



Mortar Board

Scholars... Chosen for Leadership... United to Serve

ALUMNI NEWS

Swarthmore College: an instrumental founder of Mortar Board

The seed that has grown prosperously into national Mortar Board was planted nearly 93 years ago. Eliza Ulrich Ullman recalled that chance meeting in these words, "It was on the campus of the University of Chicago in the fall of 1915 that a titian haired coed from Ohio State University greeted me by saying, 'I see you're a Mortar Board.' I must have looked very blank for she pointed to my pin and repeated. Now I was a member of the senior honor society at Swarthmore know as Pi Sigma Chi, while she belonged to a Mortar Board organization at Ohio State University, but our pins were very similar, in fact almost identical, and our methods of election, ways of working, ideals and traditions seemed to be one."

Ullman quickly wrote back to her Swarthmore classmates regarding the coincidence, expressing her belief that many of these similar groups likely existed across the nation, and thus the inspiration for nationalization was spawned.

Following a year of discussions debating the pros and cons, the chapter sent a questionnaire regarding national formation to numerous colleges. Eagerly, they waited, and finally the "Conference for Nationalization of Honorary Societies for Senior Women" was held on February 15, 1918 with representatives of five local honor societies meeting because of their close geographical proximity:

- Cornell University – Der Hexenkreis
- The University of Michigan – Mortarboard
- The Ohio State University – Mortar Board
- Swarthmore College – Pi Sigma Chi
- Syracuse University – Eta Pi Upsilon

Ester Holmes, the representative from Swarthmore, was elected the first national president of Mortar Board and presided over the convention. Over a two-day period, the group decided on a Greek motto, a black enamel mortarboard-shaped pin, the initiation ceremony, a constitution, dues, and a list of nearly two dozen other groups to invite into the national organization.

Notably, a few things they didn't decide were a formal name for the organization and a grade or scholarship standard. The name debate, which weighed whether or not "Mortar Board" or a Greek letter name was preferred, was so controversial that it led to one of the founding chapters dropping out, never again to affiliate with the organization.

At the conclusion of the conference, the sentiment of the group was that it preferred a Greek letter name (3-2). Ester Holmes was among those, but after returning to campus she changed her mind and cast a new vote by mail and began using "Mortar Board" on official letters. Syracuse, a favorer of a Greek letter name, withdrew from the organization. Their Eta Pi Upsilon local chapter, however, continued to prosper for many years. As a result of their withdrawal, they have not been recognized as a "founding chapter."

Celebrating 90 years – some landmarks

- **1892** – Mortar Board's oldest chapter, Der Hexenkreis, was founded at Cornell University as a secret society
- **1918** – The national organization was founded
- **1919** – A formal vote took place to name the organization "Mortar Board"
- **1923** – Mortar Board divided the nation into seven districts to be governed by section directors, which has today grown to 25 sections supported by section coordinators
- **1937** – Mortar Board was invited to join the Association of College Honor Societies (ACHS)
- **1941** – A national Mortar Board fellowship was created

WHAT DOES
MORTAR BOARD
MEAN TO YOU?



www.mortarboard.org

Like what you see?

Are you interested in the historical information found in this newsletter? Then be sure to update your address at www.mortarboard.org/forms/alumni_update.php or start your subscription at www.mortarboard.org/publications/subscribe.html so you can receive the 90th anniversary celebration edition of the Mortar Board Forum, out this May.

Members receive a print version free for their first five years out of college, if they have donated or if they are an alumni sustaining member. All other members can read online for free or can subscribe for just \$5 a year.



- **1955** – The Mortar Board Foundation Fund was established to provide a funding vehicle to permanently support fellowships for Mortar Board members
- **1961** – The Foundation obtained non-profit status from the IRS
- **1970** – A National Office was developed to maintain records and provide assistance
- **1975** – At the organization's first and only special conference to date, the group voted to become coeducational
- **1985** – Chapters decided to participate in a national project, to change biennially
- **2002** – A permanent national project, "Reading is Leading," was established
- **2005** – Mortar Board's first male national president began his term
- **2007** – The first male executive director of Mortar Board assumed his position

Interested in this historical information? Be sure to update your address or start your subscription at www.mortarboard.org so you can receive the 90th anniversary celebration edition of the Mortar Board Forum, out this May.

Historical book in research stages

Do you have great Mortar Board stories, photos or memorabilia? Please share them with the national Historical Publication Committee as they prepare for the publication of our centennial history book. Learn more at www.mortarboard.org/history.

Share your memories for the national magazine

The upcoming 90th anniversary celebration edition of the Mortar Board Forum will feature memories of many members. Feel free to submit yours today by e-mail or using the easy online form at <http://www.mortarboard.org/forms/testimonial.php>!

Does your family have three generations of members?

If so, we'd like to hear from you for an upcoming story in the Mortar Board Forum! In celebration of Mortar Board's 90th Anniversary, we would like to feature any families that have three generations of Mortar Board members with an interview, photos and more. If you are interested in sharing your story with Mortar Board, please contact us at mbforum@mortarboard.org.

Distinguished Mortar Board alumni

Steven Bishop

Purdue University, Initiated 1985

2007 Mortar Board Alumni Achievement Award recipient

Steven Bishop graduated from Purdue University in 1986 with a degree in agricultural economics. At that time, Steve was recognized as the outstanding senior male student at Purdue, winning the G.A. Ross Award. He joined Proctor & Gamble in 1986, first working in purchasing for the foods division. From 1989 to 1994, he worked as an assistant brand manager and brand manager.

In 1994, Bishop briefly left P&G and worked as vice president of marketing for the Christian Music Group of Sparrow Records/EMI, in Nashville, Tennessee. He returned to P&G in 1995 in the position of U.S. marketing director, first for dish products, then home care products, followed by laundry products. Today, he serves as president of North America market operations.

Bishop serves on the Board of Directors of Junior Achievement of OKI Partners in Cincinnati and northern Kentucky. Additionally, he is active in Lakeside Christian Church in Ft. Mitchell, Kentucky, where he has participated on various committees and teams including missions, decision counseling, hospitality and children's ministry.



Note to members

The Mortar Board National Office wants to know all about you – awards, accomplishments, new jobs, life events, and more! Update us using an easy online form www.mortarboard.org/forms/alumni_update.php or by sending an e-mail to mbforum@mortarboard.org.

Find an alumni chapter
or

Start a new alumni chapter
at www.mortarboard.org/alumni

**GET YOUR
OFFICIAL MERCHANDISE
TODAY**



www.mortarboard.org/merch