

Iowa Alpha's Catapult Competition — Greater Interest in Government Grant

The purpose of the Greater Interest in Government Program, established in 1969 by Frederick A. Faville, Illinois Beta '19, is to stimulate interest among student members of Tau Beta Pi in civic affairs and public-policy issues. The Executive Council awards annual grants up to \$750 each for these activities from the investment earnings of the Greater Interest in Government Fund. The report of the winning project for 1998-99 follows:

April 17, 1999, was VEISHEA Saturday on the Iowa State University campus, home of Tau Beta Pi's Iowa Alpha Chapter. VEISHEA is known as the largest student run, alcohol-free festivity in the nation, and this year Iowa Alpha had its own contribution to the day's events.

During the spring of 1998 the chapter had devised an outreach idea involving a catapult competition that would bring high-school students from around the state to our campus for the festival. A Greater Interest in Government Grant proposal had been completed, and the grant had been awarded at the Tau Beta Pi National Convention in Kansas during the fall. We began five months of planning and preparation that brought three catapults, and the teams that had built them, to campus to compete for the honor of winning the first annual Tau Beta Pi Catapult Competition.

The objective of the project was to provide high-school students with the opportunity to hone their engineering and physics skills with an enjoyable and interesting application. Teams had to design and build a catapult which fit certain safety, size, and cost constraints and that could throw a one-pound water balloon any specified distance within a given range. Students also had to submit an engineering-style report that counted for half of their final score for the competition.

Although eight reports were submitted, only three teams had working catapults, which were brought to campus for the competition. All three were excellent, although of different designs, and they performed very well. The top team hit five out of five bullseyes, and the other hit four. The day ended with the top team being awarded a plaque, and all the participants received free T-shirts.

Iowa Alpha is impressed with the success of the project and wishes to thank the Association for the Greater Interest in Government Grant that allowed us to sponsor this first annual catapult competition. We are already making plans to hold the event again next year.

— **LeAnn E. Faidley**, Iowa Alpha '00

