John S. Thompson Jr. '69

John Thompson, you have distinguished yourself as a leader in the global marketplace. As president and chief executive of BTR Inc., you head up a $4 billion venture and serve on the executive committee of BTR, plc, a $15 billion London stock exchange company. With over 35,000 employees in 24 countries, you are now leading a reorganization of the company from a diversified conglomerate to a more focused engineering company, specializing in the design and manufacture of controls and automation products.

The road to your success started when, as the first member of your family to attend college, you set foot on the WPI campus 34 years ago. Having completed your degree in mechanical engineering, you immediately took advantage of another educational opportunity and successfully completed your M.B.A. at Harvard Business School.

You progressed rapidly in positions of increased responsibility at such companies as Massachusetts Blue Shield and Continental Investment Corp., and in 1975 you joined Stowe Woodward. Within four years you were appointed vice president of finance and by 1980 you were named president, a position you held until 1988 when the company was purchased by BTR, plc of London. As vice president and later as chief executive of BTR's Paper Technology Group, you oversaw record profits, the acquisition of Niagara Lockport Corporation, an $80 million competitor, as well as two businesses in Germany and another in Italy. These significant achievements were recognized with your current appointment as president and chief executive of BTR Inc. in 1993.

Throughout your career you have encouraged a team-based approach to management, empowering others to use their own analytical skills as well as those of colleagues to minimize risk and maximize return. A devoted family man, you and your wife, Helen, have raised two sons and a daughter and for the last six years you have dutifully commuted back to your home in Wellesley from BTR corporate headquarters in Stamford, Conn., on a regular basis.

John Thompson, your achievements have brought great pride to your alma mater. It is with great honor that WPI presents you with the Robert H. Goddard Alumni Award for Outstanding Professional Achievement.