As the name of this newsletter reflects, Sigma Beta Delta has a connection and closeness to the action verb "aspire." Along with the ideals of “wisdom” and “honor,” it is one of the principles serving as a foundation and goal of our organization.

The following commentary from this year’s scholarship winners gives evidence that many Sigma Beta Delta members begin their service journey before leaving school. The scholarship application question—“What are your most important accomplishments to date?”—elicited responses which reinforce and validate a phrase in our membership pledge—“to aspire to serve humankind.” Their responses illustrate the service accomplishments produced regularly by SBD members throughout our society.

It is often hard as a young person to pinpoint which accomplishments are going to be the most significant in your life. The measures that I use to judge my accomplishments are how significantly each impacted my life and the lives of others.

By my standards, one accomplishment easily surfaces as the most significant. For the past three years, I have been involved in an organization that I helped found called Students of Missouri Assisting Rural and Urban Transportation (SMART). During my sophomore year in high school, I lost my grandmother in a car accident just weeks before graduation. This accident happened on a two-lane highway that ran only a few hundred yards from my bedroom window. I heard the sirens go by that night and had no idea how my life was to change. Returning to school and grieving with my fellow senior classmates we began to look at the cause of this terrible tragedy. We felt strongly that if this section had been upgraded to a four-lane highway as had been planned, our friend would not have died. We made a personal commitment to work with the Department of Transportation and State of Missouri to see that this was the last senseless loss of life.

My friends and I have collected signatures on petitions, lobbied state legislators, and met with the governor and the Missouri DOT many, many times. I have even traveled to Washington, D.C., with classmates and met with legislators and the federal DOT. As a result, construction has begun to upgrade to four lanes the highway on which my friend was killed. This $60 million project was moved up in the state’s schedule by 20 years as a result of our actions. Now other dangerous roadways are being moved up and youth across the state are becoming involved in the political process by forming their own SMART chapters.

As a result of my involvement with the transportation issues, Governor Bob Holden recently named me to his first Youth Cabinet. I have been assigned as his youth ambassador to the Missouri DOT where I now give input regarding many statewide issues.

In conclusion, my biggest accomplishments have come from honoring my grandmother and my friend through SMART and political actions. It is comforting to believe my efforts to turn these tragedies into positive actions have inspired other youth to become involved in state government.

Hamlet’s most famous soliloquy, ‘To be, or not to be, that is the question,’ is something I often think about. I always come up with the same conclusion: ‘to be.’ To strive to be the best person possible and to never stop learning as much as I can, including the lessons that life provides along the way. With that speculation, I am able to delete the ‘not to be’ and look at life as an optimistic journey of learning and living. Learning to speak and my first employment are two significant accomplishments in my life.

Learning to speak is my ultimate accomplishment. You see, I was born deaf. I had insufficient hearing to be able to learn and imitate the sounds spoken to me. Being the determined child I was, I pursued cued speech (a way of identifying each distinctive sound with hand shapes in four locations following mouth movements of speech), instead of sign language. After becoming an expert in cued speech, I amazingly learned to speak! My voice went from indistinguishable to comprehensible. I realized my accomplishment to speak had many benefits for me and the public. My confidence grew, which enabled me to utilize my natural leadership skills better. I learned that by having a positive outlook in life,
It is a pleasure to express warm greetings on behalf of the Sigma Beta Delta Officers and Board of Directors. We have enjoyed a very positive year at Sigma Beta Delta in providing student recognition for achieving academic excellence in higher education for business. We inducted a record 3,449 new members and added 17 new chapters. Local chapters have now been installed in 204 colleges and universities in 45 states. At the time our honor society was founded, there were 967 regionally accredited colleges and universities that had business degree programs without a national business honor society for recognizing their outstanding students. A continuing goal of our organization has been to enable faculty members at eligible college and university business programs to provide national and lifetime recognition for their deserving students. I encourage our faculty members and alumni at existing chapters and institutions to join the Sigma Beta Delta officers and directors in alerting faculty colleagues across the nation of the important opportunity they have through this important dimension of higher education for business.

Our progress in providing national honor society recognition for students in these institutions is made possible by the dedication and hard work of our local chapter advisors and other officers. We applaud these individuals. We are also grateful to our founding president, Dr. James H. Bearden, who continues to serve as editor for this issue of Aspirations.

Each year we have included in Aspirations some focus upon key issues or constituents related to the society. Our focus this year is upon some of our outstanding student and alumni members. Each of our individual members has an important story reflecting his/her journey toward excellence. We wish we could include them all.

A number of you make financial contributions to Sigma Beta Delta. These contributions make our scholarship program possible and as they grow we will be able to expand the number of scholarships provided.

Early next year the Board of Directors will be engaged in developing a strategic plan for the coming years. We have enjoyed a successful journey during our first 10 years of existence and we believe it important to have a clear plan for our next decade.

