

USA Science & Engineering Festival

The inaugural U.S. Science & Engineering Festival targeting K-12 students took place October 23-24 on the National Mall (D.C.). Tau Beta Pi hosted a booth (#232 of more than 500) and an activity (*Expanding Your MindSET*). The activity was a condensed version of the circuit board MindSET module. The TBP booth was located approximately a block from the back of the Capitol building on the National Mall.

Festival attendees were greeted by our volunteers and asked if they wanted to 'build and test' a lie detector. Once they approached the table, a brief introduction was given detailing the circuit board as a lie detector. Based on age and understanding of the circuit board, attendees were given the chance to test and learn about 'and, or, & not gates.'

Using simple, or more complex, principles of Boolean logic circuit boards were used to test truth statements. If the statement was 'true,' the light indicator on the circuit board would illuminate. If the statement was 'false,' the light indicator would not illuminate.

The weekend's volunteers consisted of about 30 student volunteers from DC Alpha (Howard University), MD Beta (University of Maryland), and MD Delta (University of Maryland Baltimore County). This was a tremendous turnout and the obvious difference between our booth and others. The TBP students were the primary teachers of the activity. [Special thanks to Helen Ji and the MD Beta Chapter for helping coordinate the module and purchasing needed supplies.] The students interacted beautifully with both the young and old Festival attendees. It was truly a joy to watch the interaction and see the young attendees learn.

Tau Beta Pi alumni volunteers present were: Russ Wernerth – district 4 director, Ed (& Kathy) Gorzkowski – MindSET representative, & Gbikeloluwa Oguntimein (GA A '05), advisor and professor at Morgan State University.

The Festival ran from 10am to 5:30pm both days. We were paired with booths from other honor societies and university centers. On Saturday, we were extremely busy and estimated at least 700 Festivalgoers stopped at our booth. Sunday began a bit slower but picked up in the afternoon. Sunday's estimated traffic was at least 500.

Special notes: The weather was terrific all weekend and greatly contributed to the atmosphere of the festival. Dr. Feisel stopped at our booth on Saturday, incognito with his wife. Once identified, he spent some time with our volunteers and posed for pictures. A record was kept of Tau Beta Pi alumni who happened to stop by at our booth. Estimated count was 15. Many local and national contacts were made with educators and parents interested in the MindSET Program (follow-ups to be made).