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# SHOULD AN ENGINEERING STUDENT BE REQUIRED TO WRITE A THESIS BEFORE GRADUATION

By JAMES R. O'ROARK, '38

I BELIEVE that all students in the College of Engineering should write a thesis before they graduate. My reasons for this belief apply equally well to every branch of engineering, and they can be subdivided under two headings, as follows: (1) the value of writing a thesis to the undergraduate student, and (2) the value of having written a thesis to the graduate engineering student.

In the preparation of material for his thesis the student does extensive research work upon some project in a particular engineering field. Since he is allowed to choose his own subject, he naturally selects the one that is most interesting to him, and thus he will learn a great deal more than if he were required to take a course which did not appeal to him. In his research work, the student spends much time in the library looking up all known data on his subject. The prospective engineer also secures additional information by interviews and talks with technical men in his field. As a consequence, the student increases his knowledge in one field, and he can continue in this work if he is sufficiently interested, and become an authority on the subject.

Mechanically, thesis writing teaches a student engineer the proper methods of writing and making a report. A value of thesis writing which should be emphasized is

that the student is taught the important factor of organization, and this is essential for all engineers.

After graduation, the engineer may more easily get a job in a field to which his thesis work applied, due to the fact that he has more knowledge about the field than other engineers. The thesis, too, can always be used as a reference source to some technical work which the engineer may do after graduation.

As a last point, I wish to mention that an engineer is often called on to make a written report on some phase of his work. It is here that his thesis writing proves an invaluable asset, enabling him to organize his research work in an efficient way, and to present a concise and correct report to his employer.

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Editor's note: This paper was written as part of the requirements for initiation into Tau Beta Pi last quarter, and it was judged the best from all those submitted.

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Kelvin used to tell his assistants that everyone should be capable of doing at least three things at once. He himself could dictate a letter, write another by hand, and carry on a discussion with his assistant, all at once.—H. S. Hatfield, Ph.D. (London).