The 1998 Tau Beta Pi Standard of Excellence Award has been bestowed upon William T. Snyder, Tennessee Alpha ’54, chancellor of the University of Tennessee, Knoxville. This award was established to recognize alumni who have demonstrated outstanding adherence to the ideals of Tau Beta Pi (integrity, breadth of interest, adaptability, and unselfish activity) and to fostering a spirit of liberal culture in our society. Its second purpose is to provide examples of excellence both in leadership and in character to members of collegiate chapters.

Dr. Snyder was honored during ceremonies in Knoxville on December 3, 1998, at which Secretary-Treasurer James D. Froula presented a commemorative plaque to him and a $500 scholarship in his name to the University of Tennessee’s college of engineering for a student to be chosen by the Tennessee Alpha Chapter. A committee of nine student and three alumnus delegates made the selection at the 93rd Convention in Manhattan, KS.

Music is the avocation of Dr. William T. Snyder, chancellor of the University of Tennessee, Knoxville, who was nominated for the Association’s prestigious award by the Great Smoky Mountains Alumnus Chapter. The best birthday present that he was ever offered was the opportunity to play the mighty Wurlitzer organ at Knoxville’s downtown Tennessee Theatre. The house organist since 1979, he often practices in the old theatre and continues to assist personally with repairing the pipes and valves. Today, a 19-song collection of pops and silent-movie favorites, including “The Tennessee Waltz,” is available on his CD entitled The Love of Music.

The professor of engineering science and mechanics at UTK is a Knoxville native and a 1954 graduate of the university. He holds advanced degrees in mechanical engineering from Northwestern University and taught at state universities in North Carolina and New York before joining the University of Tennessee Space Institute in Tullahoma in 1964 as professor of aerospace engineering.

He returned to the Knoxville campus in 1970 as head of engineering science and mechanics and served as dean of engineering during 1983-91. He was a leader in energy conservation, holding state and national workshops on energy conservation/management techniques, especially as they applied to industry and business. He developed graduate courses and textbooks, testified before Congress on pending energy legislation, and became a charter member of the Association of Energy Engineers. He is a co-author of the textbook Energy Management Theory and Practice, published by Marcel Dekker, Inc., NY, 1980, and has contributed articles to numerous professional journals and conference proceedings. As an advisor to mayors and other elected officials, he is recognized as a principal architect of the cooperative relationship that exists among those at the university, Oak Ridge National Laboratory, and area business leaders; he personally fostered developing the “Tennessee Technology Corridor,” chaired WATtec, and advised various municipal and state committees.

Approximately 30 Tau Bates serve as presidents or chancellors of U.S. universities, only half of which are institutions with varied disciplines. In 1992 after a brief internship as vice chancellor of academic affairs, Dr. Snyder was chosen chancellor of the university’s Knoxville campus. The institution serves 25,000 students and 5,500 staff employees and has a $330 million budget. Under his leadership and with his concern for enrolling at-risk students, Chancellor Snyder has led the university to the top 50 ranking of national institutions.

Dr. Snyder is ever ready to lead as well as entertain, and to ensure community spirit — either at the helm or at the keyboard. 

William T. Snyder, TN A ’54

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