2004 Award Recipient

David A. Lucht

David Lucht, few people can truly say their work has changed the world for the better. But as professor and director of WPI's Center for Firesafety for the past quarter century, you've done just that, not only building a program that enjoys an international reputation as the leading center for education and research in fire protection engineering, but one whose faculty and students are helping to reduce deaths and damage from fires worldwide.

Your interest in fire safety was kindled when you served as a volunteer fire-fighter in your hometown of Middlefield, Ohio. You studied fire protection at Illinois Institute of Technology, then began a distinguished career in the field with posts as a fire inspector, lecturer at Ohio State University, and Ohio State Fire Marshal.

In 1974, after a national report showed that the United States led all major industrialized countries in per capita fire deaths and damage, Congress established the U.S. Fire Administration. President Gerald Ford appointed you deputy administrator; you were reappointed by President Jimmy Carter. You left the agency to join a fire consulting firm before being recruited by WPI, where you built a new academic program from scratch, hiring faculty, overseeing the development of courses and textbooks, and building ties to industry. You also led the development of a thriving research program, the first Ph.D. program in the field, and a distance education program that brought WPI's degree programs to students around the world.

Your contributions to fire protection engineering go far beyond your work as an administrator. You've been highly active in your profession, you've presented testimony on fire safety issues before state and federal commissions, you've been quoted frequently in the news media, and you've been a tireless advocate for new laws and initiatives that will further the cause of fire safety.

Your achievements have been recognized with numerous awards and honors. For example, the Society of Fire Protection Engineer has named you a fellow and presented you with its Presidents Award. This year, the organization will create the David A. Lucht Award to recognize your lifetime of service.

David Lucht, for your tireless efforts to build an academic program that has carried the name of WPI to the far corners of the globe, and for your extraordinary service to a profession that has helped make the world a safer place for all of us, we are honored to present you with the William R. Grogan Award for Support of the Mission of WPI.