

Greater Interest in Government Iowa Alpha Reaches Youngsters

THE IOWA ALPHA CHAPTER of Tau Beta Pi submitted a proposal for a 1999-2000 GIG project entitled "High-School Outreach and Engineering Recruiting for High-School Students." It turns out that we had more fun with fourth graders!

Work on this project began in September 1999, when much planning went into the project to determine the best way to reach out to high-school students. We decided that the focus of our demonstrations would be muscle wire, a wire made of a metal alloy that contracts when electric current passes through it and stretches back to its original form after cooling.

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 paper airplane launches.

The first opportunity that we had to demonstrate our device turned out to be during an elementary-school science night. We had so much fun! Along with the launcher, we also brought some hands-on examples of memory wire and a poster explaining how it works and what engineering at Iowa State University is all about. The children and their parents were extremely interested in how the launching mechanism worked.

In the spring semester, a building committee was formed, and a paper airplane launcher with the release mechanism being the contraction of muscle wire was selected to demonstrate the properties of the wire. When a switch completes a circuit containing the muscle wire, a current flows through the wire, and



Students from Roosevelt Elementary School in Ames, IA, were intrigued by the launching of paper airplanes. Members of Iowa Alpha demonstrated the use of a muscle wire during the school's science-night program.

The demonstration must have been a success because we were asked to attend another fair in April. After the second fair, we decided that catering to younger students seemed to be effective and much more fun than working with high-school students. Iowa Alpha plans to continue this project in future years under the direction of our project chairs.

— Tory E. Keyzer, '00, Vice President