



eye on xi

THE XI CHAPTER OF SIGMA CHI FRATERNITY AT DEPAUW UNIVERSITY

Xi Chapter of Sigma Chi at DePauw University:

The Oldest Continuous Chapter in the Fraternity: A Legacy of Continuity, Courage, and Commitment

by Barry Cesafsky, Xi '76

For Xi Chapter brothers, both active and alumni, the proud claim that we are now the oldest continuously active Sigma Chi chapter carries deep historical significance. It is a story of endurance through war, change, and renewal, stretching unbroken from June 1, 1859, to the present day. What makes that legacy even more meaningful is how close Xi once came to losing it, and how a handful of determined brothers saved the chapter through courage and creativity.

From Indiana Asbury to DePauw University

When Sigma Chi was founded in 1855 at Miami University in Oxford, Ohio, the fraternity system in the Midwest was still in its infancy. Four years later, in 1859, Xi Chapter was established at Indiana Asbury College (renamed DePauw University in 1884). The campus was small but vibrant, and “secret societies” like Beta Theta Pi (1845), Phi Gamma Delta (1856), and Sigma Chi (1859) were beginning to shape student life, despite skepticism and occasional hostility from those outside the Greek system.

William Warren Sweet’s “Indiana Asbury–DePauw University” (1937) describes those early days vividly. “Certain students who were not members of the ‘secret societies’ were greatly agitated over the appearance of these secret bands... But in spite of opposition, with the advent of Beta Theta Pi, college secret societies had evidently come to Asbury to stay. In 1856 a second Society appeared... and three years later, in 1859, Xi Chapter of Sigma Chi had also been established.”

The chapter quickly became part of Asbury’s social and intellectual fabric. Within two years, however, the peace of college life and the chapter’s very survival would be threatened by the most divisive event in American history.

The Civil War Crisis: Xi Chapter’s Fight for Survival

By the spring of 1861, the nation was at war. The April 12 firing on Fort Sumter and President Lincoln’s call for 75,000 volunteers transformed Indiana Asbury overnight. The college had long drawn students from the South, and when the war began, eight to 10 Southern students promptly left for home. Classes were dismissed on April 16, 1861, and a volunteer unit, the Asbury Guards, began drilling on campus. They marched to Indianapolis on April 24, briefly returned, and soon re-enlisted as part of the 16th Indiana Regiment. Another company of Asbury men joined the 10th Indiana Volunteers.

Student enrollment plummeted. Patriotic fervor filled the air, but campus life was in disarray. Fraternity members were among those leaving to fight. The records of Sigma Chi show the notation “Left College to Enlist” beside several names: Obadiah B. Hayden, Caleb B. Howe, Richard K. Miller, and Jasper Nebeker. Both Howe and Nebeker gave their lives in the service of the Union. Nebeker, a second lieutenant, was killed in the Civil War at Syracuse Missouri.



Heroic Years at Greencastle

During the war, many fraternity chapters across the nation closed their doors. Even Sigma Chi’s Alpha Chapter at Miami University went inactive in 1858 and did not reopen until 1892. Yet at Greencastle, the Xi Chapter somehow survived.

According to Joseph Cookman Nate’s “The History of Sigma Chi Fraternity 1855–1925”, these were “heroic years at Greencastle.” Early wartime leadership came from Patrick O’Bannon Hawes, Richard S. Druley, and Hugh D. McMullen, who kept the chapter active through 1860–61. But as enlistments accelerated, membership dwindled. By the fall of 1863, the fraternity faced extinction.

Only one brother, **David M. Dobson ’66**, returned to campus. Recognizing that he too might soon leave for war, Dobson resolved to preserve the chapter’s life no matter what. In November 1863, he summoned his friend **William A. Wilkins ’67**, then a freshman, to his room. Wilkins later wrote of that fateful meeting:

“One morning, while waiting the hour of prayers, a student of the Scientific Sophomore Class, D. M. Dobson, requested that I call at his room that afternoon. After some conversation, he said, ‘I intend to leave college, but I have in my charge the charter, seal, minute-book, and a few of the papers of Xi Chapter of Sigma Chi Fraternity. With your permission, I will proceed to initiate you in the mysteries of that noble order.’”

