

Epsilon Iota Chapter San José State University 2024-2025 Annual Report

Chapter Advisor: Dr. Mary Currin-Percival

President: Leanna Yanes Cruz, Fall 2024

Chima Nwokolo, Spring 2025

Vice President: Chima Nwokolo, Fall 2024

Diya Agrawal, Spring 2025

Secretary: Jonathan Wu

Treasurer: Robert Lawes

Introduction

Pi Sigma Alpha, Epsilon Iota Chapter had a productive year in AY 2024-2025. The chapter sponsored or co-sponsored multiple events to help the members and Iotas (associate members) learn more about the major, the campus, the community, and the political world. We were engaged in the 2024 presidential election, on our campus, and in our community. Our chapter also had a great year for membership. We inducted 15 new members in fall 2024 and 17 new members in spring 2025. Our newly elected board is already making plans for an even more active year next year, including more active involvement with the national organization. The following report summarizes our events, budget, elections, reflections, and future plans.

Events Fall 2024

Plato Club: Fall 2024

Pi Sigma Alpha, Epsilon Iota held a Plato Club meeting on September 30, 2024, 6:00pm-8:00pm, at Sammy G's Pizzeria near the SJSU campus. Plato Club offers an opportunity for current members, prospective members, professors and board members of Epsilon Iota chapter to come together to discuss politics and current events. At Plato Club, members also network, discuss future careers in politics and share their plans after graduating from San José State University.





Chapter members attending Plato Club at Sammy G's near SJSU.

Presidential Debate Hybrid Watch Party Event



On September 10, 2024, 5:30pm-8:00pm, our chapter cohosted a hybrid presidential debate watch party event. SJSU Votes, Pi Sigma Alpha, A.S. SJSU, and Democrats at SJSU were planning an online event (via Zoom) and then joined

with Bridge SJSU, which was planning an in-person event (at MLK Library at SJSU). About 40 people participated in the hybrid event (about 20 joined online and 20 joined in person). Diya Agrawal (Iota PSA member) from

Thank your

SJSU Votes, Pi Sigma Alpha President Leanna Yanes Cruz, Katelyn Gambarin (PSA member) from A.S. SJSU, Chima Nwokolo (PSA member) from Bridge and Democrats at SJSU, and Samantha Sternstein from Bridge facilitated discussion.

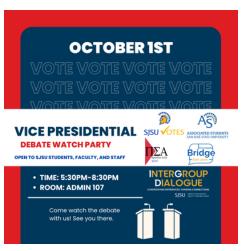
Instagram post thanking event attendees

2024 SJSU Votes Festival

Pi Sigma Alpha, Epsilon Iota was one of 40 partners for the SJSU Votes Festival, celebrating National Voter Registration Day and Constitution Day on September 17, 2024. The event was organized by SJSU Votes and held from 11:00am-7:00pm on the entire 7th St. Paseo. This year's festival also included a D.J. and a band, so the Paseo was filled with music! Pi Sigma Alpha tabled all day, providing nonpartisan registration voter information, snacks. information about the chapter. Epsilon Iota chapter has participated in every SJSU Votes Festival and we look forward to participating again in the 2025 SJSU Votes Festival! We are committed to civic engagement!



Vice Presidential Debate Watch Party



One of our most exciting events was held in fall. We hosted a vice-presidential debate watch party event on Tuesday, October 1, 2025, 5:30pm-8:30pm in Administration 107 at San José State University. The event was generously funded by a Pi Sigma Alpha National Civic Engagement Grant (\$200) and co-sponsored by SJSU Votes, Associated Students, Bridge SJSU, and the SJSU Office of Diversity Equity and Inclusion (ODEI) at San José State University.

This event was covered by several media outlets, including the <u>SJSU</u> <u>Spartan Daily</u>. It was open to SJSU students, faculty, and staff and was

advertised on all co-sponsors' social media and the SJSU Votes' website. It was also advertised to political science students through faculty Canvas course management system pages. The vice-presidential debate watch party was a nonpartisan event and gave the campus community the opportunity to come together and have a productive discussion about the 2024 presidential





election. We wanted to provide another opportunity to encourage students to become more civically engaged and educated. SJSU Votes also provided nonpartisan election resources and opportunities for voter registration at the event. About 35 students, faculty, and staff attended this event. Pizza, snacks, fruit, and beverages were provided by Pi Sigma Alpha, SJSU Votes, and A.S. SJSU. SJSU ODEI secured the event room. Bridge SJSU helped to advertise the event.

