

## Why Alpha Iota Delta?

by Stephen E. Lunce, *Midwestern State University*

On December 5, 1776, five students at the University of William and Mary, the second oldest college in the United States, formed the first Greek letter fraternity, Phi Beta Kappa ( $\Phi\text{BK}$ ). "Their motive was to arrange, within the bonds of strict secrecy and of tested friendship, for opportunities to discuss freely the exciting issues of their times, including the recently proclaimed Declaration of Independence" (Lambda Phi Epsilon Web site, "7M+ History," at [www.johndesigns.com/stonylambdas/history.html](http://www.johndesigns.com/stonylambdas/history.html)).

This initial fraternal society embodied all of the ideals found in honor societies found on college and university campuses today. Phi Beta Kappa was the first college society to have a Greek letter name, and in its early years it introduced the essential characteristics of such societies: an oath of secrecy (discarded in 1831), a badge, mottoes in Latin and Greek, a code of laws, and an elaborate initiation ritual. The members held regular meetings, generally with an emphasis on literary exercises, especially composition and debating. Fraternal sentiments were fostered, while the purpose of some meetings was simply good fellowship (Phi Beta Kappa Web site, "History," at [www.pbk.org/about/history.htm](http://www.pbk.org/about/history.htm)).

In 1971, a group of the members of the Decision Sciences Institute chartered Alpha Iota Delta ( $\text{AI}\Delta$ ), the national honorary in decision sciences and information systems. Over 30 years later, the honor society continues to be linked to the Decision Sciences Institute and supports those activities of DSI which are aimed at student involvement in the disciplines of interest to the Institute. The purpose of the society is threefold:

- To confer distinction to students in the decision sciences and information systems disciplines for academic excellence.

- To promote the infusion of the functional and behavioral areas of business with the tools, concepts, and methodologies of the decision sciences and information systems.
- To promote interest in the disciplines of decision sciences and information systems (Alpha Iota Delta Web site, "About Alpha Iota Delta," at [www.alphaiotadelta.com](http://www.alphaiotadelta.com)).

Why would a student seek initiation into Alpha Iota Delta? Why would a member of DSI choose to promote or support this specific honor society? The Decision Sciences Institute was established to provide a focus on the integration of research in the art and science of managerial decision making across traditional functional academic disciplines, including, but not limited to: accounting, management, management science MIS, operations research, quantitative analysis, and statistics. The founding faculty members of DSI were seeking the opportunity to share new knowledge across the functional area boundaries of the business disciplines. The mission statement of DSI states:

"The Decision Sciences Institute is a multidisciplinary international association dedicated to advancing knowledge and improving instruction in all business and related disciplines. To pursue this mission, the Institute will facilitate the development and dissemination of knowledge in the diverse disciplines of the decision sciences through publication, conferences, and other services."

([www.decisionsciences.org/dsi.htm](http://www.decisionsciences.org/dsi.htm))

The dissemination of new knowledge is part of the mission of most, if not all, business schools, colleges, and universities. The recognition of students who perform above the norm has long been a part of the academic profession. Thus the answer to the second question above, concerning why a DSI member should be interested in Alpha Iota Delta, is as



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*chapters and monographs. His research has been published in journals such as Journal of Innovation and Learning, Journal of Economics and Economic Education, Industrial Management and Data Systems, The International Journal of Business Disciplines, A.I. and Society, and Journal of Information Science and Technology. Dr. Lunce is a member of several academic honor societies, including Alpha Iota Delta, Sigma Beta Delta, Beta Gamma Sigma, Sigma Iota Epsilon, and Phi Alpha Theta. He has served as a vice president on the DSI Board of Directors, representing the Southwest Region. He was recognized by UTA's College of Business as the initial Lawrence Schkade Research Fellow, and his work with colleagues at UTA has been recognized with a Distinguished Professional Publication Award.*

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simple as the realization that the purpose of the Honor Society and the Institute are historically and philosophically intertwined.

