

CAMP REACH NEWSLETTER

Worcester Polytechnic Institute

Denise Nicoletti: Tribute to a Colleague

By: Stephanie Blaisdell and Chrys Demetry

We all continue to grieve the loss of Denise Nicoletti, co-founder and director of Camp Reach from 1997-2002, who died in a head-on car crash on July 21, 2002, the first full day of the 2002 program. Denise was an admired and respected colleague and friend to both of us, and she was a mentor and role model to many of you. The best way we know to keep her memory alive is to dedicate ourselves to the continuation of Camp Reach and to its continuous improvement. This program and its outcomes (that's you!) were her passion, and we feel privileged to carry it on. We can also be inspired by all that she did, and perhaps even moreso, *how* she did it, in an effort to make ourselves more influential and effective people in our communities and for causes we believe in.

Even as a child, Denise was a friend to the underrepresented. At her funeral, her only brother (in a family of three girls) described how Denise secretly pretended to be his invisible brother, with whom he could only communicate behind closed doors. Perhaps it was this

early sensitivity to what it feels like to be outnumbered that led Denise to be such a champion for women in engineering.

Denise was the visionary behind the idea of an outreach program for girls at WPI, which started with brainstorming lunches she initiated with Chrys back in 1995 and got off the ground with a successful proposal to the National Science Foundation, which helped to establish Camp Reach in 1997. But Denise's advocacy for women extended further. Each of us had many conversations with her about attracting more young women to engineering, as well as how to improve the climate for women on campus. As the only female faculty member in the ECE department, Denise started WECE: Women in Engineering and Computer Engineering, before there was a women's program at WPI. She also authored a handbook on maternity leave for faculty colleagues. In addition, she never forgot the seemingly



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Meet Chrys Demetry—Co-Director for Camp Reach 2003

By: Chrys Demetry

Alumnae from the 1997 and 1998 programs may remember me since Denise and I ran the program together those two years! But for those of you who don't know me, I thought I'd tell you a bit about myself. I grew up in Holden and attended Wachusett Regional High School. Sometime during high school when I was doing science projects, I developed an interest in the properties of materials, how materials could be tailored to have improved strength, and how materials are selected for particular applications. That's a field called Materials Science and Engineering! I earned a Bachelor of Science in Me-

chanical Engineering from WPI in 1988, and then a Ph.D. in Materials Science and Engineering from MIT in 1993. I've been on the faculty at WPI since 1993, and I'm now an Associate Professor in the Mechanical Engineering Department.

In addition to teaching materials courses, in the last five years I've been heavily involved in WPI's Global Perspective Program. For example, as I'm writing this, I'm in Bangkok, Thailand with 23 students and one other faculty member for two months! The students are juniors from all different majors, and they successfully applied to satisfy their interdisciplinary project

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Massachusetts Academy of Math and Science at WPI

By: Erin Dalianis

Okay, so how many of you have heard about Mass Academy? I mean really heard about it- you have some idea of what the Academy is and maybe even know somebody who was a student there. Of course, I could give you the generic answer: the Massachusetts Academy of Math and Science at WPI is a public high school for juniors and seniors who excel in mathematics and the sciences. Or, I could tell you that it's the hardest two years of your life, but it is worth every second of it.

When I was a sophomore in high school, a family friend who was teaching at the Academy convinced me to apply to the school. I was a student at a magnet school, so I was very involved in the arts and wasn't sure what I would think of a school that specialized in math and science, but I figured I'd give it a shot. While I was waiting for a reply from the Academy, part of me wished that I didn't get in so I



wouldn't have to make the decision myself. When I found out that I was accepted, deciding to go to the Academy was one of the hardest decisions I've ever had to make- I was leaving behind my friends and also a school that didn't challenge me, but that I fit into comfortably.

My junior year at the Academy started off with 49 students, all of whom had been, like me, "that smart kid" at their sending schools. If I had stayed at my sending school, my class would have had approximately four or five hundred students, so being in such a small class really helped me to get to know everyone and to form some really strong friendships. It also provided a stable network of people whom I could rely upon for help and support, especially when I was really stressed out.

