

# THE DUKE BETA



Gamma Rho of Beta Theta Pi • Duke University

Durham, NC

Volume XVIII, Number 1

November 2011

## UPCOMING EVENTS

### DUKE REUNIONS

2012: APRIL 20-22

2013: APRIL 12-14

2014: APRIL 4-6

2015: APRIL 17-19

[www.dukereunions.com](http://www.dukereunions.com)

## GOOD SITES

If you ever want to know what is going on at Duke or with Duke Betas, find alumni, or keep up with Duke BB check out these four sites:

**Chronicle** <http://dukechronicle.com/>

**Duke Beta** <http://www.thedukebeta.com/>

**Alumni** [www.dukedirectory.com](http://www.dukedirectory.com)

**Duke BB** <http://www.dukebasketballreport.com/>

## GREAT LAKE LURE FIFTIES GROUP MEETING

39 Duke Betas attended the Lake Lure gathering in May hosted by Doug Flynn # 403 and Suzanne Stohl. The Summer 2011 edition of Beta Theta Magazine ran a short article and picture (see page 11) on the Fifties Group Lake Lure Meeting and also put it up on the Oxford web site (<http://www.betathetapi.org/>).

For a complete report as submitted to Oxford for publication and for more pictures go to <http://www.thedukebeta.com> and scroll down.

## WANT PUBLICITY?

TDB is always looking for news, etc., concerning Duke Betas. What they are doing, what they did, and so on. If you want some publicity for yourself, or for some other Duke Beta, send an email to TDB at [Duke@aol.com](mailto:Duke@aol.com) or USMail to [The Duke Beta, 465 Sheffield Drive, Winston-Salem, NC 27104](mailto:The Duke Beta, 465 Sheffield Drive, Winston-Salem, NC 27104). Pictures, news articles, features or just memories welcome. Will be posted on the web site <http://www.thedukebeta.com/> or run in the printed newsletter, or both. If time sensitive, might even go out in an email blast.

## TDB NEEDS YOUR SUPPORT

The Duke Beta sincerely thanks all the Duke Betas who have contributed since the newsletter began publishing in 1995. Without their financial support it would not have been started or continued. Now TDB, because of the support it receives from Duke, requires only a very little to keep going. But it does require some funds. Nobody gets paid for their work, but there are out-of-pocket expenses. So if you want the newsletter to keep coming to you please send a check ever so often to The Duke Beta, 465 Sheffield Drive, Winston-Salem, NC 27014. Thank you. -kai-

## WILL BETA EVER RETURN TO DUKE?

The General Fraternity of Beta Theta Pi [Oxford] closed the Beta chapter at Duke on February 18, 2008. Gamma Rho had been continuously at Duke since it's chartering on October 6, 1939.

Oxford was very adamant in its insistence on closing the chapter although it was opposed by the active members, the alumni, and many members of the Duke administration. The chapter had never had issues of conduct or academic problems of any consequence with Oxford or with Duke and did not at the time of closing but was moved from "Good Standing" to "Probation" by Oxford several months before it was closed. While Recruitment (the two dollar word for Rush) was clearly the problem, as the chapter then had only eight initiates (and later one pledge), the directives placed upon the chapter by Oxford leaned heavily on Ritual and on Risk Management. Only two of the eight directives dealt solely with Recruitment and even one of them required a "program/plan ... centered on values-based [undefined] recruitment and completely void of any alcohol based influence". The benefit of hindsight is not needed to understand that Oxford was not focusing on the obvious problem - without numbers any emphasis on anything else was pointless.

Although resignation from Beta Theta Pi is a formal process that is conducted only by Oxford, not by the chapter, no concerns were raised by Oxford about the number of Duke Betas resigning until mid-September 2007. As early as November 2005 TDB had reported that after going for many decades with only two resignations 21 Duke Betas had resigned from Beta Theta Pi in recent years. Oxford seemed to attribute these to trends in the general decline in fraternity interest at many schools. At Duke many of these were forced because of a get tough policy encouraging seniors to pay their ever increasing dues to Oxford or please resign, an age old problem made worse by Duke's policy of encouraging seniors to live off campus. From 2005 until the chapter was closed 11 additional Duke Betas resigned. Why? With no hard evidence available there can only be speculation.

