2005 Award Recipient

Judith Nitsch '75

Judy Nitsch, you are one of WPI's most successful and honored graduates. You serve your alma mater and your fellow engineers as a role model and mentor. You are particularly effective in two arenas: practicing civil engineering and inspiring women to become engineers.

Your career has been phenomenal. Having earned your bachelor of science degree in civil engineering, you began work at Schofield Brothers, and for eight years you were the only woman engineer in the firm. Your rise was meteoric: after only three years, you were promoted to branch manager; when you passed the professional engineering exam, you became Schofield's first woman vice president; at age 26 you were a member of its board. In 1982 you joined Allen & Demurjian; by 1984 you were a stockholder. The firm was renamed Allen, Demurjian, Major & Nitsch.

In 1989 you seized the opportunity to start your own firm, Judith Nitsch Engineering Inc. (JNEI). Again, your hard work brought fame and success. In 1996 JNEI was named by Inc. magazine as one of the fastest-growing companies in the county. Today JNEI is the largest civil engineering firm in New England owned by a woman. Your clients include Harvard University, the University of Virginia, the Central Artery Tunnel, the New England Aquarium, and Logan International Airport.

You have served your profession as president of both the American Council of Engineering Companies of Massachusetts and the Boston Society of Civil Engineers Section of ASCE; in each case you were both the youngest president and the first woman president. The recipient of many young engineer awards, you've also received the American Society of Civil Engineering's Parcel-Sverdrup Engineering Management Award. Most recently, you received the Society of Women Engineers' 2004 Entrepreneur Award.

Your contributions to WPI are legion. In 1989 you were the first alumna to be elected to the WPI Board of Trustees, serving as alumni trustee until 1997 when you were elected trustee-at-large. Under your leadership as chair of the Physical Facilities Committee, WPI built the Campus Center, developed a Master Plan, and is now planning a new Recreational Center. In 2003 you agreed to chair an advisory board for the programs for women on campus. You continue to inspire not only WPI's women students, faculty, and staff, but the entire campus and the world of civil engineering.

Judy Nitsch, in recognition of your entrepreneurial abilities, your professional achievement, your leadership of your field and of your alma mater, and your work in bringing more women to engineering professions, we salute you. It is with great pride and gratitude that WPI presents you with the Robert H. Goddard Alumni Award for Outstanding Professional Achievement.