

Texas Board of Professional Engineers Announces Professional Engineer 100,000

By Lance Kinney, P.E., TBPE Deputy Executive Director

A civil engineer from Cedar Park, Texas, has been named Professional Engineer (PE) 100,000 by the Texas Board of Professional Engineers (TBPE). Dustin Mortensen, an engineer working for Freese and Nichols in Austin, was selected by the Board to receive P.E. number 100,000 as the result of his hard work, his completion of the engineering licensure exams, and the selection of his entry in a special essay contest sponsored by the Board for this occasion.

There is more to PE 100,000 than just an essay contest, however. It is important to note that the Board of Professional Engineers reached several milestones in 2007. The first was the celebration of the 70th anniversary of engineering licensure in Texas. The Board was created in 1937, in part as a result of the devastating New London School explosion, which took the lives of over 300 students and teachers. Since that time, the Board has licensed Professional Engineers to insure that engineering in the state is done in a safe and competent manner. Governor Rick Perry recognized the anniversary by declaring May 2007 as Engineering Licensure Month.

The second milestone was a timely, if not serendipitous one - it was determined in the summer of 2007 that the Board would issue its 100,000th engineering license before the end of the year. Licenses have been issued consecutively by the Board since 1938, and no other state engineering board had reached this milestone. The Board calculated that the most likely candidate to receive PE number 100,000 would be an examinee taking the licensure exam in October 2007. To determine which candidate would be best suited to receive this honor, the Board sponsored an essay contest for all eligible examinees.

The Board received essays from over eighty applicants. Board staff reviewed the entries, and TBPE Vice Chairman Jose Cardenas, P.E., selected



The continuum of Engineering Excellence: Executive Director Dale Beebe Farrow, P.E., left, with photo of Dean T.U. Taylor, P.E. #1, and Mr. Dustin Mortensen, P.E. #100,000.

the essay submitted by Mortensen as the best example of an applicant expressing his desire to become a professional engineer. "Mr. Mortensen's essay exemplifies the privilege, and honor, of being a licensed professional engineer and it clearly demonstrates his understanding of the responsibilities and duties associated with the practice of our profession," said Cardenas. "The issuance of license number 100,000 affirms the vitality of the engineering profession in our state." (Mortensen's essay is on the following page.)

Dale Beebe Farrow, P.E., Executive Director for the Board, noted that "Dustin's essay struck a chord with the Board as he wrote about the engineers that helped mentor him and how proud he will be to design for the public and mentor those that come behind him (including his two young sons)."

In his winning essay, Mortensen stated he first knew he wanted to be an engineer when he was in high school. He explained, "The summer before my senior year in high school, I went to the Engineering State at Utah State University. I was able to do hands on projects where I learned how exciting it is to solve real world problems through engineering."

Continued on the next page

He learned first hand about real world problems while living in Bolivia for a short time after his first semester of college. "I took two years off and moved to Bolivia," said Mortensen. "I lived in a city of 800,000 people, the 3rd largest City in the country. I knew when I went that I would need to boil the water before I could drink it. I was surprised to find out that we would often have very little water because the water system was very unreliable. The city water system usually only flowed for a few hours a week. Tanker trucks came around to sell water to those who could afford it. Those who couldn't had to wait until there was water in the pipes and then hurry to store as much as they could in barrels and buckets before the water quit flowing again. I realized how much better life can be with a reliable water system and the water is safe to drink. Being in Bolivia and seeing the need for infrastructure helped me decide to become an engineer to help provide the infrastructure to the public to improve our quality of life."

Mortensen returned to Utah and received his bachelor's degree from Utah State University. While pursuing his master's degree he worked at the water research laboratory. He built and tested a model of the Choke Canyon Dam outlet works operated by the City of Corpus Christi. The firm Freese and Nichols were the engineers that hired the laboratory for the project. Working on that project is how Mortensen became acquainted with the firm who later hired him and brought him to Texas. He has worked in the Austin office since 2003.

Mortensen noted that since his graduation he has been involved in many different types of projects. "I've worked on many dams that provide water and flood control to Texas, making them safer and more reliable. I have been involved with water and wastewater lines. I enjoy being an engineer and working on projects that maintain and improve our way of life."

Mortensen will be recognized at the next Board meeting February 28,

2008, by the full TBPE Board of Directors. He will receive a proclamation from Governor Rick Perry and will be featured in the next issue of the Board's newsletter, *The Engineering Express*.

For further information on this article or the Board, contact Lance Kinney directly at (512) 440-3080 or email, lance.kinney@tbpe.state.tx.us

Why I should be PE 100,000

By Dustin Mortensen

Ever since I decided to become an engineer, I have dreamed about placing my seal on a set of construction drawings. What a thrill to be responsible for the design of a highway, waterline, or something as well known as the Hoover Dam or Golden Gate Bridge. It would be even better if the license number printed on the seal was 100,000.

There is a great tradition of engineering excellence in Texas earned by nearly 100,000 engineers over many decades giving honorable and ethical service. The atmosphere where I work, Freese and Nichols, cultivates an attitude of remembering the legacy left by others and improving it for those to come. As one of the most recent licensed engineers, I will strive to uphold and enhance the dignity of the profession through my actions.

As a father of two sons I would like to inspire them to one day choose a career where they will be able to give honor and ethical service, just like the engineers of Texas.

While earning a masters degree I learned technical skills. Actually working with licensed engineers has helped me understand the responsibility we have to the public and our clients. I have learned from my mentors the scrutiny that must go into each sealed document to ensure it meets the highest standards.

Being a licensed engineer is a privilege, whether you are the first or the 100,000th. The number is less important than the fact of being licensed.