INTRODUCTION
The Strategic Planning Committee, in its vision statement, committed WPI "to build an environment that promotes innovative thinking, values mutual respect and diversity, highly regards scholarship, and engenders life-long learning from the campus community." After dividing the strategic imperatives into thirteen sub categories, the Strategic Plan Task Group on the Learning Environment and Campus Culture was charged with evaluating and making recommendations regarding "shaping the campus culture and learning environment to make it intellectually stimulating, welcoming of diversity, and valuing community, civility and citizenship."

Noting that earlier work existed regarding our charge, the Task Group spent significant time on the review of past reports and recommendations. We particularly found the Commission on Residential and Social Life at WPI Report from 1992, entitled The Third Tower: Building Community at WPI, to be instructive on the past and current state of affairs with regard to WPI's learning environment. The Committee noted that while some of the recommendations from the Commission had in fact been implemented, still others had been left in limbo. For example, many of the recommended initiatives relative to Greek Life at WPI have been implemented with mostly positive results. The current state of affairs in our Greek System are positive, with
promising leadership in place. The Housing and Safety recommendations have been, for the most part, implemented though not with as much timeliness as the Commission recommended. Educational programs on personal safety and sexual assault occur regularly. The residence halls are on year 2 of a 5 year plan to renovate each of our older buildings. Riley Hall was renovated during the summer of 1996 with Ellsworth/Fuller scheduled for May of 1997.

Campus Space Usage has been enhanced to a small degree by providing a late-night study area in Fuller Labs. Athletic facilities remain open and available until late in the evenings. The recommendations for increased meeting rooms and small-group study are as have not been met. The Fitness Center has become a popular exercise facility, but the recommendation for renovation of Alumni Gym has been ignored.

Three of the major initiatives presented by the Commission have not been realized. The single most important recommendation that came from the Commission was that WPI build a Campus Center. Quoting the Commission, "Without the investment in a campus center, the Commission believes the central finding of its work—that WPI lacks a focal point for campus identity and community—will continue to be an unfulfilled need." To date the Campus Center exists as a promise but this "Third Tower" of social community has yet to be raised.

The Commission stated, "The President must implement a 'Campaign for Diversity' to bring the imperative need for the appreciation of diversity to the forefront of the campus community." While a number of extremely successful initiatives have been undertaken, more attention must be given to this important area.

Finally, the Commission made a case for the establishment and continuation of a Community Council, "a forum where (students, staff, faculty) plus alumni and trustees, could discuss a range of issues openly and profitably."

Our report will speak to each of these three initiatives and will identify additional work that the campus must undertake to enhance the learning environment and to shape the campus culture at WPI.
CHARACTERIZATION OF WPI’S LEARNING ENVIRONMENT AND CAMPUS CULTURE

Using the conclusions of past reports, as well as task force discussions and input from other students, faculty, and staff, we offer the following observations about the learning environment and campus culture at WPI:

  While there are strong sub-communities and sub-cultures within WPI, no unifying sense of community exists. Not all members of our community are "in tune" with our mission and desired intellectual environment. It’s all the little things that too often do not get done or are done poorly that erode or prevent the supportive environment necessary for a community of scholars.

- "Involving Colleges ignore the perceived, artificial distinctions between what is academic and what is educational and between what are 'in-class' and 'out-of-class' learning experiences." — George Kuh, *Involving Colleges* (1991).
  By this definition, WPI is *not* an "Involving College." In general, students and especially faculty here do not recognize "social life," or even development or transformation of values, as an integral part of the educational experience. While the developers of the Plan recognized that the campus culture is a prevalent factor in education, the idea of Social Community as the "Third Tower" of a WPI education has never been addressed with the diligence, thoughtfulness, and determination we have given to curriculum development. No change in this culture is likely to be achieved if faculty continue to take the attitude that improvement of the social environment on campus is the responsibility of our Student Life professional staff.

