

OFFICE OF ACADEMIC ADVISING

*Advisor's  
Handbook*

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# Section 1: Advising in the Context of the WPI Plan

*"...The goals of the undergraduate program are to lead students to develop an excellent grasp of fundamental concepts in their principal areas of study; to lay a foundation for life-long renewal of knowledge; to gain a mature understanding of themselves; and, most importantly, to form a deep appreciation of the interrelationships among basic knowledge, technological advance, and human need. These principles are today manifest in the WPI Plan, a unique, project-oriented program which emphasizes intensive learning experiences and direct application of knowledge..."*

*-The Goal of Worcester Polytechnic Institute*

The Two Towers Tradition and the WPI Plan make a WPI education unique. This educational philosophy has been effective in educating professionals since the Institute's founding in 1865. To perpetuate these ideals in the form of well-trained professionals, academic advising needs to be carried out with the same philosophy. The purpose of the Academic Advisor's Handbook is to provide a comprehensive guide to advising WPI undergraduate students. Thus, academic advising should reinforce WPI's approach to education -- both philosophy and practice are important. This handbook is designed to help you, the academic advisor, provide effective advice to students, and should serve as a common reference for advising philosophy and practice on the WPI campus.

## **Faculty Advising**

Research published by the [National Academic Advising Association](#) (NACADA) has demonstrated that one of the most powerful influences on student persistence in college is individual attention from faculty members. Students frequently judge the worth of their academic experience from their interactions with faculty members. Furthermore, college presidents often consider academic advising a leading factor in student retention, and improving academic advising has been one of the most frequently cited strategies to increase student retention in the past decade. Academic advising can positively influence the educational and personal development of students.

## **Higher Education Advising Guidelines**

Increasing interest in improving the quality of academic advising at global educational institutions has motivated extensive research. The National Academic Advising Association (NACADA) has published the following standards and guidelines for academic advising that represents over six years of effort by several hundred professionals in higher education:

- The primary purpose of an academic advising program is to assist students in the development of meaningful educational plans that are compatible with their life goals. Academic advising should be viewed as a continuous process of clarification and evaluation.
- The ultimate responsibility for making informed decisions about life goals and educational plans rests with the individual student. The academic advisor assists by helping to identify and assess alternatives and consequences of decisions.

Institutional goals for academic advising should include:

1. Clarification of life and career goals
2. Development of suitable educational plans
3. Selection of appropriate courses and other educational experiences
4. Interpretation of institutional requirements
5. Increasing student awareness of educational resources available
6. Evaluation of student progress toward established goals
7. Development of decision-making skills
8. Reinforcement of student direction
9. Collection and distribution of student data regarding student needs, preferences, and performance for use in institutional policy-making

At WPI, the Plan results in educational experiences that are unique for each student, so advising needs to be specifically tailored for the individual. This creates a new level of complexity and responsibility for the advisor. To assist in the advising process, WPI's faculty endorsed the following statement on the goals of academic advising and the responsibilities of academic advisors:

### **WPI Advising Guidelines**

The primary purposes of WPI's academic advising program are to:

- Assist students in the development of meaningful educational plans, which are compatible with their life goals.
- Help students accept responsibility for their own education.
- Aid students' professional development by providing guidance in curricular and professional choices.

An academic advisor's responsibilities include:

- Helping the student design a program of study, interpret the course catalog and degree requirements, and choose among academic alternatives.
- Monitoring academic progress and recommending appropriate resources to answer questions or solve problems related to academic, career, and personal matters.

## Section 2: Getting to Know the Student

### The Importance of the Advisor/Advisee Relationship

An important factor in the advising process for WPI students is having an academic advisor who shows concern for them as individuals. Students are more likely to value the information and follow the advice given to them when they recognize the faculty advisor's genuine interest and concern.

Most faculty advisors can quickly become qualified to help students select courses; however, the challenge lays in building the personal relationship that is important for effective advising. To be truly effective, you should be able to go beyond routine course scheduling to help students achieve their academic and career goals. This section is intended to help you understand the importance of your interactions with advisees and to suggest ways to improve relationship building and communication with students.

