

To: All Electees for Tau Beta Pi Membership
From: Curtis D. Gomulinski, TBP Executive Director
Re: What to Expect from your Tau Beta Pi Initiation

The following information is provided to all individuals eligible for Tau Beta Pi membership per a request from the 2008 Tau Beta Pi Convention. The TBP ritual includes the use of the word covenant, and we provide the following information as reference to all electees.

Initiation Ritual facts which Electees should know

Much of TBP's difficulty with the words "covenant," "secret ritual," "creed," and "solemn promise" are theological in nature. TBP does not use these words in that context. The text below presents the broader, historical definitions of these phrases in order to give candidates time to think about the phrases' meanings in order to make a decision about joining prior to the day of the initiation.

During the past 100+ years there have been concerns about the "secret" ritual of the Association. The Association prides itself on its long traditions, which include tracing the history of our initiation ritual to the Founder of TBP. In order to fully understand our Association and our Ritual, it is important to understand our past and the conditions that were present at the time of our founding. This is one reason that we require our members to read the Association documents prior to being initiated.

As times change, the contemporary interpretation of words and activities from our history change. However, it is critical for us to maintain an understanding of the intent of the original words. There is a clear distinction between contract and covenant. The original intent of the Founder of Tau Beta Pi was that our principles, which are today encompassed by "Integrity and Excellence in Engineering," will remain even if some members violate those conditions. Thus one member failing to maintain Integrity and Excellence does not release TBP or any other member from their parts of the agreement.

Philosophy

A CONTRACT is an agreement made in suspicion. The parties do not trust each other, and they set "limits" to their own responsibility. In this context, when one party violates the limits of the contract the other party is freed from their responsibilities and is entitled to some recourse.

A COVENANT is an agreement made in trust. The parties share a mutual trust and put no limits on their own responsibility. In this context, when one party violates the limits of the covenant the other party retains full responsibility to the terms of the original agreement.

Definitions as intended by Tau Beta Pi

Per the Merriam Webster Dictionary as of 2008.

1. **Creed**—a set of fundamental beliefs; also: a guiding principle
2. **Covenant**—a usually formal, solemn, and binding agreement
3. **Solemn**—marked by the observance of established form or ceremony
4. **Promise**—to pledge to do, bring about, or provide

The Tau Beta Pi Association, Inc., Founded 1885

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