ISSUE 2, SUMMER 2012

Highlights and Awards

Faculty Awards
WPI Calculus is Best!
Faculty Research, Presentations and Awards
WPI in the News
MCPHS-WPI Agreement

Events

NASA Comes to WPI
Artist In Residency Program
Nano Comes to Worcester
Let’s Talk Plants
BIO2012 Convention in Boston
Share Your Stories

A message from Karen Oates
Peterson Family Dean of Arts & Sciences

It’s the end of the academic year – but certainly not the end to all the activities on campus!

Student presentation day was a huge success with hundreds of presentations happening everywhere on campus.

Campus Tours and Open Houses for our newly admitted students gave us a feeling of excitement for when we welcome our new entering freshman class to our community.

We know that within the walls of WPI, students often find their professional passion and that changes everything for them!

This newsletter captures a little bit of the accomplishments of our students, faculty and alumni – enjoy!

Sincerely,
Karen

The Arts and Sciences at WPI Welcomes
International Scholar in Residence

The Arts and Sciences at WPI is pleased to welcome Professor Thea Weiss from Zurich, Switzerland as our International Scholar-in Residence. Professor Weiss will spend the summer on campus with her office in the Department of Social Sciences and Policy Studies.

Professor Weiss is a senior researcher and project leader and lecturer at the Institute of Sustainable Development in the School of Engineering at Zurich University of Applied Sciences (ZHAW). She specializes in leading interdisciplinary projects with a main focus on sustainable regional and urban development, corporate sustainability, gender/diversity and technology. We hope to have a pilot IQP project for our students at ZHAW emerge from Professor Weiss’ time with us this summer.

In addition, three undergraduate students from ZHAW will attend WPI this fall as the first step in establishing an exchange program between our institutions.
Our Arts & Sciences Faculty

The following faculty members were recently honored during Faculty Convocation.

Jose Arguello, Professor of Biology and Biotechnology, received the Trustee’s Award for Outstanding Research and Creative Scholarship. This award recognizes research and scholarship of a faculty member over at least 5 years. Arguello is internationally known for his work on proteins that transport heavy metals across membranes. Arguello was recently appointed as the Inaugural Rutman Professor of Chemistry and Biochemistry. The endowed professorship was established by a $6 million bequest from the estate of former Trustee Miriam B. Rutman and her husband William Rutman ’30.

Jeanine Skorinko received the Romero L. Moruzzi Young Faculty Award which recognizes innovations in undergraduate education. Skorinko was recognized for her efforts at placing empirical research at the core of assessing and understanding student learning.

Janice Gobert, Associate Professor of Social Science and Policy Studies, was the Sigma Xi Senior Faculty Research Award winner for her work on the use of visualizations and simulations in the learning of science.

In addition, Professor Joseph Duffy was named Head of the Department of Biology and Biotechnology.

WPI Calculus is the Best!

WPI’s Calculus I was identified as one of the best in the nation in a survey by the Mathematical Association of America (MAA). Almost 700 faculty and 14,000 students from over 200 universities participated in the survey with WPI ranking in the top 17 identified schools. Rankings were based on five measures: passing rate, interest in continuing on to Calculus II, general interest in continuing to pursue mathematics, enjoyment of mathematics, and confidence in mathematical ability. This fall a team from MAA will visit WPI to talk with faculty and students and observe classes in order to learn more about what makes the Calculus I courses at WPI so successful. Congratulations on a job well done!

Robert Lindeman, Associate Professor in Computer Science, has been busy while away on sabbatical at the University of Canterbury HITLabNZ. He was part of a joint team that created a video entitled “Demonstrating Maori Haka with Kinect and Nao Robots”, which received a Best-Video-Award at the Human Robot Interaction 2012 conference. Congratulations to the team! He also advised a five-person, transcontinental team, led by CS PhD student Jia Wang, and including IMGD MS student Owen Leach, as well as three MS students from the Human Interface Technology (HIT) Lab at the University of Canterbury in Christchurch, New Zealand, which took second place at the fourth annual IEEE 3D User Interaction (3DUI) Contest. The contest, which spanned three months of design, development, and testing, culminated with the finalists demonstrating their solutions live on March 4-5, 2012 in Irvine, California. The team poster is above.

Micheal Gennert, Professor in Computer Science and Director of Robotic Engineering was invited by Greg Bialecki, Massachusetts Secretary of Housing and Economic Development, to participate in a round table discussion on strategies to enhance the growth potential of the Massachusetts robotic sector.

Jeanine Skorinko, Assistant Professor in Social Sciences and Policy Studies, presented work on whether social goals influence academic and social outcomes at the NSF Engineering Educations Awardee Conference. The study is co-authored by WPI Professors Jim Doyle and Gretar Tryggvason and will be published in the Journal of Pre-College Engineering Education Research (J-PEER) this fall under the title “Do goals really matter in engineering education? An exploration of how goals influence outcomes for FIRST robotics participants.”
Sample Return Robot Challenge - June 15-19, 2012

Ten teams will build, program, and demonstrate robots that will attempt—without human control—to navigate a complex terrain while seeking out samples that they must return to a designated point in a set period of time. A perfect performance could earn the team a $1.5 million prize.