Vice-presidential debate watch-party event attendees

Dr. Currin- Percival and members from the co-sponsoring organizations wrote the questions for the event moderators. Representatives from each co-sponsoring organization moderated the post-



debate discussion. Epsilon Iota Chapter Vice President Chima Nwokolo and Event Chair Insiya Neemuchwala

moderated for Pi Sigma Alpha. Katelyn Gambarin, A.S. Director of Legislative Affairs (and Pi Sigma Alpha member), moderated for A.S. SJSU. Samantha Sternstein was the Bridge SJSU moderator. Dr. Craig Alimo was the moderator for ODEI. Erin Ghilispie was the moderator for SJSU Votes.



Spartan Daily article about the vice-presidential debate watch party

Vote Early Day

The chapter was a proud co-sponsor (with SJSU Votes) of Vote Early Day at SJSU on October 29, 2024. This is one of the Civic Holidays and celebrates and encourages voting early. SJSU Votes and Epsilon Iota encouraged Spartans to bring their vote-by-mail ballots to Student Union Meeting Room 4 at 7:00pm to vote, eat pizza, listen to music, and celebrate voting! About 30 members of Pi Sigma Alpha, SJSU Votes, and other Spartans joined the event. Most of the students had already cast their ballots, due to all of the encouragement on campus to vote early! But it was still a great opportunity to come together to socialize, talk about the importance of voting, and to plan for future collaborations. The SJSU student news and local news media covered the event as well!









Vote Early Day Event attendees, including Dr. Currin-Percival and Dr. Percival

Political Science Department Don Edwards Lecture

The chapter assisted the Political Science Department with ushering and other hosting

responsibilities at the annual Don Edwards Lecture on October 30, 2025 at 7:00pm. This year's speaker was Santa Clara County Supervisor Cindy Chavez. Supervisor Chavez, an SJSU alum and

longtime leader in San José, spoke about the importance of local government and about her public service career in San José. Chapter members were able to meet with Supervisor Chavez before and after the talk, thank her for her service, and get valuable career advice.



SCC Supervisor Cindy Chavez and Moderator Sal Pizzaro from the *Mercury News*

Chapter member Katelyn Gambarin, Supervisor Cindy Chavez, and Fall 2024 Chapter Vice President Chima Nwokolo

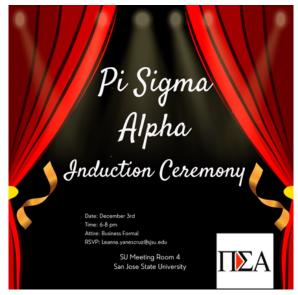
Fall 2024 Induction Ceremony

Pi Sigma Alpha, Epsilon Iota chapter had a great year for membership. We inducted 15 new members in fall semester 2024 at a new member induction event on December 3, 2024, 6:00-8:00pm in Student Union Meeting Room 4 at San José State University. This wonderful event was generously funded by a Pi Sigma Alpha National Chapter Grant (\$1557.75). We invited all of our new members (plus a guest each), all current members, the entire department faculty, multiple



members of the administration, and other honored guests. About 35 people attended the event. We were especially honored that Dr. William "Bill" McCraw, Political Science Professor Emeritus, and his wife Janet were able to join us. Dr. McCraw was the first chapter advisor to Epsilon Iota; it was such a joy to have them at the event celebrating and welcoming new members to our chapter!

Fall 2024 new members of Epsilon Iota



We were excited to welcome our amazing new members into our award-winning chapter to share in our scholarship, philanthropy, civic engagement, and networking activities that have helped current and past members take their next steps in their political science journey. Our event speakers celebrated this theme as they were recent past-presidents. These two exceptional leaders, Raquel Boales and Nika Noorishad are outstanding scholars, exceptional Pi Sigma Alpha Presidents and engaged members of their communities.