The questions you ask a student can be those that you use to seek information (closed-ended) and those that you use to build a relationship (open-ended). Try to use open-ended questions to encourage students to talk rather than closed questions that can be answered in a few words. Closed questions can shut down communication. Some examples:

Open	Closed
“What are some of your favorite concepts you are covering in Biology?”	“Do you attend Biology class?”
“Name some things that come to mind when you think about Math”	“Do you like your Math class?”
“Why do you feel you struggled on the test?”	“How long did it take you to finish the test?”

One very important aspect of successful academic advising is providing the student with personalized attention. Some simple methods for accomplishing this:

- Refer to the student by first name
- Maintain an attitude of acceptance and respect

Another important (yet commonly overlooked) method to communicate interest in the student is non-verbal communication, or body language:

- Position yourself at an appropriate distance
- Face the student squarely
- Maintain comfortable eye contact

The most important element in effective advising is good listening skills. Advisors should use active listening to understand what the student is really saying:

- Pay careful attention when the student is speaking

- Pay attention to the student's non-verbal communication (tone of voice, posture, expression, eye contact, etc.)
- Wait for speaker to finish before responding
- Clear your mind of distractions
- Focus on the central idea -- do not get lost in details

It is also a good technique while listening to clarify what you believe the student is saying:

- Note the content of student's message and feelings: repeat back, making sure you have heard correctly
- Communicate understanding of feelings, thoughts, and behaviors from the student's frame of reference [Example: "What emotions do you feel regarding the professor's comments in class?"]

It is also important to try to avoid shutting down the speaker by:

- Arguing
- Interrupting
- Judging, criticizing, or diagnosing
- Ordering or moralizing
- Misinterpreting

Another way to excel as an advisor is to practice effective speaking skills when meeting with students. Attempt to word all of your comments toward the understanding of the student's needs. Some examples:

- "Could it be that..."
- "I wonder if..."
- "I'm hearing that...."
- "It seems you're feeling a little..."
- "You appear concerned"
- "If I understand you correctly..."

### **Sample Questions for the First Meeting**

The first meeting with a student should focus on getting to know the student and discussing your role as an advisor. Some students will talk freely and readily provide the information when asked to tell a little about themselves. If the student appears shy or says very little, you can use some of the following questions to obtain information and build rapport with the student:

- What high school did you graduate from? Can you tell me how well you think your high school prepared you for the challenges of WPI?

- Where are you in the math course sequence? Have you thought about your Social Science and Physical Education courses? What topics interest you in the Humanities and Arts?
- Have you taken any courses within your major yet? How are they going?
- Is there a specific aspect of your major that particularly interests you?
- What led you to choose this major?
- Are you involved in any kind of extra-curricular activities, such as campus organizations or part-time jobs?
- Have you received any scholarships? If so, what is required for you to keep those scholarships?
- What are your goals after graduation from WPI (employment, graduate school, etc.)?
- What do you expect from me as your advisor?

You can use these questions as a guideline for initial sessions with students. You can also make notes on the student's advisee record in Banner Self-Service to remind you of your discussion. It is also a good idea to ask students for a resume to keep on file, once they have created one, to stay informed about their career goals and progress.

### **Sample Questions for Subsequent Meetings**

Future meetings with advisees should attempt to make life at WPI as productive as possible. You should be ready to work with the student to help solve any problems that he or she encounters. These meetings are also a time to clarify that the academic choices that the students make correspond with their career goals.

- How are you enjoying life at WPI? Do you know where to get help if you encounter any problems? [Advisor may refer student to campus resources -- see [Section 6](#)]
- How are your classes going? Do you know where to get help for these classes (M\*A\*S\*H sessions, tutoring, etc.)?
- Have you created a four-year academic plan? Do you know what graduation requirements you have left to complete?
- Are you involved in any activities or professional organizations? Do you know where you can find out more about campus activities? [If the student is not involved in the department's professional organization, this is a good time to encourage involvement]
- When do you plan to graduate? Do you want to participate in a co-op or internship before you graduate?
- Let's review a copy of your most recent resume. Have you contacted the Career Development Center?

### **Personal Relationships with Advisees**

Advisors sometimes wonder how much information to seek from students. As students vary in amount of information they are comfortable sharing with a faculty advisor, an effective guideline is to limit your questioning and discussion to academic and career issues; however, you should be prepared to deal with any personal questions that may arise and deal with them accordingly ([Section 6](#) has information on referring students to campus resources).

