



FOR RELEASE
JULY 19, 2012

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Tau Beta Pi Announces Dr. Abigail M. Richards, as 2012 Outstanding Advisor

Tau Beta Pi, the engineering honor society, has named its 18th Outstanding Advisor in its program to recognize engineering faculty who make important contributions to students and collegiate chapters. 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. Abigail (Abbie) M. Richards, *Washington Beta '99*, assistant professor and biological engineering program coordinator at Montana State University, and Chief Advisor to the Montana Alpha Chapter, is the *2012 Tau Beta Pi Outstanding Advisor*. She will be honored on September 29, 2012, at the 107th annual Convention to be held in Lexington, Kentucky. Tau Beta Pi President Dr. Larry A. Simonson, P.E., will present \$1,000 and a commemorative plaque to Dr. Richards. Another \$1,000 grant will be presented to the Montana State University College of Engineering's discretionary fund.

Dr. Richards was cited in her nomination for her dedication to improving her chapter, recruiting qualified students, encouraging involvement with the Association on a national level, and mentoring students interested in the pursuit of learning and service to the engineering profession.

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Dr. Richards received her bachelor's, master's, and Ph.D. degrees from Washington State University (WSU). She joined the engineering department at Montana State University (MSU) in 2007. Previously, she was part of the Idaho National Laboratory biotechnologies department, a graduate researcher at the Universidad de Sevilla (Seville, Spain), and an NSF-IGERT Fellow at WSU. Her research focuses on the isolation and characterization of iron-chelating molecules, called siderophores.

She has been Chief Advisor to *Montana Alpha* since 2008. After facing uncertain times with the transition of new leadership, Dr. Richards has instilled stability, confidence, and excitement in the chapter officers. After her second year as chief advisor, the MT Alpha chapter received the 2009-10 R.H. Nagel Most Improved Chapter Award. In the fall 2011 semester, nearly 70 new members were initiated and another forty joined in the spring 2012 semester. In addition to supporting the growth of membership, Dr. Richards helped locate and confirm two faculty advisors for the chapter.

Dr. Richards strongly supports the Tau Beta Pi Engineering Futures program. Each semester, the chapter hosts two sessions, which Dr. Richards attends. Her encouragement of student members to apply for TBP fellowships and scholarships has resulted in four recent award recipients. In the upcoming fall semester, the MT Alpha chapter plans to host its first ever social event, a barbecue and series of engineering challenges with the goal of raising awareness of the organization on campus in a fun and competitive setting.

Frequently demonstrating her excellent character and selflessness, she helped several Tau Beta Pi initiates with the fees needed to join the Association. The chapter's nomination stated: "Dr. Richards deserves the outstanding advisor award because she goes above and beyond in every facet of her life. In addition to inspiring students to attain high academic standards, she has spent endless hours coordinating with the college of engineering to establish the importance of our engineering society. She has maintained this significant interface, and Tau Beta Pi has become an extension of the college itself. She has done an excellent job fostering leadership, and filling an advisory team that is likewise supportive of the Association and its mission."

In recognition of her efforts to improve the image of the student chapter and the Association, numerous contributions as a mentor and leader, and talent for motivating students and promoting excellence in engineering, Tau Beta Pi hereby recognizes Abigail (Abbie) M. Richards as the 2012 Tau Beta Pi Outstanding Advisor.

Tau Beta Pi is the Engineering Honor Society, founded at Lehigh University in 1885. It has collegiate chapters at 238 engineering colleges in the United States and active alumnus chapters in 18 cities. It has initiated more than 535, 000 members in its 127-year history and is the world's largest engineering society. (See www.tbp.org)