

2004 Denise Nicoletti Trustees' Award for Service to Community

Professor William A. Baller

WPI is greatly honored to have among its numbers someone who has not only been active in causes that serve the high ideals of political justice and global peace, but who is as well equally dedicated to serve students, the local community, and any individual coming to him in need. The recipient of the 2004 Denise Nicoletti Trustees' Award for Service to Community is Bill Baller.



Citizen Baller believes strongly that in a democratic society one bears a moral obligation to act on political convictions, and in that capacity he has volunteered his services in campaigns at the federal, state, and local level. Good citizenship also demands service to worthy endeavors in the community, and toward that end Bill has served on the boards of the Regional Environmental Council, Friendly House and the Worcester Public Library. Public spiritedness characterizes Bill's philosophy of life, a philosophy he brings to good purpose to the classroom.

Professor Baller also believes that it is through the student, perhaps particularly the WPI student, there lies a better world. His devotion both to education and to students as individuals is legendary on campus. Students repeatedly praise his dedication to the mission of teaching, but also his service to them in supporting their efforts to win scholarships or suitable employment. Bill's project and class load is always overflowing, but he finds time to tutor after class, write numerous letters of recommendation, and can be found repeatedly at WPI athletic events cheering on his students. His office is filled with certificates and mementos of appreciation from students. The depth of his commitment to teaching, let it be added, does not rest upon the security of tenured employment, but a more profound faith in the value of the pedagogical mission and the worth of the individual student.

An excellent measure of Professor Baller's rich sense of service is in his founding and sustaining role in the Hoops Dream Project at WPI, established with Worcester's Friendly House. Started some seven years ago, and now known as Exploradreams, this initiative brings children from low income neighborhoods of Worcester to receive special scholastic tutoring from WPI students as well as a little fun on the WPI basketball courts or in the swimming pool. A great dedication to social justice, a commitment both to education and to students, and a sincere love of this institution characterize Bill's service to community.

Those who know Professor Baller personally know above all else that he is someone you can turn to in a time of need. Mostly one doesn't even have to ask, because Bill is volunteering the moment he learns that a colleague, a friend, a student is in need. All this is done with a grace and self-effacement that make Bill so deeply appreciated by all who work with him. Unbounded generosity and a profound sense of fairness, both to lofty principle and ordinary folk, make Professor William Baller a loyal servant to Worcester and WPI and a most worthy recipient of the 2004 Denise Nicoletti Trustees' Award for Service to Community.