## Section 3: Advising Special Populations of Students

### Transfer and Non-Traditional Students

Advising transfer and non-traditional students can be a rewarding experience, as they may bring a different perspective on education and the academic/career/life balance. Advisors may also encounter some challenges, such as handling situations where transfer students may be either ahead or behind in course sequences compared to the WPI students in their class. They also need to plan their projects, while they adjust to the seven-week term schedule and transition into WPI. Moreover, some transfer students are considered non-traditional students because they are over the age of 25. This student population often brings with them a different level of exposure and maturity to WPI, along with additional concerns, such as housing, child care, and career planning. It is essential that advisors help transfer and non-traditional student adjust to the rigors of WPI and help them feel involved in our community.

Initial transfer credit evaluations are handled by the Admissions Office.

### Students in Academic Difficulty

Students with Warning or Probationary status are often those most in need of careful advising; however, they are also the students least likely to seek out their advisors, or to follow through on the advice provided to them. Challenges aside, many advisors find that helping these students succeed can be the most rewarding advising experience.

Many students facing academic difficulty lack specific skills such as time management, proper study habits, or self-discipline. They are usually reluctant to seek help, and do not know what resources are available to assist them. However, if they are willing to make a commitment to change old habits and learn new skills, they can learn the strategies that are needed to be successful academically at WPI.

You can play a critical role by offering your assistance to these students. Additionally, the Office of Academic Advising specifically outreaches to academically at-risk students to provide an additional level of support. You should feel comfortable referring students to the Office of Academic Advising for questions regarding their status, or the resources available to assist them.

If you are concerned about the overall well-being of a student, you can refer him or her to the WPI [Care Team](#). The [Student Development and Counseling Center](#) (SDCC), “West Street House,” is also a good resource for students in distress.

### Students with Disabilities

Worcester Polytechnic Institute is committed to assisting its students with documented disabilities in the realization of their full academic potential. WPI has established an [Office of Disability Services](#) (ODS), to coordinate services and provide advocacy and support to students with documented physical, medical, learning, developmental, sensory and psychological disabilities.

A person with a disability is an individual with a physical or mental impairment that *substantially limits* one or more major life activities. This includes any barrier to education or participation in campus life on the part of the student (due to disability) or the institution (due to inaccessible physical, learning and social environments).



Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) states that a person with a disability who is “otherwise qualified” cannot solely by reason of their disability, “be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving federal financial assistance.” In this definition “otherwise qualified” means that, with appropriate accommodations, a student is capable of, and responsible for, meeting the fundamental, graded requirements of a course.

Students will work with the ODS to request academic accommodations based on a [documented disability](#), where a significant functional limitation is identified by a qualified professional, which causes a student to achieve at a level below their aptitude. Students are either approved for accommodations and/or are coached to develop compensatory strategies that rely on their strengths.

If a student intends to apply approved accommodations to their courses for a given term, the ODS provides a letter to the student stating all relevant accommodations. The student and professor should meet to discuss how these accommodations will be applied to the course for the specific student before signing and returning the letter of accommodation to the ODS. If questions arise during this conversation, the letter includes all relevant ODS staff contact information and you are encouraged to consult at any time with [ODS staff](#).

### **International Students**

The diversity of WPI's student population makes it unique. While all new students can experience feelings of loneliness and homesickness during the first days at WPI, for international students, these feelings can be exacerbated by separation and cultural changes. Language, food, social behavior, nonverbal communication, and academic expectations are but a few of the challenges which international students face as they adjustment to WPI.

The challenge in advising international students is to understand that they have common social and academic concerns in addition to their unique questions regarding their transition to WPI. An important resource for international students is WPI's international student advisor, who advises international students on a wide range of topics including immigration matters, social and cultural differences, financial matters and personal concerns. The international student advisor (located in the [International House](#)) is also available to assist you as an academic advisor if you have questions or concerns pertaining to an international advisee of yours.

### **Students of Color**

In order to provide assistance to students of color, WPI initiated the Excellence in Mathematics, Science and Engineering Program (EMSEP) in 1993. Coordinated by the [Office of Diversity and Women's Programs](#), the program includes personal development training for students as well as academic, personal, and financial aid counseling and support services.