They spoke about the important role Pi Sigma Alpha played in their lives and how much they learned being a part of our chapter. They focused on the importance of civic engagement and how we can

work within Pi Sigma Alpha to create civic engagement opportunities for students. Nika is completing her M.A. in political science at San Francisco State University and Raquel is applying to law school while continuing her training and competition as an artistic swimmer. She is also continuing her effort to have the sport more fully recognized as a Paralympic sport. They are truly inspirational to us and we celebrate them as leaders.





Fall 2024 new member induction

Our New Member Induction event included time for networking and mingling, our induction ceremony, a buffet-style dinner catered by Spartan Eats, and photos.

Past-President Nika Noorishad, Fall 2024 Chapter President Leanna Yanes Cruz, Past-President Raquel Boales, and Advisor Dr. Mary Currin-Percival

Events Spring 2025

Hybrid Trivia Event with SJSU Votes for Weeks of Welcome

Epsilon Iota co-sponsored a hybrid trivia event with SJSU Votes for Weeks of Welcome (WOW) on February 27, 2025 6:00pm-7:00pm. Weeks of Welcome is a campus-wide initiative that provides free programming and events during the first four to six weeks of each semester to welcome returning students and new students to SJSU. Our event was focus on election and government-related trivia to help educate students about voting and registering to vote.



First and second place winners receive a gift card from Nirvana Soul!

"Her Seat at the Table: Women in Government" Women Staffers Event for Women's History Month

Our chapter was one of several co-sponsors for the second annual women's staffer event celebrating Women's History Month. "Her Seat at the Table," held on March 28, 2025, brought women staffers from state and local government offices to share their experiences about working in public service with SJSU students. Epsilon Iota chapter, SJSU Votes, the Department of Political Science, the Institute for Public Affairs and Civic Engagement (IPACE), and SJSU Community and Government Relations were thrilled to bring these speakers to campus. The panel included Celeste Walker, District Director for California State Assemblymember Ash Kalra (D-25), Program Manager Monica Tong, Intergovernmental Relations (IGR) at the County of Santa Clara for the Office of the County Executive, and Jessica Barriga, Economic Development Policy Advisor for San José Mayor Matt Mahan. CGR Assistant Director Nina Chuang gave welcoming comments and Leslie Barker Rodriguez, partner at California Strategies, LLC, a full-service public affairs firm based in Sacramento, gave opening remarks.





Diya Agrawal, Epsilon Iota Vice President, Spartan Disability Alliance President, and Spring 2025 IPACE intern and Katelyn Gambarin, A.S. Director of Legislative Affairs (and Epsilon Iota member) co-moderated the panel. Dr. Mary Currin-Percival, Epsilon Iota Chapter Advisor, SJSU Votes Director, and IPACE Director, gave closing remarks. About 40 people attended this educational and inspirational event. Community and Government Relations provided pizza for attendees and SJSU Votes provided voter registration and voter swag.

"Her Seat at the Table: Women in Government" panel March, 2025

Members Volunteered at Admitted Spartan Day Resource Fair

Epsilon Iota answered the call to volunteer for the Admitted Spartan Day Festival Resource Fair for the Department of Political Science on Saturday, April 12, 2025. Four members of Epsilon Iota, James Demertzis, Alicia White, Christian Wortham, and Estevan Guzman, volunteered between 8:30am-2:00pm to greet newly admitted students to campus and to talk about the political science major, Pi Sigma Alpha, Model UN, internships, study abroad, scholarships, SJSU Votes, and all of the other amazing opportunities our department offers. As students who have taken many of these opportunities, it was wonderful for them to share with admitted students in peer-to-peer engagement the benefits of our program. This event, sponsored by SJSU, was held on the Paseo de Cesar Chavez (7th St. Paseo). These chapter members spoke to hundreds of students and answered questions about the campus, the college, the major, and the community.