June 16, 2012 - 10 a.m.- 3 p.m.

In the midst of the prestigious NASA Sample Return Robot Centennial Challenge, WPI will transform its campus into a family-friendly festival of hands-on technology and exhibits.

Pilot a space rover. Launch a rocket. Don a real space suit… Explore new territories galore with WPI researchers, students, and NASA educators.

TouchTomorrow at WPI will feature music, games, food, and something new to learn and do across our beautiful campus—including a chance to view some serious competition for a $1.5 million NASA Centennial Challenge prize.

FREE and open to the public - TouchTomorrow at WPI, will be an unprecedented educational and interactive event for New England.
WPI’s Artist in Residency Program – WPI students and Artist Deborah Aschheim create Memoryspace

Last year, President Berkey challenged the faculty to develop innovative programs that bring students and artists together to enliven WPI’s public spaces with creations that highlight the relationship between science, technology and the arts. In response, Professor Johsua Rosenstock created WPI’s Artist in Residency Program and welcomed Deborah Aschheim to campus this Spring. Aschheim’s artwork was inspired by the struggles of her grandfather with Alzheimers, a disease in which patients lose the cellular circuitry that defines their personalities, social connections and histories. With the help of student apprentices (Allessandra Anderson ’12, Alex Gray ’13, Deniz Ozgoren ’14, Kai He ’13, Kyle Horn ’12 and Lauren Pehnke ’12), Aschheim created a three-piece visualization of memory and perception that lines the staircase of Fuller Labs. At the center of nodes within the piece are images representing stored memories. From the nodes, networks representing neuronal connections extend and intertwine. Within the nodes of one piece, the image is that of the viewer captured from mini-cameras and displayed on the screens. In others, rotations of student-created video images from campus may be found. Aschheim also gave the first WPI Artist in Residency Program Lecture for faculty, students and community guest before the unveiling of the sculpture. (all artwork (C) Deborah Aschheim)

WPI and MCPHS Agree!

WPI has forged an agreement with our Worcester area neighbor Massachusetts College of Pharmacy and Health Sciences (MCPHS) that ensures admission for WPI students into 4 of their most popular programs. WPI students interested in pursing a career as a Doctor of Pharmacy, Doctor of Optometry, Physician Assistant or Physical Therapist are eligible for ensured admission to MCPHS provided they complete their WPI degree with a 3.2 GPA including the required courses for their program of interest. Students do not have to take standardized entry exams. If you or a student you know are interested in finding out more, please contact Pre-Health Advisor Aleshia Carlsen-Bryant or Tara Mann for more details. For more details on MCPHS, click here.

Exciting New Updates

Check out our new websites!

The Web Operations, Marketing and Communications teams have been working around the clock to update our websites. The results are sleek new sites with many different features showcasing our wonderful faculty, staff, students and facilities as well as the amazing work going on at within the Arts and Sciences at WPI. Newly launched sites include Biochemistry and Chemistry, Biology and Biotechnology, Physics, Computer Sciences and Mathematics. In addition to departmental sites, programs sites are also getting an update – check out Environmental and Sustainability Studies, Robotics Engineering and Pre-health Programs. Updates for Humanities and Arts and Social Science and Policy Studies are underway so check-in soon for these.
Come visit WPI faculty and administration as we celebrate the Life Sciences at WPI with a booth at 2012 BIO International Convention in Boston June 18 – 20th. More than 1000 biotechnologies companies, academic institutions and state agencies from around the world will be exhibitors at the event with 15,000 + attendees from 4000 companies and institutions expected to attend.

WPI’s own Christopher Lambert will be leading a breakout session titled “Scaling up by Scaling Out: Biomanufacturing for Cell and Engineered Tissue Therapy” on Wednesday June 20 at 10 AM. WPI’s booth is located in Hall A – BioProcess Zone Booth 0370. For more information on Bio 2012, click here.

NanoWorcester’s 2nd Annual Symposium was hosted on the WPI campus on Saturday, March 17th. Attendance doubled from the previous year as students and faculty gathered to discuss nanoscience, nanomedicine and nanotechnology with a focus on building collaborations within the New England area. The day began with a series of talks and the afternoon provided students an opportunity to share their research in a poster session. For more information, click here.

The 76th Annual Meeting of the Northeast Section of the American Society of Plant Biologists was held on the WPI campus in early May. The two day event included a scientific poster session, scientific talks, and a business meeting. The meeting began with a symposium titled, "Plastid Participation in Plant Development and Perception."

If you missed it, here is your chance to catch up on WPI in the news, just click each link below to be taken to the articles.

WPI’s Senior Vice President for Enrollment and Institutional Strategy Kristin Tichenor’s Op-Ed piece in the Washington Post discusses WPI success in recruiting and retaining women in STEM fields.


Professor Neil Heffernan discusses approaches for making sure homework is valuable for student learning in the Boston Herald.

Wall Street Journal’s Market Watch discusses WPI hosting of the NASA’s Centennial Challenge