Proposed Campus Culture Initiative for review, revision and costing

To: Strategic Planning Task Forces Subcommittee: Learning Environment and Campus Culture (LECC); New Programs for the 21st Century (NP); Outcome Assessment and Feedback (OAF) Scholarship (S); Graduate Programs (GP); Admissions.

Copy: Faculty Governance Committee Chairs, Officers Student Government, Offices of Student Affairs, Student Life, Officers, Intra-Fraternity/Sorority Council;

From: Planning and Implementation Committee (PIC), Chrysanthe Demetry, Coordinating Member

Date: April 3, 1998

RE: Proposed Initiative Concerning Campus Culture, for Review, Revision, and Costing

In its vision statement the Strategic Plan Steering Committee called for "an environment that promotes innovative thinking, values mutual respect and diversity, highly regards scholarship and teaching, promotes ethical behavior and engenders life-long learning for the campus community."

Background
PIC recognized in reading through the numerous task force recommendations dealing with the issue of campus culture, as well as several prior reports made available to PIC through the Student Affairs office, that the task of changing or redirecting the forces of current campus culture would not be easy. Addressing campus culture requires addressing a myriad of issues: diversity; social aridity; the chasm of on-campus versus off-campus living arrangements; the difficulties of the student's first year experience; the fraternity/sorority system; the phenomenon of empty weekends and disconnected term breaks; the gender balance of WPI.

Campus culture is inevitably the reflection of what a university is, even as it is a lagging product of what the institution hopes to be. WPI has labored long and hard to address the issues listed above. Steps have been and are being taken toward a campus culture that has greater unity and at the same time greater diversity; toward a more effective, more personalized, more project-oriented first year for students; toward more options within the very limited confines of WPI's housing (at present only 50% of the WPI student body can be accommodated on campus); toward securing a more diverse and yet less geographically dependent student body; toward a recognition that project-based learning requires a different reward system for its practitioners. These efforts will culminate in new directions for campus culture at WPI. PIC's initiative therefore seeks to supplement the process already underway; a process, as can be seen from the listing below of steps already taken, has many components:

- The creation of the 17 million dollar Campus Center Building
• Changes in the first year orientation process so that it embodies more than academic competence and extends well into the first term
• The creation and growth of the Frontiers, and Strive Programs
• The rehabilitation of the residence halls (scheduled through 2002)
• The inception and growth of the LEAP Program
• The creation of the EMSEP Program
• The creation of Camp Reach
• The creation of alternative living clusters with WPI housing
• The high-speed connection of Fraternity Houses to WPI's CCC
• The Formation of the Task Force on Community

Draft PIC Initiative:
Building on the above changes (a good many of which were called for in the recommendations of the original task force on the Learning Environment and Campus Culture) PIC advocates an innovative pilot program to be known as Project 2000, for a limited number of incoming students, aimed toward exploring a radical restructuring of the first year curriculum and living arrangements. The intent would be to deliver a first year experience as innovative and integrative as WPI hopes to be. The first year experience for this group would be significantly restructured so as to be entirely project-based and unified in approach, to be delivered by faculty tutors and the most advanced interactive technology. The curriculum for Project 2000 would reflect the considerable integrative work already tested and partially implemented under the Davis Grant. A further key element of Project 2000 would be the designation of special housing for the 50 to 60 participants—housing with its own dining facilities and space for resident tutors and/or faculty advisors and their families. To bring this pilot program into existence PIC advocates:

• The endowment of the Project 2000 Fund for housing, and curriculum innovation
• Support for faculty who commit to the Project —summer support and released time to plan and assess the effort with the student participants. The project would begin in the fall of 2000 and continue for a second year incorporating the reactions of the first year participants. In particular PIC would like to see such multi-year projects become part of the first year experience.

Additionally, PIC recommends:

• that the university reconsider and re-examine the question of whether Salisbury Estates might be best utilized in the interests of Graduate Student Housing, Visiting Scholar housing, and Project 2000.
• that a fund be established to aid in the generation and execution of three community service projects to be accomplished during term breaks
that a fund be established to bring promising minority, in-coming students to campus about six weeks early to partake in joint faculty and graduate student research efforts, that might be linked to Strive, or Frontiers, or Camp Reach efforts

that an honor code for WPI be created and promulgated

that an endowed fund to offset some of the Campus Center's operational expenses be created

Prior Recommendations from Specific Task Forces:
We list prior recommendations as background material, which are separate from the initiative recommended above.

