



PHI THETA KAPPA
HONOR SOCIETY

Candidate Questionnaire: Getting to Know You

*Please complete this questionnaire. Answers should be brief.
Responses will appear unedited on Phi Theta Kappa's Catalyst website.*

Candidate for (highlight ONE):

- International President
- Division I Vice President
- Division II Vice President
- Division III Vice President
- Division IV Vice President

Your Name: Leslie Zacarias

1. What is your college major?

I am currently a history major with a strong focus on U.S. history. My coursework has strengthened my interest in American social and political structures. I believe learning history is a vital asset, especially with the current political climate. My long-term academic goal is to earn a master's degree and eventually pursue a Ph.D. in my field.

2. What is your ultimate career goal?

My ultimate career goal is to teach U.S. History at a college or university. But before, I hope to teach U.S. history at the high school level for a few years before transitioning into higher education. I believe that understanding history is essential for any generation in order to create meaningful and informed change. Teaching allows me to connect the past to present issues while encouraging students to think critically about society.

3. What was your primary reason for accepting PTK membership?

While the scholarship opportunities initially interested me, my primary reason for accepting PTK membership was the sense of community. Members of my chapter inspired me through their leadership and dedication while I was a provisional member. It was through their encouragement that motivated me to become a better student and stronger leader, leading me to accept membership.

4. What's your go-to "fun fact" during an icebreaker?

A fun fact about me is that I can make basic balloon animals like a French poodle. I taught myself after finding extra balloons after a campus event and decided to watch online tutorials. My first attempt was a little overfilled, but my second turned out much better, and I enjoy handing them out when I find more balloons.

5. If you could thank your past self for one decision, what would it be?

I would thank my past self for learning how to budget and save money early in my childhood. Developing financial discipline at a young age taught me responsibility and long-term planning. Although, as a kid I was saving money to buy toys, those habits now help me prioritize spending as I plan for the future.

6. What's a small, everyday thing that brings you joy?

Seeing butterflies or vibrant colored flowers never fails to make me smile. Oftentimes, I think about how some species of butterflies like Monarchs are endangered so that fact that they are still flying around makes me happy. Even on hard days, they serve as a reminder that growth and positive change continue to be possible. Nature in any form always brings me a sense of peace and reassurance.

7. If you could instantly master a random skill (tightrope walking, speaking fluent whale), what would it be and why?

If I could master one skill, it would be the mastery of every language and dialect in the world. Being able to communicate beyond English and Spanish would allow me to connect with people across cultures and borders. I am especially fascinated by the idea of reading and understanding ancient text and documents in their original language. The possibilities are endless.

8. What's your go-to hype song when you want to feel unstoppable?

My go-to hype song is "I'm Still Standing," specifically the Taron Egerton version from the movie "Sing." The Elton John version is more of a post-relationship heartbreak song than the movie's optimistic version. I believe Egerton has much strong emotion and serves as a reminder of personal growth and resilience. Unlike other some of the other songs that I could've also mentioned, this song has a more upbeat and provides a healthy confidence boost.

9. What's your favorite way to recharge when you're running on empty?

My favorite way to recharge is by engaging in childlike activities such as coloring or playing card games. These activities help me slow down and recharge, allowing me to reset mentally. Recently, I have enjoyed working on a diamond art project with my college's coordinator of Student Activities in my free time or when I feel high stress.

10. What's your favorite tradition – family, personal, or something you invented?

Every year on my late stepfather's birthday, I buy a red velvet cupcake and light a candle in his honor. Red velvet was his favorite flavor, and we used to celebrate our birthdays together. This tradition allows me to remember him while celebrating the love and memories we shared. Although this tradition is very personal and I choose to do it alone, I find it very comfortable.