

Gamma Iota Sigma chapter

Insurance fraternity bringing home acclaim

by Jennifer Jackson

MTSU's insurance program has plenty to boast about. It's one of the most successful insurance programs in the nation, and its Tommy T. Martin Chair of Insurance is the only collegiate program of its kind in the state.

But its proudest accomplishments are those of its students, and the student members of Gamma Iota Sigma have received national acclaim for their efforts.

In 1984, MTSU affiliated with the national insurance fraternity Gamma Iota Sigma, and during the last 20 years the group has become one of the best-recognized chapters of the fraternity. Nearly every year since its induction into the fraternity, the MTSU chapter has won awards.

"We have won the most outstanding chapter for the last two years and the most outstanding student chapter for five years," said Dr. Ken Hollman, Martin Insurance chairholder and Gamma Iota Sigma chapter adviser.

"We have won, virtually every year, the alumni relations award because we try to maintain excellent relations with our alumni."

The chapter has also won several special awards, such as the Black and Gold Award, which recognizes a chapter's special creative projects.



Hollman

Last year's president, Paige Shipp, was the recipient of the Anita Benedetti Memorial Award, which recognizes a Gamma Iota Sigma member's participation with the Risk and Insurance Management Society.

Hollman said the fraternity is very important because it encourages interaction between current insurance students and alumni. The prestige of being a member of the fraternity helps students find jobs after graduation, and, through the Martin Chair's internship program and alumni relations, students make contacts that will help them throughout their professional career.

"I try to energize my students to get involved in this fraternity," said Hollman. "It is a unifying force that will carry over into their professional careers. It facilitates the transition from their collegiate career to their professional career."

More than 600 students have graduated under the Martin Chair, and all have been encouraged to seek excellence within their chosen field, said Hollman. To promote this, the Chair has created an endowment fund where contributions are placed to provide scholarships and improve the program.

"We currently have \$1.2 million in the endowment, and we're building all the time," said Hollman, adding that about \$435,000 of that endowment has been earmarked specifically for scholarships.

"Most of the money for scholarships comes in on an annual basis from associations in Nashville and other Middle Tennessee towns," said Hollman. "It is a very comprehensive and statewide program we have."

A little experiment



NOW TRY THIS ONE—Freshman Jessica Schneider serves water to Faye Johnson, assistant to the Executive Vice President and Provost, as Vice Provost Jack Thomas (center) and Executive Vice President and Provost Kaylene Gebert participate in a water taste test conducted by Introduction to Physical Science students. The two-day test collected data to determine if individuals can differentiate between bottled water and tap water. Participants visited testing stations in the Keathley University Center and the campus Recreation Center to sample an assortment of waters from a variety of sources and then offer their opinion on each, according to Drs. Judith Iriarte-Gross and Martha Weller, whose classes collaborated on the project.

photo by J. Intintoli

Distance learning trailblazers honored for efforts

from Staff Reports

MTSU's trailblazers in online education have once again been honored for their contributions to distance learning.

The 11th annual Distance Learning Appreciation Luncheon, which took place Dec. 1 in the Tennessee Room of the James Union Building, recognized Dr. Pat O'Leary, associate professor, Cason-Kennedy School of Nursing; Dr. Jackie Gilbert, associate professor, management and marketing; and Dr. Thomas Brinthaup, professor, psychology, as Distinguished Educators in Distance Learning.

Kathy Jones, graduation analyst/supervisor in the university's Records Office, was honored with the Staff Appreciation Award.

A tradition since 1996, the Department of Academic Outreach and Distance Learning in the Division of Continuing Studies and Public Service presents the awards to faculty and staff who have excelled in using alternative delivery methods and promoting the scholarship of distance learning through research and presentations.

O'Leary, who is actively involved in teaching, advising and promoting the new master's of science in professional science program to online audiences, "was one of the first MTSU nursing faculty members to venture into online teaching five years ago," said Dr. Lynn Parsons, director of the School of Nursing.

Gilbert, who developed the Regents Online Degree Program course in management principles in 2001 and has taught the course each semester, received certification as an online instructor in 2004

and currently serves as a mentor for online course development. She has been recognized for her efforts and accomplishments in online instruction at the International Conference on College Teaching and Learning and has received other MTSU awards.

Brinthaup was the first member of the psychology department to both design and teach a course through the RODP. He serves on the Psychology Editorial Board of MERLOT (Multimedia Educational Resource for Learning and Online Teaching), which has provided considerable national visibility for MTSU as a leader in distance education.

Jones, who took on the additional task of RODP graduation analysis in 2001, has been "invaluable" as a resource and advocate for adult students trying to complete their education, RODP advisers said.

MTSU's Constitution Day events lauded by American Democracy Project

by Heather Taylor

The Southern Consortium of the American Democracy Project (ADP-South) recently held its annual regional meeting in Atlanta, and MTSU won third place in the "co-curricular" category for its

Constitution Day symposium.

"Co-curricular" initiatives are efforts led by campus entities other than academic affairs that, while not resulting in course credit or involving the entire campus, have a far-reaching impact both on and off campus.

MTSU participated in the event

along with approximately 145 other college campuses from 13 southern states who are members of the American Association of State Colleges and Universities.

The goal of the American Democracy Project is to produce graduates who understand and are com-

mitted to engaging in important actions as citizens in a democracy. Interested MTSU faculty, administrators and student leaders volunteered their time and creativity to develop civic engagement programs and activities.