

A "Key" to a **FORD** ALEXANDRA TUNGOL, UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN-DEARBORN



The mission of Golden Key International Honour Society is "[t]o enable members to realize their potential." By being involved in Golden Key at the University of Michigan-Dearborn (UM-D), I have developed leadership skills and experienced firsthand being part of something phenomenal. The University of Michigan-Dearborn chapter is an embodiment of the Society's mission statement. Many members in addition to me have boosted their confidence in leadership roles to such an extent that they have revitalized organizations on campus that were on the brink of shutting down. Within its first year of being on campus, the UM-D chapter has reached many platforms on campus, including the first student organization to participate at Commencement; the status of being the second largest organization; the organization to which administrators first look when students are needed to represent the university; 2007 Outstanding Student Organization Award and our biggest accomplishment, completing the university's ties with Ford Motor Company by inducting Bill Ford, Jr. into Honorary Membership.

The Golden Key chapter at UM-D made its campus-wide debut with the Induction Ceremony held on March 30, 2006, through the hard work of the Steering Committee consisting of the current Chapter Advisor Randy Dillard, President Tony Lin, Vice President Alexandra Tungol, Treasurer Nadia Petlakh and VP for Membership Communication Thomas Knisley. We inducted over 200 members, equaling a membership response rate that ranked in the

top 14 in the nation. We also inducted high-profile administrators, such as the Chancellor of the university and the Dean of our College of Arts, Sciences and Letters. To keep up the momentum and prestige of our young chapter, we were already brainstorming in the summer for the upcoming membership drive that was to take place in the fall. We wanted to induct Honorary Members who would entice prospective members to join and imprint the name Golden Key into the campus community. Our chapter President, Tony Lin, suggested Bill Ford, Jr., then CEO and current Executive Chairman of Ford Motor Company. Many people thought we were being unrealistic in thinking Mr. Ford would even look in our direction. Ford Motor Company was undergoing transitions, and our chapter was less than 6 months old. However, we did not let these obstacles discourage us from trying.

At the 2006 Golden Key International Conference, our President Tony Lin and Public Relations Director Huda Kattan utilized networking to the fullest capacity. They spoke with Ford representative Barbara Bowen and informed her of our goal to induct Mr. Ford. She found their story interesting and said she would make some calls to the Ford headquarters on our behalf. Tony and Huda also had the opportunity to meet Alex Perwich, CEO of Golden Key. They told him about Mr. Ford, and Mr. Perwich was inspired to help make the goal of the UM-D chapter become reality. Huda also has ties to James Vella, who was a visiting professor at UM-D and is the current President of Ford

Motor Company Fund and Community Services. On our end, we composed a letter to Mr. Ford stating our unique associations with Ford Motor Company. Ford was founded in the city of Dearborn, and accordingly, the University of Michigan-Dearborn was a kind gift from the company in 1959. The Henry Ford Estate is located on campus, and Ford is also a corporate partner of Golden Key. Keeping our fingers crossed, we sent the letter and hoped for the best; we had many high-status individuals working on our behalf, so we were optimistic. Our patience and hard work paid off, and we received word that Mr. Ford had accepted our invitation. The UM-D Executive Board was ecstatic that we accomplished what seemed impossible to many people. Faculty and staff as well were elated that the university reestablished its relationship with Ford Motor Company.

Since Mr. Ford was unable to attend our Induction Ceremony, a few of us were invited to the Ford Motor Company World Headquarters in Dearborn to present Mr. Ford with his certificate of Honorary Membership into Golden Key on November 9, 2006. I had the privilege of going, along with our advisor and fellow officers, Tony and Huda, whose persistence and optimism earned us a lovely afternoon chat with Mr. Ford in his personal conference room. Also in attendance were members of Golden Key's Board of Directors: Brad Rainey, a founding member of Golden Key and 2006 recipient of the Golden Key International Leadership Council President's Award, and David Morgan, Ford Human Resources executive. When sitting in Mr. Ford's personal conference room, I was in complete awe because, exactly one year ago at that time, the Steering Committee was still in the process of planning and Golden Key was not yet recognized as an official student organization on campus.

