

# Mortar Board National College Senior Honor Society – Fact Sheet

## Founding date

February 15, 1918

## Founding chapters

Cornell University, The University of Michigan, The Ohio State University and Swarthmore College (Syracuse University was present at the founding meeting, but opted not to join)

## Brief description of Mortar Board

Mortar Board is a national honor society that recognizes college seniors for outstanding achievement in scholarship, leadership and service. Since its founding in 1918, the organization has grown from the four founding chapters to 228 chartered collegiate and 18 active alumni chapters with nearly a quarter of a million initiated members across the nation. Mortar Board provides opportunities for continued leadership development, promotes service to colleges and universities and encourages lifelong contributions to the global community.

## Brief description of Mortar Board Week

Mortar Board members commemorate the founding of Mortar Board with a weeklong celebration, annually held the week of the February 15 founding.

## Mission

Mortar Board, Inc., a national honor society that recognizes college seniors for their achievements in scholarship, leadership and service, provides opportunities for continued leadership development, promotes service to colleges and universities and encourages lifelong contributions to the global community. (Adopted July 1994)

## National project

In 1985, collegiate members voted that Mortar Board actively promote a cohesive national project. "Reading is Leading," which focuses on promoting literacy to all audiences, is the permanent national project.

## Membership requirements

Mortar Board members are selected annually by their peers in recognition of their devotion to scholarship, leadership and service. Students are eligible for membership in their junior year and must meet specific grade requirements that may vary slightly from one campus to the next. Each member must have at least a 3.0 (on a 4.0 scale) GPA or be in the top 35 percent of their class, whichever is higher at the specified university. Mortar Board strives to honor outstanding students by chartering chapters at strong universities across the country. These universities, which are required to be an accredited four-year baccalaureate degree-granting institution, undergo an intensive application process to have the privilege of hosting a Mortar Board chapter. Chapters may confer honorary membership upon persons who have contributed to their campus community but are not students and therefore ineligible for regular membership in the society.

## Unique facts

- Mortar Board was established as the first national organization honoring senior college women. Even after Mortar Board began accepting men in 1975, it remained loyal to its heritage with a commitment to the advancement of the status of women.
- Mortar Board functions as an honor society rather than an honorary. The difference is that while an honorary exists solely for the purpose of honoring its members, an honor society, although composed of members who have already distinguished themselves and been recognized for such, continues to make significant contributions to college and community life. Belonging to an honor society carries a commitment of individual and group participation. Therefore, Mortar Board members are not an idle part of the organization, but are active and involved, accepting the responsibility and obligation to be devoted to their chapters.
- Mortar Board makes a commitment to the success of individual students and chapters by bringing students together for an annual conference, as well as supporting students with graduate fellowships as they further their education.
- Mortar Board and its chapters are governed by members. Chapter delegates set the purpose and direct the organization at the annual national conference.

## Notable initiates

Distinguished politician Condoleezza Rice  
Astronaut on the Challenger Judith Resnick  
Best-selling author Aron Ralston  
Professional football player Drew Brees  
Best-selling author Bruce Littlefield

## Notable honorary members

Professional cyclist Lance Armstrong  
Former Supreme Court Justice Sandra Day O'Connor  
Poet Maya Angelou  
Former President Jimmy Carter  
Former Mayor of New York Rudolph Giuliani