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(2005)

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Psi Beta is the national honor society in psychology for community and junior colleges. Since Carol Tracy founded the organization in 1981, Psi Beta has grown from 11 charter chapters to include almost 25,000 registered members in 184 chapters (Tracy, 2004). Among its accomplishments, Psi Beta has developed an innovative program for encouraging ethnic minority students to pursue careers in psychology, and it has broken new ground by becoming the first two-year college student organization to successfully apply for membership with the Association of College Honor Societies (ACHS). In this essay, we describe the organization, functions, and history of Psi Beta.

The Organization and Functions of Psi Beta

Psi Beta is a federation of chapters administered by faculty advisors and student officers. Psi Beta chapters are organized into five regions: Eastern, Midwestern, Southeastern, Southwestern, Western/Rocky Mountain. The chapters in each region nominate and elect a Regional Vice-President for 2-year terms. In national elections, each active chapter has one vote. Presidents are nominated among past and present Vice-Presidents and serve 1-year terms as President-Elect, President, and Past President. Individuals in the presidency cycle, along with the Regional Vice-Presidents and the Executive Director, make up the National Council, which develops the policies and goals of Psi Beta.

The Executive Director, appointed annually by the National Council, heads the National Office, which implements policies, manages finances and publishes the *Psi Beta Newsletter* three times (now twice a year, beginning 2003-04) a year. The Executive

Director also represents Psi Beta in interactions with affiliated organizations (e.g., the American Psychological Association [APA]) and allied organizations (e.g., Psi Chi). Carol Tracy has remained the Executive Director since Psi Beta was founded in 1981.

Psi Beta's mission is "professional development of psychology students at two-year colleges through promotion and recognition of excellence in scholarship, leadership, research and community service" (Psi Beta, 2003, p. 11). An important function of Psi Beta has been to promote and facilitate the transition from psychology studies at two-year colleges to four-year college studies, and eventually to graduate school and successful careers in psychology. Psi Beta supports student research and education by organizing field trips; awarding student achievements in research; and by sponsoring speakers, panels and workshops on a variety of issues in psychology. Psi Beta also provides opportunities for networking, and it fosters personal growth through a variety of social activities.

Founding the Second Honor Society in Psychology

Psi Beta was chartered and incorporated by Carol Tracy in Tennessee on November 5, 1981. The idea of a national honor society in psychology for two-year colleges was conceived in the 1970s by Ruth Hubbard Cousins, then the executive director of Psi Chi (Davis & Wertheimer, 2000; Tracy, 2001). Former members of Psi Chi, employed as professors at two-year colleges, had contacted Cousins because they wanted their students to benefit from membership in an honor society as they had in Psi Chi. Some of these alumni wanted to establish Psi Chi chapters at their institutions, but that was not feasible because ACHS restricted Psi Chi chapters to four-year colleges. As

an alternate solution, Cousins decided to found a separate honor society for psychology students in junior and community colleges.

The original plan was that Tracy, Cousin's daughter, would establish the new honor society and administer it on a part-time basis. Subsequently, upon her retirement from Psi Chi at age 65, Cousins would take over as the executive director of Psi Beta. However, as Tracy became increasingly involved in Psi Beta, and Cousins came to enjoy her well-earned retirement, this transition did not take place.

Before she became the Executive Director of Psi Beta, Tracy had obtained an undergraduate degree from Duke University and had worked as a schoolteacher in Tennessee (Davis & Wertheimer, 2000). Although she was reluctant to assume the responsibilities of running a national organization, Tracy was, in many ways, ideal for the job. She had acquired some of the necessary organizational skills by assisting Cousins in her work at Psi Chi, and she could draw upon Cousin's experience and network of contacts. Furthermore, her husband, W. Ferber Tracy, a lawyer, who provided important assistance in drafting legal documents for Psi Beta, such as the Charter and Bylaws. Tracy's husband also put the "Beta" in Psi Beta. He suggested Beta, the second letter in the Greek alphabet, to signify that Psi Beta is second national honor society in psychology (Cousins, Tracy, & Giordano, 1992).