- WPI espouses its mission and values in publications, but in general, actions are not taken to ensure that the actual campus environment meets these goals. While cultural shifts take time, by lack of attention our campus culture continues to evolve and shape in ways that are not always commensurate with our mission and goals for a WPI education.

- Significant anecdotal evidence exists of a range of subtle to more blatant acts that harm the learning environment for people of color, international students and visitors, and women of WPI. Furthermore, a recent study comparing CIRP data for the same group of students in their freshman and senior years indicated a retrenchment in student attitudes about diversity
during their four years at WPI. While we have made tremendous progress in diversifying our student body since the Commission Report in 1992, the more difficult and "softer" part of any Campaign for Diversity — ensuring a supportive environment for all members of the community — has not been addressed.

- Personal responsibility is the mantra of a WPI education, but perhaps is so pervasive that it has broad and unintended consequences. Most students are reluctant to seek help, and many may assume that they are the only ones struggling and that should be expected to come out of a hole on their own. The aspect of WPI culture whereby students feel that actions such as cheating only hurt that individual may also be perpetuated by an overemphasis on personal responsibility and self-sufficiency.

- The absence of community for and among graduate students is even more acute than for undergraduates.

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

A summary listing of our recommendations is outlined below. Discussion of the issues leading to development of the following recommendations is contained in the next section.

Recommendations Requiring Resources from the Capital Campaign

Priority Level 1

- Construct a Campus Center, including renovation of outdated athletic facilities
- Endow a fund to contribute to the operating costs and program of the Campus Center

Priority Level 2

- Endow a fund for diversity and multiculturalism programming
- Endow a fund for recruitment of minority faculty
- Construct an On-campus Day Care Center
Priority Level 3

- Renovate remaining old classrooms and add multimedia capability to all classrooms
- Construct a Life Sciences building: refer to New Programs task force report
- Wire Greek houses into the Internet
- Set aside housing for visiting faculty and scholars
- Consider funding a full time Ombudsperson/Affirmative Action Officer, including funding for programming and professional development.

Recommendations Requiring Few Additional Financial Resources

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.
- 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.
- Develop a welcome and orientation program for all new employees: staff and faculty.
- Continue work on improving Academic Integrity at WPI.
- Continue the work that was begun several years ago to consider a WPI Campus Creed
- Take action to send messages to applicants in the Admissions process that are in tune with our educational approach, our mission, and our desired learning environment and campus culture.
- Extend New Student Orientation into the academic year.
- Creation and upkeep of a "Community Web"
• Take steps to improve the environment needed to support research activities.

• To address a strain on classroom space and utilization, consider changing the daily calendar to a 9 hour day (eliminating the 12-12:30 "safe zone") before spending resources on a "classroom building."

DISCUSSION OF ISSUES
This section provides rationale and discussion of issues associated with the above recommendations. In addition, some issues that the task group discussed related to the learning environment and campus culture are included even though they are not connect ed to particular recommendations.

Campus Center

"It is an earnest hope that some suitable building will be erected to bring students together at least once a week." --Peddler, 1908

"A campus center is essential to fill the vacuum existing at the core of WPI campus life. WPI needs, in effect, a third tower." A new "tower" to balance and complement WPI's well-known "two towers" tradition of "Lehr and Kunst." —-Report of the Commission on Residential and Social Life at WPI, 1992.

"It will be a place for community, collegiality, socialization and learning. The Campus Center will be the focal point of WPI's out-of-classroom activity." —--The Campus Center Commission Report to the WPI Trustees, 1994.

Probably no single project on the WPI campus has been studied as thoroughly as the Campus Center. Formal reports dating back to 1969 and anecdotal records from the 1900's chronicle the lack of suitable on-campus facilities to promote community, diversity, and civility. Students, faculty, staff and alumni have been surveyed and an almost unanimous WPI community believes the Campus Center to be an integral part of WPI's future.

