Proposed Scholarship Initiative for review, revision and costing

While considering the various recommendations, made by the Scholarship Taskforce, by other groups concerning scholarship at WPI, and actions recommended by the CGSR report of this year, PIC has identified a set of actions that we believe will have an immediate impact. PIC has also identified, and suggests, a structure that will provide means for continued interaction between important parties on campus directed towards continual improvement.

The goal of this initiative is to increase WPI's output of nationally recognized scholarly work which results from and is inseparable from our commitment to providing a relevant and exciting educational experience for graduate and undergraduate students alike. The recommendations that follow, seek to accomplish this by establishing a nurturing environment, active encouragement and appropriate incentives and rewards for scholarship activities. These improvements are essential to the continued professional development of the faculty, the improvement of the learning experiences of the students (graduate and undergraduate) and the enhancement of WPI's national reputation.

The CGSR report on Enhancing the Role of Graduate Studies and Research at WPI, suggests an important target for this initiative: "There are, of course, many indices of reputation but the National Research Council's peer review of scholarly quality is, perhaps, the most important. This decennial poll will next be conducted in 2005. Investing in our graduate programs starting now will certainly have a significant positive impact on WPI's ranking in this poll. It is our goal to achieve collective and individual rankings in the top fifty in this poll."

This same report takes the following stance with respect to WPI's view of the close coupling of faculty scholarship and the student's learning experience: "The reputation of the graduate program ultimately depends on the creativity and scholarly achievements of the faculty members and their students." Furthermore it states: "The development of research proposals (in itself a creative activity) and the successful solicitation of funding play an important role in enhancing scholarship. It is the role of each faculty member to establish their goals with respect to these scholarly activities and strive to achieve them. It is the responsibility of each faculty member to recognize the central role played by the student in attaining these goals and to involve them in each step of the creative process. By educating these students, who will be the future generation of scholars, the faculty member will ensure the continuity of learning."
It is in support of this view of the importance of scholarship and the need to integrate it into the experience of every student at WPI that the PIC recommends the following.

**Re-Establish the Research Development Council**
We recommend the re-establishment of the Research Development Council (RDC) and making that council a formal sub-committee of CGSR. The new RDC would be responsible for such tasks as:

1. Administering an internal renovation and seed grant program (to be described below);
2. Mentoring faculty supported by the internal grant program;
3. Encouraging interdisciplinary interactions within the context of its grant program and mentorship roles.
4. Engaging in on-going dialog with the Provost's Office regarding policies relevant to the execution and promotion of quality scholarship such as appropriate student/faculty ratios, teaching expectations, loading models, growth of the graduate program, rewards and incentives;
5. Engaging in on-going dialog with University Relations to identify areas of potential growth that can be assisted with appropriate gifts for equipment and space renovation;
6. Engaging in on-going dialog with the Provost's Office and Research Director's Office to present faculty viewpoints on important issues arising in the establishment of flourishing funded research activities. Such issues include: intellectual property policy, RA and TA stipends, cost sharing policy, travel and professional development funds, research incentive funds, etc.
7. Direct input into the budget development process at the level of BDAC.

Members of the RDC would be selected based upon their demonstrated excellence in research.

**Endowed Seed Money and Laboratory Renovation Fund**
We recommend the creation through the capital campaign of an endowed seed money and renovation fund. This perpetual fund would be administered by the members of the RDC and would be distributed on the basis of research and renovation proposals according to the perceived long-term impact on WPI. A key element in any such proposal will be the proposed follow-through by the recipient with regards to acquiring new external funding.
After an award, the RDC members would actively participate as mentors in helping the recipient achieve acquisition of external funding.

Rotating Research Chairs for Young Faculty
The first few years comprise the most critical point in a faculty member's career. Without proper assistance towards development of scholarly achievement, both the individual and the institution suffer from a lost opportunity. We strongly recommend the establishment of endowed, rotating research chairs that provide some mix of increased release time, summer salary support of discretionary funds for travel, equipment and supplies that can help launch these careers in a fruitful direction. Industrial sponsorship of these chairs is an appropriate target for the capital campaign effort and beneficial in the sense of creating an immediate network of industrial contacts for the new faculty chair and their advisees.

Endowed Undergraduate Research Experience Fellowships
The early experience of students is also of paramount importance to their academic development. Many undergraduates leave WPI without ever having contact with the scholarship of the faculty except indirectly through course content introduced by the faculty. In the interest of expanding the interests and acumen of undergraduate students, we recommend a capital campaign effort to obtain endowed funding for undergraduate research experiences connected to faculty scholarship. These fellowships may either take the form of summer stipend support, or, financial aid linked to assisting specific faculty in their efforts.

Increase the Number of Endowed Graduate Student Fellowships
This form of graduate student financial aid is widely recognized as beneficial to both the graduate student and the academic program. High quality graduate students can be attracted to a department by the availability of a fellowship. As a result of their presence, the quality of classroom education, department environment and faculty research are favorably impacted. Where such opportunities arise in the capital campaign, PIC urges development of new endowed graduate fellowships.