2006 Award Recipient

William R. Grogan ’46

Bill Grogan, it is our honor and a source of great pride to gather today to award an amazing visionary the William R. Grogan award for Support of the Mission of WPI, an award established in your honor in 1990 to recognize, in others, the kind of outstanding contributions your life here exemplifies.

More than six decades ago the transformation of WPI to a college of national repute was begun by a very simple act: a new matriculant came to campus. You would spend almost an entire career-and retirement to date-serving the university and, most especially, its students, as well as students of engineering and science throughout the nation.

Your incredible contributions began with being named to the faculty-elected committee that shaped the WPI Plan, a revolutionary new approach to engineering and science education. When the Plan was complete and approved by the faculty, you were named the college's first dean of undergraduate studies. You were entrusted with the critical task of making the Plan work. In that role, you served as mediator and interpreter, helping WPI refine and sharpen, expand opportunities and welcome change, in what has been called the most significant development in engineering education in many decades and which, thanks to your dedication, has worked for more than 35 years.

Your reputation extends far beyond the university's campus. In engineering education circles you are recognized for your vision, your dedication, and your remarkable ability to cut to the heart of complex problems and find elegant, workable solutions. David Reisman, the eminent Harvard professor of social science who served on the NSF visiting committee that evaluated the Plan, named you “the Harry Truman of higher education.” You received the American Society for Engineering Education's Chester F. Carlson Award for innovation in engineering education and its William E. Wickenden Award for the best contribution to engineering education in 1980 for a paper you wrote on the Plan. You are a fellow of the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers and the 1986 recipient of IEEE's Major Educational Innovation Award. In 1988 you received the Sterling Olmstead Award from the American Society for Engineering Education's Liberal Education Division.

WPI has also recognized your accomplishments. Dr. Dennis Berkey, at his inauguration in 2005, presented you with the WPI Medal of Honor, engraved with the simple phrase "WPI Visionary." You have received, in 1969, the Trustees' Award for Outstanding Teaching; in 1974, the Robert H. Goddard Award for Professional Achievement; in 1989 the first Trustees' Award for Outstanding Service; and, in 1990 for your contributions to the university and service to higher education, the WPI honorary degree of Doctor of Engineering.
It is fitting that today we honor this award's namesake, recognizing once again that the name William R. Grogan is synonymous with WPI's excellence, with excellence in teaching in general and with educational leadership. May your retirement continue filled with additional contributions, whether student advising or writing the history of the Plan, and may WPI and engineering education continue to benefit. William R. Grogan, we salute you.