“The initiatory ceremonies were, perhaps, the shortest that have been performed in any secret society. They began and closed with Brother Dobson going to his trunk and taking therefrom a large parcel, which was transferred to my keeping.”

That “shortest initiation” was one of the most consequential in Sigma Chi history. Wilkins, newly initiated and now the sole undergraduate member of Xi, bore the entire chapter’s identity and possessions. For months, he protected the charter, seal, and records, living under suspicion from rivals who guessed that he might be the last remnant of Sigma Chi at Asbury. “I

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felt the danger,” he later wrote, “of being waylaid by antagonistic factions and robbed of all evidence of Xi Chapter having once existed.”

A Chapter of One—and a Doctor’s Stewardship

In spring 1864, Wilkins himself volunteered for service. But before departing, he acted with extraordinary foresight. He entrusted the Xi Chapter charter, seal, and archives to Dr. Samuel Fisher, a respected Greencastle physician and an honorary member of Sigma Chi. Under fraternity law at the time, honorary members retained nearly all rights of full membership. By placing the chapter’s records in Dr. Fisher’s care rather than returning them to the parent chapter, Wilkins ensured that Xi technically remained active throughout the war, even when no undergraduates were present on campus. This decision preserved Xi’s continuity when so many other chapters lost theirs.

Restoration and Recognition

Just prior to the War’s end, Wilkins returned to Indiana Asbury, reclaiming the treasured archives from Dr. Fisher. He quickly reestablished Xi Chapter, initiated new members, and formally represented the chapter at the Fifth Grand Chapter (Western Session) held in Cincinnati on April 6, 1865. For his service, he was elected Grand Sigma (national secretary) of that convention—a fitting honor for the man who had kept Xi alive.

By commencement in 1865, five men wore the White Cross again at Asbury, a year later, seven. By 1867, the chapter had 10 active brothers and four graduating seniors—**Wilkins, Ralph S. Gregory, Leander M. Crist, and Alaric S. Emery**—who left behind a thriving and resilient chapter.

A Legacy of Loyalty

Through Dobson’s courage, Wilkins’s loyalty, and Dr. Fisher’s guardianship, Xi Chapter weathered the Civil War without ever surrendering its charter. While other early chapters went dark, Alpha, Gamma, Delta, and even Lambda temporarily weakened, Xi remained, by both spirit and record, alive.

It is this unbroken chain from 1859 to today that makes Xi Chapter the oldest continuously active Sigma Chi chapter in existence.

The Longest Continuous Chapter

For more than a century and a half, the title of “oldest continuously operating Sigma Chi chapter” belonged to Lambda Chapter at Indiana University, founded in 1858, one year before Xi. But in late 2024, the Lambda Chapter’s charter was suspended for three years following a hazing investigation, ending its 166-year unbroken run.

That suspension elevated Xi Chapter, founded June 1, 1859 at Indiana Asbury College, to the top of the fraternity’s lineage of continuous chapters.

Other early Sigma Chi chapters, though historically important, suffered interruptions:

- Alpha Chapter (Miami University) went inactive from 1858 to 1892.
- Gamma Chapter (Ohio Wesleyan University) was inactive from 1884 to 1888 and again after 2015.
- Several others were shuttered temporarily or permanently during or after the war years.

Through it all, Xi remained active in peace, in war, and through every generation of DePauw men since.

Why This Legacy Matters

For Xi Chapter brothers, this distinction is more than historical trivia. It’s a symbol of resilience, faith, and continuity.

- It reminds us that fraternity is not measured by size or prestige, but by loyalty under pressure.
- It connects every current active to a lineage stretching unbroken through wars, recessions, cultural revolutions, and pandemics.
- It charges us, each in our own way, to uphold the same sense of stewardship that saved Xi during its darkest hour.

The story of Dobson, Wilkins, and Fisher stands as one of Sigma Chi’s greatest examples of brotherhood in action: a testament to what can happen when one man refuses to let the White Cross fall.

