

Member Handbook
For
Phi Sigma Iota, Inc.
International Foreign Language
Honor Society

Founded 1917-1922

Member of the Association of College
Honor Societies

International Headquarters

Phi Sigma Iota

Pauline Lanzine, Administrative Director

Allegheny College

520 North Main St., Box 30

Meadville, PA 16335-3902

Phone: 814.332.4886

Email: contact@phisigmaiota.org

Roster of Chapters

See the list of Chapters on the website

<https://phisigmaiota.org>

History

Phi Sigma Iota was founded in 1922 at Allegheny College in Meadville Pennsylvania by Dr. Henry W. Church, members of his department of languages, and advanced students who were meeting to discuss linguistic and literary matters. PSI became a national society when Beta Chapter was established at The Pennsylvania State University in April 1925. Less than a year later, the Gamma Chapter at the College of Wooster followed them. With these three chapters as the nucleus of the national organization, the first convention was held in May 1926, at Allegheny College.

At a National Convention held in Bloomington, Illinois in November 1935, Phi Sigma Iota merged with Alpha Zeta Pi, a similar society west of the Mississippi organized by Dr. Etienne Renaud and his associates in the Department of Languages at the University of Denver in 1917.

In 1949, Phi Sigma Iota was voted membership into the U.S. Association of College Honor Societies, the first language society to receive that honor.

In 1978, under the Presidency of Dr. Santiago Vilas, the Society expanded into the National Foreign Language Honor Society Phi Sigma Iota to honor outstanding achievements in any foreign language including Classics, Philology, Applied Linguistics, Comparative Literature, and Bilingual Education.

In 1982, the Society became the International Foreign Language Honor Society by installing its first Chapter in a foreign country at Universidad Regiomontana, Monterrey, Mexico.

The Society has been granted 501(c)(3) status and is certified as a 509(a)(2) public charity by the IRS. In 2011 it was incorporated in the state of Pennsylvania.

Insignia

The Insignia of the Society was adopted in 1935 and was created by Dr. Robert E. Dengler (1893-1973), Professor Emeritus of Greek at Pennsylvania State University. The words PHI, SIGMA, and IOTA may be understood, respectively, as Philotes (Friendship), Spoude (Zeal for languages), and Idioma (Research and Individuality).

The Key and Pin of the Society were adopted in 1935. They were also designed by Dr. Dengler and are comprised of the following elements:

1. A chaplet of ivy, in honor of the birth of Horace (b.65 B.C.), the Roman poet at the height of Augustan literature who was a model for subsequent versification;

2. A stem at the bottom of which the foliage “grows;”
3. A five-point star standing for the five languages originally recognized by the Society;
4. The Greek letters PHI SIGMA IOTA imprinted over the five-point star.

The shield or coat of arms of the Society is a summary of the colors and designs of the shields of the language areas mentioned in (3) above.

Membership

Classes of membership:

A. Active Members Collegiate or professional members who pay the initial membership fee shall be active members of the Society.

1. Collegiate Members. At the time of initiation, Collegiate members shall be students enrolled in undergraduate or graduate programs and pursuing a curriculum with a major/minor in:

- Foreign Languages, including Classics and ESL
- Comparative Literature
- Foreign Language Education
- Linguistics
- Second Language Acquisition
- Other interdisciplinary programs with a significant foreign language component.

a. Undergraduate students shall be enrolled in the institution represented by the chapter, have completed at least one course in a foreign language at the third-year level or its equivalent (fifth semester or seventh quarter), have completed 45 semester hours or its equivalent, have a minimum grade point average of 3.0 on a 4.0 scale, and rank in the top 35% of their class. In cases where an institution does not offer a third-year course in a less-commonly-taught language, a third-year or higher course in English on the target culture(s), such as history, cultural history, or literature in translation may be substituted.

b. Graduate students shall be enrolled in a graduate program in one of the aforementioned fields, have attained a high degree of competence in at least one foreign language, have completed 12 semester hours of graduate work or equivalent, and have a minimum grade point average of 3.5 on a 4.0 scale.

2. Professional Members. Alumni of collegiate chapters shall be professional members. Others meeting the following criteria may be elected to professional membership: have made a distinctive contribution to the profession and (a) earned one or more degrees in foreign language and ranked within the top 35% of the class as undergraduates or graduate students, (b) earned one or more degrees qualifying them to work in the field and rank in the top 35% as undergraduates or 3.5 as graduate students, or (c) faculty of the university, after one academic year of teaching in that institution and having shown remarkable ability in their field as well as demonstrating support of the ideals of the Society.

B. Honorary Members Honorary members shall be persons outside the field, excluding those who are employed in the field, who have made distinctive scholarly and research contributions to the study, use, or promotion of foreign languages and the ideals of the Society.

Active members shall have the right to vote, hold office, be elected as delegates to conventions, be elected or appointed to committees of the Society and the chapters to office, or serve on committees.

A member desiring to resign from the Society shall submit such resignation in writing to the administrative Director. Any member having resigned from membership may be reinstated upon application to the Administrative Director and upon meeting such uniform terms and conditions as may be established by the Executive Board.

Membership in the Society may be suspended or terminated by the Executive Board for just cause. Sufficient cause for such suspension or termination may be violation of the Bylaws or any lawful rule or practice adopted by the Society or other conduct deemed by the Executive Board to be prejudicial to the best interests of the Society. A statement of the charges shall be sent by registered mail to the last recorded address of the member, along with notice of the time and place of the meeting at which the charges are to be considered. At least 30 days notice shall be given and the member shall have the opportunity to appear in person or to be represented by counsel and to present any defense to such charges before action is taken by the Executive Board. The Executive Board may adopt such rules as may be necessary to assure due process to the member. The decision for suspension or termination shall be by a two-thirds vote of the Executive Board. A member suspended or terminated for just cause shall not be entitled to return of dues.

Dues

New members pay a national initiation fee of \$35 which includes lifetime membership.

Scholarships

Phi Sigma Iota offers several scholastic grants to its members based on available funds. The first scholarship was established in 1939 in memory of the founder and first National President, Dr. Church.

In 1970, another scholarship was established in memory of Dr. Anthony S. Corbiere, who for nearly thirty years was National Historian, Editor of the Newsletter, and Executive Secretary of Phi Sigma Iota.

In 2000, two additional named scholarships were inaugurated, one to honor Dr. Cleon Capsus, professor of Spanish and Portuguese at the University of South Florida, and one to honor the years of devoted work on behalf of PSI by former National President Dr. Santiago Vilas.

The Dr. Marie-France Hilgar Scholarship was established to honor former President Dr. Hilgar.

In September 2015, the Phi Sigma Iota Executive Committee members voted to establish a scholarship to honor the memory of Dorothy I. Mitstifer, former President of the Association of College Honor Societies (ACHS), for her dedication in promoting high standards for all honor societies, as well as her instrumental stewardship of, and invaluable counsel to Phi Sigma Iota during a difficult period of transition.

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