Draft PIC Campus Culture Initiative for Review, Revision, and Costing

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