



# The History of UCO's Black Fraternities & Sororities

University of Central Oklahoma  
Max Chambers Library  
Archives and Special Collections

Edmond, OK  
February 2021

*Cover photo of Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity brothers, 1963*

## Special Thanks

In Celebration of Black History Month, the Chambers Library, Archives & Special Collections presents *The History of UCO's Black Fraternities & Sororities*. By celebrating diversity, we convey the idea that diversity is beautiful. Celebrating diversity and recognizing its beauty brings us together. It helps us understand how we are all connected and finding this connection unites us. Exhibits like this one allow us to go beyond the history books, which oftentimes, leaves out lesser-known figures who accomplished incredible things. May we all strive to realize the importance of this month because without awareness of the past, our eyes cannot be fully opened to the state of the present and where we are going in the future.

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## FOREWARD

In honor of Black History Month, the Archives & Special Collections at the Max Chambers Library features *The History of UCO's Black Fraternities and Sororities*. Taken from the UCO Archives Photograph Collection and issues of the *Bronze Book* and *Vista*, these images highlight nearly 60 years of Black fraternity and sorority members, traditions, events, and community service at Central.

The missions of Central's Black fraternities and sororities have many common goals. They hope to encourage academic achievement, inspire community service, and promote unity through the benefit of brotherhood and sisterhood. Many chapters achieve these goals through activities like intramural sports, fundraising and social events. Of greater significance, the Black sororities and fraternities on Central's campus actively promote diversity and offer educational programming about Black culture. Central's Black Greek-lettered organizations foster a community in the pursuit of positive social change.

In 1970, five Black Greek organizations, Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, and Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, sponsored the first Black Heritage Week in Central's history. The "Black Awareness" themed event offered a week of special programs including vocal performances, films, an art exhibit, dance and presentations by speakers from the Oklahoma Human Rights Commission and the NAACP. Black Heritage Week continued for several years.

In 1978, Central's Afro-American Student Union, later renamed Black Student Association, began organizing the week-long cultural activities. Later when UCO began celebrating Black History month UCO's department of Multicultural Student Services took



*Afro-American Student Union, 1969*



***Black Greek Alliance, 1984***

over sponsoring the event. For many years the most popular activity during the month was the Step Show.

Of the three largest universities in the state in 1983 (University of Oklahoma, Oklahoma State University, and UCO), Central had the largest population of Black students in the state. Being the third largest university in the Oklahoma caused some students to feel “lost in the masses.”

To help students adjust the Black Peer Counseling Center (BPC) was established to facilitate communication between black students and the university. At the same time the Black Greek Alliance (BGA) was formed. The BGA contained one member of each predominantly black Greek organization who met twice a month to encourage communication among the organizations. BPC coordinator at the time Kim Jones hoped that the center and BGA would “help black students adjust to and become a viable part of the university system.

Today, the National Pan-Hellenic Council (NPHC) represents the historically black organizations on UCO’s campus. NPHC was founded on May 10, 1930 at Howard University. The founding organizations were Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Zeta Phi Beta Sorority, Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, and Omega Psi Phi Fraternity. Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity and Phi Beta Sigma Fraternity joined the council in 1931, followed by Sigma Gamma Rho Sorority in 1937. The ninth council affiliate, Iota Phi Theta Fraternity, joined in 1997.



***National Pan Hellenic Council, 2002***

Iota Phi Theta Fraternity is the only one of the nine NPHC organizations that never established a chapter on UCO’s campus. Because it is common for an established chapter to welcome members from other colleges and universities, one former UCO student Joseph

Kennerly, III, was a member of the Gamma Kappa chapter at the University of Oklahoma. Kennerly was a star basketball player for UCO from 2004-2006 and is the only known Central student who is/was a member of Iota Phi Theta. Kinnerly's membership in Iota Phi Theta represents UCO's participation in each of the Divine Nine organizations of the NPHC.



