

STANDARD TEN: PUBLIC DISCLOSURE

WPI meets its obligations concerning public disclosure primarily through the use of printed publications and Web sites. The task of writing, editing and producing printed pieces is largely the responsibility of the Communications Group, a division of Development and University Relations. The Web Development Office, part of the University's Information Technology Division, is responsible for creating and designing material for the University's World Wide Web site, which serves, in part, as the University's campus-wide information system. Material developed for the Web includes text and graphics developed originally for printed publications, as well as a wealth of information, graphics and interactive features developed specifically to take advantage of the unique capabilities of online media. Over the past decade, online information sources have played an increasingly important role in WPI's communications and marketing efforts. Today, the WPI Web site is a vital communications and marketing tool, one that is often the first place that many of the University's internal and external audiences turn to for information about WPI.

With in-house and freelance resources, the Communications Group edits, designs, and produces the majority of WPI publications intended for external audiences—all of which are readily available and provided at no charge to any interested party. A number of other publications, most notably many advertisements and press materials aimed at prospective graduate students and adult learners, are prepared by outside agencies with limited input from the Communications Group. Steps have been taken in recent months to afford the Communications Group greater opportunity to review these other materials, and work is currently under way to establish a more integrated approach to marketing and communications throughout the University.

The Web Development Office works with academic and administrative office to assess their communications needs and then either creates new Web sites within WPI's overall Web hierarchy (<http://www.wpi.edu>) (@) or overhauls existing sites to meet those needs. Content for these sites includes material from printed publications, original content supplied by departments and by the Communications Group, and graphics, applications and other features developed by the Web Development team.

The Communications Group, the Web Development Office and other offices that produce publications and online information for external audiences take pains to assure the currency and accuracy of those materials. Whenever possible, information presented to the public through publications and the Web is drawn from authoritative source documents or is prepared by or in consultation with faculty members and administrators who are authorities on the topics covered. Valid documentation is on file in various campus offices and databases, and can be made available, for substantial claims made about the quality of the institution and the

accomplishments of WPI community members. Examples include annual and biennial reviews of student projects—Major Qualifying Projects, Interactive Qualifying Projects and Sufficiencies—which document both program excellence and learning outcomes at the undergraduate level. Press clippings, press releases and other items documenting the career success of graduates are kept on file in Development and University Relations. An annual report by the Career Development Center (CDC), prepared for the Academic Program and Student Affairs Committee of the Board of Trustees, documents the CDC's professional affiliations and services, and includes statistics on summer employment, cooperative education and internships, permanent employment, placements by company and major, the number of campus interviews, salaries for placed students, and so on. Examples of many of the kinds of documentation for WPI's claims and promises are on file in the visitors' workroom (*) as reference materials associated with the appropriate standard.

Various internal review and proofreading processes are employed to be sure that text and illustrations used in publication and within Web sites are accurate, that they are in concert with the University's published mission and goal statements, that they are consistent with the content of the undergraduate and graduate catalogs, and that the messages and descriptions and characteristics of WPI and its programs presented to prospective students and other external and internal audiences are consistent across various information sources.

The most complete and authoritative descriptions of the University are contained in the undergraduate and graduate catalogs (*). For current and prospective undergraduate students, the undergraduate catalog is the primary resource for information on WPI's academic programs, including the responsibilities of students and the institution. Each academic department is responsible for the description of its own curricula and courses, and for the proofreading of this material. The assistant provost and the administrator of academic programs are responsible for the overall editing of the undergraduate catalog. University Relations is responsible for its production and printing. The Web Development Office is responsible for creating the Web versions of the catalog and maintaining a supplement to the catalog (see below).

The undergraduate catalog is published in print as well as on the Web (<http://www.wpi.edu/Pubs/Catalogs/Ugrad/>) {@}. The Web edition is identical in content to the printed edition. A supplement to the catalog, describing new courses approved by the faculty since the catalog's printing, notices of errors identified in the printed catalog, and other new information of interest to students, is published on the Web. The catalog contains the University's mission and goal statements as well as the academic calendar and detailed undergraduate and graduate calendars. The undergraduate catalog also contains a complete description of the WPI Plan (WPI's undergraduate program), including detailed information on all degree requirements, all major, double major and minor programs, minimum distribution requirements for all students and departmental course distribution requirements, and concentrations within majors. Also included are examples of departmental course sequences and counsel to students on how to structure their programs and to make effective use of their academic advisors.

Complete information on registering for courses, projects and independent studies, as well as instructions for the proper procedures for withdrawing from courses and withdrawing from the University, are also found in the undergraduate catalog. The catalog lists all courses offered at

the undergraduate level, along with an explanation of the course numbering system and a guide to which courses are offered annually (Category I) and which are offered every other year (Category II). The administrator of academic programs, working with the Committee on Academic Operations, reviews the catalog offerings to ensure that no courses are listed if they have not been offered for two consecutive years. A separate course schedule (*) is published on the World Wide Web (<http://www.wpi.edu/Admin/Registrar/Rainbow/>) (@) and is updated for each of the four annual registration periods.