On February 17 the Task Group held an open meeting to learn from the WPI community what they saw as important initiatives to 'shaping the learning environment.' Over 400 voices clearly stated that the Campus Center must be the highest priority of the College, that the learning environment is negatively
impacted by this lack of a central meeting place on the campus. The Student Government Association president spoke eloquently about the need for the Center and presented the Task Group with a petition signed by over 1,000 WPI community members.

Based on our review of past reports, the clear recommendation of the Commission, and the continued mandate from the WPI student body, the Task Group on the Learning Environment and Campus Culture cannot stress enough the case for immediate action on the Campus Center. Students have taken the lack of follow-through on the Campus Center as a lack of commitment to the importance of community. For many, frustration and loss of hope have colored their attitudes and perceptions. Their feelings of powerlessness have become part of the campus culture.

Through the work of numerous other committees, the positive, lasting effects of a campus center have been enumerated and will not be repeated here. Their reports, however, document a critical flaw in the quality of life at WPI and an opportunity for the Strategic Planning Committee to take a leadership position. The WPI Campus Center is the single-most important recommendation of the Task Group on the Learning Environment and Campus Culture. We also recommend a parallel improvement in the outdated athletic facilities in Alumni Gym. The need for construction of a regulation-size swimming pool and an improved indoor track have been mentioned repeatedly by students, faculty, and staff offering input to the task group. These improved facilities should have positive effects on student recruitment. Our final recommendation associated with the Campus Center is to endow a fund to support the portion of the operating costs and program exceeding its income. The Campus Center must not be underutilized because of insufficient funds for management and programming.

Diversity and Multiculturalism Programming

A healthy campus climate embraces the culture, practices, and traditions of all of its constituents. Currently the campus is lacking in the areas of multicultural programming. As our campus continues to become more diverse, we need to increase awareness pertaining to ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation and
international issues. While funds for diversity and multiculturalism programming can often be scrounged up if one gets a few hundred dollars from a multitude of academic departments or administrative offices, the time and energy it takes to get those funds is a deterrent to organizing such events, in addition to being an inefficient use of time. Thus, we recommend that an endowed fund be sought in the Capital Campaign to allow at least $15K annually for diversity and multiculturalism programming.

Recruitment of Minority Faculty and Staff

A diverse faculty and staff is essential to a pluralistic campus. Faculty create the curriculum and determine the quality of the experience in every classroom. Administrators provide services to faculty, students and the community. They both serve as teachers, mentors, advisors, and role models. Without the contributions of minority individuals, no faculty or institution can be complete.

The lack of progress in improving minority representation among the faculty is largely a function of the small pool of minority doctorate holders. Further compounding the problem is the concentration of minority group members in certain fields.

As the small numbers of minority doctorate and master's holders indicate, the underrepresentation of minorities is largely a supply problem. We must explore innovative approaches such as:

- Implement short term appointments or exchanges of minority faculty from HBCUs
- Seek out individuals who are currently outside of academe: in corporations, the military, or the government
- Create postdoctoral fellowships as an enticement to minorities for permanent faculty positions
- Hire individuals who have completed all PhD requirements but their dissertations (ABDs) and provide a follow-up program of faculty development that permits the completion of the degree
- Create a visiting scholars program or distinguished lecturer series
- Use professional conference placement centers for advertising job openings
Many of these innovative approaches will require additional resources. Thus, we recommend that an endowed fund for recruiting minority faculty and staff be pursued in the Capital Campaign. A ballpark estimate of an appropriate level of funding may be $200K-$500K, depending on what approaches are pursued. Of course, more time is required for a detailed planning process and more accurate identification of funding needs.

