

Phi Bete's gift fulfills promise



Cornell chemistry professor emeritus Truman Jordan (left) gave Chris Ellerbroek a Phi Beta Kappa key when he graduated in 1977. Ellerbroek, who promised to do "something significant" for the college in return, donated funds 25 years later for the plaque behind them.

A promise by Chris Ellerbroek '77 to do "something significant" for the college has enabled Cornell's Delta of Iowa chapter of Phi Beta Kappa to install a 13-by-5-foot plaque commemorating all members inducted at Cornell.

Ellerbroek and chemistry professor emeritus Truman Jordan unveiled the plaque at a pre-commencement ceremony June 1 in Cole Library. Cornell's chapter, marking its 80th year, has initiated 1,204 members.

When he graduated, Ellerbroek could not afford a Phi Beta Kappa key. Jordan and chemistry professor Addison Ault surprised him at initiation with a key.

"You thanked me for the gift, and you said, 'I am going to do something significant for the college someday,' " Jordan wrote to Ellerbroek last year.

When Ellerbroek, a pediatric radiologist in Des Moines, was informed of plans for the plaque, he and his wife, Renee, donated \$10,000 to cover the cost of the project and fund the addition of names annually. His two former chemistry professors also contributed to the project.

The plaque was proposed a few years ago by a committee that included Jordan and professors Craig Allin, politics, and Rich Martin, English. They hoped it might raise awareness of Phi Beta Kappa on campus. Toward that end, Cornell's chapter also has sponsored annual Phi Beta Kappa Visiting Scholars, purchased stoles with the Greek letters and key that initiates wear at commencement, and begun electing a small number of juniors each year who remain on campus as an example to other students.