1. Extend New Student Orientation in the academic year (LECC)
2. Continue work on improving Academic Integrity at WPI Continue the work that was begun several years ago to consider a WPI Campus Creed (LECC)
3. Assessment activities should commence immediately, coordinated by the Community Council, with the goal of measuring the present status and future changes in the learning environment and campus culture, especially related to women, minorities, and international students, faculty and staff. (LECC)
4. Consider funding a full time Ombudsperson/Affirmative Action Officer, including funding for programming and professional development (LECC)
5. While there is no quick fix for a lack of community at WPI, many of the following recommendations may push a change in culture and improvements in the learning environment in small but not insignificant ways: The President should reconvene the Community Council (LECC)
6. Consider the adoption of student portfolios, in a manner consistent with our mission, goals, and resources. (OAF)
7. Creation and upkeep of a "Community Website." (LECC)
8. Construct an On-Campus Day Care Center (LECC)
9. Wire Greek houses into the Internet (LECC)
10. Set aside housing for visiting faculty and scholars (LECC)
11. It is imperative that we continue to embrace graduate students and graduate programs as an integral component of the fabric of our community. We must find ways to help part-time graduate students develop a sense of community. Some specific actions include the development of critical masses in research groups, provision of office and meeting space, and development of social
activities. The new International House is one positive step. We should seek to make Salisbury Gardens our graduate student residence. (GP)

12. Endow a fund to contribute to the operation costs and program of the Campus Center (LECC)

13. Renovate remaining old classrooms and add multimedia capability to all classrooms. (LECC)

14. Endow a fund for diversity and multiculturalism programming. (LECC)

15. Students attend WPI, in large measure, because of the attractiveness of the project system. At the present time students are notable to have such an experience until later in their college career. Attention should be paid to this arena. (NP)

Specific Requests
PIC requests assistance from the previous Task Force members based subcommittee with respect to the following:

1. Please review the above draft initiative. Your committee will play an important role in modifying this proposed initiative to address the needs of the WPI campus. This draft is intended to provoke discussion and reflection regarding the future thrusts for WPI and means to implement these goals with the help and within the context of the WPI capital campaign.

2. Please canvas the campus for comment and represent the collective wisdom of all interested parties in constructing your criticism and amendments.

3. Please produce a list of suggestions, by April 27, to be addressed by PIC. This need not be a formal report, but should include background information for each suggested change and an assessment of the campus wide reaction to the initiative that led to the suggested changes. This feedback can take the form of a simple email to the member of PIC coordinating this initiative, or, a new draft of the initiative.

4. Please be prepared to interact with PIC in the preparation of a second version of the initiative in response to feedback received. Also, please be prepared to participate in an open meeting with PIC and the campus community to discuss this second revision.

5. Please assist PIC is the evaluation of the costs of undertaking this initiative. As was explained at the December faculty meeting, the campus will participate in an exercise aimed at capturing the sense of priorities assigned to the various initiatives to be proposed. To conduct this exercise, we need to assign a set of costs to each initiative associated with each kind of resource required by each initiative. Please consider the following questions:
   a. What do you estimate will be the start-up costs of this initiative?
   b. What do you estimate to be the steady state operational costs of this initiative?
   c. What revenue streams, other than the operating budget, can you envision supporting this initiative?
   d. In addition to those ways that might have been suggested above, in what other ways do you imagine this initiative could benefit from the capital campaign?
e. What space requirements do you think this initiative will need?

Then, please divide the costs into the following categories:

f. One time (start-up phase) cash expenses.
g. Endowed chairs, fellowships and/or scholarships or other self-replenishing funds.
h. Facilities (construction or equipment costs) that might be addressed through a gift-in-kind or gift that targets this project-specific one-time expense.
i. Continuing costs that impact the operating budget.
j. Potential offsets of continuing costs, due to new revenue streams.

Consider the fact that those initiatives that are selected for implementation after campus priorities have been illuminated will have to share the new resources being developed by the capital campaign. These currently untargeted new resources are, conservatively, estimated at approximately $16 million in unrestricted (effectively cash) and $30 million in restricted funds (scholarships, fellowships, chairs and other gifts dedicated to a particular purpose according to the interests of the donator.)