While Oxford acknowledges that the actual chapter closing itself could have been handled more tactfully as far as notification goes, it insists the reason for the closing was completely the fault of the chapter. The chapter needed appropriate and necessary support from Oxford which it did not get. Oxford's formal position that the chapter did not want help came only after the closure. Oxford gave up on Duke and did not provide the help long pleaded for and took drastic action with little consideration of the consequences.

Right or wrong, agree or disagree, MacGregor Hill, then Director of Operations and Education at Oxford (William & Mary '04) expressed the informal position in writing: November 20, 2007, "my private assessment is that the optimism I exuded early in the semester has not panned out, and the best option may be disbandment before the spring, facilitating a swift return in -2 years.", and on March 31, 2009, after a lengthy defense of what Oxford did, "A fair criticism would be that the Fraternity [Oxford] should have more forcefully intervened back in 2004/05 to rid the apathy, drugs and 'anti-fraternity' culture that took over." ??? Huh???

It is not the purpose of this article to rehash what happened except insofar as it pertains to what happens now. There is enough blame to go around. Let bygones

be bygones and play the hand as dealt. But before the cards are read two other factors must be examined. First is the fact that Oxford was operating on the assumption that a return to Duke would be routine ("a swift return in -2 years") and secondly the intangible issue of should Beta return to Duke.

How could Oxford have assumed that a return to Duke would be routine? It was aware of the well-established policy set out in a seven page document entitled, "Expansion and Colonization Procedures of the Interfraternity Council at Duke University (Updated 2/20/05)" [Procedures]. [GO TO <http://www.thedukebeta.com/archives> AND SCROLL DOWN TO "Expansion and Colonization Procedures" to read the entire and complete document ]

In addition, Todd Adams, Nebraska '92 was then Director of Fraternity and Sorority Life at Duke, and was also the Recruitment Advisor to Gamma Rho. Although appointed to this position by Oxford, he was not kept in the loop and learned of the closing of the chapter only after it was done and then from the chapter president. Adams was thus available to help Oxford understand the difficulties it would be facing in re-opening the chapter if it were closed and the risks it was taking by doing so, had he been asked.

Oxford correctly quotes Article V.A. of the Procedures in regard to a return and did so in the Timeline for Re-colonization it sent to Duke Beta alumni shortly after the chapter was closed. The six semester rule is not mandatory.

Thus, it appears that Oxford believed that all it really had to do was ask and Duke would welcome Gamma Rho back but thus far it has not even asked. As set out Oxford's published plans were to be initiating new Betas at Duke in the Fall Semester of 2011. In fact, Oxford has had very little contact with Duke since the chapter closing and what little there has been was requested in large part by members of the Duke Greek Advisory Council which serves as a sort of Board of Visitors (advisory only) to the Duke Office of Fraternity and Sorority Life. Six semesters have now passed since Oxford closed the chapter so the issue is moot.

Should Beta even be at Duke? Most Duke Betas would answer the question yes on the expectation that Gamma Rho, assuming it ever returns, will be much like it was when they were undergraduates at Duke. It will not be. All national fraternities have, to their credit, done what they thought best to distance themselves from the animal house picture so beloved by those who do not and never will approve of fraternities. The first reaction was self-preservation and risk management became a major emphasis. The management of risk requires insurance and having insurance leads to getting sued more - why sue if the defendant is uninsured - so the problem is never ending, especially since its extension into the area of social risks of interactions with others.

Having insured their financial self-preservation most national fraternities (Beta a leader among them) turned to image improvement. Betas way was to attempt to teach young men to be leaders, to somehow make them better than they were when they pledged Beta. A more than worthy goal which can be overemphasized. The social aspect of the fraternity, the idea of joining a fraternity because you liked the men already there and wanted to closely associate with them (and it helped that it was a good national fraternity) was practically never mentioned. The days of joining a fraternity mainly for social reasons are over, at least for now.

