Proposed Continuing Education Initiative for review, revision and costing

To: Strategic Planning Task Forces Subcommittee: Graduate Programs (GP) and New Programs for the 21st Century (NP)
Copy: Chairs: Faculty Governance Committees, Stephen Jackson '85, WPI Alumni Association
From: Planning and Implementation Committee (PIC), Arlene R. Lowenstein, coordinating committee member for the Continuing Education Initiative
Date: April 3, 1998
RE: Proposed Continuing Education Initiative for Review, Revision, and Costing

A theme that is addressed in the recommendations of the Strategic Planning Task Forces is the need to revisit and redefine the objectives and expected outcomes of WPI's Continuing Education Programs. The Strategic Plan Steering Committee (SPSC) articulated a vision, which included "engendering life-long learning for the campus community." Within the Guiding Principles the SPSC stated that WPI should be responsible "to the local community and the world beyond the campus." The goals listed by the SPSC include: make creative use of information technology and recognize and adapt to continuing change - specifically by exploiting continuing education opportunities.

We have identified recommendations from the Task Forces in a list below (with the originating task force acronym in parentheses) that describe possible actions towards this end. Also included is some discussion from a presentation made by Arlene Lowenstein to the Cabinet (February 24, 1998) that, while not presented as recommendations, provide some additional context about this issue.

Following the list we describe our current view of the nature and extent of the initiative that we believe follows from these recommendations. Finally, we outline a specific request to your group to assist us in further defining this initiative and the resources that would be required to address it.

PIC requests that your subcommittee act as the sounding board for campus reaction to the ideas in this initiative and that you assist PIC in modifying and finalizing an appropriate initiative for campus approval and faculty ratification.

SPSC and Task Force Recommendations
The PIC Initiative that follows has components that follow from two SPSC goals:

1. Make Creative Use of Information Technology
2. Recognize and Adapt to Continuing Change
Specific Task Force recommendations in this area included:

1. Bring our present Continuing Education operation to a higher level. In addition to providing non-credit professional development courses and programs, this entity could provide part-time undergraduate education. (GP)

2. Establish an Extension College to satisfy the full range of educational and development needs of adult learners. (GP)

3. Build on existing programs to meet the need for re-training and life long learning. (NP)

4. Expand professional training programs between industry and WPI that match well with WPI’s strengths. (NP)

**Draft PIC Initiative**

While considering the various recommendations made by the Graduate Programs and New Programs for the 21st Century Task Forces, PIC has come to the conclusion that now is the time to expand WPI’s adult learning programs. PIC believes that the natural evolution of WPI’s Continuing Education efforts is the establishment of a new entity which features programs designed to meet a more extensive range of educational needs of adult learners than presently available through WPI’s Office of Continuing Education. The curriculum would include more hands-on advanced information technology training and new opportunities for faculty to deliver in-demand courses on the Worcester campus. The new entity could also include for-credit undergraduate certificate programs distinct from WPI’s undergraduate degree program. This expanded entity would also bring more companies to the campus for targeted corporate training programs. This initiative, PIC believes, will enhance the reputation of an already thriving operation, provide much needed resources, and enhance an already significant revenue stream for WPI.

PIC advocates the following steps toward determining the feasibility and implementation of this entity:

1. That the Capital Campaign fund a market study to determine the demand for:
   a. credit-bearing certificate programs distinct from WPI’s undergraduate programs in the areas of business and information technology programs in the Greater Worcester area
   b. hands-on advanced technology training programs similar to those currently offered at the Westboro and Waltham Campuses
   c. distance learning programs using asynchronous or synchronous delivery methods.

   (*Note: This kind of study served WPI very well in identifying in-demand programs for the Waltham Campus.*)

2. That Washburn College of Continuing Studies be established and operated with a structure and procedures developed with the advice and consent of the faculty as stated in the Faculty Handbook
(Part IV, Section II), "Should the Administration propose creating, merging, realigning or eliminating an academic program. that proposal shall be conveyed to the Committee on Governance when it has been advanced to the stage of serious consideration, but before any commitments to action have been made."

3. PIC also recommends that WPI invest in dedicated classrooms, computer laboratory facilities, staff and administrative space on the WPI Campus to meet the programming needs of the proposed Washburn College of Continuing Studies. New program revenues would repay that investment - meeting the expenses associated with the build-out and maintenance of the space and additional staff. The proposed facilities, which are modeled on the Waltham Campus, include two computer labs, one seminar room, a small student lab, and space for administrative and support staff. Since the greatest demand for Continuing Studies is expected to occur during weeknights and weekends, the labs and classroom would also be available for undergraduate and graduate classes during the weekdays.

**Background**

There are clear opportunities for WPI to build upon the current and projected enrollment trends for adult learners - the fastest growing population in higher education. WPI's Continuing Education Programs have increased by a factor of five over the past five years. In FY97 WPI's Continuing Education programs contributed over $1.1M net revenue to the operating budget. Projections are even higher for FY98. Our most outstanding programmatic and financial successes during this time have been our hands-on advanced information technology certificate programs at the Waltham and Westboro campuses. We have also seen a significant increase in companies choosing to "partner" with WPI to deliver corporate training programs to improve their productivity. At our two branch campuses (Westboro and Waltham) we are now delivering both graduate and non-credit professional development programs to adult learners. Through the Graduate Admission Office we are also delivering graduate courses in Civil and Environmental Engineering on site at Metcalf and Eddy and discussions are underway to expand off-campus graduate programs. The WPI Alumni Association's Five Year Master Plan, which was delivered at the PAC Forum (February 20 - 21, 1998), also identifies an interest in working with the Office of Continuing Education to help meet the life-long learning needs of our alumni.

Many local and national universities including Harvard, Boston University, Northeastern, and Clark, have established credit-bearing extension colleges to meet the needs of adult learners. A possible home for these facilities on the WPI campus would be the new classroom building, which is already funded by the Capital Campaign. By locating Washburn College in this facility, we would reap the benefits of tying these programs and these learners more closely to campus life. This is a financially self-supporting initiative that would extend WPI beyond our traditional student markets and into the most rapidly growing population in higher education.

**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 13, 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 in 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.)