



WPI

State of Our Black Students

Faculty Meeting

Office of Diversity, Inclusion, and Multicultural Education (ODIME)

diversity@wpi.edu



Dr. Gabe Willis

@drgabewillis



Students who were forced to be resilient their whole lives don't need another conversation about grit. They need resources, guidance, sponsorship, advocacy....etc.

7:57 AM · 4/26/22 · [Twitter for iPhone](#)

 [View Tweet activity](#)

685 Retweets **56** Quote Tweets **2,620** Likes

Identified Problems

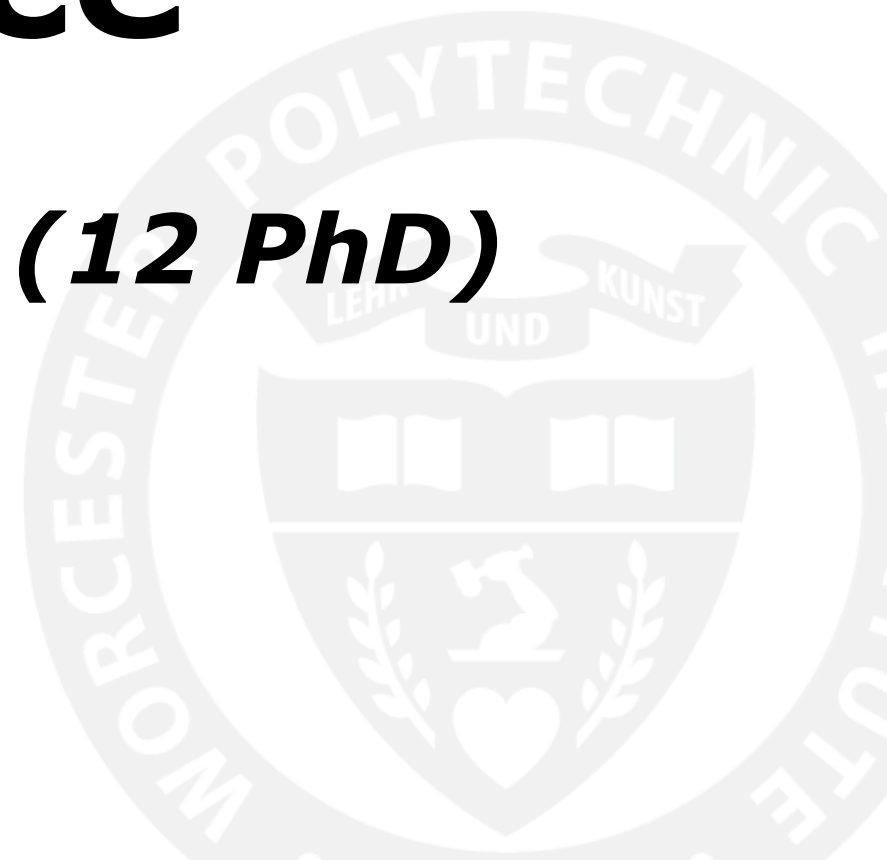
- Black students are not persisting on the graduate level at WPI.
- Black student No Record (NR) rates are too high at WPI.
- Black student graduation rates are too low at WPI.
- Black students are lacking a sense of belonging at WPI.
- Black student support is siloed in too few select roles/units at WPI.

Data At-A-Glance

143 Black Undergraduates

74 Black Graduate Students (12 PhD)

217 TOTAL



Degree Outcomes

Attrition and Intended Degree Completion – Masters Students

- 160 Black Domestic Masters Students (2009-2021)
- Of the 123 Black Masters Students that are no longer at WPI:
 - **29.27% (36) left without any graduate degree**
 - 70.73% (87) earned a Masters degree

Attrition and Intended Degree Completion – PhD Students

- 16 Black Domestic PhD Students (2009-2021)
- Of the 12 Black Domestic PhD Students that are no longer at WPI:
 - **33.33% (4) left without any graduate degree**
 - 33.33% (4) left with a Masters degree
 - 33.33% (4) earned a PhD

Degree Outcomes

Attrition and Intended Degree Completion – PhD Students

- 16 Black and 222 White Domestic PhD Students (2009-2021)
- Of the 12 Black Domestic PhD Students that are no longer at WPI:
 - 33.33% (4) left without any graduate degree
 - 33.33% (4) left with a masters degree
 - 33.33% (4) earned a PhD
- Of the 148 White Domestic PhD Students that are no longer at WPI:
 - 15.54% (23) left without any graduate degree
 - 33.11% (49) left with a masters degree
 - 51.35% (76) earned a PhD