**Joseph Kinnerly, III**

The purpose of the NPHC is to foster cooperative actions among its members in dealing with matters of mutual concern. To this end, the NPHC promotes the well-being of its affiliate fraternities and sororities, facilitates the establishment and development of local councils of the NPHC and provides leadership training for its constituents. Current President of UCO's NPHC stated, "The purpose of NPHC being on our campus is unity, scholarship and service within our organizations and those outside of them. Our biggest goal is to leave a lasting impression on the community at large."



**National Pan Hellenic Chapter Members, 2021**

The Max Chambers Library hopes the images and text presented in *The History of UCO's Black Fraternities & Sororities* will educate and interest viewers and create more open dialogue about broader racial topics. The Library is central to knowledge-building, collaboration, and community on the UCO campus. We appreciate the support of the Friends of the Library and are extremely grateful to all the people who graciously donated their time and shared their experiences about a significant population on Central's campus.

Kristi Kohl, MLIS  
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Edmond, OK

**THE HISTORY OF UCO's BLACK  
FRATERNITIES & SORORITIES**



## Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity



**Alpha Phi Alpha, 1978**

The Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity was founded in 1906 at Cornell University and was the first fraternity to be founded by Black men. It was also the first black chapter in Oklahoma at Langston University and has grown to become one of the largest Black fraternities in the state. The fraternity's mission is to develop leaders and to promote brotherhood and academic excellence while providing service and advocacy for its communities. Famous Alpha Phi Alpha members include Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., W. DuBois, Andrew Young, Duke Ellington, and Jesse Owens.

The Zeta Sigma chapter of Alpha Phi Alpha was chartered on Central's campus in 1969 with fourteen members, many of whom were basketball, football and wrestling athletes. The chapter "strives to stimulate a closer black perspective among its membership." Its house motto states, "First of all, servants of all and we shall transcend all." The 1976 issue of the *Bronze Book* adds, "The Alpha Phi Alpha fraternity leads the way in the creation of Black awareness, which is a vital need in the college atmosphere. It is the stepping stone Blacks use to understand and cope with the problems of campus life. Alpha opens its doors today, helping men accomplish a more profitable tomorrow."

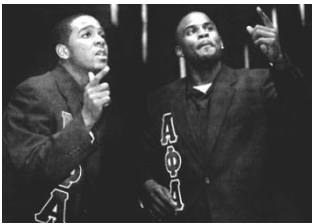


**Alpha Phi Alpha, 2003**

In a 1986 *Vista* article, part of the fraternity's initiation is described, during which Alpha Phi Alpha pledges complete the "Death March to see Alpha Land." The yearly ritual required the initiates to work together while "rowing a boat" to the Alpha Land, essentially marching across campus together. Soon after completing the difficult task, the pledges left the Sphinxmen stage advancing from pledges to Alpha Phi Alpha members.



***Alpha Phi Alpha pledges finish ritual march to Alpha Land, Dec. 9, 1986***



***Diontre Thompson & Arthur Polly***

In 2006, new Alpha Phi Alpha members, Diontre Thompson "Phirst Aid" and Arthur Polly "Black Thought," were unveiled during the fraternity's centennial celebration after they completed a Stomp routine about their ship named SS Elements of Phire.

Over the years, Alpha Phi Alpha has held fundraisers for sickle cell anemia, muscular dystrophy, and Toys for Tots. The fraternity also participated in intramural sports, winning the intramural basketball champions in 1973.



***Alpha Phi Alpha Intramural Champions, 1973***



***Alpha Angels, 1981***

In 1972, the fraternity established a women's auxiliary, the Alpha Angels, who helped with social, political, and charitable events including hosting dances at other state colleges and universities.

In 1975 the president of the auxiliary, Sharon Parker, stated that the Alpha Angels "promoted a lot of unity and awareness among the Black women on the CSU campus."

She went on to say that a “great deal of friendship has derived from this organization and that everybody is one.”

