Finding Your Place at WPI

Sponsored by Disability Services and Residential Services

~ Social Life
~ Academics
~ Wellness
~ Community
~ Activities
Hello,

Welcome and congratulations on your acceptance to WPI. We are excited to be working with you and look forward to assisting you in your college experience. The college community provides you an opportunity to become engaged academically, as well as the chance to interact, and get involved with your peers socially. However we understand this can be overwhelming for you during this time of transition. The office of Residential Services and Student Disability Services would like to make this process easy and stress free for you. Within these pages you will find a reference guide to assist you with your college experience.

Please use this guide and the resources listed to assist you as you begin your college experience. We look forward to supporting you through your college years and we wish you the best of luck as you begin this new challenge.

Sincerely,

Naomi Carton
Director of Residential Services

JoAnn Van Dyke
Director of Student Disability Services
Exploring the Benefits of Living On-Campus

Living on campus is a great opportunity for students at WPI. More than just a convenience, it is an important part of student academic growth. Research has shown that students who live on campus do better academically due to the easy access to academic support resources. In addition, living in close proximity to other students who are taking the same classes helps to develop social networks where it is easy to collaborate and organize study groups.

Understanding that college often provides the first experience for students to live away from home, our staff is trained to help make that transition as easy to possible.

Residential Services offers a living community that strives to meet students’ social and academic needs. We support a community based on individual responsibility, where there is an appreciation of individual differences and a respect for individual rights. We offer a wide variety of activities, events, and programs. Each is designed to offer not only fun, but also opportunities for student interaction, development and leadership.

What can you do to help you and your roommate(s) get along all year?

- Be considerate of each other’s rights, privacy, and preferences.
- Above, all keep lines of communication open.
- Get off to a good start by identifying important similarities and differences, as well as areas on which you’ll need to compromise.
- Take some time out of settling in to talk about your year ahead together.
- Some things to talk about: what you expect from your roommate, what does your roommate expect from you, and what both of you will contribute to this relationship. Just remember that roommates are individuals with likes and dislikes and these should be respected the same as yours.
- Naturally, you and your roommate(s) won’t see everything the same way, and sometimes the difference between you will be frustrating. However, when your roommate(s) does something that bothers you, there is nothing he/she can do to help the situation until you mention it to him or her.
- It’s not easy to talk about disagreements, but if you do, you can make the situation clearer and you may keep a simple misunderstanding from becoming a big argument. Try to be specific about what is upsetting you and why you feel that way. Make sure you listen to and understand your roommate’s point of view.

Try to build a compromise based upon meeting the most pressing needs while respecting the rights of everyone involved. If you and your roommate(s) are having difficulty resolving a particular disagreement on your own, out your Resident Assistant to help mediate.
Joining a Community of Learning

You’re entering a community of learning. This learning happens both in and out of the classroom—it’s life on campus!

Lectures, class notes, papers and projects... all of these are bound to be part of your academic experience. Yet, overall, collegiate learning focuses more on personal responsibility and taking initiative. For instance...

College coursework is typically based more on independent study than on lectures. You need to do that "outside of class work" in order to succeed.

No one will be looking over your shoulder, encouraging you to complete assignments. You need self-discipline and goal-setting skills.

Asking questions and voicing opinions is both an opportunity and an expectation in college classrooms.

Dig Into the Learning Life

When you get to choose a topic for a project, select something that you’re really interested in, not just the easiest or most popular topic.

Don’t let grades be the end-all/be-all. Put yourself into your academics and focus on the learning.

Attend extra credit, out-of-class opportunities to complement in-class learning.

Do the reading so you’re prepared for class discussions.

Pull your weight when you do group work.

Keep up with lab work and other experiential assignments to help you put learning into action.

Talk informally with friends about what you’re learning. Make academics come alive!

Faculty Facts

They expect respect & attention.

They notice if you’re absent.

They provide a syllabus to help you map out the semester.

Titles and degrees don’t automatically make faculty good. Adjunct assistants... all can be quality educators if they take interest in students and their learning.

The easiest professor isn’t always the best. Challenge is good!

Most instructors value student initiative and interest.
Seeking a Balance

Taking care of your mind isn’t the only thing that college should be about. Giving your body and spirit the same attention will help you stay well. It’s all about balance!

12 Ways Smart Students Keep Themselves Healthy

1. Balance your hobbies and interests with your academic responsibilities.
2. Get yourself into a fairly regular sleep pattern.
3. Stay connected with family and old friends while also meeting new folks.
4. Don’t rely on cramming and all-nighters to get you through.
5. Find ways to get outside of the campus bubble to keep things in perspective.
6. Eat a balanced mix of healthy foods in the dining hall.
7. Work out and/or move around on a regular basis.
8. Reach out to others and develop solid friendships.
9. Make smart choices about alcohol and other drugs.
10. Give time to good causes.
11. Renew your spirit in ways that feel right, whether it’s out in nature, in a place of worship or elsewhere.
12. Make your well-being a top priority!

