

*Why and when was the National Panhellenic Conference (NPC) founded?* Competition for pledges, for honors and achievement grew so rampant that by the late 1880s, calls for cooperation were heard from all sides. In 1883 an abortive attempt was fielded by Beta Theta Pi to initiate Panhellenic cooperation (at that time, the term encompassed, as the name implies, *all* Greeks, both men and women). Later attempts were initiated by and for the women's groups alone, and because the men did not succeed in forging association until later, the name "Panhellenic" was claimed by the women.

There was much talk during the 1880s of Panhellenism, although primarily among the men's fraternities, as the women's groups were still too young to have this concern. In 1883, magazine editors of 14 fraternities met in Philadelphia. On individual campuses, Cornell being the first in 1883, inter-fraternity compacts were sometimes signed for the peaceful regulation of rushing. And in 1891, at Kappa's call the seven women's fraternities met in Boston.

Kappa had issued the invitation during its 1890 Convention in Bloomington, Ill. The *Boston* chapter was to have been the official hostess. Delegates from the seven sororities met in Boston in April of 1891 and included Alpha Phi, Gamma Phi Beta, Delta Delta Delta, Kappa Alpha Theta, Kappa Kappa Gamma, Delta Gamma and Pi Beta Phi.

Lucy Wight, *St. Lawrence*, was elected chairman of the convention, which was divided into committees for the study of inter-fraternity and inter-chapter courtesy, fraternity jewelry and stationery, Greek journalism and planning for the coming Chicago World's Fair. Each committee presented recommendations that were adopted by the convention. Before adjourning, an interim committee was appointed with the responsibility of "keeping the fraternities in touch, notifying them concerning the ratification or rejection by the several fraternities . . ." of the seventeen recommendations of the convention.

Hope of cooperation was premature for of the seven sororities, only Pi Beta Phi ratified all of the recommendations. Gamma Phi Beta "refused ratification of any of the report and withdrew entirely from all Panhellenic cooperation," and the remaining five, including Kappa, ratified only parts of the recommendations.

Although the Boston Convention failed to create a permanent Panhellenic association, it did set the stage for Panhellenic efforts in conjunction with the Colombian Exposition in Chicago in 1893. The events of the Congress of College Fraternities, which took place July 19-20, 1893, at the Fair, did much to foster improved Panhellenic relationships. Although the foundation for Panhellenism had been established, it took another decade to mature.

Problems on individual campuses continued to multiply. Preparatory pledging, the rushing and pledging of high school students, proliferated. Rushing, itself, occupied an unwarranted amount of chapter time, efforts and money although some cooperation occurred on individual campuses in the form of Panhellenic compacts, which were not completely effective.

The Alpha Phi national president, Margaret Mason Whitney, corresponded with the presidents of the other women's fraternities and discovered them to be "intensely interested" in cooperative actions. She called a meeting for May 24, 1902, in Chicago, "for the purpose of discussing the question of pledging and rushing." The same seven fraternities that had met in Boston 11 years before were represented.

This 1902 Conference is now considered to be the first, the beginning of Panhellenic organization on a consistent basis. The National Panhellenic Conference Centennial Celebration "100 Years of Collaboration" was held in Chicago October 12, 2002.

Panhellenic remains today a conference body. Its recommendations become part of its body of law only after they have been ratified by the member fraternities. Its only legislative powers concern bylaws adopted for its own government. Each participating member retains its own autonomy.