And the Academy is really stressful; some people can't handle it and return to their sending schools, and some people manage to both over-

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Camper News

This summer, my family and I drove cross-country to California and back. We went to all sorts of neat places. I'm still doing Tae Kwon Do, and I am going to apply to Mass Academy for next year.

- Jessica Stevens, '99

As a project in my AP World History class at Doherty High we held a holiday food drive at school. We raised over 22,800 items for Worcester's hungry and homeless people by getting donations.

- Jackie Steinberg, '99

In October I had a student from England come to live with my family as part of an exchange program. In January I will travel to Worcester, England to stay with a family there and learn about their culture. I'm coaching a basketball team for my local Boys and Girls' club and I was selected as a member of the Central Massachusetts Conference All Star Team for track.

- Christina Kach, '98

I am now in 7th grade and I have made lots of new friends. I made it into first honors and am on the student council. We did a book report and now I am working on a cell project where we get to build our own cells. I am in the church choir and am a CYC member.

- Amelja Kukli, '02

I am very involved in Drama, and was elected an offi-

cer of the drama club. I am also very involved with the music department at school, where I am in an honors choir. I was also inducted into the National Honor Society.

- Sofia Wronksi, '98

I am going to Japan in a cultural exchange program for two weeks in February. Out of 36 Students in the seventh grade who wrote essays about why it's important to learn about cultural differences, 6 students get to participate in the exchange to Tokyo, Japan.

- Angela Harvey, '02

I am currently the Production Manager of my school newspaper and also work on our Literary Magazine. Last spring I learned to play golf and I hope to play on my schools team this year. I also have an awesome volunteer teaching position at my church.

- Amanda Kristoff, '98

My news is both good and bad. You '02 campers know I LOVED my dog. Well, in August, my dog passed away. The good news is I am in honors, and keep up my grades.

- Lauren Morocco, '02

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Design Project 2002—Flagg Street School

Team Members: Brittany Garrett, Angela Harvey, Jessica Hyman, Amy Katuska, Amelja Kukli, Annie MacNeal, Ana McNamara, Katie Palmgren, Jessica Rozek, Amy Zalatan; Middle School Teacher: Theresa Babin; TAs: Jessie DePalo, Crystal Tolman, Erin Young.



Campers worked on the bus and car traffic patterns at Flagg Street School.

The Parent Teacher Group (PTG) at the Flagg Street Elementary School in Worcester has been concerned for some time about transportation safety and traffic issues at the start and end of the school day. The flow of traffic is quite problematic because of the large volume of cars and buses in a constrained space, and childrens' safety is at risk. The design team came up with a creative, long-term solution of a new bus loop that would separate the car traffic pattern from the bus traffic pattern. The PTG and

school administration will be able to consider this recommendation in their long-term planning. In the meantime, they recognized that many of the problems could be addressed through better communication with parents about the schools' traffic and safety rules. They asked the Camp Reach design team to create a flyer that could be distributed for that purpose.

Nine of the 10 campers were able to attend a followup activity in December, during which they designed the flyer according to the PTG's specifications. They used graphics to make the flyer visually appealing, and also incorporated statistics and child pedestrian safety tips from the National Highway Transportation Safety Administration website. The PTG was quite pleased with the results and will be distributing the flyers to parents in January 2003, and to "new" parents regularly thereafter!

Design Project 2002—Girls Incorporated of Worcester

Team Members: Katie Cordiero, Victoria Creedon, Amanda Griffin, Danielle Grolman, Tanya Hakim, Stephanie Harling, Emily Langille, Veronica Lemieux, Claudia Martinez, Christina Ouellette; Middle School Teacher: Sue Desto; TAs: Emily Hicks Caouette, Jenelle Pope, Lindsey Woodhull.

The problem given to the team was that Girls Inc. was facing a problem with the pond's swimming area at its Camp Kinneywood site. The pond is located in a valley and surrounded by trees. During heavy rainfall and snow melts, dirt and muck are swept into the pond. In addition, many leaves collect in the pond during the autumn. Each year to get ready for the swimming season, maintenance staff have been cleaning out the swimming area by hand. They were looking for a permanent solution for this problem within a reasonable cost.