On-Campus Day Care Facility

Surveys conducted by the Day Care Committee within the past several years, as well as a unanimous faculty resolution this year, clearly indicate the desire for an on-campus day care facility by faculty, staff, and an increasing number of students, as a means of supporting the families within our community. Family considerations such as convenience of day care are also a key issue for attracting new faculty and staff; at present, WPI has little to offer in this arena. We recommend that WPI properties be reexamined by the appropriate administrators, Day Care Committee, and trustees, with the charge to identify a site by June 1998. In parallel, funds should be sought in the Capital Campaign for renovation or construction of the day care facility.

Classroom Learning Environment

a) Upgrading Existing Classrooms to Have Full Multimedia Capabilities

The task force recommends that all existing classrooms be retrofitted with video projection capabilities, internet (World Wide Web) access, and adequate sound enhancement. Due to the trends in modern teaching methods, the use of full multimedia has become more prominent at WPI and elsewhere. The quality of the learning environment is directly impacted by the availability of equipment to properly display on-line resources, video supplements, or other lecture material. If professors are expected to take full advantage of the multimedia environment, then it is crucial that they always have the ability to easily convey their work in any classroom. The task force noted that various professors objected to using internet, computer, or video resources because of the limited access to equipment. Furthermore thes e professors did not want to
invest the time and energy into creating portable multimedia lessons if there was a good chance that they would not have the resources to display them.

The Advanced Distance Learning Network would also benefit from the presence of ample and adequate multimedia equipment. As the use of supplemental video material gains momentum, the need for multimedia classrooms will increase substantially. Student projects and presentations are increasingly being carried out using high tech equipment, and chat forums online are becoming more popular as a means for encouraging interactive distance learning. The upgrade should proceed at a greatly accelerated rate than that which has been observed over the past two years. The task force further believes that it is crucial that this operation be completed within the next two years.

b) Physical Renovation of Existing Classrooms and Design of Future Classrooms

While we recommend the goal of equipping every classroom with multimedia capability, immediate priority must be placed on ensuring that all classrooms meet at least the minimum standards for an environment conducive to learning. In particular, Olin 107, a uniquely intimate large classroom utilized by the majority of every first year class, is by far the most outdated classroom on campus. This classroom is in urgent need of immediate renovation to provide an appropriate learning environment.

The task group also recommends that all classroom renovations and any new classrooms be designed with full consultation of all affected faculty as well as some students, so that pedagogical needs are considered. One needs only to look at the severe under utilization of Perrault Hall to understand the necessity for this approach.

Wiring the Greek System Into the Internet

The task force recommends that WPI assist in any way possible to connect the peripheral Greek properties to the internet via the WPI College Computing Center (CCC). In much the same way that the telephone has been
used to convey information and allow for healthy campus communication, the World Wide Web has become a staple in the lives of many students for the same reasons. The task force has received considerable input from Greeks reflecting a favorable stance towards implementing this recommendation. It is believed that the availability of internet resources in Greek houses (which provide necessary housing for many upperclassmen) should be considered with the same seriousness as it has been for on-campus residence halls. A healthy exchange beneficial to the learning environment can be achieved by establishing this electronic link from off-campus Greek housing to the campus academic and social centers via the internet.

The task force recommends that the internet connection be completed as soon as is financially feasible and be completed within a year of the start date. It is expected that cooperation between the individual Greek houses and WPI will ensure a timely and fair installation. It is likely that Plant Services and the CCC will play vital roles on behalf of WPI during this process while the IFC and Panhellenic Association (and individual house presidents), and Greek Alumni Council will represent the Greek Fraternities and Sororities.

**Housing for Visiting Scholars**

A segment of the community with specific housing needs are visiting scholars who may be teaching or doing research at WPI for a short period of time. It is difficult for these visiting scholars to find short term, fully furnished housing, with no lease. If WPI specifically designated one of the peripheral properties for visiting scholars, this would help to address this short term housing need. The budgetary concern for this proposal is that there would be no guarantee that this housing would be fully occupied during the year. In other words, there would be insufficient revenue to pay for the operating expenses of the house. WPI would thus need to make the operating expenses of the housing part of the operating budget of the institution. Revenue generated from visiting scholars would help to offset these costs.