Sleep Savvy

An all-nighter might sound like a good idea – for now. Yet messing with your sleep patterns can have long-term effects. It can:

гад Play with your memory. Tired people have a harder time remembering things.
гад Cause tasks to take twice as long. Your concentration and powers of retention will be compromised when you’re sleepy.
гад Make you irritable. You’ll say something or do something you regret when you’re tired. Guaranteed.
гад Make you a dangerous driver. Drowsy driving is a leading cause of accidents.
гад Impact your health. You’re more susceptible to colds, the flu, and more when you’re tired.
гад Affect how you look. Your eyes are brighter, your skin is clearer and your body has more energy when you get good, regular sleep. Try to make it a priority.
You’re now in a position to make your own choices and taste a bit of freedom. And the key to truly enjoying this freedom is taking responsibility for your choices.

Smart Choices

There are many choices facing you these days. Some things to remember:

- **Be safe on social networking sites.** Don’t make everything public, guard your reputation (everyone from employers to stalkers are watching!) and meet online friends in public.
- **Don’t walk alone after dark.** Walk with friends or call the campus service for a safe way home.
- **Don’t give away your social security # or other personal information to unknown sources.** Identity theft is fast becoming a big problem - don’t become a victim.
- **Don’t engage in high-risk drinking or drugging.** When your judgment is compromised, you get hurt or hurt others. Most student sexual assaults occur when one or both people are under the influence, as do drinking and driving accidents, illegal use of prescription meds and more.
- **Don’t accept drinks from strangers.** The number of “date rape drugs” being slipped into drinks makes it important to know exactly where your drink is and what’s in it.
- **Don’t leave your room unlocked.** If you’re in there, someone intending to do you harm has easy access. And if you’re not in there, your belongings and your roommate’s are fair game.
- **Don’t leave your belongings unattended.** Wherever you are, iPods, laptops, your wallet and more are easy pickings for thieves.
- **Keep an eye on textbooks.** Write your name along the binding on a certain page in every book. This may allow police to identify them more easily should they be stolen.
- **Take care with credit/ATM cards.** It’s tough to keep track of finances when you’re always using a credit or ATM card - and it’s easy to spend beyond your means.

Spend Time Wisely

- **Limit your video game intake.** TV and computer time.
- **Keep your desk and room fairly neat so you can find things easily.**
- **Use in-between class times to get work done.**
- **Study in an environment where you can concentrate fully.**
- **Don’t leave things to the last minute!**
Asking for Help

Whether you’re feeling down, having difficulty with a certain class or needing some guidance, getting help is never a sign of weakness. It’s actually a show of strength to be able to say, "I’m just not sure how to handle this on my own." It’s the smart thing to do.

And the nice thing about being at school is that many different kinds of help are right at your fingertips. For instance:

- **Need to talk with someone about troubles you’re going through?** Free, confidential counselors are available to help you sort through issues and increase your emotional health. These folks chose to work with college students – they really understand what’s happening in your world.

- **Unsure about an assignment or a topic covered in class?** Faculty members have office hours for you to use so, go visit them.

- **Have a health concern?** Don’t just "stick it out" when there’s a campus health center right at your disposal. It’s better to get checked when something in your body goes wrong rather than waiting for it to get better. Better safe than sorry!

- **Just need to talk something out?** You’re in luck! You can go to an RA, someone in Campus Ministry, your Hall Director, an advisor… There are many people here who’d be glad to help you through the rough patches!

### Check Out Programs and Workshops

Watch campus bulletin boards and keep your ears open regarding workshops on topics like:

- Test taking
- Resume writing
- Helping a friend in trouble
- Public speaking
- Reading for comprehension
- Overcoming anxiety
- Dealing with eating disorders
- Building self esteem
- Help with learning disabilities
- And much more!

### Common Counseling Concerns

- Stress
- Anxiety
- Self-Esteem
- Relationships
- Depression
- Alcohol and Other Drug Use
- Sexual Identity
- Body Image
- Eating Disorders
- Violence and Trauma
- Suicidal Thoughts

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There’s peer pressure at college - of course. Some "friends" may expect you to go along with their decisions, even though they don’t feel right to you. Others may push you to do things that you just don’t want to do.

That’s why it’s so important to stay true to who you are. You know what’s important to you, right? Just because you’re at school doesn’t mean you have to give up on those beliefs. This is an environment where you can get in even better touch with your values. For instance:

- **Serve others.** College isn’t all about you. Doing community service - giving your time - is a value that will last a lifetime.
- **Make time to worship.** If this practice means a lot to you, keep it up. There are campus and community places of worship readily available.
- **Treat others well.** Don’t make others the butt of jokes to “fit in.” Instead, find friends who value treating people well.
- **Decide about drinking.** If you’ve made the decision to abstain or drink responsibly, the myth that everyone else is drinking heavily shouldn’t sway you. It’s just not true; most other students DON’T drink that much, if at all.
- **Say “no.”** Whether it’s experimenting with drugs, being pressured to go farther than you’d like in a relationship or being pushed to put off studying in favor of partying, you can say no.

If something doesn’t feel right, chances are that it isn’t for you. So, trust your instincts and be the real you. It’ll soon help you find your true place in this college world.

### Who Do You Want to Be as a...
- friend
- family member?
- organization member?
- worker?
- student?
- citizen?

### Questions to Ask Yourself When Making a Decision
- Would I want my friends and family to know that I made this decision?
- Will this decision do anyone harm? Will it do me harm?
- How will this decision impact me in the long-term? And others?
- How would I feel if this decision was publicized?
- Am I proud of this decision?