For a few years in the early 1970s, Alpha Phi Alpha held an annual Slave Sale during which members of the Alpha Angels and new fraternity pledges were “sold” to the highest bidders. The slaves were then to perform tasks for one hour for their masters during a party sponsored by the Alphas. Money earned during the sale was set aside for community service activities for hospitalized children and orphans. Sometimes the funds were used to pay memberships dues for new Angels. The sale frequently helped recruit new members for the Black fraternities on campus. During the 1975 Slave Sale, slaves were sold for as low as 50 cents and for as high as \$3.00. Fraternity member Stanley Davis acted as the auctioneer for the slave sale. Diane Hughes was sold for \$2.75 to an Alpha Phi Alpha member.



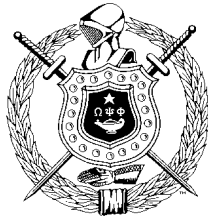
***Stanley Davis auctions off Alpha Angel Diane Hughes, 1975***

*Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity Today:* Current chapter president Evan Bostic states, “The best chapter in the District of Oklahoma, Zeta Sigma has been the staple of Black fraternity life on the campus of UCO. Our chapter members hold leadership roles in UCO Student Association (UCOSA) and other campus organizations, participate in student orientation, and are mentors for The Black Male Initiative. Our fraternity is in the business of grooming young men to be the leaders of tomorrow as well as being able-bodied Black men that are equipped to navigate in a world that is set up to tear us down.”



***Alpha Phi Alpha Members, 2021***

## Omega Psi Phi Fraternity



***Havon McLeod, James Senter and Harold Beatty, display the Coat of Arms, 1971***

Omega Psi Phi was founded at Howard University in 1911 by three liberal arts students, Edgar A. Love, Oscar J. Cooper, and Frank Coleman. It was the first Greek fraternity to be founded at a historically black college. The name Omega Psi Phi is derived from the Greek phrase meaning “friendship is essential to the soul.” The fraternity promotes unity, freedom and dignity among college men and fosters scholarship, perseverance and support. The goal of the fraternity is to change social standards and make a positive difference in the lives of Black people. A few notable Omega Psi Phi brothers include Dr. Charles Richard, Lawrence Douglas Wilder, Langston Hughes, Steve Harvey, Jesse Jackson, and Michael Jordan.

The Sigma Kappa Chapter of Omega Psi Phi was chartered on March 10th, 1978 at then Central State University. Since its founding, the fraternity has regularly sponsored Christmas programs for needy children, sponsored events during Black History Month, and held talent and fashion shows to raise money



***Carl McElroy, James Brown, Havon McLeod, and James Senter, 1971***

for schools supplies that go to local elementary schools. Closer to home the fraternity provided UCO students with scholarships for textbooks.



**Raymond Hayes Jr. presents plaque to Pres. Lillard, 1976**

In 1976 the Omega Psi Phi Fraternity presented Central’s President Dr. Bill Lillard, with a token paddle to show their appreciation for his efforts in upgrading the athletic department and for his concern in improving secondary education at the institution. Dr. Lillard responded by saying, “I appreciate this, and honor most highly the people you represent. This is another example of the great mutual respect we all have for one another, and we

have proven we can work together and live together.” Having witnessed segregation during his own college experience, Lillard went on to say, “...not one individual on the campus is more important than anyone else.”

The same year they honored Dr. Lillard, the Omega Psi Phi Fraternity celebrated the 65th anniversary of its founding. The event included displays of scrapbooks, pillows and projects in the University Center Building and the Lillard Administrative Building.



**Omega Psi Phi Members, 1978**

In an effort to recruit more members to their fraternity, the Omega Psi



**Omega Pearls, 1978**

Phi men donated its national magazine, *The Oracle*, to the library in 1978. According to fraternity pledge Bobby Davis, “the Omegas want to let interested young men know about the fraternity.”

