

FOR RELEASE
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Tau Beta Pi Names Dr. Merl Baker as 2010 Distinguished Alumnus

Tau Beta Pi, the engineering honor society, has named the 2010 winner of its Distinguished Alumnus Award. Now in its fourteenth year, the award recognizes alumni who have demonstrated adherence to the ideals of Tau Beta Pi (integrity, breadth of interest, adaptability, and unselfish activity) and to fostering a spirit of liberal culture on local, national, and international scales.

Dr. Merl Baker, *Kentucky Alpha '45*, retired administrator and educator in higher education, is the *2010 Tau Beta Pi Distinguished Alumnus* and will be honored on October 9, 2010, at the 105th annual Convention to be held in King of Prussia, Pennsylvania. Tau Beta Pi President Dr. Larry A. Simonson, P.E., will present a commemorative plaque, and a \$2,000 scholarship will be given in Dr. Baker's name to a deserving student member of Tau Beta Pi.

Dr. Baker's selection as 2010 Distinguished Alumnus recognizes his innovative contributions and his steadfast leadership at engineering institutions. His professional success and dedication to engineering management inspired future leaders and enhanced the evolution of the engineering profession.

Dr. Baker holds bachelor's degrees in mechanical engineering from the University of Kentucky (UK). After a year in the U.S. Navy, during WWII, he received master's and Ph.D. degrees in mechanical engineering from Purdue University in 1948 and 1952, respectively. He was initiated into Tau Beta Pi as an eminent engineer by the Kentucky Alpha Chapter in 1955.

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Dr. Baker is recognized as one of the pioneers in the teaching of engineering management. He worked to introduce subjects like organizational behavior and ethics, emphasizing “people skills” and helping to liberalize the engineering curriculum.

His teaching career began with the appointment as assistant professor at the UK department of mechanical engineering in 1948, advancing to professor in 1955. Dr. Baker was named, in 1953, as the first executive director of the Kentucky Research Foundation, responsible for advancing the university’s research programs and developing external funding, which increased tenfold under his leadership. He became director of international programs in 1955, coordinating the university’s program with the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) and providing educational assistance to universities in Indonesia and Guatemala.

In 1963, Dr. Baker was appointed dean of the University of Missouri’s School of Mines and Metallurgy at Rolla, now Missouri University of Science and Technology, recognized at that time as one of the top schools of its kind. When the campus was reorganized in 1964, he was inaugurated as its first chancellor. Heading the technological campus, Dr. Baker planned and presided over growth in faculty quality, enrollment, and physical facilities, including a new library and mechanical engineering building. Particular growth was noted in graduate and research programs. A college of arts and sciences and an engineering management department were established, along with 11 centers and a graduate engineering center in St. Louis.

Dr. Baker was named special assistant to the president of the University of Missouri system in 1973. During the next three years, he conducted research into public higher education, culminating in an extensive report, *Multi-campus and Consolidated University Systems: Administrative Structures and Governance*.

Widely known and respected for his organizational management expertise and experience in heat transfer and energy conservation, Dr. Baker was appointed to key management positions at Oak Ridge National Laboratory from 1977 until 1982. He managed projects in energy policy and utilization, and prepared reports interpreting federal energy programs to aid utilities and state and local governments.

In 1982, he was appointed provost at the University of Tennessee-Chattanooga, where he supported the creation of a master’s level engineering management program. Dr. Baker returned to teaching and research in 1984 as professor of engineering and engineering management and director of the Center for Professional Career Development. The retired Dr. Baker lives in Lexington, KY, with his wife Emily. They have two children and two grandchildren.

His endorsement of management education is credited with inspiring many academic leaders at a national level, and helping promote women and minority students in engineering. This is recognized with the Merl Baker Award of the engineering management division of ASEE.

Dr. Baker has been recognized as a distinguished alumnus at UK and Purdue University. He has received the Pi Tau Sigma gold medal award, the University of Missouri-Rolla silver centennial medallion, and was inducted into the Cosmos Club of Washington, DC, for his extensive record of journal publications, leadership, and national service.

In a letter regarding Dr. Baker’s work, Sharron Townsend, director of development at UK, wrote, “He is truly one whose personal qualities of excellence and leadership serve as examples to not only his professional colleagues, but to friends, not just locally, but literally around the world.”

For his leadership, dedication to advancing engineering, and valuable contributions to society, The Association hereby recognizes Dr. Merl Baker as the 2010 Tau Beta Pi Distinguished Alumnus.

Tau Beta Pi, the world’s largest engineering society, has initiated more than 516,000 members since it was founded in 1885. Headquartered in Knoxville, Tennessee, the Association has 236 active collegiate chapters and 18 active alumnus chapters throughout the country.