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The UM-D chapter is such a success story that one would be shocked to discover that Golden Key was almost not approved to be an official student organization on campus. Our chapter Advisor informed us that the recognition process was relatively straightforward and that being approved as an official student organization would not be a problem. As Tony and I were sitting in the meeting, waiting to hear the OK, we thought the approval was a done deal. To our surprise, GK's approval got tied up with bureaucratic red tape and came close to not being approved and recognized by the university. However, we prevailed, and the Golden Key chapter became official at the University of Michigan-Dearborn two weeks later.

Ever since becoming an official student organization, the UM-D chapter has truly left lasting impressions on the campus community. Within its first month, Golden Key was selected to aid in the coordination of the university-wide commencement ceremonies. Golden Key is also the only student organization to have its own table at commencement to congratulate its seniors by handing them roses as a special commemoration of their accomplishment. The UM-D chapter truly values its members and gives them the recognition they deserve.

Golden Key has established two large-scale events at UM-D that are now a campus tradition: the Detroit Tigers Fundraiser and Sophomore Recognition Event. The 1st Annual Detroit Tigers Fundraiser took place Summer 2006. This event was a major success with profits exceeding our expectations and a gigantic turnout, making the event the biggest social of the summer. The UM-D chapter reaches out beyond our campus community to the urban community while having

fun at the same time. Students and faculty, along with their friends and family, watched the Detroit Tigers battle it out with the defending champion Chicago White Sox. This summer, we will be holding the 2nd Annual Detroit Tigers Fundraiser and are expecting an even greater turnout.

Recently, we held our 1st Annual Sophomore Recognition Event, and the turnout was astonishing. Professors had the opportunity to nominate a sophomore for the Outstanding Sophomore Award with letters of recognition. Five sophomores were recognized, one from each school at UM-D. In attendance were sophomores and their family as well as faculty, including the Dean of our College of Arts, Sciences, and Letters and the Vice Chancellor, both of whom are Honorary Members of the UM-D chapter. Enthusiasm of students to join Golden Key was brought to a whole new level.

Golden Key has been phenomenal when it comes to identifying and executing the needs of its members and the campus community. To date, Golden Key has successfully encouraged many of its members to serve on major university committees such as the Distinguished Teaching Awards Committee, Library Student Advisory Committee, and the Student Organization Advisory Council. In a way, Golden Key serves as a leadership springboard for many individuals on campus. For instance, several members of the organization have gone on and become the presidents of many other clubs (i.e., Students In Free Enterprise [SIFE] and Economics Club) after getting involved with Golden Key during their preliminary leadership involvement.

Not only does the UM-D chapter give back to the students, but we also give back to the community. Golden Key volunteers regularly give

back to the community to the best of their ability. So far, Golden Key has participated in events such as Habitat for Humanity; Make A Difference Day; Martin Luther King, Jr. Day of Service with the United Way for Southeastern Michigan; Read for the Record with Jumpstart; and Adopt A Family program with the Salvation Army, for which over \$1400 worth of gifts were collected and donated to a family in need. For these contributions, Golden Key was nominated for the University of Michigan-Dearborn 2007 Civic Engagement/Volunteer Service Award.

The UM-D chapter had such an extraordinary first year; with so many accomplishments and triumphs that I never imagined were attainable in such a short length's time. As quoted from our assistant director, Lachelle Morris, "As a result of their sudden yet immense success, they are viewed as one of the most exceptional NEW chapters in Golden Key's 30 year history." A few days ago, Golden Key received the University of Michigan-Dearborn 2007 Outstanding Student Organization Award. In simply a year, we went from non-existence to the most outstanding student organization at UM-D. We have created a Golden Key "buzz" around campus, with all the top students anxious to receive their invitation. Our members hold great pride in being part of the UM-D chapter.

We have changed the face of campus by uniting students of all majors and bringing to campus the GK Induction Ceremony and Sophomore Recognition. Last of all, we put the University of Michigan-Dearborn on the international map with the induction of Bill Ford, Jr. into Honorary Membership of the Society.

What a fabulous first Year!