**Creation and Upkeep of a "Community Web"**
One issue that seemed to arise repeatedly in different forms was that of "centralized campus resources." The idea that students and faculty are unaware of the various resources that are available with regard to the learning environment and campus community was repeated on several occasions. In response to this issue, the task force discussed the implementation of an actively maintained community website where faculty, staff, and students could look to learn about current events and existing resources (e.g., dining hours, classroom scheduling, etc.). Such a medium could also be used as a forum for scheduling of activities pertinent to the campus learning environment, thus helping the WPI community maximize its available resources.

The World Wide Web in particular would be a good choice for this type of informational forum because of the existing ability to be interactive and easily modified to reflect pressing issues or imminent campus events. Furthermore, the existence of a campus-wide network (which serves as the infrastructure for this type of medium) helps to ensure that the community website would likely be received by a campus-wide audience. The task force would like to stress that while this form of media can in fact be used in a very effective manner if the proper support is available, such a resource would essentially go unused if it is poorly constructed or badly maintained. Accordingly, it is the recommendation of this task force that provisions be made in the future to provide for at least a half time position to maintain the community website and provide ancillary support.

The Community Council and Assessment of Learning Environment and Campus Culture

A strong recommendation of the task group requiring no additional financial resources is for the President to reconvene a Community Council of faculty, students, staff, alumni, and trustees. The creation of the Community Council was one of the recommendations of the Commission on Residential and Social Life, in effect to carry on its work which, it was recognized, needed on-going, long-term attention, monitoring, and assessment. The Community Council was convened by President Strauss for only a brief period of time, however. Since that time, issues of campus culture and civility have had no real home or forum
other than the Committee on Student Advising (now the Committee on Advising and Student Life), which does not have the broad representation of constituencies of the Community Council and has been able to address issues of learning environment and campus culture only on an ad-hoc and somewhat fragmented basis.

One of the primary responsibilities of the Community Council outlined by the Commission on Residential and Social Life was to survey the status of student life on an on-going basis. **This need for monitoring and assessment of our learning environment and campus culture is even more acute today,** especially if we hope to realize the aggressive goals that are being considered for increasing the representation of women, other minority, and international students at WPI by 2010, along with increasing the academic quality of incoming students. A potentially rich source of information about campus culture that presently is difficult to identify and access are IQPs and MQPs that describe or analyze WPI culture. Some small changes in how these projects are catalogued, or oversight by the Community Council, could increase utilization of these reports as tools for keeping in touch with development of campus culture. For example, project reports could relatively simply be gathered in fully searchable form on CD-ROMs.

**Orientation for New WPI Employees and Students**

**WPI is in need of an Orientation or "Welcome Wagon" program for all new employees, so that everyone is in tune with our mission and our desired intellectual environment.** Without such orientation to our institution, we cannot expect from these new employees the "thousands of small gestures" that are needed to build and maintain a community. This program should welcome new members to the community and orient them to WPI's educational philosophy, broadly interpreted. The goal should be to seek to create a team, ending division between "academic" and "non-academic" missions and responsibilities.

The lack of centralized sources for information makes it unnecessarily hard to get oriented to WPI, campus work and life. It seems to be up to the individual to get oriented and find out where to go in order to obtain necessary
information. Transfer students have a challenging time transferring credits, especially from non-American school systems. A lot (a very big lot!) is possible at WPI, but the road is often thorny, time consuming, and unclear.

Ever since the report of the First Year Future Search Conference in 1994, it has been recognized that a key need for enhancing the first year at WPI is for an extended orientation program, beyond the 4-5 day program prior to A term. While small steps have been made in this direction by committed individuals, advising and orientation of our first year students to a WPI education and the desired values of our community are still very much inadequate. The reasons for inaction on this issue are most likely a combination of lack of resources, absence of rewards for faculty in this area, and our culture's artificial divisions in responsibility between "academic" and "non-academic" aspects of a WPI education.

