In recognition of outstanding lifetime achievements, Stephen D. Bechtel Jr., P.E., Indiana Alpha ’46, is a 2008 Tau Beta Pi Distinguished Alumnus. He is retired chairman and a director of Bechtel Group Inc.

Mr. Bechtel is an outstanding model of adherence to the ideals of Tau Beta Pi. Viewed by many as one of the world’s most accomplished and respected engineers, he has served his family, his profession, and his country to form a legacy deserving of honor.

Mr. Bechtel holds a bachelor’s degree in civil engineering from Purdue University and a master’s degree in business administration from Stanford University. He also holds honorary doctorates from Purdue University and the University of Colorado.

He served as the third-generation head of the worldwide engineering and construction business, Bechtel Group Inc., which began in 1898 as a Western railroad construction firm. Mr. Bechtel was first employed by one of the family engineering-construction companies in 1941. After holding a variety of jobs in the field and at Bechtel headquarters, he served as president during 1960-90.

Mr. Bechtel became known for his expertise in construction management. He led his company toward global prominence in constructing complex and “first-of-a-kind” projects. Under his leadership the company enjoyed an eightfold growth while tackling projects such as the San Onofre nuclear generating station, the James Bay hydroelectric project in Quebec, the industrial city of Jubail, Saudi Arabia, and Boston’s Central Artery.

As characterized by Dr. Charles M. Vest, president of the National Academy of Engineering, “Long before globalization became a widely recognized phenomenon, Stephen D. Bechtel Jr. was engaged in construction, mining, project management, and other large-scale endeavors in every corner of the world.”

Mr. Bechtel received the 1980 Herbert Hoover medal, the 1999 National Academy of Engineering founders award, and the 2003 American Association of Engineering Societies’ Kenneth A. Roe award and is an honorary fellow of the U.K.’s Institution of Chemical Engineers and Institution of Civil Engineers.

He served as a member of six national committees under three U.S. Presidents, and in 1991 President Bush awarded him the National Medal of Technology, the highest American honor bestowed for technical achievement—in recognition of his outstanding leadership in the engineering profession and for developing and applying advanced management techniques to world-class industrial projects.

Chairman emeritus and director of the Fremont Group, a company that operates in marketable securities, natural resources, and other selected investments, Mr. Bechtel has served on numerous boards, including those of General Motors Corporation, Remington Arms Co., Inc., and IBM Corporation.

Known as an individual who has recognized the importance of “giving back” to the profession, he is chairman of the S.D. Bechtel Jr. Foundation, which supports well-managed non-profit organizations.

Dr. Patricia D. Galloway, P.E., CEO, Pegasus Global Holdings, Inc., explains, “...Mr. Bechtel's achievements are... only highlights to the vast number of additional activities that I believe distinguish him from other recognized members of the engineering community.”

Mr. Bechtel excels in his dedication and devotion to engineering education and supporting women and minorities in engineering. He has personally volunteered thousands of hours and great resources in efforts such as the TBI K-12 MindSET Program to help our young prepare for the challenges engineers face in the 21st century.