

TALKING PAPER FOR AIAA REGION II STUDENT CONFERENCE

AT

THE UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH CAROLINA

The August RASPET AIAA Student Chapter at Mississippi State University was established in 1947 and has a long history of promoting the aeronautical and aerospace profession. This academic year has been particularly successful, with the chapter hosting regular meetings that have provided a variety of learning and mentoring opportunities for members. Guest speakers have offered insight into professional work environments and shared information about research opportunities on campus. Chapter officers also prioritized networking by sponsoring monthly student-faculty pizza socials to encourage meaningful relationships outside traditional classroom contact hours.

One of the most successful activities was the coordination of a game-day tailgate during the fall in conjunction with a home football game. The goal of this tailgate was to further cultivate a robust aerospace community at Mississippi State University.

EVENT DEVELOPMENT:

- 1.) Planning and Coordination
 - a. Held student planning meetings to brainstorm, scope, and refine the tailgate concept.
 - b. Focused on aligning the event with MSU gameday traditions, identifying target audiences, and selecting engaging activities.
- 2.) Engagement and Invitations
 - a. Reached out to faculty, alumni, industry partners, and student design teams to ensure attendance.
 - b. Aligned the event date with the on-field recognition of the Rocket Team's first-place finish in its IREC category.
- 3.) Promotion and Outreach
 - a. Advertised through social media, flyers in engineering buildings, classroom announcements, and STEM-organization networks.
 - b. Targeted first-year engineering students to encourage early engagement with AIAA and recruit prospective members.
- 4.) Documentation and Feedback
 - a. Recorded attendance and collected informal feedback from participants.
 - b. Captured photos and notes to improve future "AIAA Tailgate" planning and provide impact reporting to the department and sponsors.

COMMUNITY IMPACT:

- 1.) Increased Interaction Between Faculty and Students
 - a. The tailgate was attended by an estimated 100+ people, including chapter members and their families, prospective members, graduate students, professors, and officers and members of the rocketry, UAV, and satellite design teams, alumni and representatives from local aerospace industry.
 - b. Informal conversations during the event helped lower barriers between students and faculty, promoted mentorship opportunities, and reinforced a collaborative culture within the aerospace community at MSU.
 - c. The event raised AIAA's visibility within the Bagley College of Engineering and across campus, positioning the chapter as a central hub for aerospace engagement.

Final Thoughts:

By connecting students, faculty, alumni, and industry professionals in a relaxed gameday setting, the "AIAA Tailgate" lowered barriers to engagement and offered a welcoming entry point for prospective members. This initiative not only strengthened the chapter's internal community but also established a repeatable framework for hosting events that more closely connect technical organizations with broader campus life.

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