

# DELTA PI EPSILON MILESTONES: A RETROSPECTION OF 75 YEARS

*Robert B. Mitchell*

*Peter F. Meggison*

The year 1936 was a historic year globally with great turmoil being experienced politically, yet with major advancements in technology, the arts, and culture. The depression lingered in the United States, Germany broke the Treaty of Versailles, Hitler made mandatory that boys years 10-18 join Hitler's Youth, the Hoover Dam was completed, the San Francisco-Oakland Bay Bridge was opened to traffic, the first successful helicopter flight occurred, electric guitars made their debut, *Gone with the Wind* was published, the first edition of *Life Magazine* made its appearance, and Jesse Owens won four gold medals at the Berlin Summer Olympics. It was in this transitional environment that the pioneers in business education established a professional organization that would impact their field of study into the twenty-first century.

In the spring of 1936, the charter meeting was held at New York University to officially establish an organization of business educators—Delta Pi Epsilon Fraternity—to give “recognition and service to outstanding teachers and leaders” (Dorothy Veon, 1957) in business education. This charter group of 106 members, lead by President Charles F. Hainfeld and Sponsor Paul Lomax (founder of the Society), were visionaries who saw a great need for development and service in a growing field of highly talented and dedicated education professionals. In 1937 Delta Pi Epsilon was incorporated in the state of New York as a national organization, with Alpha Chapter officially designated to be at New York University. The first national officers were elected in 1938, with Charles Hainfeld as national president. A National Council was elected, with plans for an annual meeting.

The early years saw the membership of Delta Pi Epsilon to include major leaders in our field including Peter Agnew, McKee Fisk, J Marshall Hanna, D. D. Lessenberry, Madeline S. Strony, and Herbert A. Tonne. The rolls of Delta Pi Epsilon have continued over its 75 years to include leaders who have established a foundation on which the field of business education has flourished.

Delta Pi Epsilon proudly presents this 75-year history of the Society to serve as a reminder of a heritage and pathway of continued achievement for and about business. This article summarizes the milestones that have impacted business education through Leadership, Service, Research, and Publications.

“Study the past if you would divine the future.” –Kung Fu-tzu (Confucius)

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Dr. Robert B. Mitchell is professor of Management in the College of Business at the University of Arkansas at Little Rock, Little Rock, Arkansas. He has served 24 years as executive director of Delta Pi Epsilon, 1988-2011.

Dr. Peter F. Meggison is professor of Computer Technology and Information Management at Massasoit Community College, Brockton, Massachusetts. He served as president of Delta Pi Epsilon, 1998-1999.

## **Delta Pi Epsilon's Impact Through Leadership and Service**

Delta Pi Epsilon's impact first reaches to the 31,000+ business educators who have been initiated into Delta Pi Epsilon's 107 chapters over the 75-year history. Membership reached its highest in 1979, when national membership peaked at 12,170 total members.

Initially chapters were established at universities with established graduate business teacher education programs. In response to the decline of business teacher education programs throughout the United States, Society structure has changed. First, established chapters at institutions which discontinued their graduate business teacher education programs became at-large chapters. Later nonuniversity-based chapter were approved for establishment in areas not serviced by university-based chapters. In 1993 the National Chapter of the Society was established by the National Council—business educators could join the National Chapter or transfer to that chapter when their home chapter became inactive. In 2010 the number of chapters had decline to 54.

The national organization was originally governed by a National Council, comprised of elected members of local chapters, and a national executive board. The first National Council meeting was held in 1938 in New York City, where the DPE Key was adopted as the “fraternity” emblem. The National Council met until 2001, when all national governing power was given directly to local chapters and the National Executive Board. The chapter structure of the Society will end on December 31, 2011, with the Society becoming an affiliate of the National Business Education Association and governed by the NBEA and DPE executive boards.

The Society has been served by five Executive Secretaries/Directors over its 75-year history: Charles B. Hicks, 1952-1958; Ruth I. Anderson, 1958-1962; John Binnion, 1962-1966; Ellis J. Jones, 1966-1987; and Robert B. Mitchell, 1988-2011. The national office has been housed in two locations over the last 45 years: St. Peter, Minnesota, 1966-1987, and Little Rock, Arkansas, 1988-2011.

Since the 1974-1975 biennium, the national president has focused on a specific theme for Society activities. The themes have varied from the first in 1974-1975, “DPE—Designing Positive Education,” to the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary theme in 1986-1987, “A Golden Past—Foundation for the Future,” to the current 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary theme in 2010-2011, “Building on Our Strong Legacy of Professionalism.” Biennium themes can be categorized as follows: Professional Commitment, 40 percent; Change, Focus on the Future, 30 percent; Excellence, 15 percent; and Research, 15 percent. National presidents have consistently focused on professional service to the field of business education.