Team and project work are seen as a major part of the WPI education, and is a wonderful opportunity for students to get used to "real life". However, as most students are not experienced in teamwork, they have problems getting the most out of the experience. A lot of unnecessary time is spent learning group dynamics the hard way, instead of on actual cooperation and problem solving. A mandatory seminar in time management, group work, group psychology and group dynamics during the freshman year could help students get a better and more efficient start on their project work.

**Campus Creed**

In 1992 a grassroots effort to establish a Campus Creed at WPI emerged. A Campus Creed, which has become a standard at many colleges and universities, is a document that articulates the principles of community of the college. Campus Creeds are not policy statements and are not sanctionable by adjudication. Rather, the Creed helps to articulate to the current and future community members what the values, guiding principles, and aspirations for civility are of the institution.

In 1992 and 1993 a group of students reviewed creeds from over 20 institutions of higher education. They fashioned a Creed for WPI which was modeled on
the Carolinian’s Creed of the University of South Carolina. The WPI Campus Creed was brought before the undergraduate Student Government Association and the Graduate Student Organization and was ratified by both bodies. The process, however, was flawed in that it did not include representation from all campus constituencies. By the time the document reached the Board of Trustees, there was concern about the process as well as some content problems and the Creed was sent back for further review and development.

The Creed languished for some years. In 1995 several community members met to revisit the development of the Creed. It was agreed that there needed to be a process champion for the project to see it through. In January, 1996, the Committee on Student Advising sent a letter to the Committee on Governance (COG) asking their guidance about how a representative group should be formed. In September of 1996 COG established an Ad-Hoc Campus Creed Committee and requested appointments from faculty committees, the Student Government Association, and Graduate Student Organization. To date, this group still has not been convened. If the Community Council is reestablished, the issue would be addressed best by this group because of its broad constituencies.

**Academic Integrity**

It is clear from surveys of WPI students in 1994 and 1996, a recent survey of faculty, and recent discourse initiated by the Ad-Hoc Committee on Academic Honesty, that WPI has a culture that tolerates cheating. The Ad-Hoc Committee presently is wrestling with the complexities of how to transform this culture and will need broad support and concern from faculty, continued support from the Administration, and perhaps support from Admissions in helping to transform our student culture.

**Interface of Admissions with Learning Environment and Campus Culture**

*The task group urges the recognition that the Admissions process affects campus culture and can be used as one of many tools for changing that culture. In particular, we strongly recommend the use of a required essay,* for a multitude of reasons: to communicate early our high expectations; to
communicate key aspired values of our community such as integrity, teamwork, diversity, and social responsibility; to identify more accurately the kind of student who will succeed at WPI; and to avoid leaving the impression that writing will not be necessary at WPI. It appears that an essay has not been required in the past in order to maximize the number of applications that WPI receives. However, we argue strongly that the type of student who will not write an essay is not the kind of student whom we would value or who would succeed at WPI. A metric other than number of applications received is needed to judge the effectiveness of our admissions process.

Campus Ombudsperson

Past personal experiences of task group members and others in our community indicate that a campus ombudsperson can be invaluable in providing an outlet for individuals to communicate frustrations with their learning environment and to identify a process for improvement, or for individuals or parties to work through their differences in a civil manner. While we applaud as a first step the recent identification of two ombudspersons with 10% release time each, we caution that such an approach should be reexamined after one year. In actuality, these individuals are not likely to give up 1/10th of their present duties, so they will be overburdened. Even if these individuals are not fully utilized, one should not make the conclusion that they are not needed. In order to function effectively, ombudspersons typically need time and resources for professional development, as well as time and resources to organize and deliver proactive educational programming. We expect that two half-time positions may be more realistic, and thus recommend reassessment of these positions in a year's time. Many other campuses also have a combined Ombudsperson/Affirmative Action Officer. There can be advantages in removing oversight of Affirmative Action from the Human Resources Department which perhaps should be considered.

