



MORTAR BOARD

NATIONAL COLLEGE SENIOR HONOR SOCIETY

2022 MORTAR BOARD WEEK FACT SHEET

Founding date

February 15, 1918

Founding chapters

Cornell University, The University of Michigan, The Ohio State University and Swarthmore College (Syracuse University was present at the founding meeting, but later opted not to join)

Brief description of Mortar Board

Mortar Board is a national honor society that recognizes college seniors for outstanding achievement in scholarship, leadership and service. Since its founding in 1918, the organization has grown from the four founding chapters to 233 chartered collegiate and 14 active alumni chapters with nearly a quarter of a million initiated members across the nation. Mortar Board provides opportunities for continued leadership development, promotes service to colleges and universities and encourages lifelong contributions to the global community.

Brief description of Mortar Board Week

Mortar Board members commemorate the founding of Mortar Board with a weeklong celebration, annually held the week of the February 15 founding. This year's celebration, which marks the 104th anniversary of Mortar Board, will be held from February 13-19, 2022.

Mission

Mortar Board, Inc., a national honor society that recognizes college seniors for their achievements in scholarship, leadership and service, provides opportunities for continued leadership development, promotes service to colleges and universities and encourages lifelong contributions to the global community. (Adopted July 1994)

National project

In 1985, collegiate members voted that Mortar Board actively promote a cohesive national project. "Reading is Leading," which focuses on promoting literacy to all audiences, is the permanent national project.

Membership requirements

Mortar Board members are selected annually by their peers in recognition of their devotion to scholarship, leadership and service. Students are eligible for membership in their junior year and must meet specific grade requirements that may vary slightly from one campus to the next. Each member must have at least a 3.0 (on a 4.0 scale) GPA or be in the top 35 percent of their class, whichever is higher at the specified university. Mortar Board strives to honor outstanding students by chartering chapters at strong campuses across the country. These campuses, which are required



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to be an accredited four-year baccalaureate degree-granting institutions, undergo an intensive application process to have the privilege of hosting a Mortar Board chapter. Chapters may confer honorary membership upon persons who have contributed to their campus community but are not students and therefore ineligible for regular membership in the society.

Notable initiates

Distinguished politician Condoleezza Rice
Astronaut on the Challenger Judith Resnik
Best-selling author Aron Ralston
Professional football player Drew Brees
Best-selling author Bruce Littlefield

Notable honorary members

Former Supreme Court Justice Sandra Day O'Connor
Poet Maya Angelou
Former President Jimmy Carter

Unique facts

- Mortar Board was established as the first national organization honoring senior college women. Even after Mortar Board began accepting men in 1975, it remained loyal to its heritage with a commitment to the advancement of the status of women.
- Mortar Board functions as an honor society rather than an honorary. The difference is that while an honorary exists solely for the purpose of honoring its members, an honor society, continues to make significant contributions to college and community life. Belonging to an honor society carries a commitment of individual and group participation. Therefore, Mortar Board members are not an idle part of the organization, but are active and involved, accepting the responsibility and obligation to be devoted to their chapters.
- Mortar Board makes a commitment to the success of individual students and chapters by bringing students together for an annual conference, as well as supporting students with graduate fellowships as they further their education.
- Mortar Board and its chapters are governed by members. Chapter delegates set the purpose and direct the organization at the annual national conference.
- Mortar Board celebrated its centennial in 2018.

Brief history of Mortar Board

Honor societies often started as local organizations, ways for like-minded students to come together. Mortar Board started the same way, with local honor societies recognizing senior college women. Specifically, it all started with an inadvertent meeting by women from Ohio State University's Mortar Board and Swarthmore College's Pi Sigma Chi. These women met on the campus of the University of Chicago in 1915 at a student government meeting and realized they wore similar mortarboard-shaped pins.

After talking, the women realized each of their honor societies held comparable values and had similar procedures. With this chance meeting, the wheels were set in motion for a national organization to be developed, closely reflecting the honor societies of the two women.

Other similar societies were sought out, and in 1918, five women representing five local honor societies joined for the "Convention for Nationalization of Honorary Societies for Senior Women." The



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representatives were Ernestine Becker from Cornell University (Der Hexenkreis), Anita Kelly Ranyford from The University of Michigan (Mortarboard), Helen Hobart from The Ohio State University (Mortar Board), Esther Holmes from Swarthmore College (Pi Sigma Chi), and Carolyn Archbold from Syracuse University (Eta Pi Upsilon).

The motto was decided (scholarship, leadership and service), a pin was chosen (the mortarboard-shaped pin used by Ohio State, emblazoned with the Greek letters symbolizing the motto: Pi Sigma Alpha), and an initiation ceremony planned. However, the society remained nameless until 1919, taking on the now well-known name of "Mortar Board."

Although Syracuse University soon chose not to affiliate with Mortar Board, a list of schools with similar organizations was quickly created and local organizations were invited to join.

The national organization quickly grew, chartering numerous local societies as chapters. Within the first 50 years, the national organization had chapters at 125 universities across the U.S.

In the early 1970s, both Mortar Board and Omicron Delta Kappa (ODK, men's organization) became coed. Today, Mortar Board has chartered 232 chapters across the nation and stays true to its motto of scholarship, leadership and service.

National Office

Mortar Board's National Office is in Columbus, Ohio. The National President is Katie Chick (Hood College, 2006)