

# INITIATION RITUAL

for

## GAMMA SIGMA EPSILON CHEMISTRY HONOR SOCIETY

(Revised at the 27th Biennial Convention, Atlanta, GA, April 22, 1977  
and at the 37th Biennial Convention, Miami, FL, April 7, 1997)

Unlike the ritual format of the past, these revisions make no demands of security and secrecy upon the individuals or chapters involved. Also, rather than depending upon the office of the Executive Director of the Archives for new copies, this ritual is subject to duplication by chapters at their discretion. It is suggested that each chapter keep four copies in existence as a matter of routine: one each for the faculty sponsor and the local president, and two others for study by other members of the chapter at formal initiations or at their request at other times.

Note that the current titles of chapter officers are used throughout this ritual; however, the constitution allows individual chapters to use the traditional titles instead in all local proceedings. The current and corresponding traditional titles are:

<u>Current Title</u>	<u>Traditional Title</u>
President	Grand Alchemist
Vice President	Apprentice Alchemist
Treasurer	Visor or Keeper of the Solvents
Recorder (Secretary)	Recorder or Keeper of the Formulae
Sergeant-at-Arms	Sergeant-at-Arms

### I. Pre-initiation Requirements for Candidates

A candidate should wear a test tube (about 4-inch size) around the neck, tied on a ribbon, during the day of and/or the day following initiation. The ribbon should be blue or white or a combination of both colors. The lower half of the test tube should be filled with a blue solid and the upper half with a white solid, then stoppered. Only chemically safe solids should be used (for example copper sulfate and sucrose).

The test tubes should be worn continually except when forbidden by other regulations, such as when in R.O.T.C. uniform or when totally impractical, such as when sleeping, showering, etc. The test tube should be worn throughout the initiation ceremony.

In the event of failure of a candidate to comply with the wearing of the test tube, s/he should be required to wear a much larger glass vessel such as a half or one liter Erlenmeyer flask, similarly filled and worn about the neck on the school day preceding the initiation and throughout the ceremony.

## II. Pre-initiation Arrangements

Preferably, the ceremony should take place in a room which can be darkened easily and in which the words of the speaker will be both clear and audible. A table (or tables) should be placed near and parallel to the wall opposite the entrance to the room. The front of the table may be draped with white and/or blue Paper or ribbon. Two large tripod-style ring stands should be placed approximately one-quarter of the length of the table from each end of the table. Large beakers or Erlenmeyer flasks (one liter, graduated) should be placed on the ring stand and filled about one-half full with water (blue food coloring may be added). Just before the entrance of the new member-initiates, a fair sized chunk of dry ice should be placed in each beaker/flask of water, to give the impression of an active, fuming reaction in each. Note: previous experience shows that, unless an extremely good refrigeration unit is available to preserve the dry ice, a larger than needed portion (up to ten pounds) will have to be purchased and kept in the freezer compartment of a conventional refrigerator. A white candle should be placed on the table to the outside aspect of each tripod-beaker assembly, and a blue candle should be placed, at the same distance, on the inner aspect of each. These candles should be lighted just prior to the entrance of the new initiates.

The Faculty Advisor stands behind and at the center of the table, and to the left stand the President and Vice-president, respectively, and to the right stand the Treasurer and Recorder, respectively. Three small podiums or reading stands should be on the table in front of the officers, and each should have mounted on the front one of the three Greek letters (ΓΣΕ) of the name Gamma Sigma Epsilon. The coat of arms should hang on the wall behind the speakers.

The previously initiated members and guests should be seated at some distance back from the table, with a pathway opened between their ranks for the initiates to enter from the rear.

The Sergeant-at-Arms should arrange the initiates in a line alphabetically outside the room, then stand just inside the door, awaiting the signal to bring them in. When the initiates enter, they should walk to the front and arrange themselves in a file, still alphabetically, about five feet from the table, opposite the officers of the Society. Should there be too many initiates for one file, several ranks may be arranged. The Sergeant-at-Arms should stand in the center, just between the previously-initiated members and the new initiates.

At this point, the ceremony begins.

