

## **Delta Sigma Pi Scholarship Key Program Overview and History**

For over 100 years, the Delta Sigma Pi Scholarship Key had been awarded each spring to the graduating student with the highest cumulative academic average toward a degree in business administration or economics, regardless of fraternal affiliation.

The Scholarship Key was created just five years after the Fraternity was founded in 1907, when Alpha was still the only chapter in the Fraternity. Delta Sigma Pi has always placed great stress upon high scholastic achievement among its own members, and when several brothers suggested an award be given annually by the Fraternity to the senior who had the highest scholastic record at graduation, the plan was readily adopted.

A monetary award was suggested at first, but many felt the money would be soon spent and nothing would be left to remind the winner of his scholastic achievement. The scholarship key idea was adopted, and the first key was presented to Brother Vincent G. McGuire, *New York*, in the spring of 1912.

When Beta Chapter (Northwestern-Chicago) joined the chapter roll in 1914, it was decided each chapter may award one medal per year. The separate chapters had the power to individually regulate the rules governing the awarding of the medals. H. G. "Gig" Wright was the first scholarship key recipient from Beta Chapter.

Later in December 1920, when the chapter roll rose to seven chapters, the National Fraternity realized that allowing individual chapters to regulate the rules of awarding the keys made the awards inconsistent. The Fraternity created new rules to make the award uniform throughout all chapters.

Also in 1920, the diamond stone which appeared in the original keys was replaced by an amethyst stone to save on costs and because of the greater symbolic significance of the amethyst. (The amethyst can also be found in the Fraternity's badge.)

The original Delta Sigma Pi Scholarship Key was much larger because the idea was to wear it on a watch fob, which was popular when the award was created. When people started wearing a watch chain from one vest pocket to another, it was necessary to reduce the size and weight of the key in 1923.

The key was awarded to students of all genders for the first 15 years, when it was restricted to male students only in 1927. When membership regulations allowed women to be initiated in 1977, the male-only restriction on the award was also dropped.

The keys have been formally presented at a convocation or honors event of each university or chapter's choice and the recipients are listed on each chapter's scholarship key scroll. Older scholarship key scrolls measure 17 x 23 inches in size and were framed in a specially designed molding that featured space for the name of the university and panels for the names of thirty local winners. The key on the scroll was reproduced in gold, embossed and illuminated.

In 2025, the Scholarship Key program was again updated in response to the feedback of the 2023 Grand Chapter. The key will once again be an honor bestowed upon by each individual chapter. Chapters develop the criteria for how to recognize members of their chapter. In an effort to evolve with the needs of the Fraternity and the wants of the recipients, recipients receive a certificate as well as a digital credential to be added to their online profile. These updates make the Scholarship Key more meaningful to the Fraternity and the recipients as they are only awarded to members by their peers within the chapter.

The Scholarship Key is a timeless tradition of Delta Sigma Pi and the Fraternity will continue to honor scholastic achievement for many years to come.