A Heritage to Uphold

From its founding in 1859 to today, Xi Chapter has remained a living part of Sigma Chi’s earliest fabric. It has produced national fraternity leaders, hosted leadership workshops, and shaped thousands of men in friendship, justice, and learning.

But its greatest legacy is the simplest one: it never stopped. Through courage and faith, Xi endured when almost no one else did, and it endures still.

Here’s to Xi Chapter, the oldest continuously active chapter in Sigma Chi, and to every brother who kept the flame burning bright.

Another Strong Semester for Xi

by Brad Sexauer ’73, Chapter Adviser

Spring semester was another strong one for Xi Chapter. It started with the chapter initiating 15 outstanding young men, all committed to advancing Sigma Chi and the history and traditions of Xi Chapter. Now that it is the chapter of longest continuous existence in the Fraternity, Xi embraces this responsibility. In March, the chapter hosted its Spring Semester Scholarship Dinner, attended by numerous DePauw faculty and staff, and, as always, a high energy event. Kudos to the Senior class with five 4.0s!

April saw then annual Derby Days fundraiser to support the Huntsman Cancer Institute, Sigma Chi’s philanthropic partner.

Thanks to an all-out effort that reached out to Xi alumni, Xi Chapter raised \$20,800 for Huntsman. And since the chapter raised over \$20,000, it will be eligible to send two brothers to the Huntsman Institute for fundraising training. Later in April was DePauw’s annual Little 500 bicycle race. Johnny Marshall, a rising senior, earned the campus-wide best individual time. A big congrats to Johnny! Spring semester ended with the annual Senior Dinner followed the next day by commencement. A very accomplished senior class is starting that next chapter, with members of the class of 2026 heading to medical school, law school, graduate school and that first job. Congrats to all!



Xi Chapter Timeline

Year / Date	Milestone
June 1, 1859	Xi Chapter is founded at Indiana Asbury College (now DePauw University) chartered under Sigma Chi Fraternity.
Early 1861	The outbreak of the Civil War leads to sharp decline in student attendance at Indiana Asbury; many Southern students depart and campus life is disrupted.
Fall 1861 – 1863	Xi Chapter struggles to maintain active status amidst student enlistments and low campus population; membership and operations are gravely challenged.
November 1863	With only one undergraduate brother returned, Brother David M. Dobson '66 entrusts the charter, seal, minute-book and archives of Xi Chapter to his friend William A. Wilkins '67 to preserve continuity.
Spring 1864	Wilkins volunteers for service and transfers the chapter's official archives into the hands of Dr. Samuel Fisher (an honorary member) in order to keep the chapter alive, though membership is absent.
April 6, 1865	William A. Wilkins represents Xi Chapter at the 5th Grand Chapter Western Session in Cincinnati and is honored by being appointed Grand Sigma (or Grand Consul) of that convention.
Commencement 1865	At commencement of Indiana Asbury, five men wear the White Cross (Sigma Chi) representing Xi Chapter, and the chapter's revival is formally underway.
1866	The number of chapter members rises to seven.
Commencement 1867	Graduating: William A. Wilkins, Ralph S. Gregory, Leander M. Crist, Alaric S. Emery ; at the same time, 10 other members remain to lead Xi Chapter forward into its post-war era.
Early 20th Century (by 1918)	Xi Chapter obtains a chapter house residence on campus (noted in the DePauw "Social Fraternities" history) thus anchoring physical presence and continuity.
1882	National Sigma Chi adopts a more centralized governance; Xi Chapter alumnus John S. McMillin (DePauw '76) becomes the first Grand Consul of Sigma Chi.
Mid-20th Century (1956–1959)	DePauw hosts Sigma Chi Leadership Training Workshops (Xi Chapter members serve as local hosts and faculty), showing the chapter's prominence in the fraternity.
2024	Due to suspension of the charter of the Lambda Chapter of Sigma Chi at Indiana University Bloomington, Xi Chapter now holds the distinction of being the oldest continuously active Sigma Chi chapter. <i>(Note: documented charter loss of Lambda ends their continuous run.)</i>
Present	Xi Chapter continues active operation, maintaining its chapter house, alumni relations, undergraduate leadership, and philanthropic programs. The unbroken span from 1859 to the present making it a unique legacy chapter.