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OLD MEMBERS  
AND GUESTS

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OLD MEMBERS  
AND GUESTS

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SGT

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INITIATES

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INITIATES

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W -1- BL

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BL -2- W

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P

P

P

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VP

PR

FA

T

R

PR - President  
VP - Vice President  
FA - Faculty Advisor  
T - Treasurer  
P - Podiums w/letters

R - Recorder  
SGT - Sgt.-at-Arms  
W - White Candle  
BL - Blue Candle  
1 & 2 - Tripod-beakers

As an alternative to having three podiums with the three Greek letters (ΓΣΕ), you may use one podium in the center and place the three Greek letters on the front of the table. The table may be appropriately draped in white cloth and blue bunting trim.

### III. THE RITUAL

(The new initiates are brought in and positioned as previously described).

**Faculty Advisor** welcomes everyone to the initiation and introduces guests. He/she reads the history of Gamma Sigma Epsilon (see attached copy), then introduces the officers and turns the initiation over to the officers.

**President**: In the beginning, there was the creation of both the heavens and the earth. And from the earth, by processes both laborious and wondrous, there arose men and women. And from the many elements of the earth came all that by and for which men and women lived and died.

The sons and daughters of mankind looked upon all that which was theirs, and they asked, "How is it so?" And from this, science was in turn given birth. The sky, the seas, the ground, and even the atom, have given and are still giving up their secrets to this unwavering quest for knowledge.

And yet, even as we stand here surrounded by the discoveries and achievement of man at his peak, can we still not appreciate the smallness of all this on comparison to the vastness of our universe?

**Sergeant-At-Arms**: President, I present at this time these candidates for initiation into the Gamma Sigma Epsilon Chemistry Honor Society. They meet the requirements of both the national and local organizations. They, in turn, have expressed a sincere desire to join us and make contributions to those things for which we stand.

**President**: The organization you are about to become a part of is represented in part by that which you see before you and in part by that which you do not see, but which is all about you. Gamma Sigma Epsilon has as its aims the pursuit of knowledge and truth, both as ends in themselves and to aid in the uplifting of the human condition; the respect for all things living and non-living, reacting and non-reacting; and the promotion of scientific research, particularly in the field of chemistry.

**Vice-President**: You have been chosen from the many who tread the halls of science to receive the recognition and honor which are associated with Gamma Sigma Epsilon. You in turn are enjoined to accept these tasks: a dedication to the highest standards of science, a recognition of and respect for the sacredness of man's ideals, and a personal pledge to truth above petty prejudice. Listen now as the Recorder reads the Oath of Gamma Sigma Epsilon, and take to yourself the meaning of its words.

**Recorder**: I do solemnly swear that I shall dedicate myself to the ideals of these sciences which have revealed to the miner the hidden ores; which have instructed the apothecary how to prepare his remedies; which have taught the physician to banish sickness; which are now and always acting and reacting in our daily lives; which have acted as a lever to raise up for us the luxuries and necessities of life, and that I resolve myself as a part of this body for the purpose of health, happiness, and comfort for our fellow mankind; to promote a spirit of allegiance to law and order by engineering a high regard for virtue and truth; to unite in closer bonds with those who are worthy; and to bring into closer relation the facts of science with the truths of the universe through the promotion of Chemistry.

**President**: You have heard the oath to which you are expected to subscribe. If you are willing to do so, then repeat these words: "I do so pledge myself." (Initiates

repeat pledge). As pledged members, you are now entitled to an explanation of the symbolism of the coat-of-arms which you see hanging here. (He/she turns and indicates the coat-of-arms on the wall.)

**Treasurer**: The greenery seen on the upper part of the coat-of-arms symbolizes both the sacredness of all life and the dependence of all people on other forms of life. The knight's helmet signifies the willingness of the scientist to aid all of mankind and to defend what he/she feels is truth in the face of formidable opposition. The shield is an ancient symbol representing the high moral and ethical idealism expected of our members. The bird in the upper right portion symbolizes the freedom of all people and the ability of mankind to soar above even the most modest beginnings. The crescent moon symbolizes the light of truth and knowledge which shines brightly in even the darkest night of life. The dark portions of the shield symbolize those things as yet unknown -- the vertical white ray, those facts which pierce the darkness of ignorance. The three stars have dual symbolism: they stand for the three portions of the name GAMMA SIGMA EPSILON and also for three ideals which we hold synonymous with that name: truth, knowledge, and endeavor.

