2000 Award Recipient

John Nelson

John Nelson, corporate executive, community leader and volunteer, you have brought real change and extraordinary good to Worcester and to WPI.

Your career has been conspicuous by its successes. As chairman and CEO of Norton Company and Wyman-Gordon, as chairman of The TJX Companies, and, now, as chairman of Brown & Sharpe Manufacturing Company, you have created prosperity and left a legacy of sound management.

You are a true community leader. Whether serving local government, Memorial Hospital, the Worcester Art Museum, or many other organizations in and around Worcester, you have inspired your fellow volunteers to look upward and achieve great things. You have provided civic leadership in the mold of others who have received this award, including Milton Higgins, Paris Fletcher and Robert Stoddard.

Perhaps no organization has benefited from your involvement as much as WPI, which you have served as a trustee for 13 years—the past five as chairman. Your years as chairman have been marked by extraordinary advances for WPI, including a significant growth in recognition worldwide. You chaired the search committee that brought Edward Alton Parrish to WPI as the University's 14th president, and you have been a mentor and friend to him. You have been a key member of The Campaign for WPI solicitation team, becoming the most successful fund-raising volunteer in WPI history. You set the tone for the solicitations you have made of trustees and others with your own gift of $1 million. And, you worked closely with the University and the City of Worcester to bring about the closing of West Street, creating a single, united campus for WPI.

Through your quiet, effective leadership, you have formulated a vision for WPI that has inspired and motivated your fellow trustees. Almost single-handedly, you have raised the University to a new plateau. Future WPI histories will recall your years of service with awe and appreciation for a job well done.

John Nelson, able businessman, dedicated volunteer and civic leader, it is with much pride and appreciation that WPI recognizes your extraordinary contributions to the University by presenting you with the WPI Award for Distinguished Service.