The undergraduate catalog includes a list of all current full-time and emeriti faculty, including the date of their initial appointment and their academic degrees, with dates and names of granting institutions. Active and emeriti members of the WPI Board of Trustees are listed, along with their dates of election to the board and their professional affiliations. A separate list includes all of the University's corporate officers. Additional lists detail, by department or division, all full-time administrators, with their dates of appointment, their titles and their academic degrees. A detailed list describes the research facilities and laboratories, the library, computer facilities and general-access laboratories and other learning and physical resources that are available for use by undergraduates. Brief descriptions are available in the undergraduate catalog of the social, residential and recreation resources available to WPI students. The catalog contains an accurate and complete statement on WPI's accreditation by NEASC, ABET, and other organizations. This information may also be found in other publications of the University, including *Discover WPI* (*), an introductory guide to the University that is published in print and on the Web (<http://www.wpi.edu/About/Intro/>) (@), and in a number of sites within the WPI Web hierarchy.

The undergraduate catalog also contains information about applying to WPI and about admissions criteria and policies. This section includes such information as guidelines for applying early decision and applying as a transfer student and transferring credit, WPI's policies on awarding credit for taking advanced placement exams, and information pertaining to applying as an international student. A separate section of the catalog explains WPI's tuition, student fees and enrollment deposit, including payment schedules, details on overload charges, and the reimbursement of tuition and room and board charges upon withdrawal. WPI's policies, application procedures and offerings in the area of financial aid are also detailed.

Information on undergraduate admissions and financial aid, as well as additional information about WPI's academic programs, courses, majors, faculty and so on, is found in an annual cycle of publications prepared for prospective undergraduate students and in a comprehensive undergraduate admissions Web site (<http://www.wpi.edu/Admin/AO/>). (@) The publications are developed by the WPI Admissions Office and designed and produced by the Communications Group. They include the viewbook (*), which, through words, facts and images, paints a portrait of the University, explains its academic approach and programs, offers a glimpse of the student body (including its size and general characteristics), describes the campus setting, and details the many extracurricular activities that are available to all students. Other publications distributed to prospective students by the Admissions Office include fact sheets on academic departments and special programs, a financial aid brochure, and an admissions video.

The Admissions Office works with the Web Development Office to create its Web-based offerings, which include a number of interactive features, such as moderated chat rooms for prospective students, parents and other selected audiences. Much of information contained in the

admissions publications and Web pages is also conveyed in *Discover WPI*, in other publications prepared for external audiences, as well as in various WPI Web sites (see General Information Pieces and Sites, below).

Information of a similar nature to that contained in the undergraduate catalog but pertaining to WPI's full- and part-time graduate programs is published annually in the *graduate catalog*. This catalog is also produced in print as well as on the Web (<http://www.wpi.edu/Pubs/Catalogs/Grad/>){@}. An online supplement, updated during the year, describes new graduate courses approved by the faculty since the printing of the catalog. Editing, production and printing of the graduate catalog is overseen by the Graduate Admissions Office. Academic departments are responsible for verifying the accuracy of material about their offerings and degree requirements.

In addition, the Graduate Admissions Office, the Management Department and the Office of Continuing Studies prepare a variety of other materials, including advertisements and course listings, to promote and provide information about the University's part- and full-time graduate programs and continuing education offerings. A number of individual academic departments and programs produce some of their own recruiting materials; some of these are edited and produced by the Communications Group. All of these offices and departments maintain Web sites through which they communicate similar information as well as original content developed for the Web. Some of the original content takes advantage of the Web's multimedia capabilities and the opportunity it affords users to communicate directly and interactively with departments and offices at WPI.

A wide variety of other publications and Web sites are produced by WPI for internal and external audiences. These include:

Periodicals: The Communications Group produces a number of periodicals. These include a university magazine, the *WPI Journal* (*), and a tabloid newspaper, *The Wire* (*), both of which are produced by the University for the WPI Alumni Association. One issue each year of the *Journal* includes the audited financial statements of the University. Additional copies of these statements are printed and are readily available to anyone requesting information about WPI's finances. Other periodicals include *Quest* (*), which reports on major individual gifts to the University; *New Visions* (*), which conveys news about the University's current capital campaign; and a number of academic department newsletters (*), prepared by the departments for distribution to their alumni.

General Information Pieces and Sites: The Communications Group publishes *Discover WPI* and makes copies available for distribution by all departments at WPI. It also prepares a campus guide (*), which includes a color map of the campus and a listing of all University departments and offices. General information about the University and about the city of Worcester, as well as printable campus maps, a virtual tour of the campus, and a variety of other information sources and features useful to campus and off-campus audiences are on the Web, reachable by clicking on "About" on the WPI home page.

Directories: The Communications Group annually publishes a campus phone book (*), with directory listings of and for all employees and students; a directory of the Board of Trustees (*); and a directory of the various academic and program advisory boards (*). A searchable campus directory is

available on the Web (<http://www.wpi.edu/Campus/whitepages.html>), along with a directory of faculty research, teaching and project advising interests (<http://www.wpi.edu/Pubs/Faculty/>) {@}.