The personal development seminar is designed to expose students to the historical, social, institutional and personal impediments which traditionally impact the success of students of color at predominately white institutions. Part of the exposure includes encouraging students to recognize these impediments and providing them with mechanisms that enable them to overcome personal, social, and institutionalized obstacles. One goal of the program is to help students learn that the process of development requires a realistic personal assessment of one's skills, an appreciation of one's ultimate goals, and the incremental steps necessary to reach these goals.

## Section 4: Guiding Students through the Plan

The WPI Plan is by design “a flexible, exciting, and academically challenging program” that can be equally challenging for the academic advisor. The Plan does not allow you to just inform students of a standard sequence of required courses that will direct students through their undergraduate career. Although there are minimum distribution requirements, with the Plan there is no rigid program of study that defines and limits students to a particular course of study. The undergraduate catalog serves as a good reference for designing these programs.

Assisting students in integrating their educational goals into the WPI Plan is no simple task. As a WPI academic advisor, you need a wealth of knowledge and experience along with a fair amount of skill. This fundamental knowledge includes an understanding of campus policy and procedures, plus familiarity with the undergraduate curricula.

### Giving Good Advice

Giving good advice is what advising is all about! Good advice should be individually tailored to students’ career and life goals, interests, and ability to complete a proposed academic load. Listed below are some suggestions for assessing student progress and helping individuals understand the options they have as WPI students:

1. Use degree evaluations found in Banner Web under the advisor menu to track students’ progress in fulfilling their distribution requirements and progress towards graduation. Students also have the capability of running their own degree evaluation through Banner Web.
2. Ask students to make a list of courses they expect to take in the coming six to eight terms.

Have students plan at least 6 terms in advance, and post their proposed schedule online in the student advising folder in Banner Web. You can view the proposed schedule by clicking on the student’s name in your advisee list Banner Web. Be sure to pay attention to courses which may be offered only in fall or only in spring semester, or during alternate years, and update and change the list at each advising session.

3. Encourage students to take a challenging, yet balanced, course load.

Balance a term by using humanities or social science electives, physical education, etc., and avoid combining extremely challenging courses or too many labs in the same term. Look for patterns, for example - If a student has difficulty with engineering mechanics, the student may have difficulties with fluid mechanics, soil mechanics, etc..

4. Compare current course load to past performance.

Determine if students have performed adequately in the past with this number of units (as defined by WPI standards and students’ personal aspirations). Decide if the student’s expectations and are reasonable relative to the proposed load, and suggest a different mix of courses, if necessary.

- a) Be aware of academic performance requirements for scholarships.

Ask students about scholarships they may have, and adjust course load to an appropriate level if students are financially dependent on a scholarship to stay in school.

- b) Estimate total student load.

Balance the academic load around all activities that students may be involved with including work study or other work commitments.

- c) Help the student weigh overloading options with the possibility of taking a course near home or work during the summer.

Be aware of student abilities, as overloading can be a good financial option for superior students. It is relatively inexpensive and does not interfere with summer employment. For other students, stress taking classes over the summer, if financially realistic, because it does not increase the academic load during the school year. Make sure you are aware of the policies about transferring courses to WPI.

- d) Recognize that WPI has an elite student body capable of a high level of achievement, but remember that these students still need encouragement.

It is often assumed that highly talented students choose a major early on and have well-defined plans for future lifestyle and careers; however, this is rarely the case. In fact, these students often struggle because they are able to consider a wide range of interests and abilities. They will need assistance in exploring their options, and they will need encouragement and support from you.

- e) Students are very sensitive to comments from advisors about their academic ability. Be tactful when providing potentially negative information.

Encourage students to reach their potential. Early in their experiences at WPI, students may be looking for short cuts and the easy way -- try to help them focus on their long term goals. This is a good time to discuss the “easy course” pitfalls.

### **Relating to Students**

Some of the most useful advice a student can receive from the advising relationship is that which you relate to the student about yourself. Being able to speak from a personal real-life experience is a powerful way to enlighten students to the many possible paths their lives and careers can take. Whenever possible, you may want to relate, in a professional manner, your personal experiences related to academic and career decisions. Such experiences can serve as examples to show students how choices made at the undergraduate level can influence career development. This is not meant to imply that every student should be encouraged to follow in the footsteps of the advisor; however, it is often true that a student can benefit from a glimpse of what types of decisions brought you to be the successful professional you are today.

## **Knowing the Rules**

The Undergraduate Catalog contains most of the information relating to policies and regulations that both students and advisors need to know. This section of the Handbook is intended to supplement the information in the catalog. Further information and clarification is available from the Registrar's Office and from the Office of Academic Advising.

