

2010 Denise Nicoletti Trustees' Award for Service to Community

Kenneth Stafford

The Trustees' Award for Service to Community is presented in memory of Denise Nicoletti, a professor in the Electrical and Computer Engineering Department from 1991-2002, whose passion for life and outreach to underrepresented groups touched many lives. Among her activities, Denise co-founded Camp Reach, a widely-acclaimed summer program which introduces seventh grade girls to the excitement of engineering and science. The recipient of the 2010 Nicoletti Trustees' Award for Service to Community is Kenneth Stafford.



Ken joined WPI in 1994 as Professor of Aerospace Studies and Commander of Air Force ROTC Program. From early on it was clear that Ken would leave his mark at WPI. He achieved the highest freshman retention in the region, tripled the size of the detachment, and scored three successive "Excellents" in Headquarters' management evaluations. In 1998, Ken's passion for sailing took him and his family on a 4000 mile journey from Nova Scotia to Venezuela aboard a 52-foot sailboat. In 1999, he continued his affiliation with WPI as director of the Robotics Resource Center. In 2007, he led the WPI/Mass Academy FIRST Robotics Team to win the World Championship.

Ken's commitment to service within the WPI community is particularly noteworthy. With over 60 advisees, his students recognize him as an always available mentor, advisor, and friend. An enthusiastic Insight Advisor for the past four years, he was a recipient of the "Best Team" Award at the Insight Awards Reception last year. Recognizing that WPI students need more than an exciting and challenging academic environment to remain engaged, Ken also serves as faculty advisor to the Robotics Team, the Racquetball Club, the Sailing Club, the Society of Automotive Engineers, and the Tau Beta Pi Engineering Honor Society. Besides coaching the WPI Sailing Team, he has also taught a PE-credit Instructional Sailing Course on his own time for over 10 years. He further volunteers his time as faculty advisor to the Sigma Pi

Fraternity and is a member of the Campus Hearing Board, Campus Sustainability Group, Corporate Interface Group, and K-12 Outreach Group.

Ken is equally well-known outside of WPI for his enthusiastic support of programs especially designed to help younger students in particular need. A sought-after inspirational speaker, he delivers an average of 40 motivational talks each year to K-12 students. His long-term commitment to helping Worcester students through his programs resulted in a recent service award from Friendly House, acknowledgment at the annual awards ceremony of the Coalition of Worcester Colleges UniverCity Partnership, and the Arthur E. Chase Service Award from the Massachusetts Academy of Math and Science. He has received similar praise for his largely after hours and weekend youth educational/inspirational programming from the Director of GEAR UP Massachusetts as well as the Worcester City Council. During holidays he is a regular volunteer at the Worcester Veteran's Shelter.

Prominently written on Ken's whiteboard in his office are the three phrases: "Integrity Above All, Service Before Self, Excellence in Everything You Do." His service at WPI is a testimony of Ken's belief in these principles. According to the people who work closely with him, Ken has a strong zest for life, an infectious enthusiasm for working with students, a flawless commitment for professionalism, and a selfless heart for sharing his talents and resources with other people.

For his years of dedication to WPI and the Worcester communities, we are proud to honor Kenneth Stafford for the 2010 Denise Nicoletti Trustees Award for Service to the Community.