In 1977, Tracy began the process of founding Psi Beta by drafting the Constitution and Bylaws, which were replaced by the Charter and Bylaws in 1981. Furthermore, Tracy sent 1,200 letters to provide information about the new organization and to invite junior and community colleges to become charter members (Davis & Wertheimer, 2000). Given the volume of the initial and subsequent mailings, the

response was low. There were only 11 charter chapters when Psi Beta was incorporated in 1981 (see Table 1).

Rapid Early Growth

In 1981, Tracy began publishing the *Psi Beta Newsletter* (Cousins, Tracy, & Giordano, 1992). Jim Hail of McLennan Community College in Waco, TX, was elected Psi Beta's first president the following year. (See Table 2 for an overview of past Psi Beta National Officers.) During his term, Psi Beta adopted its logo and royal blue and gold official colors, finalized its bylaws, and grew to a total of 24 member chapters.

Margaret S. Martin of Piedmont Technical College in Greenwood, SC, served as Psi Beta's president from 1984 to 1987. A goal of her presidency was to improve recruitment, and her efforts bore fruit. By 1987, Psi Beta's membership had doubled to 50 chapters. Also in 1987, Cindy Ahlquist of West Valley College, Saratoga, CA, was awarded Psi Beta's first award, the Ruth Cousins Research Paper Award. Psi Beta has since instituted several other awards, including the Virginia Staudt Sexton Faculty Advisor Award and the Carol Tracy Community Service Award. (Allyn & Bacon Research Paper Awards, Wadsworth Outstanding Chapter Award, Ann Garrett Robinson College Life Award) The first *Psi Beta Handbook* was published for the year 1986-87.

Establishing Affiliations in the Academic Community

During the presidencies of Martin and her successor, Ann E. Garrett Robinson of South Central Community College in New Haven, CT, Psi Beta's foremost goals were to gain recognition as an honor society and develop working relationships with other psychological organizations (Cousins, Tracy, & Giordano, 1992). At the APA convention in 1986, the President and Executive Director of Psi Beta began to participate

in the annual meetings of Psi Chi. In the following year, the Psi Chi national headquarters was relocated from APA's facilities to ~~Psi Beta's office in~~ Chattanooga, TN (Davis & Wertheimer, 2000). In 1991, Psi Beta relocated from the executive director's home to Psi Chi's new headquarters to encourage networking between the two sister organizations. From the outset, the two national honor societies in psychology maintained a strong partnership, partially due to the familial relationship between the respective Executive Directors. However, this partnership was also formalized through various business relationships and a plan of cooperation.

In 1988, Psi Beta became affiliated with APA and began to hold National Council business meetings at the annual APA conventions. At subsequent APA conventions, Psi Beta was allotted additional time for programs and events, such as the Distinguished Lecture series (named in honor of Ruth Hubbard Cousins in 1992). Robert J. Sternberg was Psi Beta's first Distinguished Lecture speaker at the APA convention in 1990. Other luminaries featured since then have included Neal E. Miller, Charles L. Brewer, James Prochaska, and Philip Zimbardo. In 1991, Psi Beta affiliated with the American Psychological Society (APS).

The ACHS is a national organization that certifies honor societies in colleges and universities. To be considered an honor society, a prospective organization must become a member of ACHS. In 1992, Psi Beta, after amending its bylaws to meet ACHS requirements, filed a petition for affiliation along with the Spanish honor society for 2 year colleges (Cousins, Tracy, & Giordano, 1992). At that time, no student organization at two-year colleges had successfully gained ACHS membership, but ACHS voted to change their membership eligibility requirements and consider petitions from two-year

honor societies. In 1994, Psi Beta thereby became the first honor society for two-year colleges affiliated with ACHS. This was a major achievement for Psi Beta, and other student organizations at two-year colleges have since followed suit.

The Diversity Project

The Diversity Project 2000 and Beyond (DP2KB) is a mentoring program for ethnic minority psychology students developed by Psi Beta in cooperation with APA's Office of Ethnic Minority Affairs (Tracy, 2000). The purpose of DP2KB is to increase the proportion of underrepresented ethnic groups in psychology by facilitating interactions between students and psychologists of color. The program provides leadership training and experience and exposes ethnic minority students to role models who encourage them to pursue graduate training and careers in psychology.

