delta Tau National Organization

Sigma Delta Tau is a National women's social sorority, founded in 1917. The organization is comprised of 103 chartered chapters and over 60,000 alumnae members. The mission of the sorority is, "to enrich the lifetime experience of women of similar ideals, to build lasting friendships, and to foster personal growth. Sigma Delta Tau shall encourage each member to reach her fullest potential by providing intellectual, philanthropic, leadership and social opportunities within a framework of mutual respect and high ethical standards." (SDT Mission Statement, 2010)

SDT is one of 26 women's groups embedded within the National Panhellenic Conference, the **suprasystem**. The NPC, founded in 1902 as the Inter-Sorority Conference, serves as the advocacy and support organization for the advancement of the sorority experience. Their mission is to provide, "...support and guidance for its 26 member sororities and serves as the national voice on contemporary issues of sorority life...NPC is one of the oldest and largest women's membership organizations representing more than 4 million women at 655 university campuses and 4,500 local alumnae chapters in the U.S. and Canada. Each year, NPC-affiliated collegians and alumnae donate more than \$5 million to worthy causes, provide \$2.8 million in scholarships to women and volunteer 500,000 hours in their communities." (NPC Mission Statement, 2011)



The Sigma Delta Tau **system**, which has been designated as such for analytical purposes, is of interest due to its internal complexity and its relationship to the larger social environment. This system is comprised of several, easily isolated, **subsystems**; including Collegiate Chapters, National Headquarters, National Council and the SDT Foundation. The undergraduate chapters are supported administratively by the centrally located National Headquarters in Carmel, Indiana. The small office staff of 6 provides supplies, processes incoming requests, tracks chapter administrative functions and collects membership dues. All society business functions are controlled by the Headquarters. The National Council is the governance subsystem and directs the day to day activities of the organization, as well as all strategic planning initiatives. The SDT Foundation is the charitable wing of Sigma Delta Tau, providing support through programming, scholarships and alumnae networking.



Sigma Delta Tau has four main **goals**, which are derived from their mission statement and organizational purpose. The first of these objectives is to promote academic achievement within each member by providing a multitude of intellectual opportunities. They also strive to instill a sense of philanthropy and community engagement. Through partnerships with organizations such as, Prevent Child Abuse America and Women for Women international, SDT hopes to engage all members in their mission to *Empower Women*. The third goal of the sorority is to build leadership skills and allow each member to nurture her individual talents. Finally, SDT strives to foster lifelong bonds of sisterhood and to create and international network of empowered women.

As a values-based organization, with a rich history, the Seven Founders presented present day members with a vision and guidelines to achieve an **ideal**. A single unified vision of the way things should be has sustained SDT through nearly 100 years of existence. As stated by Sigma Delta Tau, "It shall be the purpose of this fraternal organization to form a close social and fraternal union of those of similar ideals and to foster, maintain and instill such ideals in the hearts of its members as will result in actions worthy of the highest precepts of true womanhood, democracy and humanity." (SDT Purpose, 2010) These guiding principles promote congruence, allowing for all subsystems to function harmoniously within a framework of mutual respect and high ethical standards.

The lifeblood of Sigma Delta Tau is the recruitment of new members at the undergraduate level. Without this important **maintenance input**, the system ceases to exist. Membership dues fund the essential functions of the system relating to the goals of the organization. Every aspect of organizational functioning from Convention to Leadership Consultant visits to training manuals are funded by annual membership fees, supplemented by the generosity of Foundation donors. Financial support, notwithstanding; without a growing membership to support, the purpose of the organization is irrelevant. SDT strives to create a positive social support network, relevant and attractive to today's collegiate woman. For the system to thrive, it is required that the goals and purpose are instilled in the newest affiliates through extensive training and development. By fulfilling the **need satisfaction** of its members, and producing a nurturing environment for individual growth, the future success of the society is solidified.