The membership has approved a change in our biennial meeting to a triennial convention. This became necessary due to recent events that altered the ability for many to travel and participate in Sigma Beta Delta programs. Our first triennial is tentatively scheduled to be held in Fort Worth, Texas, during October 2004. We hope to see many of you student representatives and chapter advisors at that time.
positive things will happen. I opened doors for the deaf community in my town; many parents were inspired to pursue cued speech in hopes their deaf children would overcome the challenge of speaking as I had. Because I know deaf people can do anything their heart tells them to do, I continue to help make a difference in the lives of people who are deaf and hard of hearing.

Obtaining my first job at the age of fourteen is my second major accomplishment. Jumping into the working world at such an early age certainly gave me social, academic, and economic benefits. I also believe the social aspect of working as a teen gave me the ability to interact. Because of the social responsibilities I learned, I became more responsible for academics. My grades significantly improved, and my working experience reinforced my understanding of the business courses I took at Saint Mary’s College. As a young employee, I reduced my dependency on adults; I became extremely independent. More importantly, I was given earning power and a sense of financial responsibility.

Learning to speak and entering the workforce at an early age led me to believe that life is ‘to be’ if one wants to succeed. With the ‘to be’ belief, I am looking at life positively and striving to overcome obstacles.

I care deeply for the community I live in and the country that adopted me. Ten years ago, when my family and I fled Russia in hopes of finding peace in the United States, I did not speak English. I felt lost and puzzled by the new language, the new society, and finding personal identity in a land awash with individualism.

I met this challenge by committing myself to getting an education. In 1995, I enrolled at the Community College of Aurora as a first generation student, learned English, and, in the year 2000, graduated with a 3.79 GPA and an Associate in Applied Science in Computer Information Systems. In the same year, I transferred to Metropolitan State College of Denver pursuing a B.S. degree with a dual major in CIS and finance. With one year left to my graduation, I am closer to my dream than I have ever been.

Hard work and personal commitment to high academic standards opened a door for me to become a member of Phi Theta Kappa International Honor Society. I have also been selected an Academic All-American Scholar Honors and my biography was published in the 2000–2001 National Dean’s List. Furthermore, in December 2002, I became a member of Sigma Beta Delta International Honor Society in Business, Management, and Administration.

Because I believe that personal commitment involves action, I volunteered for four years as an English/Russian interpreter during my working at Rose Medical Center. The spiritual fulfillment that comes from this service is like no other feeling because I saw understanding light up people’s eyes.

The first of what I consider to be my most important accomplishments occurred while I was in the Navy. By the time I was 19 years old, I had operated a nuclear reactor through the Navy’s nuclear power school for enlisted personnel. After not performing so well in high school, this proved to me that I was intelligent enough to pursue any field I should choose.

The next big accomplishment in my life was quitting smoking. It took tremendous willpower to kick a seven-year and up to three-packs-a-day habit. Also, I did it without the support of my friends, many of whom also smoked at that time. By accomplishing this, I knew that I had the determination to do anything I wanted, despite the challenges or peer pressure.

Now that I am in college, my favorite achievement is tutoring. Tutoring allows me to use my skills and experience to help others, and being able to help someone learn or understand something gives me a great feeling. In addition, tutoring allows me to meet new, interesting people while I practice skills learned in previous courses.

In each of these situations, I set a goal for myself and worked hard to achieve that goal. I had to decide what was important to me and try not to focus on what others thought about those choices. In each of these situations, the more committed I was, the more I eventually got out of it. Through that determination and commitment, I hope to have emerged as a better person and role model for my friends and others to follow.
When I entered college in January of 2000 at the age of thirty-two, I did so as a GED recipient, having dropped out of school at fourteen. I knew that it was going to be difficult to keep up, especially since I was raising a child alone in tandem with attempting to reach my long-abandoned educational goals. Upon much contemplation as to what I consider to be my most important accomplishments to date, obviously I am very proud of my academic accomplishments. I have been able to maintain a 4.0 GPA and have little doubt that with continuing dedication I will graduate with that same GPA. There are other facets of my life, however, which, when coupled with my academic achievements, speak volumes more as to who I truly am than merely a dedicated student. My most important accomplishments to date include a diversified commitment to being a nurturing mother, dedicated student, and highly contributory member of my community. While I remain sternly dedicated to academic excellence, I also make time to assist in my community through a continued involvement in the local American Red Cross as a blood services coordinator and occasional office assistant. I also volunteer my time at the local women’s shelter. As previously mentioned, I am also raising a young child alone. To have achieved a balance between dedication to my son, school, and community, while hopefully instilling in my son the importance of a dedication to all, remains the accomplishment of which I am most proud.

Elizabeth A. Sykora
Elizabeth City State University

Alumni Success Stories

Alumni from the 204 Sigma Beta Delta chapters established since 1994 in 45 states will help shape this country’s destiny. Currently and in the future, Sigma Beta Delta alumni leverage their undergraduate and/or graduate studies into contributing service roles in a variety of careers and organizations. As we develop our website, we will from time to time feature alumni profiles illustrating the personal and professional accomplishments of our members. Our Society’s visibility and networking potential are enhanced through sharing alumni success stories, and we are proud and pleased to showcase them. The following three alumni profiles feature members inducted in 1994 at one of our Founding chapters.

