

Tau Beta Pi Announces 2026 Outstanding Advisor

Joel K. Ness, Ph.D.

Knoxville, TN — Tau Beta Pi, The Engineering Honor Society, has named its 32nd Outstanding Advisor. Established in 1996 by the Association, the award recognizes outstanding performance among chapter advisors who make important contributions to students and collegiate chapters. Selection is made by a committee of deans at engineering colleges and past award winners.



Joel Ness, Chief Advisor to the North Dakota Beta Chapter, is **the 2026 TBP Outstanding Advisor**. He will receive \$1,000, a commemorative plaque, and a \$1,000 grant will be presented to the University of North Dakota (UND) engineering discretionary fund. Dr. Ness has served as Chief Advisor to the ND Beta Chapter for 27+ years. His consistent leadership and sustained excellence has shaped lofty standards despite the chapter's small size.

He earned a bachelor's degree in mathematics from Mayville State University, an M.S. in applied mathematics from UND, and a Ph.D. in engineering mechanics from Iowa State University. Dr. Ness joined the faculty at UND in 1994 and recently announced his retirement as a professor. Dr. Ness remains an active member of a local jazz band where he plays trumpet. He is also a local farmer and owner of J & K Ness Farms in Minnesota producing wheat, soybeans, and other small grains. His mentorship inspires officers, guiding them into successful roles which enables the chapter to make bold new enhancements. A recent example is a fundamental shift to the tutoring system, allowing easier access. Such actions ensure the longevity of the chapter and demonstrate a true alignment with the Association's goals.

Dr. Ness' leadership has seen the chapter grow from only a few members to more than fifty. In addition, his strategy for continued improvement has seen new projects and events, such as an annual Pi Mile Run, volunteering with First Robotics, and hosting Engineering Futures sessions. These activities provide service to the local community, leading to several TBP Chapter Project Awards and the first ND Beta Laureate in 2008. To cap off the list of substantial projects, Dr. Ness found that a new Bent monument was necessary to improve the chapter's image on campus. Several alumni stepped forward and donated to this cause which illustrates Dr. Ness' influence and long-lasting impact. In the end, \$20,000 was raised and the new Bent monument was erected in 2018. During his 32-year career, his research interests included mechanical design, mechanical vibration, and mathematical modeling. He's been nominated and awarded several teaching awards, including the UND Outstanding Student-Athlete Mentor in 2025. A former colleague and current university president had this to say in his recommendation, "Joel has been a cornerstone of engineering education at UND. As a longtime instructor in foundational courses such as statics and dynamics, he has shaped the academic experience of nearly every engineering student who has come through the institution. He understands that excellence in engineering education is not just about individual achievement, but about building systems where students support one another."

For his passion and support, for being a role model to the ideal of a chapter advisor, and for enduring quality in advising, teaching, mentorship, and service, **Dr. Joel Ness is the 2026 Tau Beta Pi Outstanding Advisor**.

Tau Beta Pi is The Engineering Honor Society, founded at Lehigh University in 1885. With 259 collegiate chapters and 52 active alumni chapters, it has initiated more than 657,000 members in its 141-year history and is the world's largest engineering society (see www.tbp.org). Contact Renea Lewis (r.lewis@tbp.org) for more details.