Student Planner and Resource Guide (*): This annual publication, prepared by the Student Life Office and published by the Communications Group, contains a calendar listing key dates on WPI's academic and social calendars, a campus map, a description of all campus departments, including contact information, and a listing of cultural organizations, services, recreational opportunities and so on in the Worcester community. Also included are details about WPI's policies on student responsibility and conduct, academic honesty, HIV infection, students with disabilities, drug and alcohol use, harassment, indecent assault, abuse and rape, hazing, intellectual property, and computer network acceptable use. Finally, it contains the constitution of WPI's campus judicial system and pre-hearing procedures for parties involved in a hearing before the campus hearing board. Much of this information may also be found on the Web at <http://www.wpi.edu/Admin/SL/>.

In addition to printed publications, the Communications Group acts as the University's media relations and public information office. As such, it responds to general requests for information about the University, gathering information from or referring queries to other offices, as appropriate. It sends news releases and advisories to a wide range of newspapers, magazines and journals, broadcast news operations, and online media. Internal review and proofreading procedures are carefully observed to assure the accuracy and currency of all material distributed to the public and the news media. News releases, information on upcoming events and meetings, academic schedules and calendars, athletics schedules, and other news-related features may be found on the Web at <http://www.wpi.edu/News/>. (@) WPI's media relations office fulfilled the University's responsibility to publicize the Commission on Higher Education's review of WPI prior to the commission's visit. A news release, included at the end of this section of the self-study, was distributed to the local media and to the WPI student newspaper, and published in the WPI Wire, a publication distributed to all alumni.

myWPI Portal: WPI has adopted the Blackboard Courseinfo system for the development of Web-based course materials. The system also makes it possible for the University to create information portals that can be targeted to specific audiences. The portals can be used to direct campus news and information, and develop unique collections of information sources, that will be of specific interest to these audiences. The portals can also support discussion groups and other interactive forums that permit members of various groups and audiences to communicate with one another. A portal for WPI faculty, students and staff, called myWPI, has already been created (it hosted discussion groups that enabled the WPI community to read and comment on the NEASC self-study documents). Portals for alumni and prospective students are planned.

Appraisal

The listings of faculty in the undergraduate and graduate catalogs do not distinguish accurately and consistently between part- and full-time faculty. In addition, these and other University publications do not routinely list all part-time faculty members.

WPI does not have adequate policies and procedures in place to review and monitor the content of and image projected by all publications and Web-based material produced for external audiences. In addition, WPI needs to get a better handle on the image it projects to its various publics and the accuracy and consistency of the messages it delivers in its publications, advertisements and Web pages. It must also develop a university-wide plan for bringing greater consistency to its external marketing and communications.

Projection

Issues associated with references to part- and full-time faculty are being reviewed in 2000-01.

WPI commissioned an external marketing research firm to conduct a comprehensive marketing research project for the University and to use the research as the foundation for new university-wide marketing positioning language. The firm also developed a draft marketing and communications plan aimed at developing a consistent and accurate set of messages about WPI for external audiences, as well as strategies and timetables for delivering them and a framework for establishing an integrated approach to marketing and communications at the University. The plan was refined by the vice president for development and university relations, in collaboration with the president, the President's Cabinet and members of the Board of Trustees and presented to the board at its May 2001 meeting, along with a funding plan. With the approval of the trustees, implementation of the plan is beginning in summer 2001. Also ongoing is a review of the University's graphic identity and a possible redesign of the WPI logo.

In addition, a thorough communications audit is planned for the 2001-02 academic year. This review should help WPI develop even more effective procedures for monitoring the content of all University publications.

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Public Input Sought on WPI Accreditation by New England Association of Schools and Colleges

WORCESTER, Mass. – Worcester Polytechnic Institute will undergo a comprehensive evaluation visit this fall by a team representing the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education of the New England Association of Schools and Colleges. The public is invited to submit comments about WPI until Oct. 3.

The commission is one of eight nationwide that provide institutional accreditation on a regional basis. It accredits about 200 institutions in New England. The commission team will visit WPI between Sept. 30 and Oct. 3 and recommend to the full commission whether to continue the University's accreditation; after the review, the commission itself will take the final action. Seeking accreditation is voluntary.

WPI has been accredited by the commission since 1937 and was last reviewed in 1991. NEASC accreditation covers the entire institution.

For more than a year, WPI has been engaged in a self-study, addressing the commission's standards for accreditation. The evaluation team will gather evidence that the self-study is thorough and accurate.

The public is invited to submit written comments on substantive matters relating to the quality of the University or its academic programs. Written, signed comments must be received by Oct. 3 and should include the name, address and phone number of the person submitting comments. They should be sent to: *Public Comment on Worcester Polytechnic Institute, Commission on Institutions of Higher Education, New England Association of Schools and Colleges, 209 Burlington Road, Bedford, MA 01730-1433*, or via e-mail to cihe@neasc.org.