2003 Award Recipient

Francis P. Barton ’68

Fran Barton, for you adversity is just another opportunity to excel. You proved that at WPI, when you hitchhiked to school every day from your family home in Westboro.

You further proved your abilities as a member of the Green Berets in Okinawa from 1969 through 1972, sharpening your talent for leading successful change. Assigned to places like Burma, you developed contingency plans to keep people and national interests safe. In places like the Philippines, you built systems to assist the local people—water supply, roads, and schools. These experiences taught you to connect with individuals outside of your own culture.

You returned to WPI to finish your degree, changing your major from chemical engineering to interdisciplinary sciences. You honed your ability to see and understand the whole picture, and to build consensus among groups with competing interests. Next, you completed the two-year MBA program at Northeastern in 12 months, finishing in the top of your class. You spent 22 years at Digital Equipment Corporation, helping a $300 million company grow to a $16 billion industry leader. Your business and leadership skills were rewarded with the plum assignment of controller, DEC Europe, responsible for 40 countries in Europe, North Africa, the Middle East and the Soviet Bloc. The connections you made there remain strong and influential.

As vice president and CFO for DEC’s Personal Computer Division, you oversaw the growth of this $40 million line of business to a profitable multibillion-dollar independent division, with growth of 300 percent per year.

In 1996 your facility for growing corporations brought you to the attention of Amdahl; as its VP and CFO, you brought it back to profitability after four years of losses. Advanced Micro Devices recruited you in 1998; two years later, AMD’s nearly $1 billion profit was greater than the sum of all profits over its 30-year history.

You retired from that position only to be recruited by BroadVision, which used your appointment to underwrite its reputation, announcing, “Barton’s appointment makes a strong statement about BroadVision and its ability to attract top talent.” Now, as executive vice president and CFO of Atmel, you’ve joined a company losing money with the intention of making yet another turn-around. Your successes are no secret: the morning your appointment was announced, Atmel stock rose 15 percent. Fran Barton, cross-cultural change agent, team builder, nurturer of companies, WPI is grateful to claim you as a graduate and proud to present you with the Robert H. Goddard Alumni Award for Outstanding Professional Achievement.