2006 Award Recipient

John Lott Brown '46

John Lott Brown, today we recognize and formally thank you for your high level of distinguished service to Worcester Polytechnic Institute.

From your days as an undergraduate during the war years as part of the Navy's V-12 program with its demanding regimen, to your experiences as a trainer of the Project Mercury astronauts, through your career as a distinguished faculty member, researcher and top administrator at several of this country's higher institutions of learning, your professional leadership and demonstrated concern for students, particularly at your alma mater, has never wavered.

As a student at WPI during the 1940s, you and your classmates “hit the ground running” as part of the Navy's accelerated program for officers in which you received your education, training and commission in just three years. In those hectic days most were just trying to get through the long and demanding schedule of Navy instruction and WPI courses for which only the best and brightest were selected. Yet somehow, you became known as a leader on campus despite a protracted illness developed during the training which only stiffened your resolve to graduate on time with your classmates.

This demonstrated determination to offer your best intellectually, physically and emotionally has stood you in good stead over the years. Following graduation, your involvement in the training programs for the early astronauts through Project Mercury helped you to centrally contribute to a team of dedicated scientists and educators responsible for the United States exploration of space.

Despite your early contributions to the space program, all who know you will say that it was and remains your quiet manner of intellectual leadership which marked your career as a distinguished faculty member, researcher, and administrator at many of the country's leading universities. You have served institutions such as the University of Rochester and the University of Kansas and later, as President of the University of South Florida during its founding years, it was your leadership that moved that university from infancy to the 17th largest university in the United States. Yet, regardless of your other involvement, you always set aside a place in your heart and mind and time for WPI.

Your quiet and persuasive intellect, experience, and vision allowed you to help shape the policies and programs of WPI's academic programs and student life activities as a respected member of WPI's Board of Trustees. Elected to the Board in 1971, as the WPI Plan was becoming a reality, you served with distinction for twelve years before moving on to Emeritus status in 1983. Most notably, after retiring as President of the University of South Florida, you accepted the invitation of WPI to return to the campus to serve as interim President of your alma mater. Despite all of your other achievements John Lott Brown, WPI believes that in terms of your alma mater, this interim presidency proved to be your finest hour. During your nine months at WPI, with your wife Katie by your side, you created a sense of community on campus that fostered a campus-wide spirit of cooperation between students, faculty, and administration during a pivotal period in WPI's history.
John Lott Brown, for your high level of leadership and your dedication through the years to your alma mater, WPI honors you today with the presentation of the Herbert F. Taylor Award for Distinguished Service.