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A Brief History of the Delta Zeta Chapter at South Dakota State University Brookings, South Dakota

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Delta Zeta Chapter at South Dakota State University in a direct sense grew out of the Alpha Rho Chapter at Saint Louis University in St. Louis, MO. There, Edward P. Hogan, who was a student at the time, had been active in the Chapter as its president. His wife, Joan M. Hogan, was also a member in the 1960s. The third person who would ultimately play a role in the formation of Delta Zeta was Lee A. Opheim, an instructor at Saint Louis University, who had joined the Mu Chapter at the University of Minnesota, Duluth in the 1950s.

The elements of a new chapter started to assemble in place at Brookings in 1967, when Edward Hogan became the first faculty member of the reconstituted Geography program. Geography courses had been taught at SDSU, but no departmental structure existed. Dr. Lee Opheim joined Dr. Hogan in 1969 in offering Geography courses at the University. Thus, by early 1970, three GTU members were in residence in Brookings when the decision was made to petition to form a new chapter. Edward Hogan was designated as the sponsor and Delta Zeta Chapter became effective on March 2nd, 1970, with 19 additional charter members.

Delta Zeta quickly became one of the most active in the country. Its membership has helped to support other major Geography Department initiatives such as the South Dakota State Geography Convention. The first convention was held in the spring of 1970. The purpose was to bring geographers with other perspectives together at a meeting site near the crossroads of the Upper Midwest and Great Plains. "The Convention" developed into an annual occurrence in which hundreds of invited speakers have appeared and thousands of students and other friends of geography have attended its sessions and other activities. The Convention, now in its 28th year, is the longest running, student sponsored and organized such event in the U.S. A separate Geography Department was approved by the Board of Regents in 1972, and a graduate program established in 1974. Concurrently, a Geography Club was organized to help support the Convention and departmental activities.

Delta Zeta has initiated approximately 550 members through March 1997, most at a ceremony conducted during the annual State Geography Convention which is held in the spring. In recent years a second initiation observance has been held in conjunction with the annual Geography Club-GTU Christmas banquet in early December.

Numerous Delta Zeta members have distinguished themselves over the years. One of these individuals is Mr. Thomas Loveland, who received his B.S. degree in geography from S.D.S.U. in 1974. He earned a Master of Science degree in geography in 1976. After graduation Tom was employed at the (Earth Resources Observation System) Data Center (EROS), near Sioux Falls. In 1994, he won two commendations, one from the U.S. Geological Survey (the Mendenhall Award) and the other from the American Society of Photogrammetry and Remote Sensing (the Alan Scott Award).

On March 2nd, 1995, a potluck get-together was held at the University Alumni Center to commemorate the Silver Anniversary of Delta Zeta Chapter. In addition to the more recent chapter members, four of the Charter Members were in attendance. These were Dr. and Mrs. Edward Hogan, Dr. Lee Opheim and Mr. Joel Schneider, the first Geography Club-Delta Zeta President.

In the 1990s Delta Zeta Chapter has

been distinguished by having two of its members receive the highly prestigious National Geographic Society Internships. N.G.S. Internships are awarded to approximately 24 students per year, based on nationwide competition, to work at the Washington, D.C., headquarters for 15 week periods. Delta Zeta recipients were Mr. Mark Ernste in spring 1993 and Ms. Ann Marie (Powalski) Engels in spring 1997. Also, several Delta Zeta Chapter members have been awarded GTU scholarships over the years. These recipients include Doris Peterson, Catherine Lockwood, Rebecca (Mickelson) Laratta, Rachel (Kurtz) Clement and, most recently, Christopher Bertram. The presenting of these grants helps to attest to the quality of the students in SDSU's Geography Department. Additionally, Rachel Clement was elected to the National Executive Board of GTU in the fall of 1996.

The most recent accolade to be bestowed upon Delta Zeta Chapter was GTU's first annual Chapter of the Year designation, announced in November 1996 at the annual meeting of the National Council for Geographic Education in Santa Barbara, CA. Delta Zeta continues to be a vital component of the Geography Department at South Dakota State University and to advance the goals of GTU in all of its activities. The current faculty sponsors are Drs. Donald Berg and Darrell Napton.