



Established in 2006, the Tau Beta Pi-McDonald Mentor Award celebrates excellence in mentoring and advising among Tau Beta Pi educators and engineers who have consistently supported the personal and professional development of their students and colleagues. It recognizes those who have shown true concern for the individual, supported an environment for developing talents, and have earned respect and recognition for their contributions to their field and to the greater community.

2007 TBPI-MCDONALD MENTOR



Dr. Thomas C. Sheahan

fOR HIS OUTSTANDING achievements in mentoring engineering students, **Dr. Thomas C. Sheahan**, P.E., New York Mu '81, is the 2007 Tau Beta Pi-McDonald Mentor.

He joined Northeastern University in 1991 after receiving his Ph.D. at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. He received his B.S. in civil engineering from Union College in 1981, after which he served for five years as a U.S. naval officer.

His activities during the past 15 years demonstrate the consistency of his mentoring activities. He has positive interactions with students and stimulates them to reach their full potential. He has supervised 18 graduate students, and he engaged 11 undergraduate students in his research work—two of whom were National Science Foundation fellows. In 1999, he founded Dear Jonas, an online advice column for instructors, which ran successfully for years and was compiled and published in 2004 as Chalk Talk: E-advice from Jonas Chalk. The column also garnered a Bright Idea award from the Professional Organizational and Development Network in Higher Education in 2001.

He has made diverse contributions to the engineering community, both as an educator and as a professional. He is co-advisor to the ASME student chapter. Through such programs as the national steel-bridge and concrete-canoe competitions, this organization draws students into mentoring relationships with faculty advisors. He is an inaugural advisor to Engineers Without Borders, which uses mentoring as the main vehicle for involving students in every step of activities. Such mentoring routinely touches on social, economic, political, ethical, and cultural



issues in developing countries. He is a General Electric master teacher, wherein he fosters improved student experiences between colleges of engineering and arts and sciences. He wrote a piece titled "Becoming a Sophomore" that is presented to all first year civil engineering students. He is the chair of the Transportation Research Board committee AFS20, soils and rock instrumentation, and is the education director for an NSF project involving undergraduate research and outreach. He is co-editor of the ASTM Geotechnical Testing Journal, providing guidance to authors regarding publication of journal articles.

His dean confirms Tom's extreme popularity among students, both as a role model and as a mentor. His commitment to developing talent is

well-known.

As the undergraduate faculty advisor in civil and environmental engineering, he supported individual talent in multiple ways. He personally advised 250-300 undergraduates. He chairs the departmental committee that provides \$35,000 in awards annually. He participated in summer orientation sessions for incoming freshmen. He implemented an online assessment system for faculty to review and improve curriculum teaching and led annual retreats on assessment process.

Dr. Sheahan has earned the respect of his colleagues and garnered national recognition as a mentor. When the Chief Advisor of his Tau Beta Pi chapter stepped aside, Dr. Sheahan, the junior Advisor, stepped in. He did an outstanding job of teaching the students about leadership and invigorated the entire chapter.

The ASCE chapter that he co-advises remains one of the most active and honored chapters of that society.