### **1. FERPA: Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act**

FERPA is a federal law designed to protect the privacy of students' educational records. Educational records may include grades, grade reports, progress reports, transcripts, handwritten notes, computer records, e-mails, audio and video recordings as well as others.

#### **a) WPI's Policy on FERPA**

It is important to note that Worcester Polytechnic Institute gives parents of financially dependent students, as defined in Section 152 of the Internal Revenue Code, full access to their dependent's educational records. Access includes parents receiving copies of their dependent's grade reports each semester from the Office of the Registrar. Worcester Polytechnic Institute assumes that its undergraduate students are financially dependent on their parents unless a parent or student informs us otherwise. If the student is financially independent, they must notify the Registrar of his or her independent financial statuses by using the Financially Independent Student form, available in the Registrar's Office.

#### **b) It is important to be aware of how FERPA impacts the following:**

##### Writing Student Recommendation Letters

FERPA rules regarding the release of educational records apply to letters of recommendation. If you are asked to provide a letter of recommendation on behalf of a student which may contain information such as such as grades, academic performance, etc., you should have written permission from the student to disclose that information.

If you have questions about FERPA and proper procedure, please contact the Registrar's Office at 508-831-5211 before taking any action.

### **2. Registration and Scheduling Procedures**

The scheduling and registration process is a joint effort involving departments, administration, and the Academic Advising and Registrar's offices. The process begins with the development of the catalog.

The catalog is distributed at the beginning of C Term in order to be used for Advising Day in mid-C Term, the period when students plan their courses for the next academic year.

### **3. When students register via the web, it is a "live" registration. Students need to be advised to use the waitlist process, as this is the mechanism we use to determine the true demand for a course.**

Advisors need to be aware of the following procedures:

- **Overloads:** Overloads are not permitted over the web; students must go to the Registrar's Office. Overloads are not permitted until the first day of classes for the respective term. Students must first obtain the signature of their academic advisor before attempting to register. Check the Registrar's webpage for the current overload fees. Please note that at WPI the students are ultimately responsible for making the decisions about their schedules. Therefore, your signature does not necessarily mean "permission" for overloading, but rather, it means that you have discussed the options with the student.
- **Wait lists:** Wait lists for closed courses are established chronologically. Students must claim approved seats during the posted time. Wait lists are discontinued at noon of the first day of classes, and remaining seats are offered to students on a first-come, first-served basis. The typical advice given to students regarding wait listed courses includes the following:
  1. While you have nothing to lose by putting your name on the wait list, always have an alternate plan in mind in case the wait list process does not work
  2. Never miss a class while waiting for approval that you are moved into the course from the wait list
  3. Don't drop a class until after you have been approved off the wait list
  4. Be patient and keep checking back
- **Consortium registration:** Consortium registration information and forms are available at the Registrar's Office. Students need signatures in both the Registrar's Office and Academic Advising before taking the form to the institution during their designated enrollment period. Academic advisor's signatures are not required on the registration form.
- **Late schedule changes:** During the drop/add period (normally the first five days of classes) changes can be made at no charge. Advisees should be encouraged to make all changes by the first day or two of classes. Additional changes made during days 5-10 of the term are subject to a fee. No course changes can be made after the tenth day of the term.
- **Project and Independent Study/Project (ISP) registration:** Registration for all project activity is conducted by the registrar's office using the Project Registration Form. The same late fee schedule applies to project and ISP registrations.

#### 4. Academic Reviews

Academic reviews are conducted at the conclusion of Terms B and D. The standard for determining satisfactory academic progress is earning 4/3 units of credit during the two previous terms. Advisors and parents of dependent students are notified of students who fail to meet these standards.

## 5. **Financial Aid**

In order to retain financial aid, students must earn at least 8/3 units at WPI (10/3 if full time E term is included) during the academic year. If a student is placed on probation or reclassified for any reason, the student will lose financial aid. Financial aid is ordinarily available for a period of 16 terms. Students must petition for financial aid past the period of 16 terms.

## 6. **Petitions**

Students may petition through the Registrar's Office to the Committee on Academic Operations (CAO) for reconsideration of the academic status of warning, probation, or suspension, or for other unusual circumstances warranting special consideration. Petition forms are available in the Registrar's Office. Students are requested, but not required, to obtain the academic advisor's signature.