Participation in Beautify SJ's The Great American Litter Pickup



On April 19, 9:00am-11:00am, on behalf of Epsilon Iota, Chapter President Chima Nwokolo, Event Chair Insiya Neemuchwala, chapter member Oswaldo Ramos, Chapter Advisor Dr. Mary Currin-Percival, and Department Chair Dr. Garrick Percival participated in the Great American Litter Pick-Up, a national event.



This event is sponsored in San José in multiple neighborhoods by Beautify SJ. Epsilon Iota chose to participate in the South University Neighborhood (SUN) as it was closest to SJSU. We teamed up with the SUN Neighborhood Association to pick up litter in O'Donnell Park and

the neighborhood surrounding the park. It felt great to work as a team giving back to our community and we are committed to doing more of this as a chapter in the next academic year!

Epsilon Iota members at the Great American Litter Pick-Up in SUN
(right) Epsilon Iota members
with members of the SUN
Association at the GALPU.



Spring 2025 Induction Ceremony



Epsilon Iota inducted 17 new members in spring 2025. On May 8, 2025 at 7:00pm, the chapter held a spring induction ceremony to which new members (plus a guest), current members, faculty, and other distinguished guests were invited. One of the spring new members had their national

membership dues paid by the chapter.

The chapter voted to create a William

"Bill" McCraw National Membership Scholarship to pay for national Pi Sigma Alpha dues for up to three members per semester, based on financial need. Dr. McCraw was Epsilon Iota's first chapter advisor and was committed to creating opportunities for students to become an active part of Pi Sigma Alpha. He would never want chapter dues to be a barrier to students joining. In fall 2025, the chapter will more formally announce the scholarship and formalize it into our bylays. We will also create an application process for the

PI SIGMA ALPHA
INDUCTION CEREMONY

S MAY, 2025
7:00 PM - 7:45 PM
CLARK HALL 412

ATTIRE: BUSINESS FORMAL

RSVP BY MAY 2ND
REPLY TO THIS EMAIL OR EMAIL
THIANNY.NWOKOLO@SISU.EDU

bylaws. We will also create an application process for the scholarship.

The spring induction event was held in Clark Hall 412 (the Provost's conference room). About 35 people attended. We were able to reuse the bud vases and tablecloths purchased for the fall induction event (with PSA grant funds-thank you again!) to help decorate. We also decorated with some Pi Sigma Alpha stickers previously sent by the national organization. We held our traditional induction ceremony and then celebrated with refreshments (sandwiches, salad, cookies, and



Celebrating the new members of Epsilon Iota, Spring 2025

beverages from Costco). There was time for mingling and networking before a chapter meeting. At the chapter meeting, we held elections where a new board was chosen.

Front row: AY 25-26 Board President Insiya Neemuchwala, Treasurer Sage Sierra, Secretary Katelyn Gambarin, and Vice President Maria Vera. Back row: AY 24-25 Treasurer Robert Lawes, AY 24-25
Historian Brooke Glace, Advisor Dr. Mary Currin-Percival, Spring 2025 President Chima Nwokolo



Chapter Meetings

The chapter held four board meetings and four chapter meetings in fall 2024, including a welcome back meeting, right after the department open house on August 27, 2024 and a chapter meeting before Plato Club on September 30, 2025. We held two chapter meetings in spring 2025, including the meeting held after spring induction on May 8, 2025. We had two board meetings in spring 2025 and have already held one board in June 2025 with the newly-elected board. We hold meetings inperson and on Zoom (trying for a balance). We try to hold in-person meetings after or before a social event to encourage greater participation in chapter decision-making. Our board meetings are held on Zoom and scheduled using When to Meet or Doodle Poll, so schedules can be accommodated.

Epsilon Iota Chapter Officers AY 2025-2026

The chapter held competitive elections during an in-person meeting held after our spring induction event on May 8, 2025. All of the new board members have leadership experience in Pi Sigma Alpha or in other groups on campus, so they are already prepared for an active year!

President: Insiya Neemuchwala (previously the chapter event chair)

Vice President: Maria Vera (on the board of the university mock trial team)

Treasurer: Sage Sierra (active in her Greek organization)

Secretary: Katelyn Gambarin (the incoming A.S. President and previously A.S. Director of

Legislative Affairs)

Annual Budget Report

We began the academic year with \$1,383.56. We received two grants this year. We received a chapter activity grant (\$1,557.75) for the fall 2024 new member induction ceremony and a civic engagement grant (\$200.00) to co-sponsor the vice-presidential debate event with SJSU Votes, A.S SJSU, Bridge SJSU, and ODEI.

