

## **A Brief History of Alpha Kappa Delta**

**By Kimberly A. Folse, Ph.D.**

In 1920, University of Southern California sociologist Dr. Emory S. Bogardus founded Alpha Kappa Delta for the purposes of stimulating scholarship and promoting the scientific study of society. Bogardus' impetus in establishing this organization was to provide a forum for student and faculty interchange. His endeavor paved the way for what has become an international organization dedicated to promoting, facilitating, and recognizing academic scholarship. As we enter the 21st century, Alpha Kappa Delta is an integral part of many Sociology programs and is proud to acknowledge that in the past eight decades, over 80,000 scholars have been initiated into the Society. More than 490 chapters have been chartered in the United States, Canada, China, Finland, the Philippines, Taiwan, and Singapore.

This brief history highlights the growth and development of Alpha Kappa Delta as a contributing force in the promotion of scholarship in sociology. It starts by tracing the early years of AKD under the leadership of its founder, Emory S. Bogardus.

### **Emory Bogardus: The Man Behind AKD**

Emory S. Bogardus founded the University of Southern California Department of Sociology in 1915, one of the earliest departments of sociology. At the time, nationally, there were only about 100 colleges and universities offering sociology courses. He created Alpha Kappa Delta in 1920 by gathering together a group of 14 faculty and graduate students for the purpose of discussing research methods and findings, and promoting scholarly writing. The name, Alpha Kappa Delta, was chosen because the letters represent the first letters of the three classical Greek words that embody the function of the society. They are: anthrôpos, meaning mankind; katamanthanô, meaning to examine closely or acquire knowledge, and; diakoneô meaning to do service.<sup>1</sup> Four years later, in 1924, the United Chapters of Alpha Kappa Delta were formed. The charter members included the University of Southern California, represented by Dr. Bogardus, Wisconsin, Northwestern, and the University of Kansas.

Alpha Kappa Delta experienced phenomenal growth in the next four years as the ideals of the organization met with widespread favor. Thirteen chapters were added from all over the United States. They were, the University of Washington, Stanford University, Cornell University, Hamline University, Minnesota's first university, Miami University, Denver University, University of Oregon, Morningside College in Iowa, Ohio University, University of Omaha, University of Michigan, and the University of Missouri.

Dr. Bogardus endeavored to expand AKD beyond the United States. Yenching University, in Beijing, China, became Alpha Kappa Delta's first foreign affiliate around 1930. The University had faculty members from Yale, Vanderbilt, Dartmouth, Columbia, Stanford, Iowa State, and John Hopkins. Some of Dr. Bogardus' former students had taken positions at Yenching University and he personally visited the university in 1937. A letter from Dr. Bogardus to the President of AKD, Dr. Kimball Young, dated June 9, 1937 describes the University's chapter "... to be doing a fine piece of work, although of course under circumstances that are entirely different from those in the United States."<sup>2</sup>

Dr. Bogardus remained an integral part of Alpha Kappa Delta, serving three times as president. He served two consecutive terms from 1924-1926 and from 1926-1928. He served again from 1946-1948.

In order to keep members informed of AKD's activities and to provide a forum for scholarship, Dr. Bogardus founded *The Quarterly*, the newsletter of the society, in 1928. He served as its editor until 1932. Dr. Bogardus celebrated The United Chapter's 25th anniversary in 1949, proudly proclaiming 43 chapters from coast to coast. At AKD's 40th anniversary in 1960, he was presented with a plaque as a "testimonial of appreciation for outstanding service, founder, and first President of the United Chapters." Dr. Bogardus passed away in 1973 after a very productive academic career. He is best known for the Bogardus Social Distance Scale, a classic instrument in the social sciences. He is the author of hundreds of articles and more than 24 books. 3

### **The Early Years**

Between 1924 and 1928, the United Chapters of Alpha Kappa Delta had grown to 17 chapters and about 800 members. In comparison, the American Sociological Society claimed 1,000 members. 4 An Alpha Kappa Delta Hymn was written in 1924 by Gertrude A. Stephens, with music by Charles H. Gabriel. During the 1930s and 1940s as the number of programs offering sociology increased, the leaders of the organization, namely Kimball Young, Reed Bain, and L.L. Bernard, worked diligently to build charters.

In 1938, Fisk University, a University in Tennessee enrolling African Americans, requested information regarding application for a charter. At the time, this presented a problem for the organization because of racism, a major source of controversy for educational institutions. The executive committee of AKD acknowledged that Fisk met the requirements as established in the By-Laws, but they debated what effect granting a chapter would have on Alabama and other southern universities. They concluded that the professors of the institutions in the South would probably not object, but that the students likely would. After considerable communiqué, they were of the mind to induct Fisk even if they met opposition. In the meantime, Alabama requested and was granted a charter in 1938. Fisk University was granted a charter, the Alpha charter for Tennessee, in 1945, six years later. 5

By the 1940s membership declined because of World War II, just as did membership in the American Sociological Society. Attendance at meetings declined to the point where the organization was unable to conduct business and both the American Sociological Society and Alpha Kappa Delta canceled their 1942 annual meeting. No officers were elected. For two years AKD 'merely marked time.'6 L.L. Bernard, who had been president since 1936 led the organization through these tumultuous years. Emory Bogardus, stepping in to maintain cohesion in the organization, was elected president of the United Chapters in 1946. By 1948, when A.B. Hollingshead of Yale University was elected, AKD had regained its momentum.