DP2KB is held over the course of two days before and after each annual APA convention. As participants in the program, two-year college psychology students of color receive leadership training, 'shadow' their mentor at the convention, and attend lectures on research and professional issues by accomplished ethnic minority psychologists (Witko, 2000). An innovative aspect of this program is that DP2KB alumni return to administer the program as co-directors the following years (O'Connor, 2001). Thereby, the continuity of the program is ensured while alumni receive valuable leadership experiences.

DP2KB was originated by Psi Beta President Sandra Ladd of West College in Saratoga, CA, and other members of the Psi Beta National Council in 1992. An idea underlying the development of the DP2KB program was that diversity recruitment efforts should begin at the undergraduate level, to promote further studies at four-year and

graduate colleges, because the recruitment pool is otherwise much smaller at the advanced college and professional levels (O'Connor, 2001). The first program, then called the Summer Institute, was held in conjunction with the APA convention in 1994. By 2001, more than 200 students had participated in the program.

Recent Developments and Future Challenges

Psi Beta's remarkable growth continued in the 1990s. At its 15th anniversary, Psi Beta had 130 chapters and more than 12,000 registered members (Tracy, 2000). In 1998, Psi Beta's seven-year agreement to share office space with Psi Chi ended, and Psi Chi could not afford to continue that arrangement (Murphy, 2000). Psi Beta's National Office was therefore relocated back to Tracy's home where it remains today.

At the turn of the millennium, Psi Beta enjoyed greater financial stability due to generous donations, organizational improvements, increased membership and sales of merchandise. Costs were also cut by streamlining office tasks with new technology, such as by creating an online distribution center for processing orders, and applications and by mass communication through e-mail. Furthermore, the National Council created the Presidents Circle, a committee of former Psi Beta Presidents, to assist in planning and other administrative issues.

Psi Beta's future looks bright as it approaches its 25th anniversary. The organization's most significant future challenge will be to handle its ongoing and rapid growth (Murphy, 2000; Tracy, 2003). Psi Beta needs greater revenues to hire a fulltime Executive Director; hire clerical staff; and to outsource publishing, distribution and other tasks conducted by the National Office. Furthermore, contrary to a policy agreed upon in 1993, the Psi Beta and Psi Chi National Councils have not met annually at APA

conventions in recent years. Another future challenge for Psi Beta will therefore be to reestablish close relations with its sister society.

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Tables

Table 1

Psi Beta Charter Member Chapters

Institution	Location
Cerritos College	Norwalk, California
Cottey College	Nevada, Missouri
Des Moines Area Community College	Ankeny, Iowa
Golden West College	Huntington Beach, California
Lincoln Train College	Robinson, Illinois
McLennan Community College	Waco, Texas
Mountain View College	Dallas, Texas
Piedmont Technical College	Greenwood, South Carolina
Prince George's Community College	Largo, Maryland
St. Phillips College	San Antonio, Texas
South Central Community College	New Haven, Connecticut

Table 2

Psi Beta National Officers

Year	President	Institution
1981-1983	Jim Hail	McLennan Community College, TX
1983-1984	Allan Schultz	Prince George's Community College, MD
1984-1987	Margaret S. Martin	Piedmont Technical College, SC
1987-1990	Ann Garrett Robinson	Gateway Community-Technical College, CT
1990-1991	Richard E. Miller	Navarro Community College, TX
1991-1992	Sandra Ladd	West Valley College, CA
1992-1993	Donald Irwin	Des Moines Area Community College, IA
1993-1994	JoAnn Brannock	Fullerton College, CA
1994-1995	Donna Stuber-McEwen	North Central Missouri College, MO
1995-1996	Ann Ewing	Mesa Community College, AZ
1996-1997	Robin Hailstorks	Prince George's Community College, MD
1997-1998	Jerry Rudmann	Irvine Valley College, CA
1998-1999	Loren W. Cheney	Community College of Rhode Island, RI
1999-2000	Robbye Nesmith	Navarro Community College, TX
2000-2001	David Murphy	Waubensee Community College, IL
2001-2002	Beverly Burton	Piedmont Technical College, SC
2002-2003	Tonya Ringgold	Baltimore City Community College, MD
2003-2004	Kenneth Gray	College of DuPage, IL
2004-2005	Jaye Van Kirk	San Diego Mesa College, CA

2005-2006	Sharon Burson	Temple College, TX
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