

2013 Board of Trustees' Award for Outstanding Academic Advising

Destin Heilman

Each year, the WPI Board of Trustees presents an honor to a WPI faculty member who is an exceptional Academic Advisor. This year, we are proud to present the award to someone who not only truly embodies all of the characteristics of an outstanding advisor, but someone who is fully dedicated to the students and the WPI community as a whole.

Often times, Academic Advisors have a fairly large caseload of students to meet with, project deadlines that creep up unexpectedly, and unforeseen tasks that magically show up on their desk. While some would just smile and take on those tasks without asking, an exceptional Academic Advisor goes above and beyond the “other duties as assigned,” and takes it upon themselves to welcome in the unexpected students knocking at their door, get to know their students on a more personal level, and still continue to give 100% to their other various projects and tasks. Based on the multiple nominations from students, faculty, and staff, it is clear that Professor Destin Heilman embodies all that it means to be an exceptional advisor.

Professor Heilman claims that ‘ One of the most fulfilling things a teacher can experience is a transfer of one’s excitement and passion for a topic to a student,’ which goes beyond just his duties as a Professor, but reaches each of the students he advises. Whether it is one of his assigned students, or a student interested in Pre-Health that is seeking advice, Professor Heilman gives each of these students his undivided attention, sound advice, and the information to empower them on whatever track they may find best suited to their goals. One of his advisees states, “I have been advised by Destin since the beginning, and I’ve only continued to marvel at how he has so much effort to manage so many students on such a personal basis.” He continues to say, “While he may speak on a realistic note, he speaks with an assuring and strong tone that focuses on the available options for a student,” traits that we, as members of the WPI community, know students appreciate as they are always looking for the options available to them.

Selection committee members remarked that Professor Heilman was described as “friendly and responsive,” “well-regarded by his students,” and that he “truly collaborates ‘in the trenches’ with his project advisees in addition to taking a personal interest in their academic success and future careers.” It was noted, time and time again, the continued effort he puts into getting to know each of his students, by having casual conversations with them. One student gives the visualization of Destin’s office, which is decorated with Lord of the Rings memorabilia, pictures, and molecular

models, by describing it as “a very welcoming affair,” and the decor “is representative of how easily approachable Destin is for any student coming to solicit advice.” This decor makes it clear to students that Professor Heilman is approachable, easy going, and allows for conversations to spark beyond just that of a student’s academic interest.

Aside from his advising duties, Professor Heilman serves as an MQP Project Coordinator, UMass MQP Project Center Director, Insight Faculty Advisor, and is a member of the Pre-Health Committee. His vast involvement with the WPI community, excitement and passion in the classroom, and dedication to helping students succeed, shows that Professor Heilman is the ideal recipient of this award.

It is with great honor that we present this year’s Trustee’s Award for Outstanding Advising Award to Professor Destin Heilman.