Delta Pi Epsilon has provided service to business education by providing resources and leadership to many inter-organizational groups, such as the Policies Commission for Business and Economic Education (PCBEE) and the Joint Committee on Economic Education. The Policies Commission for Business and Economic Education was developed during the 1958-1959 biennium as a joint venture with the United Business Education Association; it continues to the present, jointly sponsored with the Association for Career and Technical

Education, Delta Pi Epsilon, and the National Business Education Association, publishing “This We Believe” statements and position papers designed to provide guidance to business educators in strengthening their programs.

The Joint Committee on Economic Education was created in 1968 on the recommendation of the PCBEE to serve in an advisory capacity to Delta Pi Epsilon and the National Business Education Association on matters related to economic education and to inform business educators about new thrusts in economic education. One of its earliest publications, *Economics in the Business Curriculum*, was published cooperatively with the Joint Council on Economic Education in 1972.

Throughout the years Delta Pi Epsilon has sponsored lecture series to allow leaders in business and education to provide insight and guidance for advancement of the field. The first annual lecture was given at the spring, 1943, conference of the Eastern Business Teachers Association, by Dr. Walter C. Eells on the topic, “Up-Grading and Out-Grading in Business Education.” This lecture program was continued until 1957, when the final lecture was given by Dr. Paul Lomax, who spoke on “Reflections on Business Education.” In 1978 DPE National President Wanda Blockhus reinitiated the series as the DPE Distinguished Lecture Series, held during the annual convention of the National Business Education Association. The series continued until 1997. Chief executive officers, such as Thomas A. Murphy, General Motors Corporation; John Sculley, Apple, Inc.; and William A. Schreyer, Merrill Lynch & Company, Inc., were spotlighted.

National Awards have been presented to Delta Pi Epsilon members and chapters to recognize meritorious leadership, service, and research. The national leadership award was first presented in 2007 to recognize a DPE member for outstanding leadership and service to the national organization and the profession. Three individuals who exemplify a commitment to promoting scholarship, leadership, and cooperation among professionals in education for business through leadership at the national level have received this award: Dr. Ellis J. Jones, DPE executive director 1966-1987; Dr. Peter F. Meggison, DPE national president, 1998-1999; and Dr. Marcia A. Anderson, DPE national president, 2000-2001.

The Delta Pi Epsilon Chapter Awards Program was initiated in 1982. Awards are now given for outstanding chapter service projects, research projects, and newsletter and for overall chapter performance. Beta Theta Chapter (University of Wisconsin—Whitewater) has most frequently received the Chapter Service Projects Award (five times), the Chapter Research Projects Award (four times), and the Chapter Newsletter Award (five times). Beta Omicron Chapter (Southern Illinois University Carbondale) has received the most awards for Chapter Recognition (six times). Three members of Beta Theta Chapter have received the Theodore Woodward Chapter Leadership Award (Sharon Esqueda, Michelle Gibson Herman, and Patricia R. King), recognizing an individual DPE member for outstanding leadership and service to the local chapter. Other Woodward Award recipients are David H. Kane (Beta Epsilon Chapter), Yves Etienne (Alpha Chapter), Sharon Andelora (Beta Phi Chapter), and Gayle McGregor (Gamma Eta Chapter).

The recognized leadership and service contributions of Delta Pi Epsilon professionals are established in the list of recipients of the John Robert Gregg Award. Twenty-two past DPE national executive board members have received this distinguished recognition.

### **Delta Pi Epsilon's Impact Through Research**

Since its inception 75 years ago, Delta Pi Epsilon's contributions to the advancement of the broad field of business education have encompassed varied professional endeavors. The Society's chief impact on the profession, however, has been through the continual thrust of members for knowledge through research activities—the design, conduct, and implementation of research to improve business education practices.

The Delta Pi Epsilon Research Awards Program was authorized by the National Council in 1939 to encourage and recognize graduate and independent research in business education. Since 1940, 93 awards have been presented for doctoral dissertations, master's theses, and independent studies. The awards represent a wide spectrum of business subject matter: curriculum and related, 17, 18%; technology related, 17, 18%; bookkeeping/accounting, 13, 14%; typewriting/keyboarding, 12, 13%; basic business/economic education, 10, 11%; distributive education, 5, 5%; management, 5, 5%; office work, 5, 5%; business communication, 5, 5%; and shorthand, 4, 4% (total 98% due to rounding). The recipients of these awards have completed their research in colleges and universities dispersed throughout America. The most award winning studies were completed at New York University—13 studies—followed by the University of Minnesota, 9 studies, and Northern Illinois University, 6 studies. In addition, national research awards have been presented for 14 master's theses or papers, with Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University having 5 awardees and Southern Illinois University Carbondale having 3 awardees.

Fortunately, a great deal of this research has been widely disseminated. J Marshall Hanna's 1939 doctoral dissertation completed at New York University, *A Study of Fifty-Two Fundamental Issues in Business Education and the Opinions of Fifty-eight Prominent Business Educators Regarding These Issues*, was published by South-Western Publishing Co. in abstract form as Monograph 48. Likewise, South-Western Publishing Co. published an abstract of Thomas James Crawford's 1956 doctoral dissertation, completed at the University of Pittsburgh, *The Effect of Emphasizing Production Typewriting Contrasted with Speed Typewriting in Developing Production Typewriting Ability*, as Monograph 97.

