

**Gamma Upsilon-Wichita State**

**Fast Facts:**

* Installation date: February 1, 1958
* Location: Wichita, Kansas
* Region: 5

**History:**

Wichita State University began in 1886 as a private Congregational preparatory school founded by Reverend Joseph Homer Parker. Initially, it was referred to as "Young Ladies College,” "Wichita Ladies College,” and "Congregational Female College.” In early 1887, the project's leaders received a parcel of land from the developers of the adjacent Fairmount Neighborhood and in response, renamed their school Fairmount College. Envisioned to be the "Vassar of the West," the streets of the surrounding neighborhoods were named after prominent women's colleges including Vassar and Holyoke. Support came mainly from the Plymouth Congregational Church to build it, but the school never opened its doors. In 1892, a corporation bought the property and named the preparatory school Fairmount Institute. It opened in September to men and women, with an emphasis on training in preaching or teaching, but subsequently closed because of financial difficulties. In 1895, on the same site, Fairmount College opened collegiate classes for men and women with funding by the Congregational Education Society. Amid growing financial troubles, the college's supporters tried to get the city of Wichita to buy it in 1925, but failed. A second referendum passed in 1926, and that fall it became the Municipal University of Wichita (popularly known as "Wichita University" or "WU"). It was the first municipal university west of the Mississippi, and catered to students of limited means. On July 1, 1964, the school officially entered the state system of higher education as Wichita State University.

One of the women’s organizations on campus was called Sororsis, a literary society. Some of the women felt that there was a lack of spirit with such few numbers and decided that the college would benefit by having another competitive group. The two women told 11 other women of their idea, and many of them agreed to withdraw from Sorosis and make plans for a new group to be the first Greek organization on campus. The women that started the chapter were called "secessionists" because of their withdrawal from Sorosis. In 1908, the faculty allowed them to use Greek letters for the name of their society, and they chose Alpha Tau Sigma. The history of this group reads:

*“In all the years of our existence, scholarship, athletics, and sociability have been the three focal points of interest of Alpha Tau Sigma. Since the days of the ‘Secessionists' we have been known for our individuality within a group and, as a group, for our intense enthusiasm and for our great spirit of personal sacrifice for the good of our sisterhood in Alpha Tau Sigma.”*

In the fall of 1909, 20 bids were issued and 19 girls accepted. Their first year was a difficult one. Sorosis had a large room on the first floor of Fairmount Hall, which was the main building on campus. Alpha Tau Sigma was given an unfurnished little room in the attic. In September 1919, they had their first meeting in their very own sorority house. It immediately became known as the “The Little Brown House” and was the first house on campus. This was the Alpha Taus sorority house until 1941 when the age of the house and the fact that the University of Wichita (as it was called then) purchased land for a sorority row on campus. Construction began in 1941 on the 2-story stone house on North Yale. The girls moved into the house November 1941 just before Pearl Harbor and the beginning of World War II. During the War, Alpha Tau graciously turned over the sorority house to the Army to be used as an infirmary for the air cadets who were on campus at this time. In the summer of 1941 the girls moved back into their house.

It wasn’t until 1958 that Alpha Tau Sigma became a memory and Gamma Upsilon of Delta Gamma became a reality. The relationship between Wichita State University and Delta Gamma began with a letter in January 1946 regarding a rumor that local sororities were going to apply for charters from NPC fraternities. In April of 1957, 12 National Panhellenic Conference groups and 11 men's groups were invited by the Dean of Students to participate in a "Greek Week" (to be held in May) for a first-hand exchange of ideas and information among the national and local groups.

On April 8, 1957, the Board of Regents of the University voted for the first time in its history to open the campus to national social fraternities and sororities. On June 4, the dean of women notified Delta Gamma that the Fraternity had been chosen by Alpha Tau Sigma. Four days later the group traveled by bus for the pledging ceremony conducted by Alpha Iota-Oklahoma. The new chapter would be Gamma Upsilon.

Initiation and Installation were held on Saturday, February 1, 1958. Four other sororities, Delta Delta Delta, Gamma Phi Beta, Alpha Chi Omega, and Alpha Phi were installed the same weekend. There were a few anxious moments on Friday night when Beta Kappa-Kansas called to say the bus company wished to cancel the trip because of icy roads. Twenty-seven Beta Kappa members did arrive later that evening, and were up by 6:45 a.m. for a busy day. Fifty-eight collegiate members were initiated in the morning, and 66 alumnae were initiated in the afternoon. The alumnae initiates ranged in age from 1957 graduates to the first president of Alpha Tau Sigma. Fraternity President, Helen Preston, Xi-Michigan placed the anchor on each initiate.

With plans for expansion, once again the university purchased all the houses on sorority row and tore them down with the exception of the Delta Gamma house. Rather, it became the home of the Alumni Association for many years. Eventually, the house was sold back to the university and shortly thereafter torn down. The Greek letters which were carved in stone on the front of the building were given to the chapter when the demolition was complete.

With the proceeds from the sale of the house to the university, plus a loan from Executives Offices and tremendous support from collegiate members, alumnae and friends of Delta Gamma, construction began on the present house in 1976. In fall of 1977, the collegiate members of Gamma Upsilon moved into their new house on Omega Court. The second house on Omega Court was dedicated on October 7, 1977.

Gamma Upsilon takes pride in their campus awards as an organization and as individuals. In 2007, Kaelee Stone won both the Greek Woman of the Year and Shocktoberfest Woman of the Year. In 2008, Kaelee Stone and Allie Crouse Crolata were both nominated for Shocktoberfest Woman of the Year – a scholarship competition between all junior and senior women of Wichita State. In 2008, Allie Crouse Crolata was the president of the student body and Brook Amos was the Vice President of the student body; this was the first time in university history that both offices were held by women. In the same year, Megan Ensley competed for the title of Miss Kansas.

In spring 1979, Gamma Upsilon was recognized at Wichita State’s Greek Convocation with the outstanding sorority award, as well as the scholarship award for the highest-grade point average. The chapter was again named the outstanding chapter in 1980.