The Omega Pearls were the women’s auxiliary of the

Omega Psi Phi Fraternity. The group assisted with parties, rush events and supported the graduate chapter of the fraternity with community service in hospitals and nursing homes. In 2017, Omega Psi Phi members hosted a women’s appreciation event during which they offered roses, candy and motivational messages to women on campus.



***L-Michael White, Anthony Byrd, Arthurray Johnson, Jarrett Evans & Trevor Gordon, 2005***

During Black History Month in 2005, the *Vista* published the story of Omega Psi Phi members tracing the history of the monthly celebration. The article states, “Black History Month began as Negro History Week and was started in 1926 by Carter Woodson in conjunction with

the Omega Psi Phi Fraternity. In 1976 it became Black History Month as we know it today.” Michael White, an Omega Psi Phi member and Central senior at the time said, “The very month in which the nation and the world pay homage to many influential and famous Blacks, an Omega man is initially responsible.”

*Omega Psi Phi Fraternity Today:* The 2021 Sigma Kappa Chapter President Kaelin Murray provided the following photographs of current members with the caption, “Friendship is Essential to the Soul.”



***Omega Psi Phi members, 2021***

## Phi Beta Sigma Fraternity



*Football game, 1980*

Phi Beta Sigma Fraternity was founded by three students at Howard University in January of 1914. The founders, A. Langston Taylor, Leonard F. Morse, and Charles I. Brown, wanted the organization to exemplify brotherhood, scholarship and service with a greater mission devoted to the “inclusive we.” A desire to serve the communities from which they came inspired the fraternity’s motto, “Culture for service and service for humanity.” Famous Phi Beta Sigma alumnae include James Weldon

Johnson, George Washington Carver, Rev. Al Sharpton, Les Brown, Albert Roker, Terrence Howard, Harold Bellafonte, and Wayne Brady.

The Lambda Pi Chapter of Phi Beta Sigma was founded on Central’s campus in 1979. The first chapter president, Cornelius Barnett, designed the new fraternity’s T-shirt with the phrase “Mighty Mite A Touch of Class & Sigmatized.”

In January of 1980, the chapter observed their first annual Founder’s Day on campus and were joined by members of the Langston University and the Oklahoma City chapters. Phi Beta Sigma brother Dr. Alvin J. McNeil, Associate Dean, School of Education, Texas



*L-Pres. Cornelius Barnett looks at t-shirt, 1978*

Southern University, was the guest speaker during the commemorative ceremony. He sits in the first-row center with light colored suit in photo to the right.

The chapter has raised funds for the March of Dimes in an effort to combat birth defects. In past years, service projects included cleaning the campus of litter and pushing for the Clean Up Edmond Campaign. Additionally, the chapter assists with an annual service event to distribute food to families in need at Thanksgiving.

In 2005, the Lambda Pi chapter members hosted its first Sexual Awareness Week on campus. In collaboration with local non-profits, the fraternity organized several presentations about sexually transmitted diseases and safe sex, offered free HIV testing, and hosted forums on many sex-related topics. The Phi Beta Sigma Fraternity has sponsored several candlelight vigils at Broncho Lake. Two of the candlelight vigils were held for the victims of Hurricane Katrina in 2005 and for the victims of the Virginia Tech shootings in 2007. The chapter also hosted an amateur talent show to raise funds for families who were relocated to Oklahoma because of Hurricane Katrina.



***Founders Day Celebration, 1980***



***Candlelight vigil for Virginia Tech shooting victims, 2007***



***Candlelight vigil for Hurricane Katrina victims, Sep. 2005***



In 2012 as part of Black History Month, the Phi Beta Sigma Fraternity hosted a Freedom Writers event to showcase students' poetry and essays about the "Black Experience."



