

President Blackford Reports to the 2015 Convention

THE CONSTITUTION OF TAU BETA PI requires that the President report on the state of the Association annually to the Convention. I am honored to serve as President and pleased to present an update on the business of the Council over the past year. The Elevate Council was elected by the 2013 Convention and took office at the conclusion of the 2014 Convention. We are indebted to the Foundation Council for their leadership of our Association and their guidance in the transition. True to their name, that Council laid the foundation and entrusted to us a strong Association.

I will present the highlights of this year and also identify some of the major accomplishments and actions of our Council as well as opportunities and challenges that we face as an Association. While this report is presented to the Convention, it is intended for all members as it is only with the involvement of all our stakeholders—students, Association Officials, alumni—that we will be able to fulfill our Council’s goal of elevating Tau Beta Pi.

Goals and Objectives

Any organization needs to periodically reflect on its goals and objectives. While our fundamental purpose as expressed in the preamble to our Constitution is: “To mark in a fitting manner those who have conferred honor upon their Alma Mater by distinguished scholarship and exemplary character as students in engineering, or by their attainments as alumni in the field of engineering, and to foster a spirit of liberal culture in engineering colleges,” we need to plan and prioritize our programs as we strive to serve our members and society. We’ve asked officials and other members *what is our mission?* Some will refer back to the sentence from the preamble I quoted above, others will point to our scholarships and fellowships, leadership development through Engineering Futures, K-12 STEM outreach through MindSET, or for our Association to be recognized as the premier honor society. All of these are admirable activities and goals. However, to be effective, we must develop a strategic plan and prioritize our goals so we can adequately allocate resources. To help us develop a strategic plan, we have contracted Dr. Brad Gray, a consultant with the Center for Nonprofit Management. He has met with Association Officials at our June meeting and will be talking with others at Convention. To be successful, we need the input of all members, and I encourage you to give your suggestions and feedback as we develop and implement a strategic plan. All attendees will be asked to complete a brief questionnaire at lunch to help in this.

Our Council is also revisiting the Association’s governing documents and leadership structure. The Governance Documentation Restructuring Committee (GDRC) has been meeting for the past year to simplify and streamline them. They total over 22,000 words—the longest of any

honor society. These documents have served us well, but updates are necessary so future Conventions are not faced with discussions on issues like reimbursement for travel via Pullman train car! The vision for these changes will be presented at the 2015 Convention for review and feedback with the restructured documents planned to be debated and voted on at the 2016 Convention. Separately, Councilors Sue Holl and Norman Pih will be presenting significant, substantial changes to the leadership

structure of TBPi at this Convention that were suggested by Dr. Gray. I ask you to carefully consider these changes and their impact to the Association as you vote whether or not to adopt them.

One of the challenges of leading an organization that relies on income of a trust prone to market fluctuations is make sure we have sufficient resources. Tau Beta Pi’s finances are solid and the Trust



Advisory Council is a good steward of our funds. Looking ahead we see challenges as our Association grows and we hope to implement and expand programs for our collegiate chapters and alumni. As you know, TBPi does not charge annual membership dues. The initiation fees that we charge do not fully cover the costs of membership. We are asking the 2015 Convention for a modest increase, but we do not want to have a high fee hinder students from joining us. It is imperative that finances do not prevent us from “marking in a fitting manner.” I am pleased to report that over 10,000 of our alumni and friends contributed a record amount of over \$1.2 million last year. Pat McDaniel, our Director of Development, has worked to achieve this increase to our annual fund, and on behalf of the Association, I thank her. We have also begun the Chapter Endowment Initiative, where we ask donors to support a chapter in perpetuity. We have set an amount of \$100,000 to endow a chapter. Through the tireless efforts of Sherry Jennings-King, our Major Gifts Officer, we have six chapters fully endowed and have received contributions to the endowments of 33 more chapters. I am thankful to all of our members who have supported the Association through their contributions and ask them to stand and be recognized and thanked for their support.

I have two other successes that I would like to report. We initiated a total of 10,170 members in the past year. This is the highest level in over 27 years. I thank our collegiate chapter leadership and our Association Officials for their help in promoting TBPi and engaging the eligible

students. Growth in membership will serve to strengthen our Association and raise our reputation.