Through **signal inputs** we are able to ensure that our system grows and flourishes. Based on trends in higher education, NPC can provide prescriptions for optimal organizational success. Given those recommendations, Sigma Delta Tau leadership can choose to implement new policies or programming to positively influence the system. The subsystems, such as the Board of Directors or the Headquarters staff, are then charged with executing the new directives. SDT leadership development programs, National initiatives, and chapter support structure all work to encourage the organization to function beyond merely sustaining.

Sigma Delta Tau functions primarily as an **open system**, exchanging information with National Panhellenic Conference, related systems, and outside influences with ease in order to achieve desired results. Whether hiring an outside consultant to perform a needs assessment or a public relations expert to evaluate crisis management strategies, SDT will take the necessary steps to maintain a contiguous exchange of information. In conjunction with the other organizations governed by the NPC, a document titled The Unanimous Agreements has been developed to set clear expectations for basic functioning. This formal agreement, which is re-examined biannually, serves to provide directives to each Panhellenic organization and create systematic harmony.

The system provides a great deal of **feedback**, as evidenced by the success or failure of individual collegiate chapters. Every academic year the organization is able to evaluate each group based on various criteria through a combination of monthly summary reports and the annual Standards of Chapter Achievement. The criterion includes membership recruitment and retention, financial stability, scholastic achievement, relevance of positive programming, community involvement, and leadership aptitude. These tools provide a qualitative and quantitative measure of the system output. By utilizing this data, system leadership is able to establish priorities for the following year. This cycle ensures Sigma Delta Tau's survival amidst the often competitive environment of NPC organizations.

An area where feedback is lacking is in individual performance appraisal. As a volunteer within the organization, especially at the entry level, there is little to no formal evaluation of performance. Occasionally there is incidental feedback in the form of a congratulatory email or a phone call to remind the member of an unexcused webinar conference absence. A formalized process for intentional feedback does not exist and it is up to the individual to evaluate their own output and adjust their future contributions accordingly.

Although most of the data utilized by the organization is obtained through chapter achievement analytics, there are a few other sources of **information** important to the functions of the system. Most importantly, the National Panhellenic Conference collects and disseminates statistics related to each of the 26 organizations under its jurisdiction. These facts and figures help to quantify Sigma Delta Tau's position in relation to other systems of similar interests. The report helps to reduce uncertainty about the status of the organization and shapes some of the directives for the following year. Universities also provide synthesized information in regards to individual chapters. This sensory data is useful in painting a realistic picture of the campus climate and aids in chapter development.

Once auxiliary information is introduced to the system, a **process** is implemented in order to synthesize the information and produce relatively predictable results. For instance, in regards to the NPC Annual Report, the statistics may show that more collegiate chapters are being sanctioned for risk management violations. In this case, the National President

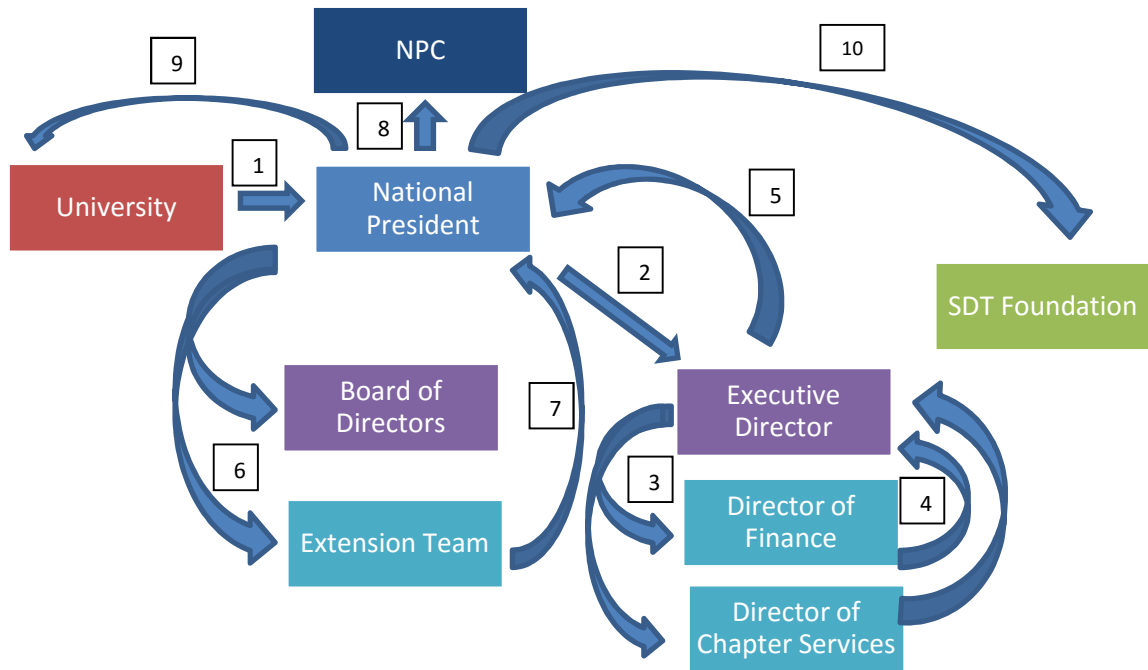
may initiate the development of a new workshop or call for an evaluation of the current crisis action plan. She will consider all data and through **selectivity**, determine the best team or individual within the organization to execute the project. Based on this directive, the appropriate subsystem will create a step by step plan to achieve the desired outcome.