*Pledges dance their way to "Beta Land," 1987*



*Phi Beta Sigma campus clean-up, ca. 1980*



*Phi Beta Sigma Fraternity, 1984*



*Marshall Goff & Steve Tate solicit donations for the March of Dimes, Jan. 1980*

## Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity



***Charter members of Alpha Kappa Alpha,  
Epsilon Gamma Chapter, 1963***

Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity was founded in 1911 by ten African-American male students at Indiana University in Bloomington, Indiana. Kappa Alpha Psi was the first black fraternity that became a national body. Famous Kappa Alpha Psi members include Arthur Ashe, Wilt Chamberlin, Colin Kaepernick and Gayle Sayers.

The Epsilon Gamma chapter of Kappa Alpha Psi was chartered at Central in January 1963, and remained active through 2015. The Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity's motto is "Achievement in every field of human endeavor." The fraternity's primary goals are attaining personal intellectual, moral and social worth, uniting college men in a fraternal bond, and inspiring service in the public interest.

In the photo above, members of the newly colonized Epsilon Gamma chapter of the Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity pose for their first picture in October 1963. The first fraternity members in the new chapter were Billy Johnson, Melvin Combs, Jr., Bob Hibler, Herman Nichols, Larry Davis, Alex Clayton, Anthony Bluitt, Floyd James, Jr., and C.D. Jones, Jr. According to a comment published in the *Vista* that same year, "Kappa Alpha Psi pledges were accused of playing too much pool during orientation and had to play a game using marbles and matchsticks."

During the fraternity's fifty-two years on campus, the group of men actively participated in campus events and community service and generously gifted the university with donated funds. The Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity was present for homecoming festivities, frequently hosted Christmas parties for underprivileged children, sponsored fund-raisers for sickle cell anemia, and hosted a Forum on AIDS. The Epsilon Gamma chapter also sponsored a \$1000 student Revolving Loan Fund and contributions to the Dean Freiberger



***Fraternity members holding trophy for outstanding scholastic record, 1968***

Memorial Fund.

In 1971 Epsilon Gamma chapter established a women's auxiliary, the Kappa Diamonds, who helped with events and fund-raisers. In 1983, the chapter started another women's auxiliary known as the Kappa Sweethearts.

William Hibler, Treasurer; Jim Hudson, Vice President; and Theo Figures, President donated the *Story of Kappa Alpha Psi* to the Max Chambers Library. The book reviews the fraternity's history and chronologically presents conditions that affected the development of Black people. As stated in the October 7, 1976 issue of the *Vista* about the *Story of Kappa Alpha Psi*, "Considerable attention is given to race relations. The book cites evidence of achievement in the face of hardship and mentions how they are overcome."



***Kappa Alpha Psi, 1974***

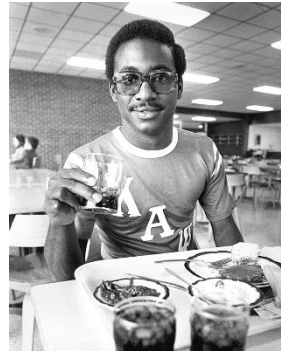


***Librarian Clemma McCawley accepts book donation from fraternity officers, 1976***

In a performance during the “Free Your Mind” fashion and talent show hosted by the Black Student Association in 1999, the “Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, better known as the ‘pretty boys’ stunned the audience with a dance and stomp act.”



*L- Fraternity brothers Robert Castleberry, Willie Post, Anthony Bird, Eric Black, Curtis Nunley, Chris Hadley perform stomp dance, 1988*



*Eslie Jagers fraternity member having lunch, 1988*



*Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, 1986*

## Sigma Gamma Rho Sorority



*Sigma, Gamma Rho members,  
2003*

Sigma Gamma Rho Sorority was founded in 1922 by seven young, black female educators at Butler University in Indianapolis, Indiana. The sorority fosters unity, wisdom, education, scholarship, and community service. Sigma Gamma Rho's commitment to service is expressed in its slogan, "Greater Service, Greater Progress." Famous honorary members include Hattie McDaniel, Audrey Jones, April Sinclair, DeShauna Barber, Maritza McClendon, and Kelly Price.

