

Tau Beta Pi Announces Dr. Steven M. Cramer, P.E., as 2008 McDonald Mentor

Tau Beta Pi, the engineering honor society, has named its third McDonald Mentor. The award was created to celebrate 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. While the primary goal of Tau Beta Pi is to recognize students of superior scholarship and exemplary character and to honor eminent practicing engineers, the Association also lauds excellence in engineering education and in the ethical practice of engineering.

Dr. Steven M. Cramer, P.E., *Wisconsin Alpha '79*, associate dean of academic affairs and professor in the department of civil and environmental engineering at the University of Wisconsin-Madison college of engineering, is the *2008 Tau Beta Pi- McDonald Mentor*. He will be honored on October 25, 2008, at the 103rd annual national Convention to be held in Sacramento, California. Tau Beta Pi President Dr. Larry A. Simonson, P.E. will present \$1,000 and an engraved medallion to Dr. Cramer. Another \$1,000 grant will be presented to the Wisconsin Alpha Chapter of Tau Beta Pi at the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

Established in 2005 by Marion and Capers W. McDonald and the Association, the McDonald Mentor award recognizes engineering educators or professionals in industry, government, or service organizations who have shown true concern for the individual, supporting an environment for developing talents, and who have earned respect and recognition for their contributions to their field and to the greater community.

An excellent teacher and advisor, Dr. Cramer was cited by students and peers for his years of consistently positive interactions with students and for his work to encourage them to reach their full potential, all of which have established him as an invigorating role model for students, faculty, and advisory peers.

Dr. Cramer graduated from the University of Wisconsin-Madison in 1979 with a B.S. in civil and environmental engineering. Moving to Colorado State University's department of civil engineering, Dr. Cramer gained an M.S. in 1981 and his Ph.D. in 1984. He returned to Madison in 1984 as an assistant professor and has become an authority on the subject of wood structures and concrete materials.

Tributes have been paid to Dr. Cramer's merits as a teacher, mentor, coach, and role model for students. He is actively involved in the UW-Madison chapter of ASCE and has been advisor to both the concrete canoe and steel bridge teams for more than 10 years. In 2007, the canoe team won its fifth straight national title, and no other school in the 30-year history of the competition has won more than two consecutive national titles. His leadership has been praised for being available to help the students when needed without micro-managing the teams. The mature and gracious attitudes of the winning team members is further testament to his unique capabilities as a mentor. The success has created a positive *esprit de corps* among students, and has also boosted student interest in engineering and the department. A colleague who has observed hundreds of mentors in similar milieus feels that Dr. Cramer "stands head and shoulders above the rest."

Dr. Cramer's students rank his teaching, via student evaluations, as among the best in the department. His classes have a reputation for being technically demanding. His dean describes him as a very gifted teacher who creates a culture of high expectations and high support to help all students succeed. He is a fellow of the UW-Madison Teaching Academy and has received the outstanding professor award from the ASCE student chapter nine times, including the last six consecutive semesters. He has an active research program, with a reputation for publishing high quality papers. Dr. Cramer's portfolio includes funding from leading federal agencies and strong participation from the private sector. Through his research, Dr. Cramer has mentored more than 60 students who have gone on to positions of leadership in practice and academia. He recently advised ten students whose total research activity was funded in excess of \$632,000.

Dr. Cramer has taken part in diversity initiatives like the school of education's College for Kids, the Minority Research Apprentice Program and the graduate school's Summer Undergraduate Research Experience. His contribution in different capacities at department, college, and institutional levels has included service on the university committee, the six-member executive committee of the faculty senate that addresses broad issues on the UW-Madison campus.

Dr. Cramer has also made his mark off campus, bringing back experience to help students and colleagues. This includes representing engineers on the U.S. Department of Commerce's American Lumber Standard Committee, as well as serving as an associate editor of the *Journal of Structural Engineering*. He is a member of a National Academy of Science panel that reviews housing issues.

He has been a visiting scientist at the materials technology division of research and development at Weyerhaeuser Company, Tacoma, WA, for whom he has also been a consultant. Dr. Cramer has consulted for a number of insurance companies and law firms, as well as the Truss Plate Institute and the Wood Products Promotion Council. He holds three U.S. patents for methods of measuring properties in woods.

Dr. Cramer's work on campus, both job-related and volunteer, and his respect and support of students, the university, and fellow faculty embodies the ideal of professor as mentor. For his contributions to the personal growth of students and student groups, fellow faculty, and engineering education, Dr. Steven M. Cramer is the 2008 Tau Beta Pi-McDonald Mentor.

Tau Beta Pi, the world's largest engineering society, has initiated more than 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.