

**Beta Sigma-Maryland**

**Fast Facts:**

* Installation date: October 12, 1945
* Location: College Park, MD
* Region: 2

**History:**

On March 6, 1856, the forerunner of today's University of Maryland was chartered as the Maryland Agricultural College. Two years later, Charles Benedict Calvert, a future U.S. Congressman, purchased 420 acres of the Riverdale Plantation in College Park. Calvert founded the school later that year. On October 5, 1859, the first 34 students entered the Maryland Agricultural College. The school became a land grant college in February 1864. During the Civil War, Confederate soldiers under Brigadier General Bradley Tyler Johnson moved past the college on July 12, 1864 as part of Jubal Early's raid on Washington, D.C. By the end of the war, financial problems forced the administrators to sell off 200 acres of land, and the continuing decline in enrollment sent the Maryland Agricultural College into bankruptcy. For the next two years the campus was used as a boy’s preparatory school. Following the Civil War, in February 1866 the Maryland legislature assumed half ownership of the school. The college thus became in part a state institution. By October 1867, the school reopened with 11 students. In the next six years, enrollment grew and the school's debt was paid off.

The state took control of the school in 1916, and the institution was renamed Maryland State College. That year, the first female students enrolled at the school. On April 9, 1920, the college became part of the existing University of Maryland, replacing St. John's College, Annapolis as the University's undergraduate campus.

In 1944, Fraternity Secretary Dorothy Knight Wildasin, Alpha Omicron-Miami (Ohio) first wrote of possible expansion at the University of Maryland. In January 1945, Dr. Cornella Cotton, Beta Epsilon- American, and staff of the university, presented to the Washington D.C. alumnae chapter a full report on the university, the status of women’s fraternities on campus, and her recommendation for expansion at the University of Maryland. An investigative committee was formed the next month to interview university officials.

In May 1945, Beta Sigma was established with 20 charter members. Dr. Cotton served as the pledge mistress/advisor. The rush theme for the colonization was “a sea voyage on the ship of DG,” and was organized by the Washington D.C. alumnae. Also at this time, the alumnae were busy refurbishing a rented fraternity house for the new chapter. Beta Epsilon-American members aided during the recruitment efforts.

During the weekend of October 12-13, 1945, Beta Sigma chapter of Delta Gamma was installed. The Fraternity officers installed the chapter in a nearly renovated house on Friday evening, October 12. Saturday evening had a joint Installation banquet with Beta Rho-George Washington at Washington’s Statler Hotel’s Federal Room. There were 125 Delta Gammas present for the event. The group was treated to remarks by Hazel Whitaker Vandenverg, Xi-Michigan, wife of Honorable Senator Arthur Vandenburg, WWII Director of the Red Cross who received the highest medal of the Belgium government for helping Delta Gamma establish a nursery for orphans in Marchienne, Belgium during WWI. She spoke of her involvement in Delta Gamma, stressing the satisfaction which she had derived over the years from her contacts with the Fraternity. Ms. Carrie Ellington Green, daughter of Anna Boyd Ellington, also presented an intimate glimpse of the three founders as she knew them.

On Sunday afternoon, the new chapter received 700 guests at a reception in the chapter house. For the first time in Delta Gamma history, all five members of Council, Executive Secretary Roberta Abernethy, Epsilon-Ohio State, and Province Secretary Jane Cowell, all gathered to install two chapters in one week.

Beta Sigma chapter of Delta Gamma was the 10th National Panhellenic Conference group to enter the University of Maryland.

In 1962, the chapter changed its residence from the old Sigma Nu house on College Avenue to its new home. In November, Beta Sigma moved into its new corner house at 4518 Knox Road. Dedication of the new chapter house was held Saturday, March 30, 1963 at 9:30 in the morning. The house became part of the University owned “Graham Cracker” of seven sororities arranged around a parking lot to resemble a graham cracker. The house was originally built to house 40 girls, but with the 70’s brought the need to have a few changes in the house. Girls were eager to move in, and as a result, two large walk-in closets were made into day rooms, and the President’s room, a double, became a single. One girl even slept in the maid’s quarters. The rooms of the basement underwent a few changes also. The maid’s quarters were converted to a library and what was once the office, where all ritual materials are kept, became the study room. The anchor in the front lawn that sets the house apart from the rest has had quite a bit of traveling in order to maintain its place of residence. The anchor was brought from California, through the Panama Canal to arrive at Beta Sigma. However, the anchor has also been stolen twice from its place before it could be placed permanently.

With nearly 70 years on the University of Maryland campus, the chapter has a proud tradition and a strong presence throughout campus life. They pride themselves in valuing friendship, philanthropy, sisterhood, involvement, leadership, academics, and so much more.