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It is fair to say that most members of Gamma Rho, from the beginning of the chapter, were not gung-ho Betas. They enjoyed the friendships, they were, “Proud to be a Beta”, they grew as men, but all of this was local, not something handed down by Oxford. Convention attendance was always slight, often non-existent, awards were never sought, and consequently seldom received (and then only for scholastics), no Duke Beta alum ever seriously sought or held a general fraternity position, and Oxford was generally ignored except for the bitching about the required dues. What was important was the lifelong friendships and assistance one received from fellow Duke Betas.

Oxford tolerated the chapter at Duke. After all, times were easier. Duke was, but certainly not to the point it is today, a prestigious institution, the dues were paid, and very importantly, Gamma Rho never made the front page with unacceptable conduct. Few fraternities at Duke ever did, partially because of the unique nature of fraternity life at Duke, but primarily because such conduct (be it hazing, stupid drunken conduct, or having a drug house reputation) were just not things looked up to by students at Duke. Not to say that it did not go on to some extent, after all Duke considered students as grown men and women and the slogan “study hard, party hard” became almost the school motto for a time. However, it was never excessive or out of control. In short Duke Betas were proud to be members of a great national fraternity, but never took it very seriously and stayed out of trouble with Duke, Oxford and local law enforcement.

But times changed. Admission to Duke became much more difficult, the school became much more of a national, and now international, university. Seniors living off campus became the rule. The Duke student had accomplished much before he got to Duke and he expected to accomplish much more at Duke and afterwards. Oxford having, to a large extent, put behind it the animal house image, turned its attention to developing seemingly immature young men into leaders. A worthy aim and in one sense a culture clash that should not have occurred. The chapter could have played along, as it had for years, sent in the dues money, filled in the forms, and sent, somehow or other, a representative to at least some of the numerous “bonding” leadership type events held by Oxford. The Duke student looked upon what Oxford offered, and semi-required, and considered much of it juvenile, or worse. Hard to fault a Duke student for thinking this way considering the leadership and character he had to show to even get admitted to Duke. He was already a leader or he would not be at Duke in the first place. Oxford’s approach was better suited for a small school without the vast resources and ambitions of Duke to do such things or for a huge state university where fraternities, and what they offer, are an absolute necessity because of the numbers. One size does not always fit all.

But the clash did occur. Gamma Rho repeatedly explained to Oxford that the fraternity experience at Duke is different in many respects. It starts with the students themselves, as diverse a group as the university can make it in every way except scholastically (on this point check out what it takes to get in Duke – tests and grade wise, plus demonstrated leadership in at least one area – something that sets the applicant apart). Take this young man, generally without any Beta legacy, offer him a very short fraternity experience (second semester rush, probably part of his junior year abroad, and living off campus senior year – and not living/having lived in an actual fraternity house when he did – and smart though he is still has to study to get into the graduate school he is likely going to) and expect him to look for, or get, the experience from a fraternity that national fraternities now expect/demand may not be reasonable.

So the chapter got smaller and smaller. The increasing requirements for ritual (which was never a very big part of the fraternity experience at Duke anyway) and the demands for risk management (much of which did not apply to Duke) continued. The insistence upon greater participation in the general fraternity increased, which did not happen, and Oxford closed the chapter. The slack that Oxford had allowed the chapter was gone and with no Duke Betas in positions of power with Oxford to champion its cause the chapter was gone. Should it return? A subject for opinion not objectivity.

Duke is now firmly committed to the fraternity system and has even put it in writing. From the Preamble to “Statement of Relationship Between Duke

University and the Greek Community” signed by the Duke Provost on April 15, 2010:

“Fraternities and Sororities have been an integral part of Duke University since 1872 . . . . Duke University recognizes that fraternities and sororities are an integral part of the campus community and can have a positive impact for members and non-members. . . .”

After setting out the commitments of the individual chapters, the governing councils of the Duke Greek organizations, the national Greek organizations and their student members, the university makes its own firm commitment to fraternities.

Duke would welcome Beta Theta Pi’s return to Duke. Oxford obviously abandoned its own 2008 published Re-colonization Timeline calling for Gamma Rho to be fully functioning at Duke the Fall of 2011 some time ago as indicated by an April 2, 2010 internal discussion of expansion targets.

