

Tau Beta Pi Announces the 2026 Distinguished Alumni

Knoxville, TN — Tau Beta Pi, the Engineering Honor Society, has named the recipient of its 30th annual Distinguished Alumni Award: Gerald D. Griffin, *IN A '56*. This award recognizes alumni who have demonstrated adherence to the ideals of Tau Beta Pi and fostered a spirit of liberal culture on local, national, and international levels. Each will receive a commemorative plaque, and a \$2,000 scholarship will be given in the name of each winner to a deserving student member of TBP.



In recognition of a distinguished technical career advancing space flight and contributions to improving society, Gerald D. Griffin is named a **2026 TBP Distinguished Alumnus**.

Mr. Griffin received a B.S. in aeronautical engineering from Texas A&M University and was commissioned as a 2nd Lieutenant in the U.S. Air Force. After flight training, he served as weapons systems officer in the 84th Fighter Interceptor Squadron flying F-89J Scorpion and F-101B Voodoo aircrafts. He was promoted to 1st Lieutenant before leaving active duty and then Captain before leaving active reserve.

Mr. Griffin joined NASA in 1964 as a flight controller at the Manned Spacecraft Center. In 1968, he was named a flight director and assigned to the first crewed mission of the Apollo Program. He served as flight director during all of the Apollo manned missions, including nine missions to the Moon, six with lunar landings. His “Gold Team” conducted half of the Apollo lunar landings and was scheduled for the Apollo 13 landing, but after an oxygen tank explosion they played a key role in the safe return of the astronauts.

He became Johnson Space Center’s third director (1982-86) and was responsible for NASA’s prime center for human space flight R&D and operations. Because of his real-life role as a flight director, Gerry served as a technical advisor for the movie Apollo 13. He’s since worked on four other feature films, and is a member of the Screen Actors Guild.

On July 4, 2025, Mr. Griffin’s community in Hunt, TX, was devastated by a flood with the loss of many lives, homes, and businesses. The local preservation society was tasked with care of the area’s infrastructure and culture. When the flood took place the organization needed to raise money and allocate the funds for the community. Until the end of 2025, Gerry served as Executive Director of the allocation committee, and helped in any way he could.

In addition to his career accomplishments, Mr. Griffin is an avid supporter of higher education as demonstrated through involvement on numerous boards and councils.

Gerald D. Griffin is the fourth recipient of the Asad M. Madni Distinguished Alumnus/Alumna Award. Dr. Madni, CA E ’69, made a gift in 2023 to permanently endow this award to annually recognize one Tau Beta Pi with this distinction. He believes that a successful professional career includes philanthropy and considers it a privilege to give back and recognize those who echo the same value system.