



FOR RELEASE
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Tau Beta Pi Announces 2014 Laureates

Tau Beta Pi, the engineering honor society, has named five Laureates in the Association's annual program to recognize gifted engineering students who have excelled in areas beyond their technical majors.

The 2014 Tau Beta Pi Laureates are Bingxuan Dennis Chua, a recent graduate from Cornell University, cited for his achievements in the arts; Christopher M. Douglas, a 2014 graduate of Bradley University, cited for his diverse achievements; Lisa N. Garrett, a graduate of Iowa State University, cited for her diverse achievements; Erika M. Pliner, a graduating senior of the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, cited for her achievements in athletics; and Tonya J. Whitehead, a Ph.D. candidate at Wayne State University, cited for her service contributions. This brings the total to 93 remarkable Tau Bates that have been named Laureates since 1982.

The Laureate Program exists to further Tau Beta Pi's second fundamental purpose as stated in the Association's Constitution: ". . . to foster a spirit of liberal culture in engineering colleges." The primary concern of the Society is to recognize students of superior scholarship and exemplary character and to honor eminent practicing engineers. The Society also encourages excellence in engineering education and in the ethical practice of engineering.

The Laureates will be honored with other 2014 national award winners on October 4, at the 109th annual Convention in Spokane, WA. Tau Beta Pi President Larry A. Simonson, Ph.D., P.E., will present each with a \$2,500 cash award and a commemorative plaque. Their biographies follow:

(more)

BINGXUAN DENNIS CHUA, *New York Delta '14*, graduated with a B.S. degree in chemical engineering from Cornell University and will pursue a master's degree.

Dennis is president of the university's largest dance group, "Base Productions." The service-oriented dance group served as a vehicle for promoting dance throughout the local community. He also helped organize the citywide "Basement Party" with all proceeds donated to charity. Not only is he the leader of the group, but he is also a talented dancer and an inspiration to others.

He is passionate about different cultures and has traveled to six of the seven continents. During his travels, he has served as a soldier, volunteered as a nurse, protected lions and other endangered animals, worked as an investment banker, and set up mobile clinics in Peru.

On campus, Dennis served as president of the New York Delta Chapter of Tau Beta Pi, was a 2013 TBP Scholar, and has pioneered various new programs to increase member activity. He was recently named a 2014 Merrill Presidential Scholar, the highest honor given by Cornell University to a graduating senior. His multitude of talents and artistic contributions were summarized, "Dennis possesses an awe-inspiring spirit of liberal culture, and is one of the most well-rounded and successful engineers on campus."

CHRISTOPHER M. DOUGLAS, *Illinois Delta '14*, is a mechanical engineering graduate of Bradley University and will pursue a Ph.D. at Georgia Tech as a presidential fellow.

His diverse achievements include qualifying for the 2014 Triathlon World Championships representing team USA, serving as president of the university triathlon club, leading the IL Delta Chapter of Tau Beta Pi as a two-year president, and conducting MEMS research.

Chris got involved with the triathlon club in 2012, and has consistently placed in the top ten percent of collegiate races entered. As the leader of the triathlon club, he handled the planning and execution of the indoor triathlon event, including securing sponsors, website management, and hosting athletes at his apartment. His enthusiasm for competition also led to the club nearly tripling in size.

His leadership within the Association began at the 2012 Convention as a committee chair. Chris took office as chapter president in 2013 and has since coordinated four chapter initiations. He was elected as chair of another committee at the 2013 Convention, chosen as a 2014 TBP Fellow, and selected to a three-year term on the TBP Student Advisory Board. A recommendation letter cited Chris for his infectious enthusiasm and ability to motivate students and faculty to reach out to the community.

LISA N. GARRETT, *Iowa Alpha '14*, graduated from Iowa State University with a degree in mechanical engineering with plans to attend law school.

Lisa is an accomplished musician, a proven leader, and a selfless volunteer with experience in professional and non-profit arenas. She joined the ISU Marching Band and Jazz 2 concert band playing the alto and bari saxophone, respectively. She was also selected to play the piccolo in the women's basketball pep band and was active in the choir.

Lisa was elected president of the ISU chapter of Kappa Kappa Psi, the honorary band service fraternity; In 2012, under her leadership Psi was recognized as one of the top 15 chapters in the nation. She also served as a "big brother" mentoring new Psi members.

Her contributions to the local Ames community include being a Sunday school helper, participation in the dance marathon for the Univ. of Iowa Children's Hospital, and through other work with CyServe. She dedicated her time for more than two years as the recording secretary for the IA Alpha Chapter of TBP.

It was repeatedly mentioned that Lisa is a team player with great skill and leadership. These traits can also be seen in her intramural athletic successes, her high marks from two internships, and scholastic recognitions.

ERIKA M. PLINER, *Wisconsin Gamma '14*, will graduate in December with a degree in mechanical engineering from the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee.

Erika has made an impact as a member of the UWM swimming and diving team beginning when she broke the school records in the 100m and 200m backstroke for freshmen. The next season, she was a contributor as the team won the Horizon-League Championship title.

Her participation on the athletics teams goes beyond individual accomplishments as she is an effective leader and has twice been elected team captain by her teammates. In this role she does more than encourage teammates, as she also works with new student-athletes to help them adapt to collegiate responsibilities, assists with class work, and encourages self-sufficiency.

In addition to the more than 300 competitive races in her collegiate career, Erika has worked for two years as an undergraduate researcher. She is a former TBP chapter treasurer and is an active volunteer with Destination Imagination (DI). She has participated for four years in local DI competitions and workshops helping more than 500 teams develop collaborative, engineering, and presentation skills.

In summary, her experience and involvement as a student athlete that “always strives and encourages others to achieve their top capability” will help her achieve her future goals as an engineer.

TONYA J. WHITEHEAD, *Michigan Epsilon '15*, is majoring in biomedical engineering at Wayne State University (WSU).

Her impressive dedication to service stems from her passion for biomedical engineering, education, and animals. In 2010, she co-founded and is currently president of the non-profit Pawsitive Impact for Pets, Inc., which helps keep pets safe, healthy, and united with their owners.

Tonya's support of education has led her to work as a secretary, convention chair, and bylaws chair for the Michigan Parent Teacher Association. She is also involved with the Society of Women Engineers, the Biomedical Engineering Society, and helped to organize a celebration of the founder of biomedical engineering at WSU.

In addition, Tonya has the distinction of serving as a TBP chapter officer in every semester since joining the MI Epsilon Chapter, most recently as cataloger and recording secretary. On campus, she also works as a graduate student researcher, studying neural tissue engineering, and as a teaching assistant.

Her humanitarian efforts include volunteer work for the Shiawassee County Humane Society, Mid-Michigan Boxer Rescue, and as an aide for handicapped students in college. The common theme of her nomination packet is her willingness to go above and beyond expectations and ability to share her energy and compassion to help others, animals included.

Tau Beta Pi is the Engineering Honor Society, founded at Lehigh University in 1885. It has collegiate chapters at 242 engineering colleges in the United States and active alumnus chapters in 39 cities. It has initiated more than 545,000 members in its 129-year history and is the world's largest engineering society. (See www.tbp.org)