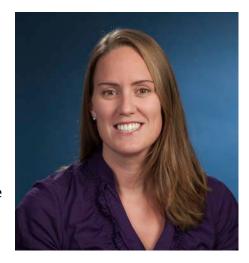Citation of Patricia Stapleton
for the
2017 Romeo L. Moruzzi Young Faculty Award
for Innovation in Undergraduate Education

This year WPI is pleased to present the Romeo Moruzzi Young Faculty Award to Professor Tricia Stapleton of the Social Sciences and Policy Studies Department for her coordinated efforts to innovate and evaluate the learning of international relations via role-playing.

Professor Stapleton has been continually improving and refining her course on international relations during her time at WPI. Students learn about international relations by taking on the role of policy makers and diplomats of different countries. They are asked to think about what their rivals are doing, as well as why their sometimes divergent interests lead them to take those actions. To make the simulation more realistic, Professor Stapleton adds real-world shocks such as terrorist attacks and natural disasters to challenge the students to form a consensus on how they would respond. Integrated with these activities are intensive writing assignments and media campaigns to persuade rival leaders of a particular course of action. In the words of a colleague, "her course is not just role-playing, it is role-playing on steroids!"

In addition to her innovation's having had an impact on students in her own classes, Professor Stapleton has had a broader impact on student learning. At WPI, she helped grow the Model United Nations Club from six students to eighteen. She has also created metrics for evaluating student progress toward learning outcomes, which can be used by other instructors. Externally, she has communicated the results of her work for the course at the American Political Science Teaching and Learning Conference and the Western Political Science Association Annual Meeting. She has also mentored faculty at three other institutions to adopt her role-playing simulation.

For her work at integrating role-playing and making international relations students active learners, as well as her success at transmitting the lessons learned at WPI to others, we are proud to present the 2017 Romeo L. Moruzzi Young Faculty Award for Innovation in Undergraduate Education to Professor Tricia Stapleton.