Classroom/Space Utilization

The task group discussed space issues regarding classroom and laboratory utilization with Chuck Kornik, Administrator of Academic Programs. Many sources of the space strain that currently exists were identified. The need to
take courses in tandem sometimes leads to time-space conflicts under the current system. While computerization of the schedule has minimized conflicts, large time-slot classes are still problematic. There are currently 38 classrooms available, and this number seems to be shrinking as renovations take place. Competition for use of multimedia facilities can be a problem. A recent software acquisition will give students and faculty the ability to get view-only access to classroom scheduling via the Internet, links to Plant Services and Food Services for room scheduling, and automated billing.

Various low cost solutions were identified that would greatly ease the burden that currently exists. First, **various hidden spaces on campus could be utilized more effectively if one person were in control of all spaces.** The frustration associated with having to schedule campus space with a multitude of people (Events Coordinator, Projects/Enrollment Office, Department Offices, etc.) was mentioned frequently. This same issue was identified in the 1992 Commission Report, but very little improvement has been achieved. Another opportunity to increase the number of available rooms is the fact that two exits are no longer required by law for rooms holding less than 50 people. A re-inventory of classrooms accompanied by their centralized scheduling may improve the situation. Lastly, WPI could move from an 8 hour daily schedule to a 9 hour schedule, removing the 12-12:30 "protected zone." The task group recommends that these approaches be attempted before spending resources on a "classroom building."

**Environment Associated with Research Activities**

The WPI campus is comatose during term breaks, and to a lesser extent, during the summer. Less severe cutbacks in library hours, food service options, and athletic facility hours are needed to provide a more supportive environment for those on campus who are involved in scholarly activities during these times. There is also the perception that there are few meeting room and food service options for part-time graduate students in the evenings. While much of this problem will be solved with the construction of a Campus Center, improvements can be made in the meantime through better and more centralized communication about existing late evening food service and meeting area options.
Residence Hall Renovations

On September 22, 1995, the WPI Board of Trustees voted to fund a five year renovation plan of residence halls at WPI. The schedule and projected costs for the renovations were:

Summer of 1996 -- Sanford Riley -- 3.5 million
Summer of 1997 -- Ellsworth/Fuller -- 2.8 million
Summer of 1998 -- Daniels Hall -- 2.975 million
Summer of 1999 -- Morgan Hall -- 4.345 million

The Sanford Riley renovation has been completed. It included the installation of an elevator, reconstruction of the bathrooms to make them fully handicapped accessible, new roof, masonry repair, and new paint, carpet, vinyl flooring, furniture. The renovation also included adding an additional lounge in the building, bringing the total up to three.

The Ellsworth/Fuller renovation is slated to begin in May of 1997. The scope of the renovation will include a total rehabilitation of the bathrooms and kitchens, new carpet and flooring, paint, new appliances and furniture. These proposed renovations will address some of the feedback that the task force received about the conditions of the Ellsworth/Fuller apartments. New windows were installed in Ellsworth/Fuller during the summer of 1995.

While the specific programs for Daniels and Morgan have not been developed yet, it is likely that the renovations will be similar in their scope. The Morgan renovation will also include the dining hall area and exterior site work.

These renovations will greatly increase the quality of our on campus housing facilities and thus contribute more positively to the learning environment.

Residence Hall Networking

During the summer of 1994, every WPI residence hall was networked to provide computer data, telephone, and cable television (CATV) access in each
student bedroom. The CATV service is furnished at no cost; students may elect to receive the full telephone and network services, which have associated fees. The network connection gives students high speed, uncontested access to the Internet and to campus computer facilities from their residence hall room. The addition of this comprehensive, state-of-the-art telecommunications system for on campus students has greatly augmented the learning environment in the residence halls.