Johnny Marshall '27 winning the Little Five race.



Ethan Williams '26, Ben Sanders '26, Franco Chirinos '28, and Johnny Marshall '26 after racing for Little Five with the rest of their house.



Xi alumni together at their 37th annual gathering in Indianapolis.



Xi seniors at Spring Formal in Chicago.



Tavi Calin-Jageman '29 at the Little Five tricycle race.



Seniors Carson Empie and Ben Sanders in Iceland after graduation.



Seniors at this year's state day in Indianapolis.



Senior class celebrating graduation weekend with returning alumni.

Senior plans

Many seniors this year have procured excellent jobs and graduate school opportunities. **Turner Keck** will be moving to Chicago to earn a Master of Science in Journalism at Northwestern University. Eddie Loucka has a full ride at Wake Forest Law School. **Ethan Williams** and **Ben Sanders** will both be attending medical school. **Taps** will do Data and Strategy for Bridge Builder Strategies in Indianapolis. **Raiden Miyamoto** will be attending Johns Hopkins University School of Advanced International Studies. **Prem Kumar** will be working at Amazon. **Hamza Shahzad** will be attending the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Finally, **Carson Empie** will be going to Loyola University Chicago Law School. The future is exciting for our talented group of seniors.



Xi senior class.

GPA

We are proud to say that once again Sigma Chi had the highest GPA of the 10 fraternities on campus for the fall semester of 2025.

Derby Days

The Xi Chapter of Sigma Chi did fantastic in the Huntsman Challenge again this year. The house ran fundraising events through April with the sororities on campus to raise money for the cause to end cancer. Some events for Derby Days included the sheet sign and mural competitions where the sororities made sheet signs for their house and painted murals on the walls in the stairwells of Sigma Chi. The chapter raised \$20,800 for Huntsman, the most raised in recent years. As a result of the brothers' excellent fundraising efforts, we will be sending a brother to the research institute this summer.

Recruitment, New PC 167s

On February 28, the 167th pledge class of the Xi Chapter was initiated into the Fraternity. With the 167th pledge class, the house brought in 15 new brothers. The newly initiated class consists of a Sigma Chi legacy, members of the Management Fellows and Honors Scholar programs, tennis players, lacrosse players, swimmers, and track runners. Additionally on March 2, we initiated a 16th member to the pledge class expanding upon an already strong class. The house is pleased with the excellent quality of character in the new pledge class, and we are excited to have the 167s contribute to the growth and future of the chapter.



Greg Sissel '94 addresses the graduating seniors and their families at their senior dinner.



Senior Ethan Williams '26 with House Corporation president Derek Empie '95 after Ethan was awarded with top academic honors among graduating student athletes.

Internships

The house had five brothers on internship across the country. **Leo Hamilton** did his Management Fellows internship in Cleveland, Ohio, working for KeyBanc Capital Markets in their Industrials Investment Banking Group. Leo worked on active mergers and acquisition deals in the aerospace and defense, metals, and manufacturing sectors. He will remain at KeyBanc until August. **Jack Shaw** did his internship for the Management Fellows program working for the Kenco Group in Chattanooga as a data analytics intern. This coming summer the brothers will be busy on various internships. **Ethan Hurwitz** is going to work for Congressman Raja Krishnamoorthi as a congressional intern. **Eddie Loucka** has an internship at the state auditor's office. **Johnny Marshall** is going to be in Chicago working at BMO Commercial Bank in Chicago as a credit analyst intern.

Louis S. Hensley III '77 Named to 2026 Order of Constantine

The Xi Chapter proudly congratulates **Louis S. Hensley III '77** on his selection to the 2026 Order of Constantine, Sigma Chi Fraternity's highest honor recognizing more than 20 years of exemplary service.