From existing drawings the design team developed a good

understanding of existing structures in the pond and around the swimming area, including a submerged concrete wall and a drain valve at the bottom of the swimming area. They developed a creative solution that would use a system of nets attached to the concrete wall and to buoys, which could be used to collect leaves in a feasible manner. They also developed recommendations for a drainage ditch in front of the pond and for a leaf composting pile.

The girls came back together for a follow-up meeting at Camp Kinneywood in November. Girls Inc. had received permission to drain the pond for maintenance purposes, and it was then that they discovered that the concrete wall in the drawing didn't actually exist! Therefore, the net system would not be feasible to implement. However, the girls were able to see the improvements that were made to the drain valve, which will enable Girls Inc. to partially drain the pond for cleanup without the use of a diver. In addition, they helped with leaf cleanup and started a compost pile for use in the camp's herb garden. Maintenance staff will be pursuing the drainage ditch idea this coming spring.

Design Project 2002—Society of Women Engineers, Boston Chapter

Team Members: Nancy Boyd, Tara Calnan, Rachel Goodell, Alex Hall, Tara Jacobson, Emily Kupstas, Kelsey McCullough, Franny Minervini, Kelsey Moody, Lauren Morocco; Middle School Teacher: Judith Murphy; TAs: Erin Dalianis, Aimee Hart.



SWE was interested in updating their career guidance webpages, specifically to appeal to young women in the age range 12-18 and to encourage interest in engineering and the sciences. The girls developed an organization for the site that focused on three elements: the theme of "Discovery, Fun, and Education", information about SWE and what it stands for, and information on

outreach programs and scholarship opportunities. They did a thorough job in identifying and evaluating on-line engineering games that would be of interest to girls of the targeted age range and that could be linked from the SWE web site.

The Reach design team had a followup meeting and pizza social with the SWE web design team in November. They made an encore presentation of their final presentation from the closing ceremony! Then together they agreed on a name for the site and refined the content and structure of the web pages. The site will be implemented to a large degree from Powerpoint slides developed by the team.

Denise Nicoletti Continued

small things, like reaching out to new female colleagues on campus through a lunch invitation.

Recently Denise had become interested in development of K-12 engineering curricula, as well as student learning outcomes assessment in the ECE department. Within the past year, she was a leader or major player in three successful grants to the National Science Foundation for more than a million dollars in funding for projects in these areas!

What many of us didn't fully understand was the extent to which Denise's energy and passion for life extended well beyond her professional life. Since her death, her family, friends and colleagues have come forward to talk about all that she was involved with, and the level of commitment that she had dedicated to these efforts. All of you know that she was a dedicated wife to Rich, and a wonderful mother to Celeste, Lucio, and Marcello. (We will continue to include the Nicoletti family in invitations to Camp Reach events.) In addition to raising a family, she was active in her church and projects to improve the community of Petersham. Together she and Rich built a homestead with sheep, a barn, and gardens. She loved throwing dinner parties for friends using recipes from *Gourmet* magazine. She sewed some of her own

clothes. And through all of this, she *laughed*. Do you remember her wonderful, infectious laughter?

Even beyond all that Denise did, we can draw lessons from how she lived her life. At the WPI memorial service for Denise, one colleague spoke about his amazement at how well Denise received even the most critical feedback. He saw that she looked for the truth in any biting comment and sought to change to accommodate the feedback. He wondered where she would have been had she continued on this path of self-improvement – perhaps a future president of WPI?

“He saw that she looked for the truth in any biting comment and sought to change to accommodate the feedback.”

A theme in WPI campus programming this year has been “The Power of One,” which is meant to show students that they can make a difference, here at WPI and in the world. We couldn't ask for better evidence than Denise. So many of you shared with us at the summer reunion how she influenced your lives, and her influence has reached as far as Australia (see story on this page. She identified seemingly large problems and resolved to begin addressing them with a positive

attitude. Denise was truly a remarkable person, and the world is better for her presence here, however short. And we are better people for having known her.