Through review of the various reports and analyses of observed behavior we are able to paint an accurate picture of the way things are. Fortunately these types of publications exist, because it is often difficult to evaluate behavior internally due to individual biases. Once the **status quo**, based on external perception and experience, is determined; an ideal can be defined. The National President, along with the Board of Directors, is tasked with interpreting the outcomes and defining a path for the future.

Being such a large organization with many intricate subdivisions, there is a great need for assessment of the inputs being introduced to the system. The National President, with assistance from the Board of Directors and Cabinet, spends extensive time reviewing feedback each year during the National Council meeting to ensure appropriate priorities are determined for the future. Through **filtering**, the unwanted information can be disregarded and the useful data can be evaluated and synthesized. There is also a use of filtering when selecting volunteer personnel. In order to be invited to become a member of the National Council, an individual must demonstrate a history of successful leadership during their undergraduate membership and post baccalaureate endeavors. It is at the discretion of the National President to accept or deny membership and to determine assignment within the organization.

Sigma Delta Tau utilizes many **boundaries** in their organization, both internally and externally. Internally, the structure has many checks and balances used to ensure order within the system. The National President serves as the both the strategic leader as well as the **interface** between the National Panhellenic Conference and related systems. It is her responsibility to consider the **inputs**, whether new information or materials being reintroduced, from all parties and ensure the information is properly communicated through the appropriate channels. For instance, if an opportunity to establish a new colony arises, she will need to communicate with all entities involved in order to make an educated decision. First she will need to confirm with the Executive Director at the National Headquarters to ensure there are resources available. Within their subsystem, the Director of Finances will verify that the opportunity is financially viable and the Director of Chapter Services can determine if they will be able to provide the staffing to support the project. Once support from the National Headquarters is received, the National President can alert the Board of Directors and the Cabinet of the opportunity. The Board of Directors is responsible for various components such as treasury allocation, program development, and strategic planning. The Cabinet fulfills the Board directives including campus research, exploratory visits and expansion presentation execution. Once the research and development process has been completed the National President alerts appropriate University personnel and the National Panhellenic Conference of the intentions to establish

a new chapter. The Sigma Delta Tau Foundation would also be notified, at this point, in order to gain access to their vast alumnae network.



The primary function of the Board of Directors and Cabinet is to create relevant programming and carry out the directives of the organization's leadership. Such **outputs** include global instruction manuals, Regional Leadership Conclave programming and local Chapter officer transition training, to name a few. These products and services enrich the membership experience, enhance the status of the system within NPC and develop strong women who will one day serve on the National Council, at the National Headquarters or with the SDT Foundation. This cyclical process sustains the organization, much like photosynthesis sustains the life of our ecosystem.