**President**: As new members you inscribe your names upon the roll of this, the \_\_\_\_\_ chapter. Please step forward and receive your membership certificate (and honor cord\* to be worn at graduation) as I call I your name.

(He/she presents the certificates, while the vice-president drapes the honor cord over each initiate. The officers and faculty advisor shake hands with each initiate.)

**President**: At this time I, and all of the other members, bid you welcome and say to you, "Well done!"

(The new members are congratulated by the old members. Refreshments are suggested at this time.)

\*Note - honor cords are blue and white and may be secured from the company that supplies your graduation caps and gowns. Contact your bookstore or academic dean.

## HISTORY OF GAMMA SIGMA EPSILON CHEMISTRY HONORARY

(To be read at initiation)

With the signing of the Armistice on Nov. 11, 1918, World War I ended abruptly. The nation was drunk with victory, and the returning doughboys were anxious to make up for lost time as quickly as possible. The fall of 1919 was not an auspicious time for serious study of chemistry. Two of those returning soldiers, Louis P. Good and Manley A. Siske, at Davidson College were convinced that an honorary chemical fraternity, which would recognize undergraduates, would help lead students to a more serious study of chemistry.

There had been a local Alchemist Club on campus which tried to recognize the outstanding chemistry students, but this was not enough for these ambitious young men. They envisioned an organization of national scope that would command more respect and interest. Many lively discussions were held in the old Martin Chemistry Laboratories at Davidson about the merits of one and another existing chemical fraternity, but none fulfilled the requirements and ideals of these young men. So, they decided to start a new fraternity and make it national in scope by sharing it with other colleges.

Good and Siske invited another younger chemistry student, Malcolm R. Doubles, to join forces with them. In October 1919 these three, with the advice and cooperation of the chemistry faculty, began working on the details of the organization. The undertaking was great. First, a name or handle had to be chosen. After much deliberation, and for reasons which must remain secret, the name Gamma Sigma Epsilon was chosen. Following this, there had to be prepared a Ritual, including a short history of chemistry, an initiation ceremony and a design for the initiation paraphernalia.

The exact date of the first meeting for the purpose of declaring that the organization had been founded is uncertain. It was either the middle of December 1919 or January 19, 1920. Strong evidence, according to Prof. O. J. Thies, who as a charter member, seems to favor the December 1919 date. Here by the dint of long, hard and sometimes exasperating work, a dream culminated in a living reality - Gamma Sigma Epsilon. At a later date, Malcolm Doubles summed up the purpose of the fraternity when he wrote "...we might very well say that the purpose of the founding of Gamma Sigma Epsilon was to unite those men with a high scholastic grade in chemistry, in Class A colleges, in order to foster a more comprehensive and cooperative study of that great branch of science and its immediately allied studies."

After many proposals it was decided that chapters would be designated by two Greek letters, the first letter to indicate the state in which it is located, and the second the number of the chapter in

that state. Thus the Davidson mother chapter, the first in the first state, was Alpha Alpha.

The purpose and ideals of the fraternity were communicated to several other institutions; interest was aroused at once. On February 14, 1921, slightly more than a year after the founding, the Alpha Beta Chapter was installed at North Carolina State College in Raleigh. In less than another year the third chapter, Beta Alpha, at the University of Florida, joined the fold on Dec. 16, 1921. By 1925, Gamma Sig boasted 5 chapters. The expansion program was launched. New chapters were added at the rate of about one per year. A few of these were planted in thorny ground and soon perished. But for the most part, they have grown into strong active chapters. In 1931 the "fraternity" went co-ed and became an "honor society."

To maintain unity, the Constitution provided for assemblage of chapter delegates in biennial conventions. The first convention was held at Davidson in the spring of 1920. There was only one chapter, Davidson, to be represented at this "national" convention. The founders and members of the Davidson chapter were there.

Gamma Sigma Epsilon is now firmly established and regarded with high esteem. Gamma Sig now has over 70 active chapters in 24 states and has inducted over 16,500 members since its inception. It is an inspiring organization and one of which we are rightly proud to be a part. An invitation to membership in Gamma Sigma Epsilon is a coveted honor among students in chemistry. Truly it has in a large manner achieved the ideals of its founders.