Many of the findings of the various award-winning studies were incorporated into the methodology used in textbooks and related instructional materials. In addition, articles based on these studies have been published in *The Delta Pi Epsilon Journal*.

Individual chapters, too, have encouraged their own members, as a form of professional development even after degrees have been awarded, to conduct action research projects that would impact the profession both locally and nationally.

Many finalized research projects of these chapters have been made available to other Delta Pi Epsilon members throughout the country.

Delta Pi Epsilon members, as a commitment to their initiation pledge to promote scholarship, leadership, and cooperation, have recorded and collected data for several national research projects that would influence business teaching practices nationwide. These include *Curriculum Implications of Automated Data Processing for Educational Institutions* (1968) and *A Report of the National Word Processing Research Study of Delta Pi Epsilon* (1981).

The Delta Pi Epsilon Research Foundation, Inc., was established in 1977 to support research in business education through grants. Applications for funds may be submitted at any time and are reviewed by the six-member Board of Directors. Approximately \$235,000 has been awarded to researchers since 1981.

National research conferences, designed as a vehicle to evaluate and disseminate completed research and to provide graduate students and other practitioners an opportunity to discuss the framework for needed research, have been conducted since 1950. By the mid-1960s, these conferences became a biennial event held in even-numbered years. Since 1998, the conference is an annual event. A research conference *Book of Readings* is published annually.

Delta Pi Epsilon members continue to value research as they engage in finding answers to the important questions affecting their instructional practices for they believe, just as the founders of the Society did 75 years ago, that the implementation of sound research findings enables business educators to design the most creative and valid ways to impart learning. As Pullis pointed out 30 years ago, “The primary concern of all business educators should be the scientific identification of teaching methodologies which are most beneficial to our students” (Joe M. Pulls, *NABTE Review*, 1981, p. 34).

### **Delta Pi Epsilon’s Impact Through Publications**

Delta Pi Epsilon’s publication program has, over the years, enriched the professional literature of business education in a variety of ways.

The *Business Education Index* premiered in 1940 and served as a database of articles, research studies, and related publications in the business education field for sixty years. With the widespread use of electronic databases that contain comparable information, the publication was discontinued in 2000. For many years the *Business Education Index* was published with the cooperation of the Gregg Division of McGraw-Hill Book Company.

The first issue of *The Delta Pi Epsilon Journal* was distributed in 1957; however, it was not until 1959 that it became a permanent publication of the Society. Considered by most business educators to be the foremost research publication in the field, this referred journal presents abstracts of significant research.

The *Journal of Applied Research for Business Instruction* (formerly known as *TIPS* and later as *Instructional Strategies: An Applied Research Series*) was inaugurated in 1985 as a publication that would provide practical methodology

for the classroom teacher based on research findings. Easy-to-implement “best practice” techniques have been the focus of this publication since its outset.

*Needed Research in Business Education*, currently in its 7<sup>th</sup> edition, has been used by those seeking to carefully explore problem areas of business education for over fifty years. The publication assists the graduate student who is searching for a research topic and others who intend to conduct independent research investigations. Each new edition identifies questions that need to be answered and directions for research efforts in various business subject-matter areas.

Numerous other publications, representing many different aspects of business education, have sprung from the Delta Pi Epsilon publications program over the years. A series of monographs, known as rapid readers, were designed to be methods guides on teaching specific business subjects. Commencing in 1977, this series has included teaching general business, consumer education, typewriting/ keyboarding (the fourth edition was published in 2011), shorthand, business communication, and computer applications.

A wide array of other publications has been issued by Delta Pi Epsilon including indices to doctoral dissertations, syntheses of research studies, case studies, research monographs, assessment strategies, technology applications, as well as specialized research reports.

### **Continuing Influence on the Profession**

The ideals of Delta Pi Epsilon are symbolized in its name (“Facts About Delta Pi Epsilon,” 2010):

- Scholarship—Delta, the search for accurate knowledge.
- Leadership—Pi, true leadership.
- Cooperation—Epsilon, unity of purpose and effort.

The Society accomplishes these ideals by encouraging, improving, recognizing, and publicizing research in business education. These objectives have provided unity of purpose for developing leadership and service programs and activities benefitting members globally throughout the 75 years.

As Delta Pi Epsilon transitions to become an affiliate of the National Business Education Association, these ideals are evermore applicable. The goal of the affiliation is for Delta Pi Epsilon to focus on its core competencies of “encouraging, improving, recognizing, and publicizing research in Business Education.” The Society can provide leadership and service to assure that business education curricula is based on a strong foundation of credible research. Society publications and activities can revolve around this renewed focus.

The National Business Education Association will now have divisions representing international business education, business teacher education, and research. As a result, our professional association and our field of study will be strengthened and positioned to meet today’s challenges and to face the future with strength and renewed commitment.