While Sigma Delta Tau generally operates as an open system, occasionally the need arises to limit outside influence. During internal crisis situations, there is a need to abide by a strict media and public relations plan to protect individual members and the integrity of the organization. By nature, sororities are ritual and values based, and have retained their secret ceremonies and moral codes since their inception. When it comes to ritualistic related topics and issues, the organization's leadership takes great care when bringing in outside consultants and speakers to ensure the sanctity of traditions. In these

instances, SDT acts as a **closed system** and will reject outside influences to protect its character regardless of influence of adjacent systems.

Unfortunately, there is a fair amount of **entropy** within Sigma Delta Tau and its various subsystems, especially within the National Council. This governing body is made up entirely of volunteer personnel. Expectations of individual members are often unclear, leading to confusion, inefficient utilization of resources and unsatisfactory results. As evidenced in previous examples, the governing structure of SDT is non-linear. Direction often comes from multiple sources, leading to confusion over what the best course of action should be. For instance, as a Chapter Advisor you may be faced with the issue of a chapter with declining membership retention. As a result, the group might be placed on a 'priority' status and assigned a supervising Board member until the issue is resolved. In addition, all Advisors work with a Recruitment Coordinator, Chapter Services Coordinator (Cabinet) and the Director of Chapter Services (HQ) to support day to day functions. Regrettably, due to busy schedules and conflicting priorities, these entities rarely meet to discuss an appropriate plan of action. With input from the National Headquarters, Board of Directors, and Cabinet, combined with their own perspective of how the desired results should be achieved, chaos often ensues.

With such a large and complex volunteer organization, **system dissonance** is bound to become an issue. This dissonance, which manifests as incongruence between actions and beliefs, causes discord between the various subsystems within Sigma Delta Tau. As times change; so does the leadership of the organization and with that change comes many differences in opinions. The root cause of the problem is that SDT has not been able to keep up with the exponential growth experienced by both the system and the suprasystem. In recent years, these issues have been addressed through strategic planning initiatives and professional consultations. However, after decades of ignoring the symptoms, Sigma Delta Tau has a long way to go before they make up for lost time.

SDT is a historically Jewish sorority, of which there are three National organizations categorizing themselves as such. In 1917, Jewish women were not welcome in many other Panhellenic sororities. Sigma Delta Tau was founded to provide the fraternal experience to a small demographic of women who were formerly discriminated against. This model was successful for decades, but as antidiscrimination policies are adopted and organizations become diversified, the need for a Jewish sorority no longer exists. As the demand for their type of organization has diminished, they have needed to adapt to be more appealing to women of diverse heritages. This **adaptation** has not been easy as SDT struggles with staying true to their historical roots, while ensuring that they are relevant to the college woman of today.

Over the past few years, Sigma Delta Tau has excelled in many endeavors and has achieved many of its intended goals. Several examples of **formal achievement** have been produced, moving the organization towards their vision of ideal operations. In 2011, SDT unveiled a new tagline and corresponding branding portfolio under the title, "Empowering

Women.” In just three short years they have engaged in a partnership with Jewish Women International (JWI) to create two programs focused on the education and empowerment of women. Life\$avings, a financial literacy seminar and Safe Smart Dating have received national acclaim and have brought SDT and JWI into the spotlight. In addition, Sigma Delta Tau has become a primary sponsor of the Response Ability Project and Hazing Prevention.org, in an effort to promote values-based leadership and increased bystander intervention within fraternal organizations. Over \$200,000 and thousands of service hours were donated to philanthropic causes in 2013, including Prevent Child Abuse America and Women for Women International. Through these initiatives, as well as many others, Sigma Delta Tau is working toward their goal of empowering women through leadership and increasing their quantifiable contribution to society.

As the world changes, so too does the realm of NPC social sororities. Best practices of the early 20th century do not necessarily meet the needs of today’s woman. Campus culture and the university environment have changed significantly since 1917. Sigma Delta Tau is at a pivotal time in the organization’s history, **transforming** from the way things were, to make way for an even brighter second century of women’s empowerment advocacy and sisterhood.

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