If the goals and vision of DSI and Alpha Iota Delta are intertwined, and if this is the justification for faculty interest, why would a student be interested in being initiated into the Society? The answer might be found, in part, in an excerpt from an Alpha Iota Delta Initiation Ritual which addresses the meaning of the Greek letters A (Alpha), I (Iota), and Δ (Delta).

**ALPHA** represents the beginning. It not only signifies the beginning of a career in the decision sciences and/or computer information systems but also it signifies a commitment to leadership. A leader develops guiding ideas and articulates them deliberately, demonstrating philosophical depth and recognizing the process as ongoing. The meaning, and sometimes the expression, of these guiding ideas evolve as people reflect and talk about them, and as they are applied to guide decisions and actions.

**IOTA** represents integration, both of knowledge and also of concept. The synergy between theories, methods, and tools lies at the heart of any field of human endeavor that truly builds knowledge. The continuous cycle of creating theories, developing and applying practical methods and tools based on the theories, leading to new insights that improve the theories – is the primary engine of growth in decision sciences and computer information systems.

**DELTA** is the universal symbol for change. It signifies that the initiate will respond to change with rationality and logic. (Initiation Ritual, Alpha Iota Delta Chapter, University of Detroit Mercy).

Honor society membership, like most worthwhile things in life, does not come easily. Therefore, when an invitation to membership arrives, it truly is a *matter of honor*, reflecting exceptional academic achievement and, perhaps, outstanding campus leadership and service. It is an honor typically bestowed upon students by faculty, and it provides lifetime distinction. The mem-

bers of an honor society share similar interests; in the case of Alpha Iota Delta, the members share an interest in the decision sciences and information systems. Through the society and the parent Decision Sciences Institute, the member can maintain currency in the fields of interest. Alpha Iota Delta allows its members to stay in contact through meetings at the annual DSI meeting, and it provides lifelong recognition of a member's search for excellence (Association of College Honor Societies website, "A Matter of Honor," [www.achsnaatl.org](http://www.achsnaatl.org)).

If you are interested in creating a chapter of Alpha Iota Delta at your college or university, or if you are interested in membership in the national chapter, please contact Greg Ulferts ([ulfertgw@udmercy.edu](mailto:ulfertgw@udmercy.edu)) or Steve Lunce. For more information about Alpha Iota Delta, please visit the website at <http://www.alphaiotadelta.com> ■

## NAMES IN THE NEWS

**CAROL LATTA, Executive Director, Decision Sciences Institute**

**Jeff Harper**, Indiana State University, has been promoted to the rank of full professor. He joined ISU in 1998 where he teaches graduate and undergraduate courses including Systems Analysis and Design, Electronic Commerce [Grad.], and Management of Information Systems [Capstone]. He holds a Ph.D. in MIS from Auburn University. Professor Harper's research and consulting interests include aligning information technology with strategic intent and technology transfer. His research has appeared in a variety of academic publications and his book, *Practical Student Outcomes Assessment: A Faculty-Driven Approach*, will be published later this year by Jossey-Bass, Inc. He has served as an IT consult-

ant for such organizations as NASA, the U.S. Justice Department, the Department of the Navy, Monroe Guaranty Insurance Corporation, and BellSouth Corporation. He is also the program coordinator for Management Information Systems in the College of Business.

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**Sandra P. Storrod**, the Institute's Home Office Accounting and Membership Services Supervisor, was one of the few appli-

cants chosen from Georgia State University's College of Business to participate in the Georgia 100 one-year mentoring program which is

sponsored by the Advancement of Women Committee (AofW) at Georgia State. The program combines mentoring by a senior executive with leadership education and peer networking. The AofW serves as a resource for developing programs and initiatives toward the promotion of women faculty, administrators, and staff. The mission of the AofW is to enhance collective efforts to improve the status of women at Georgia State University.

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