The Order of Constantine recognizes brothers whose sustained service reflects the highest ideals of Sigma Chi, and Lou's leadership, humility, and enduring commitment exemplify those ideals in every respect.

A longtime member of the Xi Chapter House Corporation Board and now Emeritus Board Member, Lou has provided decades of steady leadership, thoughtful counsel, and unwavering support to the chapter. His dedication and commitment to Sigma Chi and the Xi Brotherhood make this recognition especially well deserved.

Xi Chapter celebrates Brother Hensley's remarkable achievement and thanks him for his lifelong service to Sigma Chi.



Mark Driggs Named 2026 Significant Sig



The Xi Chapter is proud to announce that **Brother Mark Driggs** has been selected as a member of the 2026 class of Significant Sigs, one of Sigma Chi Fraternity's highest honors recognizing alumni who have achieved outstanding professional success while bringing great honor and prestige to the name of Sigma Chi.

Mark is the founder of Legacy Marketing, which he established more than 25 years ago and has grown into a nationally recognized firm employing more than 400 professionals. Widely respected across the United States as a visionary marketing executive, Mark's leadership, innovation, and commitment to excellence have distinguished him as a leader in his field and a proud representative of Xi Chapter values.

The Significant Sig Award recognizes alumni whose exemplary achievements have positioned them at the highest levels of their professions and who have brought lasting honor to Sigma Chi. Since its introduction at the 1935 Grand Chapter, fewer

than 2,500 brothers—less than one percent of the Fraternity's membership—have received this prestigious distinction.

Mark's professional accomplishments, combined with his long-standing dedication to Xi Chapter and Sigma Chi, make him exceptionally deserving of this recognition. The Xi Brotherhood congratulates Mark on this remarkable achievement and celebrates the honor he brings to our Chapter and to Sigma Chi.

Reflections on Brotherhood, Legacy, and the Future of Xi

by Derek Empie '95, President, Xi Chapter House Corporation



This spring marked a meaningful milestone for my family and, in many ways, a full-circle moment in my own Sigma Chi journey. In May, my son Carson graduated from DePauw as a proud member of the Xi Chapter's 164th class. That milestone really struck me; it is remarkable to think about the countless men that have been part of Xi Chapter over so many decades. Watching Carson experience the same brotherhood, traditions, and lifelong connections that shaped my own undergraduate years gave me a renewed appreciation for what Sigma Chi represents and reminded me just how enduring those bonds truly are.

Like many alumni, life, career, and family had gradually pulled me away from regular involvement with the house. But through my son's experience, I found myself reconnecting, attending events, meeting the active chapter, and ultimately becoming more involved with the House Corporation. That reconnection has been incredibly rewarding. It has reinforced something we often say but perhaps don't fully realize until we return: Sigma Chi is not just part of our past. It remains an active and meaningful part of our lives if we choose to re-engage.

The graduating senior class of 2026 is a powerful example of what makes the Xi Chapter so special.

This group has built a strong foundation for the future of the fraternity through leadership, academic excellence, and engagement across campus. These men have consistently elevated Sigma Chi to the top GPA among fraternities while also serving in key leadership roles throughout the university community. Whether in student government, academic organizations, or other campus initiatives, they have represented Xi with distinction.

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House Corporation Updates

In addition to the success of the active chapter, the House Corporation has remained focused on maintaining and improving the physical condition of the house. Over the past academic year, we have made several significant upgrades:

Completed Improvements:

- Installation of new HVAC units in all individual rooms on the 2nd and 3rd floors
- Repair, resealing, and repainting of the front white columns
- Replacement of the steel exterior basement door
- Repair of the basement stairwell drain to address water intrusion issues
- Replacement of damaged and missing furniture throughout the house
- Retiling of bathroom showers (scheduled for completion this summer)

Planned Future Improvements:

- New window treatments at the front of the house and in the Board room
- Installation of hard-wired smoke detectors in common areas on the 2nd and 3rd floors
- Evaluation and potential replacement of the roof
- Installation of a pergola or privacy fencing in the side yard near the administration building

These investments are critical to ensuring that the Xi Chapter continues to provide a high-quality living environment that reflects the pride we all share in the house.

