**History of the Florida Institute of Technology Chapter-Elect of Theta Tau**

One Saturday afternoon in January 2017, a group of students at Florida Tech were discussing the lack of a campus community where all engineering students could live, learn, and grow together. Some argued that this already weakly existed in Greek life because of the large number of engineering students at the school. Others lamented that none were oriented to allow students to grow as young professionals and leaders, and that Greek life solely consisted of gender-exclusive organizations. The only group that weakly resembled what they desired was a recently folded Triangle Fraternity interest group, and even they were primarily a social group on top of being a gender-exclusive organization.

Some of those students decided to pursue starting a campus organization to fill the void that they discussed, and they decided to create a local co-ed fraternity. After learning about Theta Tau, the nation’s foremost co-ed engineering fraternity, the group realized that Theta Tau’s purpose and values were closely aligned with theirs. They wanted to learn more, so on February 10th, 2017, Peter Tarsoly, a freshman studying Computer Engineering, spoke with Executive Director Michael T. Abraham. The meeting went well, and Abe demonstrated an interest in one day bringing Theta Tau to Florida Tech. From then, the local fraternity continued their efforts and became a recognized student organization on February 22nd, going by the name Zeta Theta Tau. Shortly thereafter, the first official meeting was held on February 27th, 2017. The first semester of the local fraternity’s existence consisted of 10 core members, along with their first social and professional development events.

During the Fall 2017 semester, the local fraternity grew once again. In addition to gaining new members, the group also secured an advisor, Dr. Vipuil Kishore, from the Chemical Engineering department. On October 21st, 2017, Abe and the group had a meeting to discuss the path forward towards colony certification and the national organization at large. Additionally, the group’s initial bylaws were ratified. After the meeting, the group worked hard to prepare themselves to become a colony of Theta Tau, which included creating a petition and updating bylaws to include preliminary group elections during the first meeting in the month of December. The group also held their first service event that semester, along with various social and professional development events.

The Spring 2018 semester brought the members of the local fraternity closer, as they started to realize fraternal fellowship. A combination of service and social events was critical for that to occur. On the service side, the local fraternity started to interact more with other campus organizations. They volunteered in the planning and execution of the campus-wide Engineers’ Week 2018 and collaborated with the local Alpha Phi Omega chapter to organize a beach cleanup. On the social side, the local fraternity organized game and movie nights, beach days, a hike, and an end of the semester trip to Disney. While the group grew closer, they successfully submitted a petition to become a colony of Theta Tau.

After months of planning, the Florida Institute of Technology Colony of Theta Tau was certified on August 25th, 2018 with 15 founders. The founding executive board consisted of Peter Tarsoly as Regent, Garrett Jacobellis as Vice Regent, Nathan Parker as Scribe, Camara Casson as Treasurer, and Robert Whitman as Corresponding Secretary. The brothers were ecstatic to meet Theta Tau brothers, both active and alumni, who came not only from around the Gulf region, but from around the country. The remainder of the Fall 2018 semester was characterized by bringing in the first official pledge class and continuing to form brotherhood within the colony. In March 2019, brothers visited Rho Gamma chapter during their alumni weekend. Those who attended quickly realized that they too wanted to someday host a gathering of their magnitude and began to plan out how the colony could grow to that size.

The Fall 2019 semester is considered a turning point in the colony’s history. On November 2nd, 2019, the colony was visited by Colony Director Kristen Bobuk to discuss their future. While they determined that they were not quite ready to become a Theta Tau chapter, the visit served as a reminder that the road ahead would require the utmost effort of all brothers if they were to eventually reach their goal. As a result, the colony became busy with service, professional development, and brotherhood events.