### **Promoting Scholarship**

Since its inception, the aim of Alpha Kappa Delta has been to stimulate scholarship. One avenue was through publication. The first publication of the organization was *The Quarterly*, established and edited by Emory Bogardus from 1928-1932. It briefly changed names to the *Newsletter* for five years, and then returned to *The Quarterly* in 1936. In 1955, having published 24 volumes, *The Quarterly* became the *Alpha Kappa Deltan: A Sociological Journal*. Published twice a year, it had grown from a 4-page folder to an attractive publication of 32 pages. Information about chapters and miscellaneous items found a place in the AKD *Newsletter* that was started in 1954. In 1960, the *Alpha Kappa Deltan* was renamed *Sociological Inquiry: The Quarterly Journal of the International Sociology Honor Society*. The editors of the peer-review journal, selected by the Board of Alpha Kappa Delta, have consistently maintained high standards of scholarship. Many prominent sociologists have published in *Sociological Inquiry*.

The purpose of the honor society is to promote scholarship, but the focus has always been fellowship for students, both at the graduate and undergraduate levels. Conferring a charter signifies that the institution meets high standards of program quality and scholarship. Individual students must also meet high standards. In the 1930s, undergraduate students needed the equivalent of a 'B+' average in at least 12 hours of sociology and a 'B' average, overall, to be considered. Today, to become a member of AKD, a student has to be at least a junior and rank in the top 35% of his or her class, or have an overall GPA of 3.3. A student must also have a 3.0 GPA in sociology, with at least 12 hours of sociology coursework, or 4 classes. Graduate students need to complete at least one-half year of course work in sociology while maintaining at least a 'B' average, and continue to be matriculated in a program of study leading towards a graduate degree in sociology at the host institution.

Student scholarship in Alpha Kappa Delta is recognized in several ways. The Society sponsors student travel to regional meetings, supporting those who want to present their own work and learn from the scholarly presentations of others. The Society sponsors annual student paper contests, presenting awards which include monetary prizes, travel support, and scholarships. In addition, by funding research symposia and honoraria for guest speakers, the Society supports chapter activities which further education. The Society continues to recognize scholarly excellence in sociology by inducting approximately 4,000 lifetime members each year.

#### **Endnotes -**

1. <http://liddell-scott-jones-lexicon-of-classical-greek.com/> Purseous Project, Tufts University.
2. Yen-ching University is Beijing, China's oldest university and first foreign affiliate of Alpha Kappa Delta. Based on research conducted on AKD's Secretary Treasurer archives, Yen-ching University has been documented as the Alpha Chapter of China. Its charter appears to have been lost until now.
3. <http://www.usc.edu/isk/locations/ssh/special/uscarchives/Bogardus.html>. USC University Archives: Emory Bogardus Papers.
4. The American Sociological Society is what we know as the American Sociological Association. It changed its name in 1955.
5. The history of the Fisk University chapter is based on research conducted on AKD's Secretary Treasurer archives of communiqué of Executive Council members.
6. This information was taken from the previous Handbook (1998-2000), "Brief History of Alpha Kappa Delta."

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**Presidents of Alpha Kappa Delta**

1924-1925 Emory S. Bogardus  
1926-1927 Emory S. Bogardus  
1928-1929 Kimball Young  
1930-1931 Robert C. Angell  
1932-1933 Reed Bain  
1934-1935 Reed Bain  
1936-1938 L.L. Bernard  
1939-1940 L.L. Bernard  
1941-1942 L.L. Bernard  
1943-1945 ---WWII---  
1946-1947 Emory S. Bogardus  
1948-1949 A.B. Hollingshed  
1950-1951 T. Earl Sullenger  
1952-1953 T. Earl Sullenger  
1954-1955 Martin H. Neumeyer  
1956-1957 Martin H. Neumeyer  
1958-1959 Rex D. Hopper  
1960-1961 Rex D. Hopper  
1962-1963 Walter A. Lunden  
1964-1965 Edward C. McDonagh  
1966-1967 Raymond W. Mack  
1968-1969 Herman Turk  
1970-1971 Otto N. Larsen  
1972-1973 Alan P. Bates  
1974-1975 Herman Loether  
1976-1977 Rudolfo Alvarez  
1978-1979 J. Sherwood Williams  
1980-1981 J. Sherwood Williams  
1982-1983 Marie M. Fuller  
1984-1985 Jerry B. Michel  
1986-1987 Michael A. Malec  
1988-1989 Donald J. Shoemaker  
1990-1991 James K. Skipper Jr.  
1992-1993 Candace Clark  
1994-1995 Donna K. Darden  
1996-1997 J. Kenneth Davidson  
1998-1999 Mark Hutter  
2000-2001 Claire Renzetti  
2002-2003 Catherine Harris  
2004-2006 Peter Wood  
2006-2008 Sharon Araji  
2008-2010 Meg Wilkes Karraker  
2010-2012 Joseph Healey

### About the Author of this History

Dr. Folse has been a member of AKD since 1989. As a graduate research assistant at the University of Alabama, she served as Managing Editor of AKD's journal, *Sociological Inquiry: the Quarterly Journal of the International Sociology Honor Society*, from 1988-1993, under the editorship of Dr. Dennis L. Peck. Preparation for writing this history included an analysis of AKD archives maintained by the organization's Secretary Treasurer. Dr. Folse is a faculty member in the Department of Psychology & Sociology at Texas A&M International University.