

**Zeta Phi- Harvard**

**Fast Facts:**

* Installation date: November 12, 1994
* Location: Cambridge, MA
* Region: 1

**History:**

The "Harvard Annex," a private program for the instruction of women by Harvard faculty, was founded in 1879 after prolonged efforts by women to gain access to Harvard College failed. Arthur Gilman, a Cambridge banker and philanthropist, hoped to establish a higher educational opportunity for women that exceeded what was generally available in female seminaries and the new women's colleges, most of which in their early years had substantial numbers of faculty who were not university trained. The Annex was incorporated in 1882 as the Society for the Collegiate Instruction of Women. In subsequent years, after discussions with Harvard about admitting women directly into the university came to a dead end, Harvard and the Annex negotiated the creation of a degree-granting institution, with Harvard professors serving as its faculty and visiting body. This modification of the Annex was chartered by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts as Radcliffe College in 1894.

In 1923 Ada Comstock, an initiate of Delta Gamma Fraternity’s Lambda- Minnesota, and a leader in the movement to provide women with higher education, became the college's third president. She was a key figure in the college's early 20th century development. One Radcliffe alumna remembers that, "we were in awe of 'Miss Comstock... and knew even then that we had been touched by a vanishing breed of female educator. Ada Comstock had an extraordinary presence—she radiated dignity, strength, and decisiveness." In the early 1940s she negotiated a new relationship with Harvard that vastly expanded women's access to the full Harvard course catalog. It was said, employing Harvard faculty to teach the Radcliffe women from the beginning, made Radcliffe “a woman's Harvard.” It was still a separate institution, with its own corporation, receiving no financial aid from Harvard.

In 1963 joint Harvard-Radcliffe diplomas to undergraduates were conferred. A formal "non-merger/ merger" agreement with Harvard was signed in 1977, with full integration with Harvard completed in 1999.

The first contact made by Delta Gamma Fraternity to explore an expansion opportunity for women with Harvard-Radcliffe was April 30, 1987. Vicki Nixon, Director of Expansion, filed a letter of interest with Mr. William R. Fitzsimmons, Director of Admissions, Harvard. Julie Bloch, Xi-Michigan, a Harvard Law School first year 1989 student, encouraged Delta Gamma to establish a chapter at Harvard, as did a freshman woman, Julie Skleinblatt in 1991. She was part of an interest group of 10-15 women, wanting sororities to expand to the campus. She also contacted the National Panhellenic Conference where Mary Barbee, NPC, told her they could not pursue expansion since the administration at Harvard did not want them to. Julie said she didn’t see any difference between their campus and Harvard or Dartmouth.

Dated October 16, 1992, NPC sent a memo to its membership that it was okay to submit information to Harvard. On October 21, 1992, Delta Gamma submitted information which included our member, Ada Louise Comstock, Lambda-Minnesota, being President of Radcliffe College for twenty years from 1923-1943, and our interest in installing a chapter on the campus.

Kappa Alpha Theta arrived on campus in 1992 with the stipulation another group could not be considered until they reached a membership of 35 members. Three women, Sara Mulholland, a Delta Gamma transfer student from Beta Chi- Denver, Brooke Winkle and Mary Rocha attended the first Theta rush function. Sara told the women about the benefits of Greek life and sisterhood, and a fourth woman, Tracey Stokes, became interested and they worked together over the course of the next year to petition Delta Gamma.

On December 1, 1992 the New York City alumnae president head rumors of Delta Gamma pursuing Harvard, and thus the alumnae group decided to help. On October 5, 1993 Delta Gamma wrote the alumnae in Boston and surrounding areas to ask about the possibility of expansion at Harvard. Next on November 4, 1993 the expansion team met with alumnae at the home of Hillary Spector, Boston Alumnae president.

In a letter dated January 13, 1994, Maureen Syring wrote to NPC Extension saying it is time to reconsider allowing another group to expand at Harvard. Three days later, Barbara Probst, VP: Development, received a letter from NPC saying Delta Gamma could colonize at Harvard.

May 13-15, 1994, Delta Gamma Colonization took place with interviews of members from the Interest group and pledging of the colony occurred on May 15. Nine women pledged the Zeta Phi colony. By September 30, 1994 there were 16 members of Zeta Phi colony.

The weekend of November 11-12, 1994, saw the installation of Zeta Phi chapter with 12 women initiated at the Hyatt Regency Hotel in Cambridge. An Installation Banquet followed with approximately 50 guests in attendance. Chapter Co-President, Brooke Winkle, received the charter from VP: Development, Betsy Teti.

In 1995 Zeta Phi won its first award from the Fraternity, a Citation for Excellence in Scholarship. Then from February 10 to 16 that year, they held their first formal rush jointly with Kappa Alpha Theta. In April the chapter created its first relationship with Perkins School for the Blind in Boston. They made textured cards for the children, then began another Foundation project of recording books on audio tapes for blind and disabled students at Harvard.

The spring of 1996 bonds of sisterhood were deepened by the creation of a “Strength in Sisterhood” (SIS) program to promote chapter unity. The first Harvard University Tri-Greek mixer was held with Kappa Alpha Theta and Sigma Chi at the Crimson Sports Grille so these organizations could learn about each other.

Twenty-two years later in 2016, Zeta Phi Chapter has 156 initiated members at Harvard University. There are four NPC recognized organizations on campus even though these Greek groups are not officially recognized by the university administration. They are: Alpha Phi, Kappa Alpha Theta, Kappa Kappa Gamma and Delta Gamma. Representatives from all four sororities work well together to solve problems of the Panhellenic community. They are passionate about coordinating a “Go Greek Relay for Life” team and are extremely well organized about recruitment.