Love of Learning is the Guide of Life

Phi Beta Kappa (PBK) is the oldest and most prestigious academic honor society in the United States. Since its founding on December 5, 1776, the Society has been a leading advocate for the ideals of a liberal arts education: intellectual curiosity, freedom of inquiry, creative endeavor, ethical reflection, and the pursuit of wisdom. In addition, the Society values the principles of friendship, morality, and scholarship; these are symbolized as stars on the front of the Phi Beta Kappa key. The motto of PBK – "love of learning is the guide of life" – derives from the initials of the ancient Greek phrase, Φιλοσοφία Βίου Κυβεονήτης. Washington College is one of only 280 colleges and universities to shelter a chapter of Phi Beta Kappa, and membership is widely considered to be the most highly regarded mark of academic distinction for undergraduate students in liberal studies.



Caroline Stanley, Katie Manion, and Ann Eickelberg were inducted into PBK in February 2012.

The Washington College Chapter of Phi Beta Kappa

The Washington College Chapter of Phi Beta Kappa, the Theta of Maryland, was established on February 23, 2007. Since then, the chapter has inducted 175 students and three alumni to membership. The student initiates, all of whom were elected in their senior year, are a diverse group, representing nearly every academic major that the College offers. The chapter's resident members are comprised of Washington College faculty and staff who work to promote PBK on campus and in the Chestertown community. Throughout the year the Theta of Maryland sponsors a number of public events and receptions, it honors rising sophomores with the highest grade point average, and it bestows the Gerda Blumenthal Phi Beta Kappa Award for undergraduate research in the humanities.

Recognizing Excellence in the Liberal Arts and Sciences

Every spring, the resident members meet to review the transcripts of Washington College's best students in the liberal arts and sciences – normally the top 10-12% of a graduating class. While a strong academic record is vital for election, it is not the only consideration. The chapter looks closely at the breadth and depth of study during a student's academic career. In addition, it consults with the Associate Vice President for Student Affairs and the Associate Provost for Academic Services to confirm that a student is of



good character and in good standing. Once the resident members have deliberated, they vote by secret ballot on candidates for membership. The chapter publicly announces its initiates at George Washington's Birthday Convocation and inducts them into PBK soon thereafter.

Invitation to Join Phi Beta Kappa: Some Final Considerations

Election into PBK is by invitation only. The following is a list of criteria that the Theta of Maryland uses to evaluate candidates:

- A student must have completed at least three full semesters of work in residence at Washington College and be fully registered for the fourth semester.
- A student must have completed (or is registered to complete) at least 96 credits in the liberal arts and sciences among the 128 credits normally needed for graduation.
- Intermediate competency in a second or nonnative language is typically demonstrated by completing language study through the 201 level or above.
- Ideally, every quantitative course at Washington College would satisfy PBK's quantitative requirement, but this is not the case. Students should endeavor to take at least one course in calculus or statistics, or in computer science at the 201 level and above. (This requirement may be met through a strong AP Calculus score.)
- Advanced placement, transfer, and study abroad credits are accepted if Washington College accepts them. Students, however, are cautioned not to rely too heavily on these credits as the chapter prefers to evaluate courses offered at Washington College.

For more information, talk to your advisor or any resident member of the Theta of Maryland. You may also consult the following websites:

- · http://academics.washcoll.edu/phibetakappa.php
- https://www.pbk.org/home/index.aspx

he particular interest of Phi Beta Kappa is in liberal education. Whatever debate there may be as to its exact definition, or its prerequisites, it persists as an ideal... It means the development by careful training of the capacity to appreciate what has been done and thought, the ability to make worthwhile appraisals of achievements, doctrines, theories, proposals. It is liberal because it emancipates. It signifies freedom from the tyranny of ignorance and, from what is worse, the dominion of folly. Learning is not its aim, so much as intelligence served by learning... At this time, when the world stands in need of every influence which favors intellectual discipline and achievement, as against a complacent indifference, the service of Phi Beta Kappa is of heightened value. It holds aloft the old banner of scholarship; to the students who have turned aside from easier paths and, by their talent and fidelity, have proved themselves to be worthy, it gives the fitting recognition of a special distinction.

Charles Evans Hughes
 Chief Justice of the United States, 1930-1941

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PHI BETA KAPPA Society



