

2002 Board of Trustees' Award for Outstanding Academic Advising

Professor Philip E. Robakiewicz

This year, the advisees of Dr. Philip E. Robakiewicz of the Biology and Biotechnology Department named him as the most outstanding Academic Advisor on campus, an honor reserved for the WPI professor who most epitomizes selflessness, spirit, and personal touch. As an advisee notes, "He is extremely approachable"; the relationships Phil cultivates with undergraduates begin between an advisor and his advisees and blossom between two friends.



Even at the end of a term, Phil's lectures remain packed with students who have already taken final exams: they attend his classes for the pleasure of learning from an enthusiastic and personable mentor. One student aptly describes Phil by writing "He has been instrumental in my completion of coursework here at WPI, and I can thank him for not only advising me, but for sparking my interest in ecology and environmental matters." Phil's knowledge and enthusiasm about Ecological Biology positively radiate from his being and set his classes aflame.

Outside of the lecture hall, a general consensus exists that Phil must be a biological aberration; he doesn't sleep, or so it would seem considering the number of student groups that Phil supports and advises. He recently became the academic advisor for one of WPI's fraternities, he is one of four advisors for the WPI chapter of the national Engineering Honor Society Tau Beta Pi, he runs the Health and Fitness Club on campus, and he is the advisor for numerous MQPs.

These examples of Phil's extracurricular life, however, remain only examples, and because of its brevity, this congratulatory letter cannot do him justice; his involvement in student life as well as students' lives draws respect from all quarters. A student nominating Phil for the advising award wrote: "Phil Robakiewicz is one of a select few faculty members that I have encountered... [who numbers among the]... rare breed of WPI professors that maintain that their students and advisees [are] their primary obligations." This seems to be the overwhelming sentiment of anyone who has spent even ten minutes with him. The students of WPI take pride in having Phil as their advisor, mentor and friend. We congratulate him wholeheartedly, and thank him for all that he does!

The following are verbatim quotations from Phil's advisees:

"Phil is not all business with his advisees, but rather takes the time to get to know them, understand what their goals are and advise them in the best direction... "

"He's an incredibly influential voice in the group of students who believe ecology and environmental biology is their way."

"I would consider him the most influential person that I have met here at WPI, as far as professors and advisors go, and am incredibly glad I chose him as an advisor."

"Phil realizes that his students and advisees require more than just academic direction."

"I... saw four different advisors from different departments and no one helped me find what was right for me... finally, as a last shot, I talked to Phil... [he] always made me feel comfortable and welcome."

"... Instead of memorizing information that you would otherwise forget, you actually LEARN."