Parents’ Weekend 2015
Volunteer Chair Job Report – prepared by Andy Koontz

The Stanford Parents’ Club (SPC) participates actively in Parents’ Weekend (PW) – we organize the Entertainment Extravaganza, and provide a large number of volunteers to Stanford to help at registration, host classes, introduce speakers and hold mics for questions, and to act as ushers at the Extravaganza. We also sell our merchandise, and staff the Parent Chat Corner throughout the weekend.

Planning for Parents’ Weekend began in the Fall. In late September, SPC representatives met with members of the Stanford Office of Special Events and Protocol to discuss PW. Invited attendees included the SPC president and president-elect (Maria Carano and Erin Pashelinsky), Entertainment Extravaganza chairs (Marcia Hansen and Kathleen Christman) and PW chair of volunteers (Andy Koontz), SPC VP of Volunteers (Mary Rose Theis) and relevant staff at OSEP (ChiSook Hwang, the OSEP lead for PW, Janelle Sugarman, and Jody Nyberg, the Extravaganza contact). The agenda for the meeting is set by Stanford OSEP. This meeting reviewed the Entertainment Extravaganza (timelines, event services, ticket sales), Volunteers (positions to be filled, timeline), set up for Sales Tables and Chat Corner at the alumni center.

Mary Rose Theis set up the Google Doc spreadsheet of volunteers in the fall based on our discussions and on the volunteers needed by Stanford. Mary Rose based it off the previous year’s spreadsheet, which had different pages for each of the volunteer roles (eg, registration, class hosts, sales tables) and each page was organized by day and time. Mary Rose was in contact with Ramona Varella, head of merchandise sales, about her staffing needs for PW. We needed to staff about 100 positions.

In October I met with Maria Carano and Cheryl Foung, the previous year’s PW weekend chair of volunteers, to discuss Cheryl’s advice and lessons learned.

Early December we met again with OSEP. At this time, they gave us the final numbers of volunteers they needed for each position and time, and the exact timing of each shift. Discussion also included the timeline for the weeks leading up to PW:

* Update of volunteer sign-up status to Stanford in mid-January
* Final volunteer list with the volunteer emails and cell phone numbers to Stanford by February 12
* Stanford to mail volunteer instructions to SPC volunteers by February 17 (registration, conversation with parents, class hosts, extravaganza ushers).
SPC needs to send instructions to volunteers working at SPC shifts (sales table set up and staffing, chat table, floaters).
Other discussion points:
* Stanford will have someone checking in all the volunteers for Stanford shifts at Arrillaga Alumni Center (Fisher Conference Center) and will notify volunteer chair if someone needs to be contacted or floater needs to fill in (volunteer chair or designee should be readily available at chat table for all of the check ins)
*Stanford will provide brief training for volunteers after they check in. This is best done right before the shift but if the volunteer is doing multiple shifts of same job, they can come to early training and not come back to check in for later shift. If necessary they can come to early training for a later shift even if they are only doing a later shift but this is discouraged because you don’t know if volunteer is actually showing up for later shift unless you contact them (we did not have issues with this situation).

*Extravaganza volunteers cannot volunteer to work as a class host for the last class as they would be late to show up as an usher.

*Extravaganza tickets are sold during sign ups for parents weekend but not during the period after sign ups close and PW. Extra tickets are available at registration during PW and any remaining tickets are available at Mem Aud starting 30 minutes before the show. (We were concerned that this new policy would hurt ticket sales but we did end up selling out after additional marketing right before PW).

Mary Rose updated the Google Doc spreadsheet to reflect the final volunteer needs and timing for each shift.

I spoke about PW at the SPC Christmas luncheon and the need we would have for volunteers. Mary Rose had organized a sign up of volunteers on her computer – a great test, but very few signed up and probably not worth the effort in the future to obtain sign ups at the luncheon (important to talk about it, however).

In early January, Maria Carano sent out an email to the parents requesting volunteers (email reviewed by president, VP of volunteers and PW volunteer chair). Date and time and number of volunteers needed at each shift were specified and linked to a letter, eg, “A. Registration: Friday 8 am-12 pm (8 volunteers); B. Registration: Friday 11:30 am – 4 pm (5 volunteers).” Volunteers reviewed the options, chose the shift(s) they would like to work and designated their selection by letter(s) and sent their choices to the VP of volunteers. Mary Rose had a google email address specifically for volunteer communication (which I also had access to). As responses came in, VP assigned volunteers into the slots in the Google Doc and notified the volunteers of their assigned shifts. Google Doc was made available for viewing to PW volunteer chair and Stanford staff so they could monitor sign ups. It is a lot of work for VP to work with volunteers to best meet their wishes and our needs and often involves quite a bit of email back and forth. Mary Rose and I had some discussion of having volunteers sign up directly to the spreadsheet next year or find some other way to streamline system, but no final decision made at this time.

We sent out a second email to request additional volunteers about two weeks after the first email specifying the remaining slots. We were able to fill all slots with this second request.

The google doc with the final list of volunteers was ready for Stanford about two weeks before PW. Stanford then sent out an email with instructions specific to each volunteer position, such as bios for lecturers for class hosts, as well as general information such as parking instructions about 10 days before PW (though this year it was about 7 days
prior). I sent out confirmation emails to all volunteers along with instructions to SPC volunteers about 1 week prior to PW. Also ensured in this email that all Stanford volunteers received instructions from Stanford (and make sure you received copies of all instructions in case needed). Followed up with volunteers if they did not confirm their job. Important to continue to check volunteers email as last minute changes and cancellations do occur and these need to filled with the floaters. Important to have several floaters for every shift. Notify Stanford of any changes after you have submitted the final Google Doc.