The Theta Pi Chapter of Sigma Gamma Rho Sorority was established at Central in 1982. The first chapter president Paula White said that member responsibilities are to encourage and promote high scholastic achievement and to develop leadership skills and individual talents. In addition, White hoped the sorority could help develop and channel its members' skills in creative, productive ways. In accordance with the sorority's mission and values, Sigma Gamma Rho women participate in community service, leadership training and education of youth.



*Sigma Gamma Rho, Gammettes & Rhomeos, 1983*

The men's auxiliary is the Rhomeo Club. The Gammette Club is for women interested in being involved with Sigma Gamma Rho but who are not necessarily pledges.

Sigma Gamma Rho members volunteer with Project Reassurance to support and to provide health education to expectant teenage mothers. The Theta Pi Chapter has also collaborated with other UCO organizations during Breast Cancer Awareness Month to distribute women's health information and products. The chapter hosted an annual fall fashion show in its earlier years with men and women featuring the latest styles.



*Homecoming parade, 1985*

The women of Sigma Gamma Rho have always actively participated in homecoming festivities. In line with their mission to educate youth, the women have also taught children in the community about the value of saving money through the local WeeSaver program.



*Sigma Gamma Rho, 2021*

*Sigma Gamma Rho Sorority Today:* The 2021 Chapter President Destinee Rush states, “Sigma Gamma Rho Sorority’s aim is to enhance the quality of life within the community. Public service, leadership development and education of youth are the hallmark of the organization’s programs and activities. Sigma Gamma Rho addresses concerns that impact society educationally, civically and economically.” Chapter members featured in the photos below include Destinee Rush, Adriana Javier-Gonzales, Trezure Fox, Alexis Harris.

## Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority



*Sorority members sharing scrapbook with Dean of Women, Wilma Armstrong, 1969*

Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority was founded by nine women in 1908 at Howard University as the first sorority in the US. The women dreamed of “creating a support network for women with like minds coming together for mutual uplift, and coalescing their talents and strengths for the benefit of others.” Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority is “the oldest Greek-letter

organization established by African-American college-educated women.” Famous alumnae include Gladys Knight, Ella Fitzgerald and Kamala Harris.

The Beta Beta Chapter of Alpha Kappa Alpha was organized in March of 1962 in Oklahoma City by members of the Beta Sigma Omega Chapter of AKA. The founders wanted to create a sorority for Black women enrolled at Central, University of Oklahoma, and Oklahoma City University. Four of the charter members were Central students Jan Ray, Marsha McCauley, Marjorie Patman, and Sandra Eakers. Eakers was elected as the chapter’s first vice-president. While still encompassing three college campuses, Beta Beta Chapter was officially recognized on Central’s campus in 1971.



*Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority sisters, 1973*



**Terri Bush & Larita Mallory-R, show 3 rushees chapter scrapbooks, 1983**

Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority encourages lifelong personal and professional development of its members and advocates for social change to bring equality and equity to all. In line with the sorority's primary tenets, the Beta Beta Chapter encourages high scholastic and ethical standards while promoting unity among college women.

The Beta Beta Chapter offers support to the campus and the surrounding community through a variety of service projects and programs. Over the years, Beta Beta women sponsored breast cancer self-examination programs and breast cancer awareness walks for the Susan G. Komen Foundation. The women held garage sales to raise scholarship funds and book drives for after-school programs. They hosted March of Dimes fundraisers and voter registration drives with the NAACP and the League of Women Voters. The chapter assists the elderly at local nursing homes, donates fruit baskets to a battered women's shelter and hosted fashion shows giving the proceeds to the NAACP Youth Council

In 1978, Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority members Karin Dewberry, Peretha Grundy, Vaness Mitchell and Leora Smith presented Linda Matthews, Academic Advisor, with a sorority pin in honor of her support to the chapter. Matthews served as chapter advisor for many years.