(Reflections on Brotherhood, Legacy, and the Future of Xi continued from page 6)

They have also excelled athletically, particularly in the pool, continuing a proud tradition of competitive success while strengthening the camaraderie that defines the brotherhood.

Most importantly, this class is prepared for what comes next. Upon graduation, these men are heading in a wide range of impressive directions: medical school, dental school, law school, graduate programs, and careers in government, education, business, and beyond. Their accomplishments reflect not only their individual talents, but also the strength of the culture within the house that supports and challenges each member to succeed.

One of the most memorable moments of the spring occurred the night before graduation at the senior dinner. The class was joined by a special guest, Xi alumnus and current chairman of the DePauw University Board of Trustees, **Greg Sissel**. Greg shared thoughtful and impactful remarks about the enduring bonds of brotherhood, the lasting influence Sigma Chi will have on their lives, and the importance of cherishing the relationships formed during their time at DePauw.

It was truly a special evening. His words resonated deeply with the seniors and with those of us in attendance, serving as a powerful reminder that while each generation passes through the doors of Xi, the underlying bond remains constant: strong, meaningful, and lifelong.

Sustaining Xi Chapter: Alumni Engagement and Future Opportunities

Greek life at DePauw and across the country continues to face both external pressures and growing financial challenges. While Xi Chapter remains in a strong financial position, continued alumni engagement and support are more important than ever. And with the Sigma Chi chapter at Indiana University currently suspended, Xi Chapter now stands as the oldest active chapter in the country. That is an extraordinary distinction and an amazing achievement, but it also carries an important and heavy responsibility for all of us to keep this chapter open, strong, and thriving for years to come.

We are incredibly grateful for the generosity of our alumni and the outstanding leadership of **John Kniesly** and **Mark Ulmschneider** through the Xi Chapter Foundation. Their efforts have resulted in meaningful fundraising success, supporting both capital improvements such as portions of the HVAC project, and academic scholarships for our active members.

If you have not been back to campus recently, I strongly encourage you to visit. There is nothing