Total deposits: \$1757.75

Our expenses are below:

SJSU Votes Festival 9/17 Door Dash (Candy, tablecloths, paper holders)	\$ 35.58
Plato Club 9/30 Sammy G's Pizza	\$ 90.78
VP Debate Event 10/01 Costco	\$ 53.05
VP Debate Event 10/01 Sammy G's.	\$ 146.95
Vote Early Day 10/29 Sammy G's Pizza	\$ 100.62
Chapter grant overpayment AY 23-24	\$ 29.44
Fall 2024 Induction 12/3 Spartan Eats/Chartwells	\$1044.73
Fall 2024 Induction Amazon (bud vases and tablecloths)	\$ 71.45
Membership fee (Bill McCraw Scholarship)	\$ 35.00
Spring Induction 5/8/25 Costco (food, bev, flowers)	\$ 118.92
Chapter grant overpayment AY 24-25	\$ 441.57
Total expenses	\$2168.09

The chapter's ending balance at Associated Students' General Services is currently \$873.22.

There is an outstanding amount of \$100 of funds that were advanced to a board member that were not used for chapter expenses that will be returned. **This will raise our balance to \$973.22.**

We were awarded \$500 for "Best Chapter" from the national organization. We have not deposited the Best Chapter check yet. It has been locked in Dr. Currin-Percival's desk. We received the check during a time when we had not elected a treasurer and Dr. Currin-Percival forgot about the check. She will request a replacement check from the national organization. When this check is replaced and deposited, **our balance beginning in fall 2025 will be \$1473.22.**

Future Plans

This year we were not successful at accomplishing all of our goals we set last year, but we still had a very successful year! We have some things left to tackle and some larger long-term goals we review here.

Budget

Last year, we had a goal to create a budget at our first meeting but did not meet this goal. In our first board meeting after our elections, the new board agreed to create a budget for AY 2024-2025 in July 2025. This plan would also include our fundraising plan for the academic year since we are likely to decide to not reinstate local chapter dues. We did not collect local chapter dues during the pandemic (due to the lack of in-person events) and have not collected them regularly since then. We have managed to have a very active chapter without local chapter dues. To avoid creating barriers to joining our chapter, we are considering amending our by-laws to eliminate local chapter dues.

As mentioned earlier in this report, we created the Bill McCraw Scholarship to cover national Pi Sigma Alpha membership dues. We will add this to our by-laws and begin to fundraise so we can support up to three scholarships every semester (\$105). We will officially announce this scholarship at the fall 2025 induction and invite Dr. McCraw to speak on his teaching and service at SJSU as well as what Pi Sigma Alpha has meant to him. He is a treasure to our chapter, to our department and to our university.

The chapter needs to maintain better records of spending to make annual reporting easier and to avoid the possibility of bookkeeping errors. The chapter stopped using physical binders for receipts before the pandemic. We will maintain receipts for all spending in our team drive (in the Treasurer folder) so future chapters will have all records of chapter spending (in addition to our reports). Our Treasurer this year was very helpful with reports and receipts. We need to all follow through on submitting receipts more promptly so there are not mistakes with reimbursements or advancements. We need to adopt a 30-day rule for submission of receipts after expenses to maintain consistency with A.S. General Services.

Philanthropy

We did not bring back our 100 Hours Challenge as planned this year, though we did participate in the Great American Litter Pick-Up. The incoming board is committed to the 100 Hours Challenge next year and will make this a chapter priority in AY 2025-2026. We hope to have at least two philanthropy events (e.g., community clean-ups, food bank volunteering as a group) with the

chapter each semester. We are also going to appoint a philanthropy chair in fall 2025 to help organize events and focus our commitment to philanthropy.