“Earliest return probably Fall 2012.” If an application [Formal Prospectus] had been filed that very day it is unlikely that Gamma Rho could be initiating new members before 2015 at the very earliest due to circumstances at that time. Now it is unlikely, given the scope and detail of the Prospectus that one could be filed any sooner than the Fall of 2012, if then. Thus, even if everything went extremely smoothly it would have been 2017 or later before there would be a Roll # 1303 at Duke. However, due to the changed circumstances this time table hopefully may be speeded up considerably if Oxford files the required Prospectus.

“This will require additional cultivation.” It is always good to have friends in high places. There are many current and former members of the Duke administration, of the Board of Trustees, on various Duke boards, commissions and committees, as well as many influential and high donor Duke alumni, who are Betas who attended other schools but there are also many among them who have Gamma Rho roll numbers and this certainly cannot hurt. To have them support the return of Beta to Duke can in no way be harmful. However, to rely on a few of them, or all of them for that matter, to facilitate or to speed up the process would be a major mistake. It simply is not going to happen. Duke does not work that way. Try to get a student admitted to Duke through pressure only and see what happens.

In this instance relying on proceeding with such pressure would in all likelihood be counter-productive. At Duke fraternity expansion and colonization is controlled by the Interfraternity Council [IFC], particularly the IFC Expansion Committee comprised of certain IFC appointees, an administration advisor and two possible ex-officio appointees. While it would be foolish to say there is not administration input into IFC decisions it would be even more foolish to say that the administration calls the shots. Thus, the IFC Procedures as set out have to be followed. There is no getting around them with a few well-placed phone calls to the right people or a few winks and a nod. Ain’t gonna happen that way.

The Procedures are quite detailed and not easily complied with. Almost all of the required work can only be done by Oxford. The process can start with the filing of the formal Prospectus to colonize/recolonize by the general fraternity, in Beta’s case Oxford [Sec. II.A.2.].

The duties of the IFC Expansion Committee sound simple: “Make a recommendation regarding expansion to the IFC Council of Presidents” [Sec. II.B.]. The duties of the organization attempting to start or return a fraternity to Duke are not so simple [Sec. II.C – Sec. IV].

Preparing a Prospectus acceptable to the IFC is not going to be a simple task. Much of the data compiling can be done mechanically and by interns, but see such items as Sec. I.C. I.a.iii, “. . . specific alumni who are interested in working with the chapter. . . .”. These cannot just be names on a list and see Sec. I.C. I.a.v. about the issues involved in the chapter having been closed which have to be addressed. The requirements imposed by the IFC are not overly burdensome or cumbersome but they are thorough. They are designed for the fraternity

world as seen by Duke and as it applies to some of the special problems/ advantages a fraternity has at Duke.

The goal is not just to add fraternities, but to add, as appropriate, fraternities that will succeed at Duke and be a credit to themselves as well as to the university. The approval process could still possibly take several years, assuming it is too be successful, but nothing happens until it is started. Most of the Prospectus application requirements are routine although a good deal of detail is necessary. There probably is little that Oxford has not dealt with at other colleges. Summing up, it will be a lot of work and time consuming for the staff at Oxford, but it is doable, and in any event if it is not done Beta will not return to Duke assuming the present rules remain in effect.

While within any such undertaking where the rules are well established (and written by the decision making party which has the full power to interpret them as it sees fit) there is still room for discussion, but there is little, if any room for negotiation. Thus, going in, decisions need to be made as to how matters where there is obvious conflict are going to be approached. One such issue is the use of alcohol in Rush. The subject is mentioned twice in the Prospectus, first in Sec. II.C. I.b.vi. Wherein the petitioning fraternity is asked to set out its values, policies and publications: “Alcohol. . . policy and program.” And in Sec. III.D. 7. Dealing with programs required to be developed during the colonization period: “Social Programming (to include substance abuse. . .).” Nowhere is absolute prohibition imposed. The first requirement imposed upon Gamma Rho just before the chapter was closed was, “Develop a recruitment program/plan . . . completely void of any alcohol influence”.

