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CONTACT: Pat McDaniel  
pat@tbp.org

## **It's Not As Lonely At the Top Tau Beta Pi Honor Society Demonstrates Above Average Diversity in its Leadership**

Women engineering students attending the October 2005 annual Convention of Tau Beta Pi, the engineering honor society, find that the Convention attendees are more diverse than the classrooms in which they normally sit.

Data released last week by the American Society for Engineering Education indicates that during the past five years, the percentage of women who are awarded bachelor's degrees in engineering has remained unchanged at slightly over 20%. Yet in recent years, nearly 30% of the Tau Beta Pi Convention student delegates have been female. These delegates are predominantly seniors who attend the Convention because of their leadership roles within their respective collegiate chapters. Not only are they solidly on their way to graduation, but they are excelling.

While the 20% graduate ratio has remained flat during the past five years, the representation of female members in each class year of Tau Beta Pi members has hovered at 26%, plus or minus one point. Additionally, women make up nearly 29% of the collegiate chapters' top two leadership positions and 35% of the Association's national officials, which students—both male and female—are sure to notice.

Dr. Matthew Ohland, President of Tau Beta Pi, isn't surprised by these numbers at all. "As Advisor to Clemson University's chapter, I have noticed the prevalence of women members and officers for years. Two of the last five chapter Presidents were women, including 2002 Clemson alumna Melissa Fort, who brought the chapter back to life after a dormant period. Women students are more likely to be eligible, more likely to join, and more likely to be active once they join."

While it is known that women leave engineering at a higher rate than men do, successful female graduates credit a positive peer group and involvement in activities as key factors in completing a rugged curriculum. Women engineering students gravitate to organizations such as Tau Beta Pi because they encourage meaningful group service activities and are comprised of other talented and disciplined female members with whom they can identify.

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**Tau Beta Pi is the engineering honor society, now with 229 collegiate chapters, 19 active alumnus chapters, and a membership of more than 478,000. Engineering students in the top eighth of their junior class or top fifth of their senior class scholastically are elected to membership on the basis of character. Graduate engineers may be elected on the basis of their eminent achievements in the engineering profession. The national Headquarters of the Tau Beta Pi Association is located in Knoxville on the main campus of the University of Tennessee.**