Help us champion a polytechnic education that creates a new competitive edge. With your support, we can continue to be among those who are eclectic in their talents and passions lead very fulfilling lives and make a significant difference in their communities, professions, and avocations.

At WPI, we have gone far beyond simply acknowledging the fact that educated scientists and engineers, steeped in the arts and humanities, make more informed decisions, work better in teams, think more creatively, and bring new ideas to old challenges. We back up our assertion by making theory and practice in the arts and sciences a critical, active part of our WPI Plan. With your support, we can continue to be among the nation’s most influential polytechnic institutions.

Help us give our students the strongest competitive edge. Help us champion a polytechnic education that creates a new generation of transformational game-changers—engineers, scientists, entrepreneurs, educators, scholars, and leaders who share a powerful difference: skills and knowledge in engineering, science, and technology, coupled with a depth of understanding in the humanities and arts that fosters the ability to make a greater impact on the world and truly improve lives.

Your investment in our faculty and researchers makes a critical difference. In their ability to explore new frontiers and bring research from the laboratory to the marketplace. With private support for innovative projects—such as MQUs, IQPs, and humanities projects that blend the technological with the creative—our faculty and students together explore new worlds leading to discovery and change.

If...we recognize our responsibility to provide a rich and unexpected arts and sciences experience to our students, tomorrow has boundless potential. Through if...The Campaign to Advance WPI, you will make all the difference.

Today’s world is driven more than ever by technology, and people who pursue degrees in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics are considered at the top or ahead of the curve in terms of career outcomes.

One of only five truly polytechnic institutes in the country, and one of the oldest, WPI excels at preparing technologically savvy people—physicists, mathematicians, computer scientists, engineers, chemists, and others who will use their technical skills to address the world’s greatest challenges: the environment, Medicine, Energy, Transportation.

WPI is, in addition, committed to a much broader mission—one enriched by an interdisciplinary environment and a true spirit of collaboration among faculty and students in all fields of study. We place tremendous value not only on helping students master the skills they will need to be society’s next technological problem solvers but also on helping them develop habits of mind that lead to their becoming well-rounded, caring citizens of the world. Since 1970, when we adopted the revolutionary WPI Plan, our students have tackled issues at the intersection of science, technology, and culture—learning through investigation how technology affects societal values and structures. What’s more, every student achieves intellectual breadth through degree requirements and projects in the social sciences, humanities, and arts.

At WPI, we contend that only through a meaningful combination of theory and practice in the sciences and the liberal arts will our students truly be engaged in creating a better world, a better society. Financial support for programs, projects, and people is the best way to ensure that we continue to graduate scientists and engineers whose decisions, actions, and work are motivated by a profound desire to serve humanity’s best interests.

if...the Campaign to Advance WPI is about funding unexpected ways to augment and elevate students’ technological skill set through the arts and sciences. Your support can help WPI students become creative and well-rounded as they prepare to use their minds, their hands, and their hearts to serve the world in which we live.
New WPI students usually arrive with much more than high-level math and science skills. They have been members of choirs, bands, and debate teams. They’ve studied foreign languages and volunteered with community organizations. They are actors, fine artists, and dancers. The talents and interests they bring with them are exactly the components that will enrich their lives and inform their work when they graduate from WPI. Through innovative programs, opportunities, and faculty members in the arts and sciences—and the generous people who support them—we offer a deeper, more meaningful academic experience. We are able to encourage students to see the powerful connections between their passions and their ambitions.

• An IQP team comprised of an aerospace engineering major/music minor, two biology majors, and an electrical and computer engineering major traveled to Venice, Italy to analyze, protect, and preserve public works of art. This is one of hundreds of student projects that have contributed significantly to the life and culture of Venice.

• A world-renowned acoustical oceanographer and avid music enthusiast effectively created a string music program at WPI where none existed. In the 1980s, the late Herman Medwin ’41 established the Medwin String Ensemble Endowment and the Medwin Chamber Music Scholarship, which awards scholarships to the four members of WPI’s Medwin Honors Quartet. Upon Medwin’s passing, an additional $1 million came to WPI, ensuring these ensembles would enrich students’ lives for generations to come.

• The chair of WPI’s Arts & Sciences Advisory Council, Sergio Salvatore ’02, has two careers: he is director of e-commerce services for Barnes & Noble and an active jazz musician. As interested in technology as he was in music, he wanted to study computer science at a good engineering school. He chose WPI because he was able to integrate music into his course of study. It wasn’t a tangential academic requirement; music enhanced his technological interests. “Being an artist is about having a unique personality and contributing something,” he explained. “If we’re trying to cultivate the next generation of influential engineers, then giving them a background in the arts and the humanities is essential. WPI doesn’t merely pay lip service to this concept; it is deliberate in the way it incorporates this focus into the academic program.”

• WPI had the first undergraduate program in robotics engineering and was the first in the country to have bachelor’s, master’s, and doctoral programs in the discipline. “Robotics used to be primarily manufacturing-based, but the impact of robotics is now being felt across a broad range of disciplines, from healthcare to education to behavioral research,” said Sonia Chernova, assistant professor of computer science and robotics engineering. With the help of funding from corporate donors and national foundations, students are completing robotics projects in a wide variety of areas and competing successfully in robotics competitions, she explained. “WPI’s history—its project-based curriculum and its focus on societal impact—provides a unique environment that enables students to excel in these areas.”

The arts and sciences, in tandem, help WPI students develop the intangible, hard-to-quantify skills that ultimately make them not only better engineers and scientists but also better human beings through critical thinking, effective communication, creative problem-solving, and a sense of social responsibility. At WPI, the humanities—philosophy, history, literature, foreign language, art, and music; the social sciences—economics, psychology, system dynamics, and society, technology, and policy; and the life sciences and hard sciences come together at the heart of the academic experience. Through a broad range of disciplines, students learn about the world around them. They come to understand their obligation to future generations. They learn to appreciate beauty.

What’s more, many WPI programs, facilities, and initiatives both exist and thrive at the intersection of art and technology—our ultra-sophisticated computer music and sound technology labs, our groundbreaking interactive media and game development program, our artist-in-residence program, to name a few.

Our faculty, rife with top engineers and scientists, also boasts world-class scholars and brilliant practitioners in vocal and instrumental music, fine art, and theater. Far from being relegated to the background, these individuals inspire students and collaborate with their science and engineering colleagues in unexpected, cross-disciplinary ways.

“WPI, we create a space, an environment—an ecosystem—that allows us to provide powerful learning experiences in both the arts and the sciences so that when students graduate, they are creative, discipline-based innovators. The arts and the sciences help us celebrate a diversity of ideas and show students the pathways they can take to bring their innovative ideas to life and to become the kind of innovators and inventors our economy and our society really need.”

—Karen Kashmanian Oates, PH.D., The Peterson Family Dean, Arts & Sciences, WPI