



PHI THETA KAPPA  
HONOR SOCIETY

## **Association of Chapter Advisors (ACA)**

### **2026 Secretary/Division I Representative Election**

**Name:** Dr. Sara R. Banfield

**College:** Raritan Valley Community College

**Chapter:** Alpha Epsilon Pi

**Advisor Start Date:** Summer 2014

**What is your position at your college?** Professor- Communication Studies

**How has being a Phi Theta Kappa Advisor contributed to your professional and/or personal life?**

Phi Theta Kappa has allowed me to have a different relationship with students on our campus. I am able to step outside of the role of instructor and explore topics outside my field of study. I often find myself in learning situations surrounding the HIA projects that enhance my understanding of the world around me in very different ways than through my field-of-study lens alone. It has also allowed me to mentor students in leadership skills that may be more meaningful to their futures than some of the content of their classes. It is very fulfilling to see how students grow in their leadership voice through PTK programming. Lastly, this has allowed me to build lasting relationships with students who see me as a mentor and who become a part of my life beyond their time at our school—receiving Christmas cards, wedding invitations, and more after they have left. All of these experiences have enhanced both my position at the school and my personal life in more ways than can be expressed.

**Briefly describe two of your favorite PTK moments. It can be with your chapter and/or from a regional or international PTK Activity/Event.**

- 1) One of my most meaningful moments involved in PTK was being able to support our incarcerated students in gaining membership. For the past three years, I have sought funding to cover the cost of these students joining by writing grant proposals to our school's foundation and successfully advocating

for this funding. This past semester, one of these students who was able to join because of this effort came to my office after their transition to on-campus education to personally thank me. They were able to express what this membership meant to them while they were incarcerated—to be acknowledged for their efforts to make substantial changes in their life—and that they had never thought of themselves as honors students before learning they were being inducted into an honor society. They were very thankful to me for advocating for them, even though I did not personally know them. Their gratitude made me aware of how something small that I do as an advisor, such as advocating for funding, can make a huge difference in someone's life.

- 2) Another one of my favorite moments from my time as a PTK advisor was being selected as a Faculty Scholar and engaging in all the training and work related to this leadership opportunity. I am a natural introvert who functions in an extroverted world, and this experience really allowed me to engage with others in the society in ways that helped me grow as an advisor and leader. From working with fellow advisors to prepare for Honors Institute to facilitating student groups during the Institute, there are many wonderful moments that created lasting memories. For instance, having too many moments to count of fun with fellow Faculty Scholars surrounding our shared experiences while visiting Mississippi, Philadelphia, and San Diego. The programming and training gave us so many opportunities to look at the honors studies topics through different lenses that would help our own chapters deeply explore these ideas. In our student groups, I was able to engage with students from all over the country. The openness and vulnerability in our group, where students explored not only the honors study topic but also their identity as a leader and as a person, was impactful on how I saw my role as an advisor. The experience allowed me to grow as an advisor in how I engage with my own chapter for the better. I am now more connected and engaged with my own students after this experience.

**Please share a fun, non-PTK fact about yourself.**

Something fun about myself is that I love comics and enjoy attending Comic-Con events on a regular basis. My whole family enjoys these, with Awesome Con in the DC area being one of our favorites. They have an amazing kids' section that is super family-friendly. My whole family goes, including my husband, kids, my siblings, and even my parents. We make a really cool group, often dressing up in group themes. So, we draw a lot of attention for having a 75-year-old to a 4-year-old as part of our group 😊 .