“I couldn’t be more excited to join this extraordinary community that’s so dedicated to solving our greatest challenges, to educating the next generation of leaders, and to making people’s lives better around the world. This is me pinching myself. I am literally saying ‘how did I get so lucky?’”

“On a very cold Saturday in November my husband and I drove over to campus to secretly sleuth out the situation. We were standing next to Goddard Hall looking at the map of the campus trying to get our bearings, and this voice says, ‘can I help you find something?’ and I turn around and there is a police cruiser with an officer inside. I said ‘No! No we’re fine,” and tried not to attract too much attention, but whoever that was, he was very kind and a great recruiter.”

“On what makes WPI distinctive

“As I have learned about the incredible diversity of accomplishments of this great institution, I am really in awe of all of you—of the faculty who bring seeds of ideas to life and who educate our students to be leaders in their field; of the students who embrace experiential learning and challenge us to be our best; and of the staff who enable all of this in the most fundamental way.”

“You’re addressing global challenges of today and tomorrow—cutting-edge robotics, computing and data science, bio-inspired products to fight disease, remedies to threats to our environmental resilience. The questions we seek to address do three critical things: they expand human knowledge, they make the world better, and they spark our imaginations of what’s possible.”
On how small ideas can have powerful impact

“I spent four years of my life in graduate school, working in this little tiny lab under the stairs. I would spend hours taking pieces of meteorites and heating them up and extracting the water to learn about water on Mars. I would go to conferences, and there were about 25 of us in the whole world that studied these meteorites.

“One day, when I was a postdoc, I got a phone call from a reporter who said, ‘Hey, tomorrow it’s going to be announced that some NASA scientists think they found evidence of fossil life in one of these meteorites that you studied.’ Next, President Clinton spoke about my little meteorite…. At the next conference, there were 1,000 people in the room—the point is, here I was in my lab under the stairs, working away on something that can really spark people’s imagination. The work that we do has the power to do that.”

On a shared history and vision with WPI

“My job is to enable people to make achievements that inspire and make an impact on the world, by helping all of you succeed. That is one of the things that led me to NASA, which, of course, is something else we share—our love and appreciation for Robert Goddard. I worked at Goddard Space Flight Center and know the incredible impact that he has had on our nation that I think most people still don’t really appropriately appreciate.”

“My heart is truly in these places where education and innovation intersect—fabulous universities like WPI. The thing that really drew me here is the opportunity to be a part of a community that so clearly values the intersection of the technological and the human, innovating technologically for the benefit of humanity.”

On responses to questions about WPI’s future

“I agreed to become the President of WPI because I can already see such great potential for increasing our impact on the world, by building on the success of the WPI Plan and deep commitment to interdisciplinary and experiential learning. Our job together is to crystallize where WPI’s strengths and inspirations intersect those opportunities, and to move powerfully to create the future we imagine together.”

“I’m interested in lots of discussions and perspectives on WPI. I want everyone to think about answers to a couple of very important questions: What’s excellent at WPI? Where are we, and what must we push to be among the very best? What is distinctive about WPI?”

“I will pledge to you, make it my mission in life to enable our success and increase our impact, and accelerate the rise of this great institution, but I can’t do it alone. We’re going to need to do it together. So, be my partners in this. Join me in considering how you can contribute to moving WPI forward. Continue, and even enhance the energy and passion that you commit to that goal with me, and I’ll be right there with you.”

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