The colony continued to build on their recently reestablished efforts to grow themselves into the Spring 2020 semester. Brothers brought in ten prospective members that semester, making them the largest group since the founding class. Over the weekend of January 17th, 2020, the colony went on their first camping trip to Salt Springs in Ocala National Forest. The trip helped form a strong bond between the brothers. Other significant events planned included resurrecting Florida Tech Engineering Week to be carried out at the end of March, attending the Gulf Regional conference hosted by Zeta Gamma chapter, and the colony’s first formal in April. Unfortunately, that all came to a screeching halt on March 13th, 2020, amidst the initial lockdowns and chaos caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. Almost immediately, many in the group scattered out to different corners of the state, country, and world. Many of the prospective members dropped out of both the colony and school, cutting the class in half. If it were not for that initial camping trip, houses and apartments where brothers locked down together, and a colony Minecraft server, the colony may have ceased to exist by the end of that semester. Nevertheless, they persisted forward.

Over Summer 2020, the colony was at a crossroads about redefining their operations during COVID-19. While the colony fully intended on visiting the national convention in Tampa to connect with Theta Tau brothers across the country, they were able to achieve this at a smaller scale, in a rather unconventional way. Some of the brothers joined the national Minecraft server, which not only provided some distraction from the day-to-day trials and tribulations faced during that period, but also served as a place to mingle with Theta Tau brothers. Early on, the brothers rekindled their relationship with actives and alumni of Rho Gamma chapter, along with meeting some brothers from both inside and outside the Gulf region. These interactions, though informal, gave the brothers insight into what they could achieve both in virtual and socially distanced mediums.

As the Fall 2020 semester approached, the colony planned to hold primarily virtual events and a return to weekly meetings, combined with some carefully planned in-person events. After partnering with Rigg’s Outpost, a local boat and kayak rental business, brothers kayaked out on the local Crane Creek to collect waste. Ultimately, they were able to help collect over 70 pounds of waste over a two-hour period on October 12th, 2020. The colony additionally started holding weekly meme contests and created a new position with a weekly term called the Meme Lord. Prior to each week’s meeting, the Meme Lord picks a winner for that week’s contest, who is then appointed Meme Lord for that next week. Despite the nature of the event, it provided another channel for active brothers and alumni to reconnect during this trying time.

As the Spring 2021 semester progressed, the colony continued to thrive. While they continued holding virtual movie and game nights, those living in Melbourne started hiking in small groups. Professional Development flourished during the Fall 2020 and Spring 2021 semesters, which included talks from alumni, LinkedIn, and résumé nights. One of the colony’s goals during the Spring 2021 semester was to provide opportunities to the general student body in the area of professional development. They were able to meet this through their PTC Creo virtual workshop series, COVID-conscious professional headshot event, and Florida Tech Engineer’s week. In March 2021, more than half of the colony’s active brothers attended both the Eastern and Western 2021 Virtual Spring Regional Conferences. The brothers enjoyed connecting and learning from Theta Tau brothers both within the Gulf region and around the country. Finally, brothers became increasingly communicative with the Zeta Gamma chapter, culminating in a joint Minecraft night in May 2021.

Summer 2021 proved to be fruitful for the brothers. On June 2nd, 2021, after receiving help and eventual approval from Colony Director Dan Jensen, the colony sent their petition for chapter status to Central Office. A month later, the colony sent its first delegation including brothers Miranda Easton, Michael Hoadley, Marcell Tapaszto, and Peter Tarsoly to Tampa for the Theta Tau National Convention. As one of the first items on the convention agenda, the colony’s petition for chapter status was overwhelmingly approved, making them a chapter-elect. For the rest of convention, the brothers contributed to committee work, learned more about the national fraternity, and befriended delegates from other chapters and colonies.

The brothers of the chapter-elect have a bright future ahead of them. In addition to their upcoming installation as Psi Epsilon chapter, they were instrumental early on in the Fall 2021 semester in convincing the University to designate them, among others, as professional fraternities instead of honor societies. With COVID-19 finally becoming more manageable, the chapter-elect may soon fully realize what it once sought to become: a campus community where all engineering students could live, learn, and grow together.