

Tau Beta Pi Announces 2008 Laureates

Tau Beta Pi, the engineering honor society, has named five Laureates in the Association's annual program to recognize gifted engineering students who have excelled in areas beyond their technical majors.

The 2008 Tau Beta Pi Laureates are Mitchell P. Braegelmann, a graduate student in chemical engineering at the University of North Dakota, cited for his diverse achievements; Austin D. Cooley, a 2008 computer engineering graduate of the University of Florida, lauded for his diverse achievements; Eli Krahenbuhl, a mechanical engineering student due to graduate from the University of Wyoming in 2009, cited for achievements in athletics; James G. Moxness II, a 2008 graduate of the University of Arizona with degrees in both chemical engineering and art history, lauded for achievement in the arts; and Melanie R. Vedvei, a 2008 industrial engineering graduate from the South Dakota School of Mines and Technology, cited for her achievements in athletics. They join 60 other remarkable Tau Bates who have been named Laureates since 1982.

The Laureate Program exists to further Tau Beta Pi's second fundamental purpose as stated in the Association's Constitution: ". . . to foster a spirit of liberal culture in engineering colleges." The primary concern of the Society is to recognize students of superior scholarship and exemplary character and to honor eminent practicing engineers. The Society also encourages excellence in engineering education and in the ethical practice of engineering.

The Laureates will be honored with other 2008 national award winners on October 25, 2008, at the 103rd annual Convention to be held in Sacramento, California. Tau Beta Pi President Dr. Larry A. Simonson, P.E., will present each with a \$2,500 cash award and a commemorative plaque. Their biographies follow:

MITCH BRAEGELMANN, *North Dakota Beta '08*, is a chemical engineering graduate of the University of North Dakota and is working on a master's degree there. Captain of his college football team, he accumulated many sporting awards, including being named to *ESPN The Magazine's* All-America team. More than this, he has provided many hours of service to his university community, as well as the wider Grand Forks community.

Mitch has volunteered for the past four winters with Holiday Magic for Marcus, using donated money to buy Christmas presents for children with serious illnesses. When a nearby town was hit by a tornado last spring, he went with other students to help in the cleanup operation.

On the academic front, Mitch was inducted into TBP the first semester he was eligible and has maintained his grades ever since. He has been an active chapter member, especially in math tutoring sessions where Tau Bates help students with calculus and other math problems. He made the academic first team twice, an achievement for an engineering major, and was sophomore chemical engineer of the year, along with freshman and junior finalist for that award. Mitch's areas of interest include experimental design, polymer science, and materials and corrosion. He has also been active in AIChE.

He has started three seasons on the offensive line for his college football team, two years at center, and one at guard. Other awards have included UND offensive lineman of the year in 2006-07.

AUSTIN COOLEY, *Florida Alpha '08*, is a computer engineering graduate of the University of Florida. A gifted musician, Austin is noted for his volunteer efforts in the arts and his commitment to community service. Music is a large part of his life, especially playing the piano and the drums. He received an outstanding soloist award for performing a piano concerto with his high school's symphony orchestra. He was elected drum line and band captain of the marching band.

Since 2006, Austin has volunteered more than 400 hours with Studio Percussion, a non-profit created to help people express themselves through music. In addition to teaching music theory, arranging pieces, composing, and performing in outreach concerts, he developed a piano studio there and is now its teacher.

Soon after his initiation into TBP, the coordinator of one of his chapter's major programs, SECME, had to step down. With no prior experience, Austin stepped into the breach. His hard work and commitment led to an expansion of SECME, the K-12 math and science Olympiad, increasing the number of local high-school students taking part from five percent to 15 percent. His own cumulative G.P.A. of 3.96 was complemented when fellow Tau Bates recognized Austin's commitment and leadership by voting him the chapter's most outstanding officer for the Spring 2007 semester.

He is also active in his campus Green Team, an environmental concern that took him to Germany this summer to study the latest renewable energy technology.

ELI KRAHENBUHL, *Wyoming Alpha '09*, is a mechanical engineering undergraduate at the University of Wyoming. He competes in the non-traditional collegiate sport of downhill mountain biking, which is a test of skills, like downhill skiing on a narrow dirt path with lots of obstacles. He has been recognized by all the governing bodies of the sport and been ranked 11th out of 132 professional riders in the U.S. Eli has competed in both national and international events and placed third in the Division I downhill competition.

With a G.P.A. of 4.00, he is praised for taking on what may be the toughest curriculum at the University of Wyoming and excelling in a world where top athletes more often opt for a softer curriculum. Eli has found time to be a math and science tutor, as well as making the president's and dean's lists.

An active member of Tau Beta Pi, he assumed a leadership role in the campus Math Counts program. Eli is leading his school's mountain biking team for the coming season as well as competing on the professional circuit. He envisions a career as a designer in the cycling industry, using engineering skills to help his sport and bring innovations to the marketplace.

JAMES MOXNESS II, *Arizona Alpha '08*, is a 2008 Tau Beta Pi Laureate for his achievement in the arts. He graduated with honors from the University of Arizona with a B.S. in chemical engineering and a B.A. in art history.

Outside the classroom, James has worked extensively at the University of Arizona Museum of Art. He worked on the collections committee, helping to bring about purchases of works ranging from Rembrandt and Durer to emerging American artists. He has also interned there, researching antiquities in the collection, managing records, as well as helping with curatorial and exhibition work. This was furthered by a summer as a student assistant at an archaeological excavation in Italy, dealing with Roman and Etruscan artifacts.

James has volunteered with the Arizona Opera, preparing program booklets and serving as an usher. He also set up a Japanese archery club at his university and took part in a statewide Japan festival.

Service as president of his Tau Beta Pi chapter has been supplemented by work as a rotational volunteer tutor. He made the dean's list with distinction for five semesters and twice took the award for highest academic distinction at the college of engineering.

James has also interned at ExxonMobil Corporation, working in areas from finance to pipeline corrosion.

MELANIE VEDVEI, *South Dakota Alpha '08*, is a 2008 Tau Beta Pi Laureate for her achievement in athletics. She is an industrial engineering graduate of the South Dakota School of Mines and Technology.

Melanie displayed talent in basketball at an early age, earning a starting position on her high-school varsity basketball team as an eighth grader. She continued to exhibit her characteristic hard work and determination to excel on the squad at SDSMT, winning the 2008 LeRoy Walker champions of character award, considered one of the most prestigious accolades in the NAIA. It honors a student athlete who excels in sports, integrity, and academics. Melanie has been an NAIA Basketball All-American for the past three years, an NAIA Academic All-American in 2007 and 2008, and Dakota Athletic Conference basketball MVP for the past two years. She holds most of the school's records for women's basketball and is the all-time career steals leader for the NAIA. All this, in spite of collapsing with a season-ending knee injury during a game in January 2008. Melanie began coaching basketball, volleyball, and track in high school and continued coaching while in college. This has included serving at numerous youth camps and coaching a YMCA team. She led a youth basketball camp at the School of Mines for three summers.

On the academic front, she achieved a G.P.A of 3.94 and made the dean's list for seven out of seven semesters. Melanie was a key contributor to many projects and was named to the school's leadership hall of fame in 2008. She was a TBP - Record Scholar for 2007-08 and served as chapter vice president. She also works at her family cattle ranch.

Tau Beta Pi, the world's largest engineering society, has initiated 500,800 members since it was founded in 1885. Headquartered in Knoxville, Tennessee, the Association has 234 active collegiate chapters and 16 active alumnus chapters throughout the country.