Students who have lost their financial aid because they failed to meet the eligibility requirements may, in cases that involve unusual or extenuating circumstances, such as documented medical problems, file a petition with the Financial Aid Office. These petitions are accepted on a rolling basis and handled on a case by case basis by the financial aid review committee.

Academic advisors may be asked by students to write recommendations or supply supporting letters to supplement their petitions.

## 7. **Transfer Credit**

The Admissions Office coordinates evaluation of transfer credit earned prior to matriculation at WPI. To obtain transfer credit after matriculation to WPI, students should pick up the Transfer Credit Authorization Form at the Academic Advising Office and obtain the authorizing signatures before registering for the course. Upon successful completion of the activity, the students should request that an official transcript be sent directly to WPI's Registrar's Office.

## 8. **Advanced Placement Credit**

Advanced Placement credit is awarded to those students who take the Advanced Placement Examinations and score a "4" or "5" on the exam. The Office of Academic Advising will notify students in early August of credit earned through Advanced Placement testing. Credit is awarded in the following way:

- Other ways to earn advanced credit include retroactive credit for successful completion of courses in mathematics, and foreign language. See the [Undergraduate Catalog](#) for details.
- Foreign exams such as the International Baccalaureate, the French Baccalaureate, and the English A Level exams, are eligible for credit and are handled on a case by case basis through the Office of Academic Advising.

## **9. Changing Majors and Changing Advisors**

More than one-half of WPI students change majors at least once, and since. WPI students are admitted to the University, not to a specific program, changing majors is a simple process. Each year, during B Term, we ask all first year students to discuss their major with their advisor and then declare their major through SharePoint. If a student wants to change their major at any time, they can pick up a Change of Major Form in the Office of Academic Advising or in the Registrar's Office. Students who need help declaring a major, or who wish to discuss the various options, should be referred to the Career Development Center.

Students who change their major typically change their advisor; however, students can change advisors for any reason. Conversely, advisors can request that the Academic Advising Office assign an advisee to another advisor for any reason.

Advisor changes are processed by the Academic Advising Office and major changes are processed in the Registrar's Office.

## **10. Student Judicial Policies and Procedures**

All advisors, and all members of the WPI community, should be familiar with the policies governing behavior on the campus. The Student Life Office has produced a publication, "The Campus Planner & Resource Guide," which documents WPI's policies and the code of conduct that all WPI students are expected to observe (in addition to providing a calendar, list of campus dates and events, and a guide to campus and community services). This publication chronicles the procedure by which a member of the WPI community may be brought before the various judicial or administrative boards and the sanctions, which may be levied, for infractions.

The publication contains WPI's Campus Code, the Academic Honesty Policy, the Policy Concerning Students with Learning Disabilities, the Sexual Harassment Policy, WPI Drug and Alcohol Policy, and other policies and procedures advisors may need for reference. Advisors are encouraged to review this publication on an annual basis.

# **Section 5: Helping Students with Career Development**

## **What is Career Development?**

Career development encompasses or interfaces with all aspects of people's lives. For WPI students, career development involves more than the completion of specified degree requirements leading to a particular academic degree. Career planning must incorporate students' values, goals, interests, skills, and other individual variables. WPI students also need strong interpersonal communication skills to be professionally successful in the constantly changing world of work.

Comprehensive career development services are available at WPI to prepare students for the work environment of the future. All components of the campus must work together to help students achieve their professional goals. [The Career Development Center](#) (CDC) provides a wide range of services related to career development. Academic advisors who have regular contact with students can serve as their mentors and professional role models. As such, advisors should be aware of

students' self-awareness, educational history and goals, and their knowledge of the world of work. In some cases, the academic advisors are the primary career planning resource, and in other cases, their role is to identify student needs and refer them to the appropriate resources.

## **Legal Issues in Advising**

### **1. When Employment Recruiters Seek Help From Faculty**

The Equal Employment Opportunity Act and Civil Rights Acts ban discrimination in employment and govern hiring practices. Employment agencies, which locate personnel or job applicants for employers are also bound by the provisions of these acts. Both acts define "employment agencies" broadly to include "any person regularly undertaking with or without compensation to procure employees for an employer..."

