Draft PIC Continuing Education Initiative for Review, Revision, and Costing

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
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 lifelong 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.