

Tau Beta Pi Announces 2024 McDonald Mentor Steve E. Watkins, Ph.D.

Knoxville, TN — Tau Beta Pi, The Engineering Honor Society, has named its 18th McDonald Mentor. Established in 2005 by the Association and Marion and Capers W. McDonald, *NC Gamma '74*, the award recognizes excellence in engineering educators or professionals who consistently support the personal and professional development of their students and colleagues in industry, government, or service organizations.

Steve E. Watkins, Ph.D., *MO B '83*, is the 2024 Tau Beta Pi McDonald Mentor, and will receive \$1,000, a bronze engraved medallion, and replica lapel pin. A \$1,000 grant will be presented to the nominating chapter, the Missouri Beta Chapter at the Missouri University of Science & Technology (S&T).



Dr. Watkins earned B.S. and M.S. degrees in electrical engineering from the University of Missouri-Rolla (now the Missouri University of Science & Technology) and a Ph.D., also in electrical engineering, from the University of Texas at Austin.

A faculty member at S&T since 1989 with technical interests in smart structures, sensing systems, and engineering education, he also served as interim ECE department chair for two years and as associate chair of undergraduate studies for eleven years. Dr. Watkins has served as a Distinguished Visiting Professor at the U.S. Air Force Academy, as an IEEE-USA Congressional Fellow in the office of California Congressman Dana Rohrabacher, as a visiting physicist at the Phillips Laboratory (USAF) — Kirtland Air Force Base, Albuquerque, New Mexico, and as a visiting scholar at the Basic Research Laboratories of NTT in Japan.

In his nomination, Dr. Watkins was lauded for “supporting S&T activities in the professional engineering community for Tau Bates, students, alumni, and faculty.” An advocate for learning in engineering ethics, Dr. Watkins helped develop the IEEE Student Ethics Competition program in 2004 and has championed this competition through leadership positions and articles in American Society for Engineering Education (ASEE) publications.

Dr. Watkins served as Editor-in-Chief of *The Bridge* of IEEE-HKN magazine for eight years. During that time, it was converted to an online format and received eight APEX Awards of Excellence, including a 2023 Grand Award. With professional development as another area of focus, he has presented at eleven college campuses, the 2018 TBP Convention, the IEEE-USA Leadership Conference, and many more.

Dr. Watkins became a MO Beta Chapter Advisor in 2014, has served as Chief Advisor since 2020, and also advises IEEE-HKN (32 years) and Toastmasters (28 years). As a mentor, he solicits candidates for awards and provides references and endorsements for their nominations. Dr. Watkins also mentors junior faculty and is effective in recruiting female students for undergraduate degrees. A colleague stated that “Dr. Watkins has a heart for teaching and mentoring students and works to create a positive environment for them to grow professionally.” He supports his department’s recruiting programs, most notably by coordinating a summer camp for middle school students in robotics. “In summary, Dr. Watkins is well aware that education extends far beyond the classroom and seeks opportunities to engage with students to foster their growth in many dimensions.”

For his sustained contributions as an advisor and mentor, commitment to professional development, and advocacy for colleagues and students, we honor Dr. Steve Watkins as the **2024 Tau Beta Pi McDonald Mentor**.