Chrys Demetry Continued

In Bangkok. They're divided into six teams, each of which is working with a sponsoring agency to address a real problem that has humanistic, social, and technical aspects (similar to your Camp Reach design projects but much bigger!) Since Thailand is a developing nation, many projects here tend to focus on sustainable human and community development. For example, one team is assessing needs at a home for 500 abandoned mentally- and physically-disabled girls, developing and prioritizing recommendations for improvements that can be made to enhance their quality of life. Another team is using community participation to develop a playground design for the largest slum area in



Bangkok. It's challenging because there is hardly any available space in slums, so it needs to be a compact playground! They hope that their design may be used as a model for other slum areas around the world. Advising students on these types of projects all around the globe is the favorite part of my job!

My partner Rick is also a professor at WPI. We own a home near campus and together love to cook, entertain, garden, and travel. A long-standing passion of mine is hiking and wilderness backpacking—anything to do with mountains. Recently, with my sister, I summited Mt. Whitney in California, the highest peak in the continental U.S.

at about 14,500 feet!

Camp Reach in Australia?

Denise's work with Camp Reach inspired a former WPI colleague of hers, Louis Sanzogni, to start a similar program at Griffith University in Australia, specifically to recruit more young



women to the area of Information Technology. Formal planning has begun for the launch of Camp ISABEL (Information Systems and Business Education Linkage) in May/June 2003!

Massachusetts Academy Continued

people). Then there are the rest of us; we usually managed to get everything done, but lost a lot of sleep in the process, and often got stressed about school, because we all put a lot of pressure on ourselves. I've heard graduates of the Academy say "if you can survive the Academy, you can survive anything- even med school and law school at the same time".

Now that I've survived my junior year and am a senior, I'm beginning to realize that although junior year was really rough, it's strengthened me in so many ways. I don't try to make everything perfect anymore, because I know that it's not worth stressing myself out. I put as much effort as I can into my schoolwork, but if I'm tired, I go to bed rather than exhaust myself working on a project. I have much better time management skills than I ever did, and I now know my limitations and my abilities.

As a senior at the Academy, I take all WPI classes and am treated as a WPI freshman. In some ways, this is both much

easier and much harder than junior year was. I have more time to work on my projects and homework, but because I don't have somebody telling me I have to do something, I may not do any of it until it's due. I'm usually pretty good about doing my work on time and put a lot of effort into it, because even though it's my senior year, I still push myself to achieve.

I hope that you now have some idea of what the Academy is and what it's like to be a student there. Even though it is incredibly difficult and often stressful, it can also be one of the best and most memorable experiences of your life. You get to be in a college setting a year early, so when you do go to college, it's not as new and scary. You meet wonderful, intelligent people who are actually interested in things that you're interested in. And best of all, you learn about yourself, your ambitions, and your abilities in ways you didn't know were possible.

Thank You Supporters!

The generous companies, foundations, and other organizations that supported the '02 program, and those who have already contributed for '03, are listed below. Without their generosity, we would not be able to deliver a high quality program and keep camper tuition as low!

Albert Rice Charitable Foundation
AQUAL Clinical Services
Fidelity Investments
General Motors
Intellution/Emerson Charitable Trust
Intel



Mercury Computer Systems
TJX Foundation
UBS Paine Webber
Verizon Foundation
WPI Provost's Office

In addition, Camp Reach would not be possible without the support of many in the WPI community: administration, staff, students, and faculty.

Come Back to Camp Reach—Staff Selections 2003

All Camp Reach alumnae who will complete their sophomore year of high school this year will be eligible to apply for a volunteer Teaching Assistant (TA) position for the 2003 program, which will be held from June 20-August 1. We would like to fill all positions with former campers and staff members, so please consider applying!

Application materials will be available beginning in mid-March, by calling Chrys Demetry (508-831-5195), emailing her (cdemetry@wpi.edu), or by submitting a form on the Camp Reach website (<http://www.wpi.edu/+reach>).

