

2003 Board of Trustees' Award for Outstanding Academic Advising

Professor Jonathan R. Barnett

Learning at a university is one of the most important stepping-stones in any student's life. It is the chance for young individuals to be exposed to and take advantage of the endless opportunities that will help shape the rest of their lives. WPI is a window of opportunity in itself and through its unique Plan offers students the chance to mould their own future. While the freedom of choice at WPI can be an incredible benefit, it can also be daunting to incoming freshmen who are still adjusting to a new environment and making the difficult transition from high school to college. Under these potentially stressful circumstances, students need someone they can look to for academic guidance, someone who cares about their well-being; they need a role model who can guide them. It is for these reasons that the responsibility of an Academic Advisor is so important. Every year WPI students nominate those advisors who they feel have gone above and beyond their expected duties. The award for this year goes to Professor Jonathan Barnett. Not only is Jonathan Barnett an exceptional advisor but he manages to share his expertise with an overwhelming number of advisees. He is a primary advisor to 70 students and secondary advisor to an additional 4. Amazingly, he finds time to guide all these students as well as teach full time as a Fire Protection Engineering Professor at WPI, and continue his own research. Yet amidst all his other on-campus involvements, he manages to make time generously available to advisees. As one of his students says, "he always finds time to meet with students and I personally know they are one of his utmost priorities."



Professor Barnett has been recognized by his students for the incredible advising that he offers. He has been described as "helpful and efficient" and has been known to go out of his way to ensure his students are doing well. "He is genuinely interested in my academics," says one of his advisees. "If he sees me around campus he always inquires about my classes and if I need any assistance." He is devoted to giving each of his advisees the attention they deserve, and as one of his students commented in appreciation, "Professor Barnett worked with me extensively to get my schedule and classes on the right track. He has provided me with insight into where I am going."

Besides his role as an advisor, Professor Barnett takes a genuine interest in the welfare of his students. One of his advisees testifies to this: "More than his attention to my academics is his attention to my health and well-being. He makes sure I am taking care of myself, not only academically, but also physically and mentally." The importance of this cannot be understood without fully understanding what a rigorous program WPI offers at all levels. Freshmen have to adjust to being fully responsible

for their own academic and personal lives while upperclassmen need to focus on meeting degree requirements, completing challenging projects, and finding jobs and future career paths. Nobody could better understand what each of these stages is like than a former student at WPI. Professor Barnett has this experience as he completed his undergraduate and postgraduate degrees at WPI and has been here for 33 years.

Students value the effort Jonathan Barnett puts into his role as Academic Advisor and his other duties on campus. When one of his students said, "Professor Barnett is one of the most hard working and productive faculty members on campus," they were not exaggerating. Professor Barnett is made of what students dream of in an Academic Advisor. Through his guidance and support a significant portion of the WPI student body has benefited. He is well-loved and respected by those students who have been privileged to have him as an Academic Advisor and a teacher.

For his zealous commitment to his role as Academic Advisor, his dedication and genuine concern for his students, and exemplary performance as role model, mentor, and friend, we proudly present the 2003 Board of Trustees Award for Outstanding Academic Advising to Professor Jonathan R. Barnett.