**Sorority sisters, 1986**

Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority has hosted several MyAKA Pageants in which five male contestants are judged in five different categories: sportswear, business attire, casual wear, tuxedo, and elocution. The top three winners were awarded scholarships.



During Black History Month in 2012, Alpha Kappa Alpha hosted “Black Girls Rock” during which they recognized and honored African-American women who serve as role models.



*Alpha Kappa Alpha in Homecoming parade, 1985*

with Planned Parenthood educated about sexually transmitted diseases; and a service activity focused on creating food baskets for senior citizens.

In 2007 Alpha Kappa Alpha kicked off a new program, The Biggest Loser, to encourage college students to lose weight and to maintain a healthy life style. The initiative supported their health and economics platform. The chapter held bi-weekly weigh-ins and meetings during which educational topics were discussed such as mental health, regular

Alpha Kappa Alpha has actively participated in Black History Month over the years. In 1997, the women offered a variety of programs about history, education and community service. A story-telling event encouraged the passing on of African-American traditions; an event co-hosted



*Sorority sisters support the football team in the rain, 1991*



*Alpha Kappa Alpha sister party, 1989*

exercise and healthy eating.

In 2008, Alpha members commemorated the 100th anniversary of the sorority by releasing 100 balloons into the air in front of Broncho.

## Delta Sigma Theta Sorority



*Delta Sigma Theta sisters, 1980*

Active on Central's campus until 2017, the women of the chapter collaborated with numerous local agencies to offer public service. Annual events hosted by Delta Sigma Theta



*Delta Sigma Theta pledges, 1983*

included a Halloween party for community children and a Thanksgiving Benefit Party for which they charged two canned goods for admission that were donated to needy families. They also hosted blood drives, fundraisers for sickle cell anemia and Christmas parties for underprivileged youth.

Delta Sigma Theta Sorority was founded in 1913 at Howard University to promote academic excellence and to aid those in need. The primary purpose of the organization is to fight illiteracy and to promote higher cultural, intellectual and moral standards among its members. Some famous alumnae include Shirley Chisholm, Nikki Giovanni, Mary Church Terrell, and Leontyne Price.

The local Iota Omicron Chapter was founded on campus in 1972.

included a Halloween party for community children and a Thanksgiving Benefit Party for which they charged two canned goods for admission that were donated to needy families. They also hosted blood drives,



*Sorority sisters, 1978*

The Iota Omicron sisters not only helped the surrounding community; they assisted their peers by promoting academic achievement and by granting scholarships to their own chapter members. Every year the women recognized



*Sir Debonaire Pageant, 1982*

Central students who demonstrated outstanding academic achievement and community service. The chapter also promoted voter registration on campus and hosted presentations with state politicians and open forums during presidential election years.

One of the most popular events sponsored by the Delta Sigma Theta Sorority was the annual Sir Debonaire Pageant. The beauty contest judged male contestants on poise, personality and physique. The first pageant was held in 1981. Each year the sorority would nominate contestants and then narrow down the field to 10 for the pageant. Each of the contestants modeled three different categories of clothing: formal wear, casual wear and swimwear. Sir Debonaire, the pageant winner, served as the symbol of the sorority's high ideals for the year.



*Rushes learn about the sorority, 1977*

Kent Austin was titled Sir Debonaire the first year, and Robert Henderson received the “Golden Touch Award.” Henderson was quoted after the pageant as saying, “I could hear the girls in the audience yelling ‘take it off.’ I didn’t know what to think. I was glad I didn’t have to take it off.” In the 1982 pageant, Shawn Atkinson

was chosen as Sir Debonaire, and Kevin Cash was given the Golden Touch Award.

In 2009, the Delta Sigma Theta Sorority developed and hosted a program for Black men on campus. The two-part event, Empowering Males to Build Opportunities for Developing Independence (EMBODI), was created to empower and uplift under-achieving men at Central. The program allowed participants to build camaraderie with other students going through the same types of situations, to identify their personal strengths and values, and to find opportunities to succeed.



