

2003 Board of Trustees' Award for Outstanding Teaching Recipient

Professor Helen G. Vassallo

Professor Helen Vassallo has dedicated herself to the education of WPI students in the field of Management for over two decades. Her energy and creative commitment as a teacher, scholar, advisor and lecturer have had an enormously positive impact on the academic lives of countless students. Her teaching style has been described as "unique," "enthusiastic," and "captivating." A well known name and face on campus, Professor Vassallo is said to remember each and every one of her student's names. She is a gifted communicator who inspires her students in the classroom, in project work, in graduate classes, and around the campus.



In the classroom, "Professor Vassallo is incredibly creative in her design and selection of course materials." Students comment about her use of Legos and Monopoly money: "What you learn in her class sticks with you because she finds a way to relate it in a manner that is understood by all - engineers and management majors alike." Others expand on that theme by noting that "she brings great creativity and passion to the classroom," and that "she makes learning fun." Colleagues note that "her creative use of simple inexpensive hands-on props is a real inspiration," and that Professor Vassallo is "pure energy. Students consistently rate her as one of the best teachers they have ever had," and that goes for graduate and undergraduate students alike. An alumnus states, "While I may have only had her for one graduate course, I would have taken other courses in a heartbeat if I knew she was teaching them. Her classroom style was fantastic. She was able to keep everyone actively involved throughout every class."

Throughout the college community, Professor Vassallo has earned respect for her commitment to campus activities beyond the classroom and project forum. Her address at a Baccalaureate Ceremony and another to those gathered at a Tau Beta Pi induction banquet are among her speeches cited as memorable by colleagues and alumni. Additionally, Professor Vassallo regularly supports the work of Greek Life at WPI, serving as advisor of the Phi Sigma Sigma sorority. Her participation in theatre on campus has enriched the University's artistic life. One nominator remembers: "Her dedication to these extracurricular activities proved to me how much she cared for students and the WPI community as a whole. Even when the stage crew accidentally dropped a bookcase on her foot during one of the productions, she bit her lip and realized the show must go on."

Perhaps the best example of the impact that Professor Vassallo has had on students can be seen in the following student testimonial: "At the beginning of my sophomore year when it became apparent that engineering was not for me, I was lost... When walking into Professor Vassallo's MG 2300 class that fall, I was contemplating transferring schools. At the end of the term, I walked out with a new major and the feeling that I still belonged at WPI. Professor Vassallo took the time to help me understand that if Management was what I wanted to do, then Management was what I should be doing. Professor Vassallo is simply an exceptionally wonderful, superbly fantastic, unbelievably outstanding teacher!"

For her tireless dedication to the lives and learning of her students and to the WPI community, for her excellence in teaching, for her commitment to instilling a strong work ethic among all her students, we proudly present the 2003 Board of Trustees' Award for Outstanding Teaching to Professor Helen Vassallo.