

**Alpha Iota-Oklahoma**

**Fast Facts:**

* Installation date: June 4, 1918
* Location: Norman, Oklahoma
* Region: 6

**History:**

With the support of Governor George Washington Steele, on December 18, 1890 the Oklahoma Territorial legislature established three universities: the state university in Norman, the agricultural and mechanical college in Stillwater (later renamed Oklahoma State University) and a normal school in Edmond (later renamed University of Central Oklahoma). Norman residents donated 407 acres of land for the university 0.5 miles south of the Norman railroad depot. The university's first president ordered the planting of trees before the construction of the first campus building because he "could not visualize a treeless university seat." The first students enrolled in 1892. Oklahoma's admission into the union in 1907 led to the renaming of the Norman Territorial University as the University of Oklahoma.

Phi Chi was organized in the fall semester of 1915 by three girls, who added to their numbers 10 others. Knowing of the high rank of Delta Gamma among national fraternities, and its splendid standards and ideals, Phi Chi determined from the start to petition Delta Gamma for a charter. The remainder of the 1915-1916 year was spent in perfecting a more permanent organization and getting in touch with a few Delta Gammas, who proved to be loyal friends to the local chapter. In the fall of 1916 the chapter secured a house, in which all members who were not local residents lived.

Phi Chi social club officially petitioned Delta Gamma on October 2, 1916. Included in the petition was a letter from the university president, Stratton D. Brooks saying, “…. I wish to add also that the conditions in the school are such that there is ample room for the establishing and the maintaining of a national sorority of high grade. The administration of the university finds the present fraternities and sororities very helpful and would be pleased to see a chapter of Delta Gamma placed here." The women were informed that action would be taken on their application at the Delta Gamma Convention in the summer of 1917. When news of the postponement of the Convention because of World War I reached them, they wrote with urgency to Secretary Leulah Judson Hawley, Lambda-Minnesota to find out when and how the decision for a charter would be made.

Isabel Cunningham Parks, Omega-Wisconsin, and Hilde Schrader, Lambda-Minnesota, officially inspected the group on February 23 and 24, 1918. With much enthusiasm, the girls of Phi Chi awaited the final report. When the telegram came bearing the good news from Delta Gamma, there was a joyful realization that good things come to those who wait.

The chapter was officially installed on rather short notice during Commencement week. Due to the fact that Alpha Iota desired to start the college year as a full-fledged chapter of Delta Gamma, the original plans were laid aside and the installation took place on Monday and Tuesday, June 3 and 4, 1918.

Naturally not many Delta Gammas could be present on such short notice, so the eight members of the fraternity who could come had a busy, happy two days. They felt it was a great joy to have a part in installing a new chapter and to help bring to them a full understanding of the meaning of the Fraternity.

One outstanding feature of the occasion was the splendid spirit of good-fellowship and true interfraternal feeling prevailing on the campus. The Kappa Sigmas offered their lovely home for the two days, and in it the girls served a banquet and all other meals. The Beta Theta Pis also gave their home to hold their Initiation ceremony. Other groups showed similar evidence of an excellent fraternity spirit.

On Monday afternoon, the formal pledging of twenty-five girls was held at the Delta Gamma house. That evening came the inevitable Fraternity examination. Tuesday afternoon, 24 girls, one having been pledged to be initiated in the fall, were made charter members of Alpha Iota. Fraternity Treasurer Lenore Richards, Kappa-Nebraska portrayed: “It was a happy hour for all of us, for it is in the renewal of the bonds that the full meaning of Delta Gamma is appreciated. Following Initiation came the banquet, which was all that an Initiation banquet ought to be."

The Alpha Iota housing story is one of countless hours given by dedicated alumnae who have served on the house corporation board. The first chapter house was rented on DeBarr Street on the east side of campus. In 1929 a new English Tudor style house, which housed 36 women, was constructed at 744 Elm for $39,000. After WW II enrollments exploded and Greek housing likewise felt the boom. The chapter was able to purchase the lot just west of their present house for expansion. However due to city restraints, they weren’t allowed to build west as an addition onto the house. However a clever architect, William L. Howard, Jr., designed an expansion of the original Tudor house to the front. The design was changed to contemporary styling with beautiful small landscaped areas enclosed behind a brick wall, creating an urban-like atmosphere praised by regional planners. It was able to house 75 women. In the late 1980’s once again, the chapter house would begin a third renovation. By 1990 the present chapter house was completed and returned it to a more traditional design.

Some of the early memories from Alpha Iota women are observed in issues of the *ANCHORA*. For instance, on October 14, 1918, a rule was established that the pledges and underclassmen could not have dates unless they had a B average. On October 28, 1918, Fraternity dues were $1 a month. It also cost an extra 35 cents for each guest at meals. On February 24, 1919, it was announced that everyone must attend study hall, and if impossible, they must be excused by the monitor. It was established on January 12, 1920, that Alpha Iota adopted the custom of sending a Delta Gamma rose and a four-leaf clover with the invitation to initiates of the chapter. On February 26, 1923, the chapter decided to have a Delta Gamma newspaper called “Anchor Angles,” which were sent to each alumna and Delta Gamma chapter. On April 13, 1931, it was made a rule that there was to be no more dancing on Sundays. Another sign of the times was made apparent on October 19, 1931, when no more smoking was allowed in the house during the week. On weekends only, the corner room on the third floor would be available for smoking.