Considering the breadth of this definition, faculty who regularly refer students to employers risk being considered an "employment agency" under the terms of the Acts. Faculty members are, therefore, obliged to make referrals without discriminating on the basis of race, religion, ethnic heritage, or gender. The Americans with Disabilities Act expands these categories by prohibiting persons who offer references from giving information about a person's disability (or handicap, legally defined).

WPI's Committee on Advising and Student Life has consulted with the Career Development Center and recommends the following for faculty who are approached by employers seeking to identify students for employment:

- a) Faculty can refer students to employers in response to employers' requests, but they should also tell employers of our obligation to share knowledge of job openings with the student body through the CDC. The employer should expect and can prepare for job inquiries from the WPI community.
- b) Faculty with information regarding specific job openings should always make that information available to all students and alumni by passing the information along to the CDC.

### **2. Recommending Students for Employment or Graduate School**

Providing references for students seeking employment or admission to graduate school is an important professional responsibility for faculty members. Like other responsibilities, there are legal implications of which faculty should be aware.

First, faculty should be aware that both written and oral communications regarding a particular student's work or suitability for employment/graduate school should be considered confidential. Moreover, under the Buckley Amendment students can waive their right to obtain recommendations completed on their behalf, but they are not obligated to do so. Faculty, on the other hand, must safeguard students' privacy rights. They have no authority to disseminate student records or other confidential matters regarding a student without the permission of the student. Of course, both oral and written recommendations, like all



confidential material, may only be disclosed to those authorized by the student to receive the recommendation.

Students are obliged to ask faculty to serve as a reference and faculty should not do so until a student makes such a request. If an employer contacts a faculty member for a reference, and the student in question has not asked the faculty member, the faculty member should first consult with the student before offering a recommendation. Once a student requests a reference (written or oral), faculty members can provide a recommendation without fear of breaching a student's privacy rights. Faculty should use discretion, however, and not disclose the specific contents of educational records (grades, for example) without the student's approval.

When students apply to graduate schools, they typically present faculty with a recommendation form that includes a statement on confidentiality and a waiver that students may sign. The CDC recommends that students seeking recommendations for jobs follow similar procedures. In August, the CDC will send confidentiality forms, like those used by graduate schools, to juniors and seniors. The students will be asked to present these forms to faculty when students request recommendations for employers.

## **Section 6: Identifying Resources**

### **Problem Solving with Students**

Advisors frequently question how much responsibility to take in student problem solving. You should assist students in making their own decisions and show them where they can get help. Avoid telling students what to do, and making decisions for them. It is also best to avoid trying to solve all of the students' problems. An initial discussion of faculty roles and student expectations can circumvent any misunderstanding by the advisee.

### **Campus Involvement**

Many students at WPI are involved in the campus community. These extracurricular activities can provide a numerous opportunities for students to develop skills in socialization, relaxation and cooperation. To find out more about these and other activities, contact the [Student Activities Office](#).

### **Referring Students to Campus Resources**

To ensure academic success at WPI, students need to receive information regarding university procedures, departmental requirements, and professional and student organizations. Students have opportunities to utilize self-help materials and workshops, get work experience, become involved in student organizations, and gain research experience. These types of experiences and knowledge will assist students in making informed and educated decisions about their academic goals and career paths.

As an advisor, students may approach you with questions or concerns that other people on campus are more qualified to address; therefore, it is important to be aware of the various resources available on campus, and feel comfortable referring students whenever you feel that another campus resource could better serve students' needs. Assisting students in making appointments can be helpful and is recommended. Below you will find a list of useful campus resources.