Events

While we did not host events with other Pi Sigma Alpha chapters this academic year, we are already actively planning an online pre-law event with the University of California, Davis chapter (Delta Upsilon) for fall 2025. We will invite both campuses' mock trial teams, SJSU's pre-law club, UC Davis pre law honor society, and SJSU Institute for Public Affairs and Civic Engagement to co-sponsor the event. The event will be a pre-law panel aimed at primarily first and second-year students, but open to all SJSU and UC Davis students. We want to help prepare students early in their pre-law journey. We plan to have this event in late October and will begin advertising it to both campuses in early October.

In AY 2025-2026, we will plan several more civic engagement events. As previously mentioned, we expect to participate in the SJSU Votes Festival, celebrating National Voter Registration Day on September 16, 2025. As close partners with SJSU Votes (our chapter advisor is the founding Director of SJSU Votes), we also expect to co-sponsor several events related to the June 2026 California Primary Election and other civic engagement efforts on and off campus. We hope to host a Constitution Day event with SJSU Votes or the Institute for Public Affairs and Civic Engagement. SJSU Votes has sponsored or co-sponsored several "Contact Your Representatives" event where pre-addressed post-cards are provided to students and are mailed at no-cost to students. Our chapter would like to co-sponsor an event like this for Constitution Day. We'd like to also sponsor or co-sponsor an on-campus moderated talk with our newly-elected San José D-3 City Councilmember, Anthony Tordillos, who could talk about the importance of local government.

The chapter is also hoping to co-host a research symposium in the spring with the Institute for Public Affairs and Civic Engagement (IPACE), where political science students could present papers in preparation for conference presentation and in an effort to encourage more students to consider graduate school after graduation from SJSU.

Organization and By-laws

We planned to change our by-laws where the chapter vice-president would take the lead on chapter reports (with the chapter advisor). While we have not officially changed the by-laws, we are following this convention. Outgoing Vice-President Diya Agrawal and Chapter Advisor Dr. Mary Currin-Percival compiled the chapter activity grant report and the chapter civic engagement report. Dr. Currin-Percival wrote the chapter report and submitted it to Diya for proofreading/additions. We expect to pass this change to the by-laws officially in the upcoming academic year.

In last year's report, we stressed the need for the chapter president to appoint committee chairs and a chapter historian by the end of September, so the president can rely upon these members to plan events. It was also mentioned that these offices are vital for the chapter and to the newer members who would like to take a more active role in the chapter and develop leadership skills. These positions can serve as the training ground for future board members. In fall 2024, President Leanna Cruz appointed committee chairs and a historian early in the semester (by the end of August). This served our chapter well as we were able to begin planning events early and students were able to

gain leadership skills. In fact, our AY 2024-2025 events chair is our incoming chapter president Insiya Neemuchwala.

Next, we recognize that our social media needs to be stronger. We have so many events that we do not advertise well as well as we could. We should use our social media to better market our chapter's successes as well. We should be posting photos and flyers for our events and tagging the national organization, the university, the college, and the department. This is also going to be a priority for the board in AY 2025-2026. Because social media for such an active chapter is a large responsibility, we will have a social media committee, headed by a chair, who will be directly responsive to the president. The historian will also serve on this committee. The social media committee will also assist the historian by documenting events as this is also too much work for one person.

Department Outreach

Finally, we are well-supported by our chapter advisor, our department chair, and our college dean. The department is very vocally supportive of the chapter, but few faculty have been able to attend chapter events this year. We know that most faculty commute; therefore, evening events can be challenging. Chapter members will plan to do more outreach to faculty to encourage greater attendance at chapter events. For instance, chapter members will reach out to department faculty members in person to ask them to attend the fall and spring induction events. It would be wonderful to have more faculty attending these events. This outreach, combined with more advanced planning, and more active social media should boost attendance by faculty.

Increased Involvement in the National Organization

Finally, and very importantly, our chapter is committed to becoming more involved with Pi Sigma Alpha at the national level. We plan to encourage students to submit manuscripts to the Pi Sigma Alpha journal. We will help to raise funds to help send students to the Pi Sigma Alpha National Student Research Conference and to present posters at the Western Political Science Association Annual Meeting. We are especially excited about research presentation opportunities.