Black UG Student NR Data

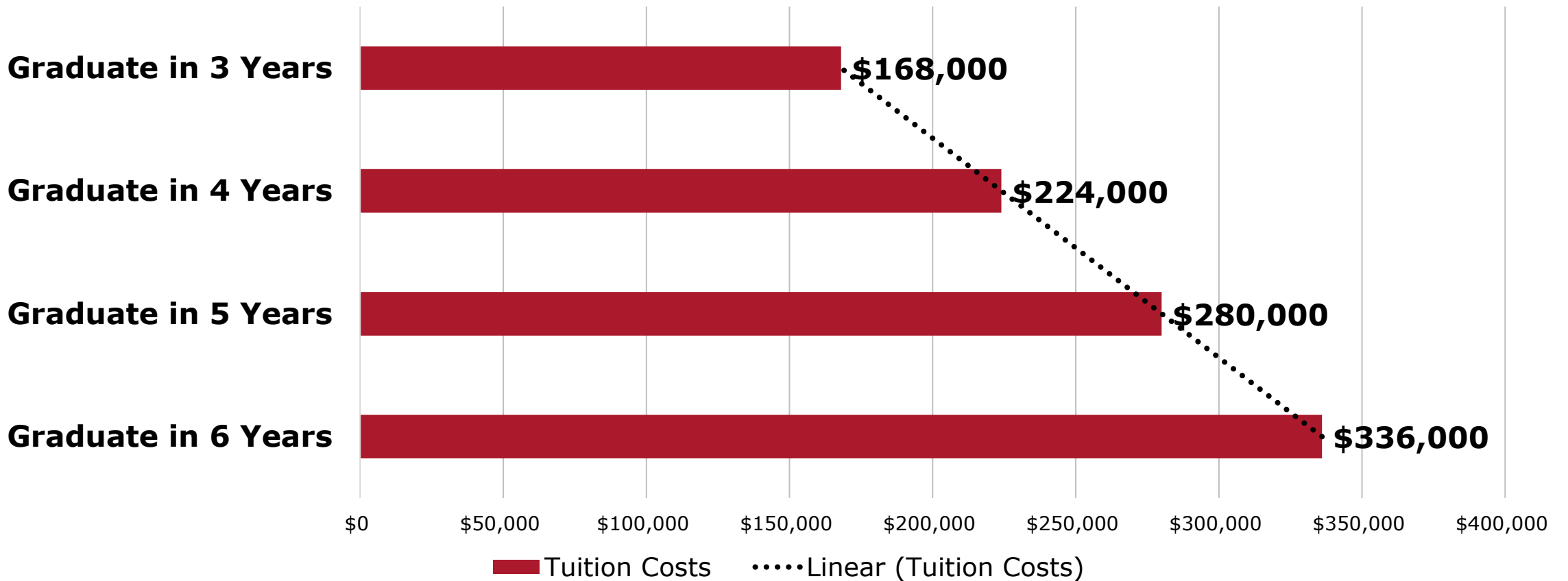
Class Year	Total Population	# Students with NRs	Percentage
Class of 2025	43	35	81%
Class of 2026	43	30	70%

Cost of NRing Multiple Courses Class of 2026 (Current First-Year Class)

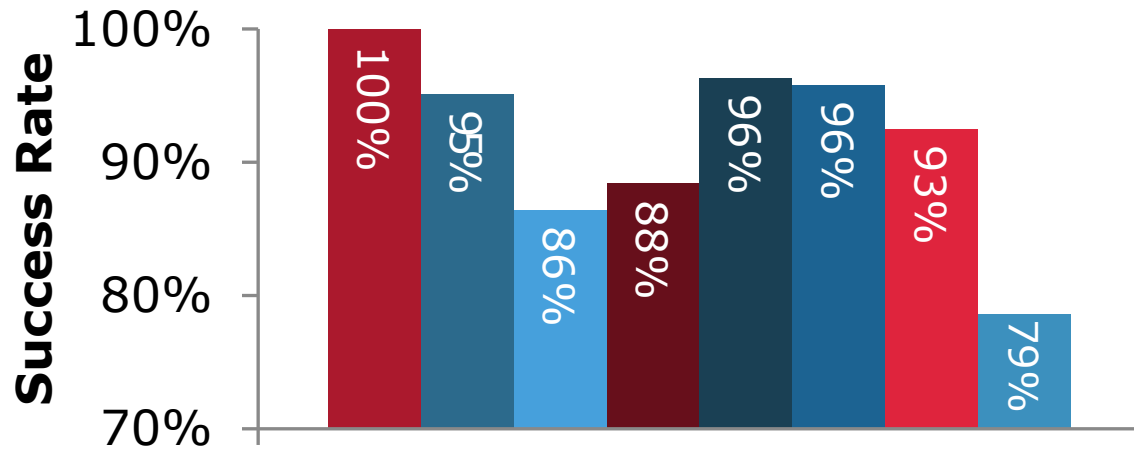
Number of NRs	Number of Students	Cost/Student	Total Cost
1 NR	4	\$4,560	\$50,160
2 NRs	11	\$9,120	\$100,320
3 NRs	8	\$13,680	\$109,440
4 NRs	5	\$18,240	\$72,960
5 NRs	2	\$22,800	\$91,200