**Housing For Graduate Students**

Residential Services provided separate housing for graduate students up until 1996-1997 academic year. The housing was primarily in double rooms, which is not the preferred type of housing by graduate students. It was also more expensive than living in off campus housing. As a result, the housing remained only partially filled for several years and was eliminated this past year.

Currently, graduate students are permitted to live in undergraduate student housing on a space available basis. They are also permitted to live in WPI owned peripheral properties, managed by Plant Services. The other housing options include Salisbury Estates or off campus housing.

**Food Service on Campus**

During the 1995-1996 academic year, the Food Service Advisory made the following revisions to increase the flexibility of food service on campus. The hours of operation between Founders and Morgan Commons have been staggered so that they are no longer duplicate each other. A new meal zone was added in Founders from 1:15 p.m. to 5:00 where students who miss lunch during regular hours can eat. Founders also serves dinner until 8:00 p.m., which allows students the option of eating later. Thus, students on meal plans can basically eat any time from 11:15 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. which greatly increases flexibility. The other feature for students on meal plans is a more formalized bag lunch and dinner program. Students who will miss a lunch or dinner because of class, lab, or other obligations can fill out an individualized meal request which can be picked up.
The Grille is open from 8:00 am to 8:00 p.m. and Gompei’s is open continuously from 11:00 am to 11:00 p.m. These increased hours allow greater flexibility for commuter students, graduate students, off campus students, as well as faculty/staff. Food Service also created special meal plans for these segments of the campus population to be able to eat lunches in the dining halls, as well as a declining balance plan for the a la carte facilities. Considered together, these changes have greatly increased the flexibility and availability of food service on campus for all segments of the campus population. These address the feedback that the committee received regarding the lack of places to pick up something to eat on campus when coming in for an evening class, etc. This simply is not true, but clearly the flexibility of the food service needs to be better advertised to these specialized populations. The flexibility of the various food service operations and options would also support some of the proposed changes in the academic scheduling that Chuck Kornik had presented to the task force.

Seven Week Terms

The task group received some input from both faculty and students expressing concern about the deleterious effect of seven week terms on the learning environment at WPI. The work pace inflicted by the 7 week term is very intense and high energy. Students who take advantage of WPI’s special opportunities (mix and match scheduling, intensive teamwork across disciplines etc.) often find themselves struggling with an unbearable workload, which in turn causes an increasing level of stress as the term goes on. Even a brief illness can set a student too far behind in course work to recover fully. From the viewpoint of some faculty, short terms do not allow students sufficient time to integrate what they have learned. The opposing argument has been that almost any alternative calendar would not allow us to sustain our emphasis on projects as degree requirements and the ability for students to take advantage of global opportunities with minimal disruption to the rest of their academic programs.

Students pointed out that some small, but not insignificant improvements could be made by more coordination of schedules and programs, and by faculty striving for evenly assigned and sensible workloads. Publishing of homework
assignments at the beginning of the term is helpful for students. Department should increase information exchange to avoid high concurrence in due dates and exams.

CONCLUSION
The consequences of not addressing the strategic issue of improving the learning environment and campus culture are broad and foreboding. We as an institution must take action to make sure that the actuality of a WPI education meets the goals that we espouse. By lack of attention the campus culture has continued to evolve and shape itself in ways that are in many cases counter to the values we advocate in the words of our publications. Perhaps the most dire consequence of failure to address issues of community and campus culture will be the inability to attract and retain a more diverse student body that will be necessary if WPI is to survive and prosper in the 21st century.

The most important recommendation of this task group for building community is the timely construction of a Campus Center as the Third Tower at WPI. Bricks and mortar will not be enough, however. We recommend that the Community Council be reconvened to provide continuous vigilance from a broad constituency on issues of diversity, civility, community, and social life. The remainder of the recommendations contained in this report represent just some of the "thousands of small gestures" that are needed for building a civil community of scholars at WPI.