*Delta Sigma Theta sisters, 1981*



*Delta Sigma Theta, 1983*

## Zeta Phi Beta Sorority



*Zeta Phi Beta sisters, 1984*

Zeta Phi Beta Sorority was founded by five women at Howard University in 1920. The founders envisioned “a sorority that would directly affect change, chart a course for the 1920s and beyond, raise consciousness of their people, encourage the highest standards of scholastic

achievement, and foster a greater sense of unity among its members.” The women hoped to develop a progressive organization that would address societal prejudices that affected the black community. Since the sorority’s inception one hundred years ago, Zeta chapters have served the public, provided scholarships, supported charities, and promoted legislations for social change. Famous sorority members include Clara Luper, Esther Rolle, Dionne Warwick, and Natalie Cole.



*LaWanna Hackner,  
1961*

In 1960 the Beta Gamma Chapter of Zeta Phi Beta was founded on Central’s campus. The chapter was sponsored by the Chi Zeta chapter of sorority graduates. At the charter meeting of the Beta Gamma chapter, two Central students were elected as officers: LaWanna Hackner, a junior English major was elected president; and sophomore Alma Washington was named treasurer. Hackner graduated from Central in 1961 and was elected vice-president of the national



*Alma Washington,  
1965*

Zeta Phi Beta Sorority, Inc. in 1962. During her tenure, she oversaw all undergraduate activities in the US and abroad.

While active on campus until 2012, the Zeta Phi Beta Sorority focused on community service, scholarship, sisterhood and finer womanhood. Finer Womanhood is a time period during the spring of every year when the Zeta Phi Beta Sorority members reflect on how they can be of greater service to their communities, successfully promote their programs, and strive to be better role models for their sisters.



*Cynthia Singer creams Renee Brown with a cream pie, 1984*

Central's Beta Gamma Chapter members actively recruited local high school women for the Zeta Phi Beta Sorority. Young ladies who demonstrated an interest in the goals and ideals of the chapter were accepted into the Archonette Club. This young women's auxiliary may not necessarily join the pledge club once in college.

Zeta Phi Beta's brother fraternity is Phi Beta Sigma. Each year the chapter members would vote on a Phi Beta Sigma brother who most closely represented their chapter ideals. He would serve as the Zeta Phi Beta Casanova for the year. Phi Beta Sigma selected a Zeta Phi Beta sister, too, who served as their Sweetheart.



*Zeta Phi Beta sisters, 1985*

Starting in 1982, the chapter's membership began to decline. The chapter was rebuilt in 1988 when Letitia Johnson, a Zeta Phi Beta member from OU, transferred to Central. By spring semester, the chapter had attracted many members and had organized a fashion show at the state capitol and a Push It Jam party to celebrate their 28th year. Central's Zeta Phi Beta Sorority actively participated in campus festivities such as Homecoming and

Central birthday parties. The women held food and clothes drives for the needy and offered events for the surrounding community. One well-attended community event sponsored by the Zeta Phi Betas was Gospel Fest in 2000.

During Black History Month in 2010, the Zeta Phi Beta Sorority hosted the program Light-Skinned Vs. Dark-Skinned: Breaking Down Barriers. The event provided an open forum about “the problem facing the African-American race with skin color that traces back to slavery.”

Zeta Phi Beta Sorority were involved in and hosted several events every year during Black History Month. In 2000, Zeta Phi Beta alumna Clara Luper spoke at the Black History Month commencement ceremony at UCO. During her speech, Luper encouraged all students to register to vote, educate themselves, and to vote in the upcoming election. Luper’s Zeta Phi Beta sisters at Central regularly sponsored voter registration drives on campus.



*Zeta Phi Beta sisters, 1980*



*Zeta Phi Beta, 1983*

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