Phillip C. Mount, Houston Baptist University: According to HBU Alumni Business Connections, Phillip “CEO of Christian Single Web, graduated from HBU with a Bachelor’s degree in business. Following graduation he became a successful businessman in the financial services industry working as an independent broker where he was consistently ranked as the top salesperson out of 300 independent brokers nationally. Following his financial services experience, he created Christian Single Web, the number one office out of 30 Christian dating services nationwide. He is now involved in two new business ventures and currently serves on the Board of Directors of Young Entrepreneur’s Organization (YEO), an international organization created for successful entrepreneurs under the age of 40.”

Michael Zapata, III, North Carolina State University: Michael is CEO and chairman of ArrayXpress. This new microarray technology company is in a field that is having a significant impact on genomics study. Many fields from agriculture to pharmaceuticals are the beneficiaries of DNA microarray technology. Michael became a player in the high tech field almost immediately upon graduation with a master’s degree in 1994. He was formerly CEO of LIPSinc, a company that developed and sold software to synchronize animated mouths with the words spoken. Michael serves North Carolina State University as Entrepreneur in Residence. Additionally, he is a major in the North Carolina National Guard where he flies an Apache attack helicopter.

Susan Cotham Welch, Belmont University: Inducted into the initial chapter of Sigma Beta Delta in 1994, Susan graduated with a bachelor’s degree in management. In order to pursue a long-held interest (an interest shared with her late father, Professor James C. Cotham, SBD ‘94) Susan enrolled in Middle Tennessee State University’s nutrition program and obtained a degree in that field. After a hospital internship in Sarasota, Florida, she became Clinical Dietician at Vanderbilt Stallworth Rehabilitation Hospital. The 80-bed hospital provides rehabilitation services to adults and children who have suffered strokes, head or spinal cord injuries, or have other orthopaedic or neurological diseases requiring rehabilitation. Her education in the management and nutrition fields has served her well in providing direction and implementation for nutrition assessment of patients who are at nutritional risk.

Lindsay Gaither holds the Blanche M. Touhill fellowship. Davin V. Jones holds the Richard C. Scott fellowship. These two fellowships are named in honor of Dr. Scott and Dr. Touhill who were previously designated by SBD as Ambassadors of Excellence.
The Wall Street Journal Student Achievement Award is a program developed by The Educational Service Bureau of Dow Jones in 1948. Since inception, many colleges and universities throughout the United States have chosen this award to honor students whose academic performance is considered exceptional. Each school receives a wall plaque designed to display the names of ten award winners. Each year a brass nameplate, engraved with the winner’s name and year of citation, is sent to the school for mounting on the plaque. The “outstanding student” nominated by the institution receives an embossed paperweight with the recipient’s name imprinted and a one-year subscription to The Wall Street Journal. The Journal’s September 2, 2003, issue listed all national Wall Street Journal 2003 Student Achievement Award Winners. The honorees included the above Sigma Beta Delta members.

This year Sigma Beta Delta became the newest partner in The PhD Project. The Project’s mission is “to increase the diversity of business school faculty by attracting African-Americans, Hispanic-Americans, and Native Americans to business doctoral programs and provide a network of peer support throughout the program.” While not a doctoral program, it is an information clearinghouse for underrepresented minorities who are interested in pursuing a business Ph.D. to become a business school professor.

Bernie Milano, President of KPMG Foundation, a founder and the administrator and lead sponsor of The Project notes “with 1200 colleges and universities with schools of business and about 900 minority business school professors, there still will be less than one per school. There is much more to do to create a diverse faculty that will provide a more complete educational experience for all students.”

The PhD Project, a partnership between academic and leading corporations, aims to create more minority professors. Through its alliance with The Project, Sigma Beta Delta members will have an opportunity to receive information about this important program.

For more information on The PhD Project, visit the website at www.phdproject.org
The opportunity for Sigma Beta Delta to provide scholarships derives from the generosity of alumni and friends. Contributions have enabled us to increase to six the number of scholarships awarded. A scholarship may be named in perpetuity for a pledge of $15,000 and may be used to honor the memory of a loved one or to recognize and acknowledge contributions of individuals or organizations. We are receptive and appreciative of endowment and planned giving support.

We continue to seek your assistance in supporting scholarships, whether at the $50 Sponsor level or as a Summa Cum Laude Sponsor of $2,500 or more. We regard each contribution as a worthwhile investment and one which is most appreciated.

EMERGING EXCELLENCE

Tn the near future a new service will be on our web site to help connect members with employment opportunities. As you begin your job search, members will be able to:

- post your anonymous résumé for free and let employers submit opportunities to you;
- view the newest/freshest jobs available for business professionals;
- create a Job Agent, and new jobs that match your search will be emailed to you;
- avail yourself of other opportunities.

Employers and recruiters will be able to:

- post job openings, etc.;
- view résumés.

Be on the lookout over the next few months about this new development at Sigma Beta Delta Career Central on www.sigmabetadelta.org.