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CONTACT: Patricia McDaniel
865/546-4578

Tau Beta Pi Announces Dr. Carter J. Kerk as 2006 McDonald Mentor

Tau Beta Pi, the engineering honor society, has named its inaugural McDonald Mentor in a newly created program to celebrate excellence in mentoring and advising among Tau Beta Pi educators and engineers who have consistently supported the personal and professional development of their students and colleagues. While the primary goal of Tau Beta Pi is to recognize students of superior scholarship and exemplary character and to honor eminent practicing engineers, the Association also lauds excellence in engineering education and in the ethical practice of engineering.

Dr. Carter J. Kerk, P.E., *South Dakota Alpha '81*, associate professor of industrial engineering at the South Dakota School of Mines and Technology, is the *2006 Tau Beta Pi McDonald Mentor*. He will be honored on October 7, 2006, at the 101st annual national Convention to be held in Denver, Colorado. Tau Beta Pi President Dr. Matthew W. Ohland and McDonald Award co-founder, Capers W. McDonald, *North Carolina Gamma '74*, will present \$1,000 and an engraved medallion to Dr. Kerk. Another \$1,000 grant will be presented to the South Dakota Alpha Chapter of Tau Beta Pi.

Established in 2005 by Marion and Capers W. McDonald and the Executive Council, the McDonald Mentor award recognizes engineering educators or professionals in industry, government, or service organizations who have shown true concern for the individual, supporting an environment for developing talents, and who have earned respect and recognition for their contributions to their field and to the greater community.

Dr. Kerk was cited by students and peers for his genuine concern for others, accessibility, service to his school and community, his personal integrity, and tireless work to encourage excellence, all of which have established him as an invigorating role model for students, faculty, and advisory peers.

Dr. Kerk has proven to be an inexhaustible wellspring of support for engineering students seeking professional and personal excellence. Formally, he advises 30 incoming freshmen and 60 non-first-year students, but his sincere interest consistently reaches uncounted others throughout their undergraduate years and even beyond. An excellent teacher, Dr. Kerk's presentations make clear connections between theory and real-world applications. His door is noted for always being open to any who need his help, whether or not they are enrolled in his classes. This also holds true for those who call his home phone number, which he willingly prints on all class syllabi.

Students, faculty, and alumni of his college confirm that Dr. Kerk offers the same genuine attention to

each of the many students who regularly form lines outside his office. He is praised for offering academic support, employment-seeking assistance, suggestions on creating resumes, discussing study skills and techniques, writing letters of recommendations for employment and scholarships, encouraging student activities in professional societies, and providing advice on personal matters. Even after his students graduate, Dr. Kerk sends regular emails to keep them informed of departmental events and of interesting job openings. His support and practical assistance never wane. Years later, when weighing advanced degrees vs. job offers, Dr. Kerk remains an involved and encouraging mentor.

Dr. Kerk has lent his esteemed services to numerous search and advisory committees at SDSMT. He serves as faculty advisor for the student chapters of Alpha Pi Mu, Tau Beta Pi, the Triangle Fraternity, and the Institute of Industrial Engineers. He also bestows voluntary mentoring on his fellow faculty, taking each new hire in the industrial engineering department under his wing, to assure them a smooth transition to SDSMT.

Dr. Kerk completed his bachelor's and master's degrees in industrial and management systems engineering at the University of Nebraska. After several years employed as an industrial engineer in Nebraska, he accepted a position as a research assistant at the University of Michigan, obtaining a Ph.D. in 1992 in the area of industrial and operations engineering. His specialty areas include ergonomics, human factors, biomechanics, and safety engineering. Grateful for the impact of his own mentors on his success, Dr. Kerk acknowledges the following people: Robert A. Sladky, VP of tube mill engineering at Roll-Kraft; Drs. Michael W. Riley and David J. Cochran, industrial and management systems engineering department at the University of Nebraska, and Dr. Don B. Chaffin at the University of Michigan's department of industrial and operations engineering.

Dr. Kerk spent five years as an assistant professor in the industrial engineering and nuclear engineering departments at Texas A&M University, where his talents as an educator earned him the industrial engineering department's most valuable professor in 1995. Since his move to SDSMT in 1997, he has received awards for his work in ergonomics, workers' safety, and academics, including an NSF award in research. He was recognized with a governor's award for teaching with technology in 1999, the Benard Ennega Award for excellence in teaching and motivating students in 2002, and in 2005, a distinguished service award from the American Society of Safety Engineers Foundation. He was inducted into Tau Beta Pi in 2000 and is also a member of Alpha Pi Mu industrial engineering honor society.

In the community, Dr. Kerk is also known for assuming leadership positions with the Girl Scouts, Boy Scouts, Cub Scouts, and Knights of Columbus. He has worked for the past nine summers with the NASA honors program for American Indian students with Oglala Lakota College and SDSMT and the past four summers as director of the "Bridges to Success" program for American Indian students.

Dr. Kerk's presence on campus and his respect and support of students and fellow faculty extends far beyond the numerous awards and formal honors. He has earned a reputation for not only comprehensive technical expertise, but for also having what one student called simply "the *biggest* heart." For his genuine concern for students, faculty, and administrators alike, Dr. Carter Kerk is the 2006 Tau Beta Pi- McDonald Mentor.

Tau Beta Pi, the world's largest engineering society, has initiated 485,000 members since it was founded in 1885. Headquartered in Knoxville, Tennessee, the Association has 230 active collegiate chapters and 16 active alumnus chapters throughout the country.