Verne C. Harnish

Verne C. Harnish has been chosen Tau Beta Pi’s first Laureate to be recognized for campus leadership and service. A 1982 graduate of Wichita State University, he was first in his class, majoring in mechanical engineering. Capable and energetic, he has contributed widely to student life on campus through a variety of activities. Student lobbyist, senator, committee chair, editor, organizer, speaker, scholar, pianist, and executive officer are all titles that testify to his abilities.

Through this array of titles, several predominate. As president of his Omicron Delta Kappa chapter, he activated many programs to help foster the spirit of liberal culture that both Tau Beta Pi and ODK seek to foster. He brought people together by holding meetings in faculty homes, inviting outside speakers to discuss subjects like stress and health care, and honoring university employees at an annual banquet for their often-unrecognized supportive role. His efforts were unrivaled as he was named ODK 1981 National Leader of the Year.

He became active in the state-wide student lobby ASK (Associated Students of Kansas) during his freshman year. For two years he was campus director and served one year on the board of directors. In 1979, he was a university delegate to the national conference in Washington, DC.

Also active in WSU’s Student Government Association, he was first elected to a senate seat, chaired the academics committee, and most recently served on the University Forum Board responsible for selecting guest speakers.

For his fraternity, Sigma Phi Epsilon, he served as philanthropy and scholarship chairman. He played keyboards in the fraternity’s last three musical productions and won a place in the university’s talent contest on the piano. As an executive officer, he initiated and edited the fraternity’s twice-monthly newsletter.

A frequent speaker, as well as a writer, he has presented the keynote address at national conferences, been a student speaker at faculty gatherings, spoken to other student leaders at regional and national honors conferences, and lectured to high school students on behalf of the university.

Verne most recently helped charter a chapter of the American Society of Heating, Refrigerating and Air Conditioning Engineers on campus and was that organization’s first president. He has also been busy helping to organize the regional leadership conference of the Young Republicans as Wichita’s new chairman.

His energy has been applied to tasks off campus too. For four years he was employed in sales and engineering by Superior Supply Co. And for a 6-month period he was director of sales and marketing for the $10-million-a-year organization.

Since March, he has been employed on the staff of the Center for Entrepreneurship of WSU which has been charged with developing a cooperative relationship between the Center, the College of Engineering, and the College of Business Administration. The thrust is to bridge the gap between development and evaluation and the marketing and financing of products. Verne’s leadership skills, practiced during his college years, have been an important asset in developing interdisciplinary programs at the Center.

As stated in the Preamble to Tau Beta Pi’s Constitution, with a two-fold purpose, to bestow honor and to “...foster a spirit of liberal culture...” The Association has successfully fulfilled its mission of recognizing outstanding engineering students and making available, on a competitive basis, scholarships that are selected on the basis of academic achievements in the field of engineering.

In an effort to implement Tau Beta Pi’s goals, Paul H. Robbins conceived a program that would encourage the “Laureate Program.” It has evolved over the past few years, in response to the Washington DC area, the Executive Committee’s call for contributions from members, the support of the Foundation, and the help of contributions from many Tau Beta Pi members.

Councilor John Law, Laureate Committee chairman, noted that “the single most important contribution of President Bender” was pleasing that President Bender presented the first award to Verne C. Harnish.

THE BENT of Tau Beta Pi

Tau Beta Pi's first two Laureates have been named recognizing engineering students who have distinguished themselves.

Molly K. Brennan of Michigan Alpha received the award. Verne C. Harnish of Kansas Beta became the first Laureate to foster leadership.

The two Laureates, nominated by their local chapter Directors, were honored during ceremonies at the Tau Beta Pi National Convention in Idaho, October 16. Each received a $2,500 scholarship.

President Donald L. Bender.

The Laureate Program is being directed by Tau Beta Pi Directors on the selection of the Honorary Laureate award and the selection of the Honorary Laureate award for recognizing outstanding engineering students and making available, on a competitive basis, scholarships that are selected on the basis of academic achievements in the field of engineering.

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