1999 Award Recipient

William J. Dowd ’64

Bill Dowd, your hard work, dedication and commitment to quality have propelled your career and led to numerous professional achievements. As the president and chief operating officer of Fleming Companies, the largest grocery distributor in the United States, you lead a $15 billion company employing over 39,000 employees.

Your work ethic and business acumen were developed early in life with a paper route and your analytical and mathematical skills emerged when your elementary school teacher called upon you to help explain complex mathematical concepts. Having attended WPI's Techniquest, you were encouraged to pursue a career in either engineering or finance. Although you chose chemical engineering, you did so more because you saw the commercial potential of the emerging plastics industry, than for a pure love of engineering.

Following your graduation from WPI, you put your chemical engineering degree to work at Monsanto and later at Occidental Petroleum while obtaining an M.B.A. from the University of Connecticut. In 1971 you joined R.J. Reynolds/Heublin Inc. and worked your way up to vice president of this $300 million specialty grocery company. The next decade would bring appointments as president/CEO of Mrs. Paul's Kitchens Inc., a $200 million division of Campbell Soup, as president of Kraft Dairy Food, and as executive vice president and general manager of Kraft General Foods, a $17 billion operation. These experiences and successes led to your current appointment in 1995. Reporting to the chairman and CEO of Fleming Companies, your collaborative management style made you the perfect candidate to head the company's strategic initiatives to optimize wholesale operations, and more effectively and efficiently support retail customers.

Throughout your career, you have placed a high value on integrity, personal happiness and professional satisfaction. An avid family man, you and your wife, Gladys, have successfully raised two children and have shared a passion for piloting private aircraft.

Bill Dowd, your impressive career has distinguished you and brought great honor to your alma mater. It is with significant pride that WPI presents you with the Robert H. Goddard Alumni Award for Outstanding Professional Achievement.