Duke’s attitude, for better or worse, right or wrong, is considerably more laissez-faire. That is certainly not to say that Duke favors alcohol and certainly not that it condones under-age use, but simply keep it under control, and be sensible coupled with a good deal of hope. Not perfect whatsoever, but realistic. Thus, Duke does not deny, or attempt to change things when the IFC announces that there is no such thing as “dry rush” at Duke and that every fraternity spends a large portion of its budget on alcohol during rush.

Awareness of potential conflicts is the first step in resolving them. Enough said.

Shortly after the chapter was closed the IFC announced that it had selected two fraternities, Sigma Pi and SAE, after a search process seeking additional fraternities which had begun in 2007 resulted in applications from 10 national fraternities. The IFC had voted to expand the number of fraternities at Duke because in the previous rush there were 140 men who received bids from no group. The process of absorbing the two new fraternities began in early 2008 and has just recently been completed. The colonization/recolonization period is supervised by the IFC until the newcomer/returnee is a thriving member of the Duke Greek community. Failure is not an option either in the selection or the nurturing process and the IFC has a right to be proud of the way it manages both.

While the two new fraternities were still being watched over by the IFC Kappa Sigma filed an application to be recognized as a Duke fraternity. The situation was different in that the petitioning group already had been granted a charter a few years ago by the national group and had initiated members into an off campus fraternity even though it was completely unrecognized by the university including the IFC. Why the national fraternity went about it this way is unknown. As would be expected the IFC had problems with a group seeking to en masse to become an IFC member when the group had been formed and existed by rushing against IFC members but not having had to abide by any rush or university rules. After extended discussions and possibly because of respect for the national fraternity and the individual members of the group and the desire to expand the number of fraternities even more the application was approved. However, several conditions were imposed. The off campus unrecognized Kappa Sigma petitioning group refused to accept these conditions and the application was thus rejected by the IFC. The group may reapply or seek on campus housing as a non-fraternity Selected Living Group in the future but suffice it say that it burned a lot of bridges!

How does this affect Beta? There are now no applications whatsoever pending. No applications are expected according to sources that ought to know. Although the Minutes of the September 24, 2011 meeting of the Duke Greek Advisory Council (which includes three Betas, one of them a Duke Beta) do not go quite this far [“IFC is not currently open for expansion, but they are aware that some alumni are really interested in their organizations coming back on campus”] the meeting was informally advised by the Director and by the IFC President that an application from Beta Theta Pi, “an outstanding national fraternity”, would be welcome at this time. It is possible that if a completed Prospectus is filed within the next several months and everything moves along exceedingly well that Beta could be back, or at least well on the way to being back, at Duke by the end of 2013 or shortly thereafter. However, Oxford does not see it this way and contends that applications are not being accepted now and that no applications can be filed at the earliest until late in 2012 and then only if the IFC solicits them. And further that if filed following an IFC solicitation no decisions on the applications will be made before 2013 by the IFC.

It is speculation but one can reasonably assume that the number of men, if any, who do not receive bids when the upcoming Rush ends in late January 2012 will have considerable bearing on the expediting or non-expediting by the IFC of an application Prospectus from Beta Theta Pi, or any other fraternity for that matter, were it to have received one by the time Rush ends.

Whatever, the application Prospectus can only be filed by Oxford, so the decision is theirs alone as to when one will be filed or even if one will be filed at all.

Will Beta ever return to Duke? Yes, if sufficient Duke Beta alumni support materializes, which it has not to date, if Oxford timely files the Prospectus and vigorously pursues it, if Duke Beta alumni accept that the fraternity world has changed since they left Duke with increased emphasis on becoming a better person and decreased emphasis on having a good time with a good group, if Oxford accepts that the fraternity world has not changed, and may never change, as much as they may want it to, and if Oxford accepts and makes allowances for Duke being different in many ways. Return is not going to be easy and compromises and accommodations will have to be made for Gamma Rho to become a reality at Duke again.

In short, it can be done, but it is not going to be easy.

## HELP TDB LOCATE THE LOST (PLEASE)

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