## List of Referral Resources

Office or Department	Location	Contact Information
<b>Academics</b>		
<a href="#"><u>Academic Resources Center</u></a>	Office of Academic Advising Daniels Hall, 1st Floor	<a href="mailto:arc@wpi.edu"><u>arc@wpi.edu</u></a>
<a href="#"><u>Academic Technology Center</u></a>	Fuller Labs, 1st Floor	<a href="mailto:atc@wpi.edu"><u>atc@wpi.edu</u></a>
<a href="#"><u>Computing and Communications Center (CCC)</u></a>	Helpdesk, Fuller Labs Basement	<a href="mailto:helpdesk@wpi.edu"><u>helpdesk@wpi.edu</u></a> or ext. 5888
<a href="#"><u>M*A*S*H (Math and Science Help)</u></a>	Office of Academic Advising Daniels Hall, 1st Floor	<a href="mailto:arc@wpi.edu"><u>arc@wpi.edu</u></a>
<a href="#"><u>Peer Academic Coaching</u></a>	Office of Academic Advising Daniels Hall, 1st Floor	<a href="mailto:pacs@wpi.edu"><u>pacs@wpi.edu</u></a>
<a href="#"><u>Projects Office</u></a> (IQP and MQP information)	Daniels Hall, 1st Floor	<a href="mailto:cjkornik@wpi.edu"><u>cjkornik@wpi.edu</u></a>
<a href="#"><u>Writing Center</u></a>	Academic Resources Center, Daniels Hall, 1st Floor	Prof. Lorraine Higgins <a href="mailto:jdh@wpi.edu"><u>jdh@wpi.edu</u></a>
<b>Administration and Student Services</b>		
<a href="#"><u>Academic Advising</u></a>	Daniels Hall, 1st floor	<a href="mailto:academic-advising@wpi.edu"><u>academic-advising@wpi.edu</u></a>
<a href="#"><u>Accounting Office</u></a>	Boynton Hall, 2nd floor	<a href="mailto:accounting@wpi.edu"><u>accounting@wpi.edu</u></a>
<a href="#"><u>Admissions</u></a>	Bartlett Center	<a href="mailto:admissions@wpi.edu"><u>admissions@wpi.edu</u></a>
<a href="#"><u>Campus Police</u></a>	35 Dean Street	<a href="mailto:police@wpi.edu"><u>police@wpi.edu</u></a>
<a href="#"><u>Career Development Center (CDC)</u></a>	Project Center, Lower Level	<a href="mailto:cdc@wpi.edu"><u>cdc@wpi.edu</u></a>
<a href="#"><u>Cooperative Education Program</u></a>	Project Center, Lower Level	<a href="mailto:cdc@wpi.edu"><u>cdc@wpi.edu</u></a>
<a href="#"><u>Collegiate Religious Center</u></a>	19 Schussler Road	<a href="mailto:ReligiousDiversity@wpi.edu"><u>ReligiousDiversity@wpi.edu</u></a>
<a href="#"><u>Financial Aid Office</u></a>	Bartlett Center, upper level	<a href="mailto:finaid@wpi.edu"><u>finaid@wpi.edu</u></a>
<a href="#"><u>George C. Gordon Library</u></a>	Library	<a href="mailto:library-questions@wpi.edu"><u>library-questions@wpi.edu</u></a>
<a href="#"><u>Health Center</u></a>	Stoddard C	<a href="mailto:healthcenter@wpi.edu"><u>healthcenter@wpi.edu</u></a>
<a href="#"><u>Interdisciplinary &amp; Global Studies</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>Project Center</u></a>	<a href="mailto:igsd@wpi.edu"><u>igsd@wpi.edu</u></a>
<a href="#"><u>International House</u></a>	28 Trowbridge Road	<a href="mailto:hartvig@wpi.edu"><u>hartvig@wpi.edu</u></a>
<a href="#"><u>Office of Disability Services</u></a>	Daniel Hall, 1st Floor	<a href="mailto:dso@wpi.edu"><u>dso@wpi.edu</u></a>
<a href="#"><u>Office of Diversity and Women's Programs</u></a>	Campus Center, 2nd floor	<a href="mailto:mao@wpi.edu"><u>mao@wpi.edu</u></a>
<a href="#"><u>Registrar's Office</u></a>	Daniels Hall, 1st floor	<a href="mailto:registrar@wpi.edu"><u>registrar@wpi.edu</u></a>

Office or Department	Location	Contact Information
<b>Administration and Student Services Continued</b>		
<u>Residential Services</u>	East Hall	<a href="mailto:res-services@wpi.edu">res-services@wpi.edu</a>
<u>Student Affairs &amp; Campus Life</u>	Campus Center 1st Floor	<a href="mailto:dean-of-students@wpi.edu">dean-of-students@wpi.edu</a>
<u>Student Activities Office</u>	Campus center, 2nd floor	<a href="mailto:sao@wpi.edu">sao@wpi.edu</a>
<u>Student Development and Counseling Center</u>	157 West Street	<a href="mailto:sdcc@wpi.edu">sdcc@wpi.edu</a> Ext. 5540