For alumnae who aren't yet old enough to apply, you can think ahead! Relevant experience is key to a staff member's success. Try to find ways to gain experience by working or volunteering at places like community centers, churches, daycare centers, or other similar programs—you'll develop important skills that will help you in a TA position and many other positions! Also, please stay in touch over the years if you are interested in returning as a staff member.

T-Shirt Contest Time!

It's time once again for submissions for the next Reach t-shirt. Do you have any ideas? Please send them to Chrys. And, if you can send a graphics file through email, that would be especially great!

Winter Reunion Information

The next reunion activity for all alumni (campers and staff) is planned for

**Saturday, March 8, 1-3 p.m.
Alumni Gym, WPI Campus**

We will be swimming, enjoying each other's company, and swapping stories about how things are going. **Even if you don't want to swim, come just to chat!!**

What you should bring:

Your bathing suit and towel. We'll provide a place to change, a light snack, and access to vending machines.

RSVP by calling the Office of Diversity and Women's Programs at 508-831-5819 or by emailing reach@wpi.edu by February 28.

On the actual date of March 8, if there is inclement weather, a message will be left on Chrys's answering machine (call 508-831-5195) if we decide to cancel.

Reunion Add-On for Classes of '98 and '99 – Parents Too!

With the support and assistance of WPI's Admissions group, for the first time this year we will be holding a "**Mock Admissions Committee**" event for Camp Reach classes of 1998 and 1999 (current high school sophomores and juniors), and their parents, immediately following the winter reunion:

Saturday, March 8, 3-4 p.m.

Camp Reach Alumnae: Campus Center Chairman's Room

Parents: Campus Center Morgan Room

One of our admissions staff will tell you what most admissions counselors look for when they evaluate applications, and what emphasis is placed on various factors (grades, what classes have been taken, essay, extracurricular activities, test scores, etc.) Then you'll get to evaluate some actual applications (with fake names!) and pretend you're part of the Admissions Committee, deciding whether to accept or reject the applicants. We think this could be a beneficial and fun experience for sophomores and juniors since you're midway through your high school experience, regardless of where you end up applying! (Note that this will not be a WPI recruiting session!)

Camper News Continued

I tried out for my school's dance club and became goalie for my field hockey team. I work at LUK Crisis Center as a G.I.F.T.S peer leader. We held an AIDS art gallery on World's AIDS Day, and I received an award for a picture I made for the exhibit.

-Alex Hall, '02

I was a member of the First Lego League through my school. It was the first all girls team and it was pretty fun. We competed at Robonautica, which was held at WPI. I am also involved with the youth ministry group at my church. I look forward to seeing some of you guys again soon.

- Emily Kupstas, '02

This year for Christmas I went to the Cayman Islands. It is so beautiful and relaxed. At school I'm in Drama, on the math team, am active with the Student Council, and write for my Junior High paper.

- Tara Calnan, '02

Right now I'm enjoying senior year and having lots of fun skiing, lifeguarding, and running Indoor Track. I have been accepted to the Coast Guard Academy and will be going there next year. Last season in Cross Country, I received Most Improved Award and was team captain.

- Aimee Hart, '97, TA '01, '02

I run the mile and the two-mile on our school's winter track team, and I ran on the cross-country team last fall. During the fall I also worked as a soccer referee. I also recently became an editor for our school newspaper, which I'm really excited about.

- Lindsey Woodhull, TA '02

I participated in the Mass State First Lego League Tournament, which was held at WPI, with my team from Shrewsbury Middle School. We came in third place in the competition and also won a judges award. We also competed at Bay Path Regional High School, where we won the spirit award.

- Christina Ouellette, '02

To everyone who replied:

Thank you! Unfortunately, I had to edit out a lot from everyone's news because so many of you replied. To see the full responses, check out the Camp Reach page on my website: www.wpi.edu/~erindal/reach.html.

If you have any other questions about the camp, feel free to email me at erindal@wpi.edu.

Thanks again! Have a great year!