In the 1940s, Alpha Iota cared deeply about the war effort. Two women were commissioned as Ensigns in the Waves - the World War II women’s branch of the United States Naval Reserve that was signed into law by President Franklin D. Roosevelt on July 30, 1942. There was a War Activities Chairman that kept the chapter updated on campus activities. The Delta Gammas sold stamps at the Union one afternoon a week, made afghans and worked at the Red Cross. In 1946, the chapter adopted a war child from Czechoslovakia named Hanna, for $180 per year. Dedication kept Alpha Iota strong during the 1940s.

The 1950s brought back a decade of involvement in campus activities and Alpha Iota’s numbers soared. In 1955 they pledged 55 women. The next year, they pledged 78 women, which was prior to the NPC quota system being used. The 1960s continued at the same fast pace, and saw an expansion of the chapter house to its contemporary design. New ideas marked the 1970s. Alpha Iota started an Anchorman program, and held their first Anchor Splash® in the late ‘70s. The programs really helped emphasize closer contact with other fraternity and sorority chapters on campus.

Nancy Johnson was selected Homecoming Queen in 1980. In 1981, Alpha Iota was first in scholarship out of the 12 sororities on campus. 1982 saw the Delta Gammas and Phi Psi’s winning awards for the best script and original act in the “Sooner Scandals.” Another Homecoming Queen, Lynn Grigsby, was selected in 1985. 1988 marked the chapter’s 70th anniversary with a Spring Formal at the Skirvin Hotel in Oklahoma City - remember “No Tux, No Bus!” Several “House Moms” in the ‘80s were loved - Aunt Billie and her cookies every night, Mom C who joined in singing songs during rush, Kathryn “Mumsy” Heisser, Mom Butler who held her own candle lighting ceremony to announce her engagement and then Betty Faulkner. The greatest change to 744 Elm came this decade from the support of house corporation members, Kathryn Copple Steely and Ann Steely Herlacher. They were responsible for organizing the house renovation. An expanded entry with skylights, a library and larger dining area needed repairs - all which made the chapter house a beautiful home.

As the decade of the nineties began and the renovation and construction continued, the chapter house grew in size to being able to sleep 99 women. It was completed just in time for the 1990 Founders Day. The appearance and size had changed drastically, and more than 200 alumnae came for Founders Day to see the changes. The traditional fun events of the chapter continued – Anchor Splash, homecoming activities, Christmas parties, officers’ transitions, Founder’ Day, Greek Week and Legacy Weekend. Members participated in the marching band and Flag Corps, varsity athletics, student government and Panhellenic Council, President’s Leadership Class, Honors Program and O.U. Scholars. The chapter won the OU Panhellenic Spirit Award two consecutive years in a row, and were softball, handball and coed softball champions. Everyone was proud of Jennifer Young when she was crowned Miss Oklahoma. Tim Nelson was a Norman High school student who was blind, whom they helped for a few years and eventually celebrated his 21st birthday with him, presenting him with a Braille typewriter, together with the alumnae chapter. In 1993 Alpha Iota hosted the Province XI Transitional Workshop. Five other chapters were represented along with their alumnae advisers. This event was organized by Carmela Martini Crawford, Alpha Upsilon-Southern Methodist, Province Collegiate Chairman. The mid-nineties found the chapter being creative in holding events without alcohol. In 1996 Delta Gamma was awarded nine OU Panhellenic Achievement Awards plus the coveted Roberta Abernethy Award at Convention.

The new millennium found Alpha Iota receiving the highest award to a Greek chapter, given by the University of Oklahoma - the President’s Trophy, in 2001. They continued to raise many dollars for the Foundation through Anchor Splash, had members on the President’s List, the Dean’s List, and in 2002 presented the university with a formal check for their first Delta Gamma Values and Ethics Lectureship, featuring Jeff Probst, producer of the popular television show “Survivor” and son of Delta Gamma, Barbara Probst, Gamma Upsilon-Wichita State. The chapter claimed the editor of the OU Daily newspaper, volunteered and participated in Special Olympics and the Children’s Miracle Network “Dance Marathon.” They worked at a library for the blind, held a concert for a high school girl who was visually impaired, hosted athletic groups and fraternities and held a “Nacho Average Fundraiser” in honor of chapter member, Ashley Wilson, who suffered from a kidney disease and ultimately had a transplant. This trend of service to others continued throughout the decade bringing them much recognition and a few awards.

Alpha Iota has continued to blossom and grow through the years. They have provided student leaders, maintained a high grade-point average, have had several members receive Phi Beta Kappa distinction and continue to raise funds for the Delta Gamma Foundation and their Lectureship. In 2018, they once again won the University of Oklahoma President’s Trophy in the sorority division, for their overall achievement in setting and meeting high standards for their chapter.