History of Mortar Board at Oklahoma State

The history of Mortar Board is not only a chronicle of national growth, it is a record of women and men accomplishing countless services to colleges and students across the nation. It is a story of local chapters whose generosity, motivation, and achievements have become the strength that is Mortar Board. The following is a story of the beginnings of a special chapter of Mortar Board - Achafoa - at Oklahoma State University.

On May 16, 1930, a committee of six representative young women met for the forming of an honor society for senior women on the campus of Oklahoma Agricultural and Mechanical College. These girls were Francis Swim, Marguerite Little, Vera Thompson, Zerlan Hazen, Corinne Calhoun, and Bess Allen. They chose Achafoa, a Choctaw Indian word meaning "a few rare and precious ones", as their name.

In January of 1931, these girls chose twelve seniors to be the first actives in the history of Achafoa. These eighteen girls selected as their sponsors: Dean Julia Stout, Miss Elsie Hand, and Miss Valerie Colvin (as in the Colvin Center). To eventually become a Chapter of Mortar Board became the objective of Achafoa, and plans were set to conform to the organization's requirements.

Each year for ten years, six junior women were selected for Achafoa until 1940 when membership was increased to eleven on the recommendation of Mortar Board's national president. The names of the girls elected to membership were announced by the president of the college during Honor Day Convocation.

During Achafoa's first active year, Orange Quill and Orange and Black Quill were created as honor societies for freshman and sophomore women. In addition to the Quills, Achafoa conducted the election of study hall, arranged the program for the AWS spring tea, published a newsletter, and honored the alumnae at a breakfast during the annual homecoming celebration. These service activities were sponsored yearly, with many becoming long-lasting traditions.

During the time span between Achafoa's first year and the present, many changes have taken place. New programs and traditions have been implemented, and new members are constantly being given the responsibility of carrying on our tradition of excellence. Achafoa now centers its
organization around: the publication of the Mortar Board calendar, the selection of the Top Ten Freshmen Women, Get on Board Week, Mom's Weekend, overseeing Orange and Black Quill, and various service projects.

In 1975, some very important changes took place on our national level. At a special conference convened in October of 1975 in Kansas City, Missouri, membership was opened to male students. The phrase "to promote and advance the status of women" was added to the national purpose to strengthen and affirm Mortar Board's uniqueness as a national senior honor society.