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House Corporation Members

Derek Empie '95
President

John Marshall '93
Vice President

Jack Flynn '24
Treasurer

Barry Cesafsky '76
Secretary

Mark Driggs '91
*Immediate Past President
& Board Member*

Mike Davis '74
Board Member

Frank Facchini '90
Board Member

Elliott Atkinson '19
Board Member

Lou Hensley '77
Emeritus

Foundation Board Members

Mark Ulmschneider '75
President

Barry Cesafsky '76
Vice President

John Kniesly '73
Treasurer

Grant Thiessen '22
Secretary

Eric Nelson '01
Board Member

James Browne '91
Board Member

Peter Huber '93
Board Member

Mark Driggs '91
Board Member

Andy Wessman '24
Board Member

Mike Smith '70
Emeritus

Lou Hensley '77
Emeritus



eye on xi alumni

XI CHAPTER ALUMNI SEND THEIR NEWS AND NOTES

ALUMNI NEWS

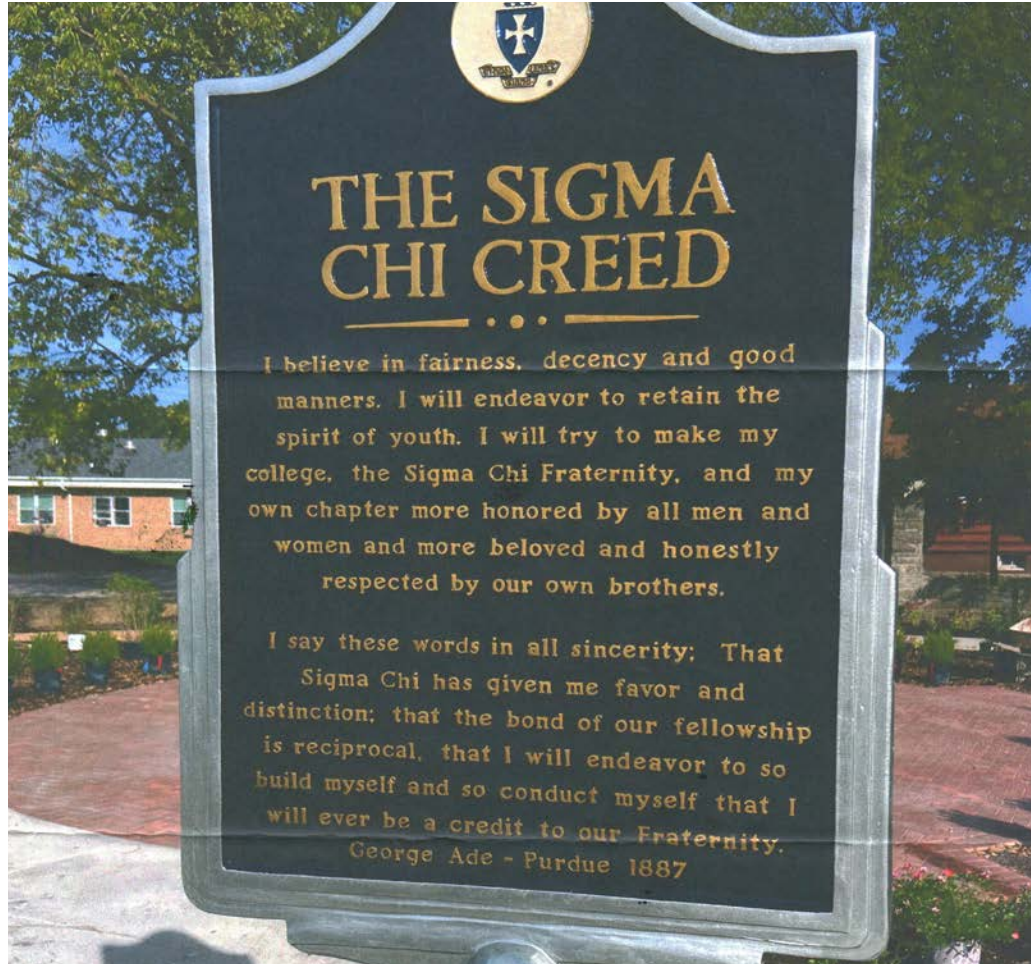
Michael A. Davis '74: I have been a long-time member of the George Ade Historic Preservation Commission. This fall George Ade's estate "Hazelden" was awarded designation as a Sigma Chi National Historic Site, with an historic marker recognizing Ade for his contributions as Grand Consul and author of the Sigma Chi Creed, along with an outstanding career as an author, playwright and philanthropist.

(Reflections on Brotherhood, Legacy, and the Future of Xi continued from page 7)

quite like walking through the house, meeting the current brothers, and seeing firsthand how Xi continues to evolve while staying true to its roots. If you are interested in coming back, please don't hesitate to reach out to me directly. I would be happy to help coordinate a visit.

I also encourage you to consider ways to reconnect and get involved, whether through mentorship, Foundation support, House Corporation engagement, or simply spending time with the chapter. I am always happy to speak with any brother who is interested in re-engaging with Xi.

Sigma Chi has given all of us something meaningful: friendships, values, opportunities, and memories that last a lifetime. It is up to all of us to ensure that future generations have the same experience.



Sigma Chi (Xi Chapter) Scholarship



This scholarship fund supports the undergraduate members of Xi Chapter of Sigma Chi, DePauw University, Greencastle, IN.

Scholarship Awards are made each semester to members of four classes for academic excellence as well as improvement. One Philanthropic Service award is made each semester.

Additionally, the fund may provide financial support for undergraduate participation in Leadership Training and Personal Development programs provided by the Sigma Chi International Fraternity.

Chapter Eternal

WE REGRET TO ANNOUNCE
THE PASSING OF

Owen E. Floyd '53
July 16, 2025

Paul A. Plociennik '57
November 29, 2020

James P. Dewar '74
May 7, 2022