



NAPE Lifetime Achievement Award



This year's NAPE Lifetime Achievement Award winner goes to a woman who has dedicated her life to advancing students underrepresented in nontraditional careers. Her many years of hard work and dedication to building equity in education to serve the needs of those who too often are marginalized or underserved, even in the face of cultural adversity, has served to break down barriers to education and the workforce that many of us today never realized existed. And while she continues to be an active, committed member of NAPE, instrumental in providing her expertise and time to the organization on a state and national level, it seems appropriate on the heels of her recent retirement from the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction (WDPI) that we honor her for the countless invaluable contributions she has made to education and NAPE.

As a graduate student at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, Ms. Barbara Bitters helped establish the university's women's studies program. Upon earning her master's degree, she joined the WDPI, and in 1980 she lent her expertise as a Special Advisor on Women's Issues and Vocational Equity to the Assistant Secretary for Vocation and Adult Education. Ms. Bitters served WDPI as the Assistant Director for the Career and Technical Education Team until her retirement in 2012. President Barack Obama recognized Ms. Bitters dedication to reducing barriers that turn away girls and women from pursuing high-paying, highly rewarding careers in science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) by honoring her as a White House 2012 Champion of Change under his *Winning the Future* initiative. For Ms. Bitters, women's capacity to learn new skills, compete in STEM, and positively contribute in nontraditional fields was never a question; the question she spent her career answering was how the government can best provide women the opportunities they have earned in high-wage, high-skill careers.

Ms. Bitters was co-director of the National Leadership Development Conference for Vocational Sex Equity Coordinators for eight years and is a Past Chair of the Association for Gender Equity Leadership in Education. She continues to act as the state leader of the Wisconsin Girl's Collaborative Project, serves as a champion of the Wisconsin STEM Equity Pipeline Project, and remains a member of the National Association of State Directors of Career and Technical Education Consortium. She also remains on the NAPE Executive Committee, providing her leadership, expertise, and mentoring for those individuals continuing in her footsteps. NAPE is proud to honor Ms. Barbara Bitters and her *purple passion* for equity in education here today.