Spoke about the status of PW readiness at the SPC meeting – chance to recruit more volunteers if needed.

Two cakes ordered a couple weeks before for a volunteer to bring at 9 am on Saturday of Parents weekend. Sample cups (purchased at Smart n Final), napkins, paper towels and serving utensils for handing out cake samples coordinated by volunteer chair (sample cups and napkins may be available in SPC supplies so check before purchasing).

Ensure that Parents Club signage, office supplies, Parents Club flyers, Top 10 list, etc are available in sufficient quantities and will be brought on Friday morning of PW.

Stanford supplies tables and tablecloths - confirm numbers and layout for Chat Corner and Sales tables with Stanford, as well as timing for Thursday set up and start and end times Friday and Saturday.

Parents Weekend –

Thursday – Set up Sales Tables with volunteers – we started at 10 am, coordinated access to room and tables and tablecloths with Stanford. VP of Sales coordinates delivery of supplies and volunteers help set up display tables and organize all the supplies for easy access during PW. We could not set the tables up in McCaw Hall where registration and sales take place so stored them and supplies in BMC viewing room, down by Fisher Conference Center (to be moved to main room Friday morning). Took about 2 hours.

Friday – Registration for parents begins at 9 am and we showed up at 8 am to start setting up Chat Table supplies and Sales Tables in McCaw Hall. Eight am was too late to set up in my opinion because many parents were milling about inside starting at about 8 am and were asking many questions, which was great, but meant that we couldn’t really set up at the same time. Made for a very frantic start. Would recommend arrival by 7:30 at latest and preferably 7 am.

Stanford volunteers checked in and received training at the Fisher Conference Center in the Alumni Center for all shifts over the weekend except the Extravaganza for which they checked in directly at Memorial Auditorium. Parents Club volunteers (including floaters) checked in with volunteer chair or designee at the Chat Table. As volunteer chair I checked in with Stanford at the start of each shift to make sure that everyone had
shown up (they also had my cell). Contact volunteers if they are late and be ready to slot in a floater if needed. We needed to use about 6 floaters over the course of the weekend for a variety of last minute issues that came up so it is really important to have floaters ready to go. Volunteer chair or designee should be at Chat Table all weekend.

Saturday – Volunteers continued to check in and worked their shifts as with Friday. We had a couple volunteers working at the chat table Saturday morning who handed out the cake samples, which were very popular. This job could be covered by the volunteers working at the chat table, but it was a nice way to include some extra volunteers. Cake samples are handed out on Saturday rather than Friday because it is too busy Friday morning. We started closing down early afternoon Saturday after registration closed and very few parents were coming by. Mary Rose and I moved over to Mem Aud to ensure that we had sufficient volunteers to usher for the Extravaganza. We did need to use floaters for this event as well so important to have someone there to coordinate.

Spoke about PW at March SPC meeting (along with Extravaganza Chairs and VP Sales).

Final Thoughts –

I did not have a volunteer co chair but VP of volunteers Mary Rose worked closely with me throughout the volunteer sign ups and during the weekend so she could cover me when needed. It was really helpful to have her available for this, or to have a co chair. The extravaganza co chairs handled everything related to the show except for recruiting volunteer ushers. VP of sales handled everything for sales except for recruiting volunteers. Great team!

Not worth it for us to recruit volunteers at the holiday luncheon. We did speak about the need for volunteers at the lunch and SPC meetings.

Google Doc worked really well for tracking volunteers signed up and for all of their contact information. This document was used by VP of volunteers and PW volunteer chair, and could be viewed by Stanford at any time. Notify Stanford of any changes to the document after the “final” list sent. It was still very time consuming for Mary Rose to slot everyone according to their ideal jobs, perhaps there is a better way for volunteers to enter the information directly to the document so they can see what is available in real time.

Arrive for set up by 7:30 at latest on Friday morning as parents start coming in about 8 am before registration starts at 9 am, so you are needed to answer questions. If McCaw Hall is available on Thursday to set up Sales Tables, this earlier start may not be so important.

Have fun, it’s a great event!
Parents’ Weekend Report 2014.

Submitted by Cheryl Foung and Jeanne Harvey,

Gathering Volunteers.

After the preliminary meetings with Stanford’s representative and Merchandise Sales Chairs are over, you will be working primarily with the Parent Club’s VP of Volunteers. She will be gathering the names of the volunteers, probably starting in January.

But before she can do that, you will be working with her to prepare the global email that will help you to organize responses and inform potential volunteers of the slots that need to be filled. In order to do this, it is best that Stanford’s needs and Parents Club’s needs are identified, by date and time, so that there can be coordination of time and place. For example, if Stanford’s Registration of Parents doesn’t begin on Saturday until 10 or 11, it may not make sense to ask for volunteers to staff sales tables for Parents Club at an earlier time because parents will not be arriving before registration starts on both days.

You will be better off if you have all of the slots that Stanford requires before you send any requests out to volunteers. Stanford’s strong preference is that the class host volunteers attend specifically timed instruction sessions. Those sessions are short, and Stanford prefers that the hosts attend the specific offered instruction sessions so that these sessions can be limited in number. Let the volunteers know what those sessions are so they can decide what times they can conveniently volunteer for.

This past year, we organized the various volunteer jobs and positions by letter, and listed each position by date and time. That way,