

Epsilon Sigma Omicron

Introduction to ESO Epsilon Sigma Omicron (ESO) is an honorary educational society open to all per-capita dues paying GFWC federated clubs. More than 70 years ago, the ESO program became a permanent part of the GFWC Education Community Service Program. Through ESO, clubwomen are given direction in planned reading for self-enrichment and personal growth. Over the years, many GFWC clubwomen have profited from this unique self-improvement program, seen as vital by the members it directly benefits. The purpose of ESO is to provide clubwomen with a structural reading program, which is educational and stimulates a desire for self-improvement. The following are the goals of the ESO:

- To encourage clubwomen's pursuit of higher education
- To create an additional means to unite women in volunteerism
- To develop a support network for women returning to school
- To improve current and develop new study skills
- To stimulate systematic home reading and study with minimum supervision
- To encourage the establishment of home libraries and
- To encourage the formation of reading/study/discussion groups.

ESO can take the form of a reading group or an individual's personal reading pursuit. The program provides membership, awards/certificates, pins, reading lists, and a framework in which to pursue continued self-improvement through reading. Many clubs combine club programming with ESO related activities, such as reading awareness and book promotion.

HISTORY OF ESO

ESO was established in 1928 by the Indiana Federation of Clubs. In 1930, it was incorporated as a national sorority; the Indiana society became the Alpha chapter. Later that same year, the Washington state chapter became the Beta chapter. Since then, approximately 47 states have followed the lead of Indiana and Washington by establishing their own state ESO chapters.

The first national convention of ESO was held at the 1932 GFWC Convention in Seattle, Washington. In 1940, ESO gave up its incorporation as a national sorority and became a Special Committee of GFWC. This relationship needed clarification. In 1945, Mrs. Fred A. Bell, then GFWC ESO chairman, appointed Mrs. W.D Keenan of the Alpha chapter as a consultant. Mrs. Keenan worked with Mrs. Bell and Mrs. Meyers, organizer and first president of ESO, to present rules and regulations to meet both ESO and GFWC requirements and to clarify the status of the organization. Their work was completed in 1950 when the rules were modified to include ESO as a division of the Education Department of GFWC. The establishment of ESO was aided by the Extension Division of the University of Indiana. The Extension Division began creating "reading courses" which gave college credit, applicable to a University degree or membership in ESO. The enrollment fee in 1935 was \$1 for one course or \$3 for four courses. The original ESO reading courses were compiled by the American Library Association, the United States Office of Education, Purdue University, and Indiana University. Clubwomen could choose from over 100 courses. Reading courses ranged in subject matter from American heroes to interior decoration to U.S foreign relations.

ESO TODAY

Today ESO is part of the GFWC Education and Libraries Community Service Program with clubs across the country continuing to participate in this self-improvement reading program. Since 1928, ESO has evolved into a diverse program with state chapters personalizing their programs based on clubwomen's needs and their communities. ESO members should follow the guidelines of their state ESO chapter. If a state chapter does not exist, one must be established before clubwomen can participate. The rules and regulations included in this handbook should be used as a framework for establishing and administering state ESO chapters. Questions regarding the administration of ESO on the local and state levels should be directed to the GFWC Education and Libraries Program Chairman (who also serves as ESO chairman).

(This list is a brief offering. Please visit Club Manual for other grassroots projects and/or programs as well as those with Affiliate Organizations or Resources.)