



Nancy L. Barker
Vice President/Office of the President
Northwood University

[1st Annual Distinguished Woman in Higher Education Leadership Award \(2001\)](#)

Nancy Barker's long and non traditional career in higher education started at the University of Michigan Medical Center, where she was a member of the staff and critic teacher in the Hospital School. Those experiences led to later success as co-author of a series of books for hospitalized children. Moving from Ann Arbor to Midland, Michigan, she became a leading community volunteer, specializing in the arts and in women's career issues. Enlisted by the co-founders of fledgling Northwood Institute, Ms. Barker founded the Careers for Women program at the all-business-management college which during the early 1970s had attracted an almost exclusively male student body. Credited with helping to correct that ratio (the now-university today regularly enrolls a 50/50 ratio of women/men students) she notes with a smile that "the times were with me!" Still, the series of important workshops, seminars, academic programs and mentoring presentations which she founded or directed have continued to this day and influence the philosophy of the university. As example, the Northwood Distinguished Women's Award established in 1970 now boasts a cadre of over 400 honorees from the highest ranks of women achievers nationwide.

In 1979 Nancy Barker became the first woman officer of Northwood University and her responsibilities expanded to include the direction of nine departments and the nation-wide constituents program of the university, active in 11 cities in 5 states. Consistent with her long standing advocacy for the arts, she concurrently became chair of the Matrix:Midland festival of the arts and sciences, president of the Midland Art Council and Midland Symphony League, supervisor of the Northwood Gallery and Orchestra and state president of the International Furnishings and Design Association; she currently serves on the state-wide ArtServe board of Michigan. Ms. Barker served on the founding board of the Michigan Women's Studies Association and is also the past president of the National Council of Women of the United States, headquartered in New York,. She is a past board member of the International Council of Women, a United Nations non governmental organization headquartered in Paris. Both she and her husband serve on Northwood's International Business Advisory Board and are deeply involved in community service.

Ever 'non traditional' Nancy and her husband R. William Barker, a retired attorney and executive with The Dow Chemical Company, are the parents of a blended family of nine children and additional "progeny" made up of a large number of Northwood international students who have made their home with the Barkers over the years.

Nancy Barker holds a bachelor's degree in Education from the University of Michigan (1957) where she was valedictorian of her graduating class and a member of Phi Beta Kappa and other honor societies. In 2001 she received the Distinguished Women's Lifetime Achievement Award and the Doctor of Humanities degree (Hon.) from Northwood University, the only currently active officer ever to be so awarded.