We have also had tremendous success in our alumni chapters. Thanks to the work of Tricia Gomulinski, our Director of Alumni Affairs, we have grown the number of alumni chapters to 42 and hosted receptions across the country. This significantly increased the engagement of alumni and reconnected many with us. I enjoyed attending these receptions and meeting up with fellow Tau Bates I've met at past Conventions and look forward to encountering many more alumni! At the end of Convention, we will officially install the Boston alumni chapter.

I would be remiss if I didn't also point out some challenges that we faced during the last year. In 2014, we had 100% of the collegiate chapters turn in their ratification ballots. This year, we had to cast votes for chapters not submitting ballots. While we have Constitutional authority to vote for chapters not submitting ratification ballots, we would prefer to see the chapters decide what is best for the Association. Convention delegates spend long hours debating and reviewing amendments to our governing documents and I ask that all chapters strive to submit valid ballots to complete their work.

Highlights of Actions

I'd also like to report on the highlights of actions taken by the Council over the past year:

The 2014 Convention revised the process by which non-voting delegates at full expense were to be selected. The Council thanks that committee for their criteria list and selected non-voting delegates based on them. We hope that your experience here will strengthen your chapter and you will take back your enthusiasm and implement the ideas you gain at Convention.

The association installed two new chapters—IN Z and AZ Δ. I had the privilege of being the installing deputy in Indiana and was fortunate to see the enthusiasm of the students and their strong desire to become part of our Association. I was able to meet Diane Kewley-Port, a Woman's Badge recipient from MI Γ at the IN Z installation. I am thankful that we have initiated her to full membership and to see her desire to remain connected with us. We also have received the petition of one new chapter—East Carolina University. They will be asking the 2015 Convention to grant them a chapter and I look forward to the continued growth of our Association.

Councillor Alan Passman has been taking the lead in improving our marketing and communication, assisted by the generosity of Murray Rudin. At this Convention, we will be shooting some videos, with the assistance of Jason Rogan, District 2 Director, for a new publication that we are developing and to capture the enthusiasm and spirit of the occasion. I hope all of you consider contributing stories about your chapter's projects and achievements.

We are also implementing changes and improvements to Convention, including more leadership development sessions and social activities during the evenings. Councillor George Morales has coordinated an opt-in design competition for a team of 2-4 engineers. Each team will

be provided with tools and materials for designing and building a sumobot. At the end, each team's sumobot will defend itself against others' designs and prevent itself from being pushed out of the sumo ring. We look forward to seeing the competition and winning designs.

The Council reviewed the recommendations from the 2014 Convention. I have responded to each of the recommendations individually and thank the delegates for their comments and suggestions. As the leaders of our Association, I encourage all of you to let us know how we can improve Convention and the programs, benefits, and services we offer to our chapters and members.

My report would not be complete without acknowledging the contributions of the Association volunteers and staff. We will be recognizing them later at Convention, but I want to especially acknowledge and thank Steve Pierre, the Director of Fellowships, who is retiring after over 20 years leading our Fellowship and Scholarship program, and Russ Pierce, who served as Director of Engineering Futures for 10 years, for their distinguished service. The Association staff ensures that day-to-day operations are maintained and provide exemplary service to chapters and members. I want to acknowledge Ray Thompson who is retiring prior to the next Convention and thank him for his support of our IT systems and for serving as Convention photographer. And finally I want to thank all the members who contributed to TBPI this past year. Whether it is with time, treasure, or both, your contributions allow the Council to preside over a vibrant Association and for us to expand our mission.

It has been a privilege serving as Association President this year. I look forward to continuing to work with you to elevate our Association and welcome any comments, suggestions, or questions you have!

2014-18 PRESIDENT

Joseph P. "J.P." Blackford, *District of Columbia Gamma '95*, is a graduate of the George Washington University with a B.S. degree in civil engineering, summa cum laude, and an M.S. in environmental engineering. He is director of doctoral programs for the engineering management and systems engineering off-campus programs office in the school of engineering and applied science at the George Washington University. Blackford is also a lecturer in engineering management and systems engineering at GW and teaches undergraduate courses in probability and statistics as well as graduate level courses on stochastic processes and decision analysis. Prior to returning to his alma mater, he was the senior environmental services engineer at the American Public Power Association (APPA), a non-partisan organization representing community-owned electric utilities. Blackford served as an Engineering Futures Facilitator since 2003 and was a District 4 Director from 2005-14. He enjoys traveling and outdoor activities in his spare time.