WPI Tuition Costs

Tuition Costs based on \$56,000 per year



First Destination Outcomes (2022) – Race/Ethnicity Bachelors Degree



Success Rate

- American Indian / Alaska Native (100%)
- Asian (95%)
- Black / African American (86%)
- Hispanic / Latino (88%)
- Non-resident Alien (96%)
- Two or more races (96%)
- White (93%)
- Unknown (79%)

Race / Ethnicity	Average Salary
Asian	\$83,935
Black / African American	\$55,752
Hispanic / Latino	\$68,136
Nonresident Alien	\$80,234
Two or more races	\$71,622
White	\$71,381
Unknown	\$73,726

Note: American Indian / Alaska Native and Native Hawaiian / other pacific Islander was left out as there was no data

A deeper dive into these numbers is currently ongoing.

Graduate Student Life Experiences

Negative influence on mental health (Fall 2021 Mental Health Survey)...

- When faculty or advisors are **inflexible**
- When it's **difficult to communicate with faculty** or they are inaccessible
- **Social isolation** and other pandemic impacts
- **Imposter Syndrome**/feeling like I'm not good enough for grad school
- **Fear of Failure**
- **Concerns about future plans**

Graduate Student Life Experiences

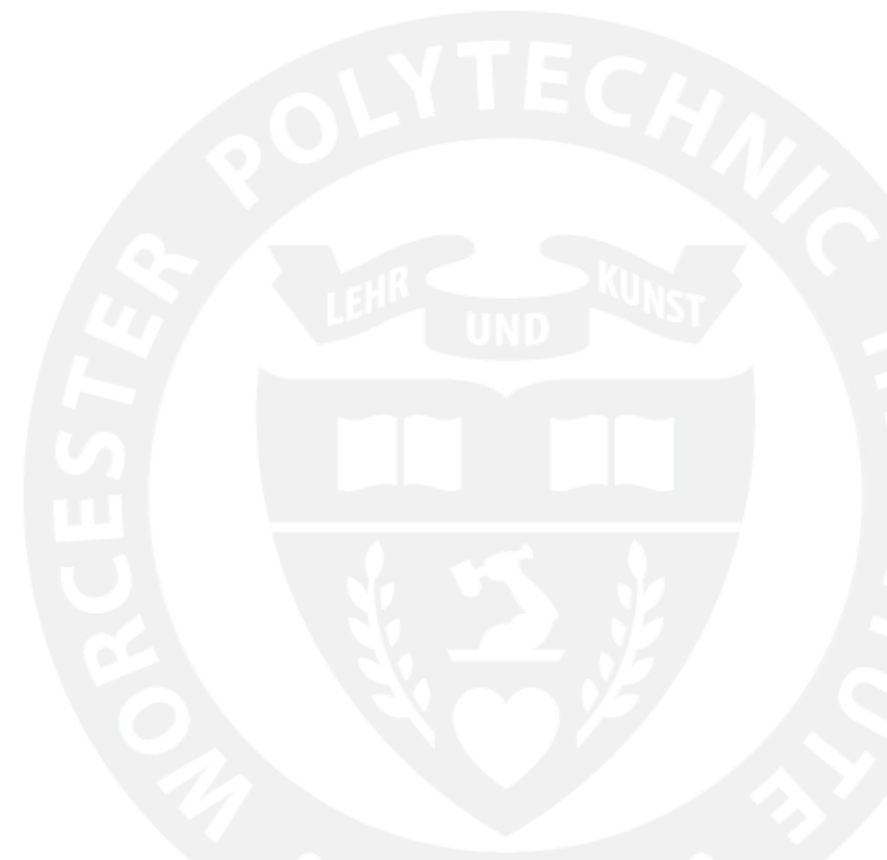
Black Graduate Students More Likely to (Spring 2022 Enrolled Student Survey)...

- Have been **subjected to inappropriate or disrespectful language** by a member of the WPI community
- Have been **harassed or discriminated against** based on their gender, gender identity, or sexual orientation while a graduate student at WPI
- Have been **harassed or discriminated against** based on their race, ethnicity, disability, or religious beliefs while a graduate student at WPI
- **Not feel safe** on campus
- Feel they **have to work harder than some of their peers to be perceived as proficient** in their area of study or research field
- **Stay up all night** to finish an academic assignment or prepare for an exam

Understanding the Experience of Black Students at WPI and How to Improve Them

- **Transition to WPI** (i.e. Pre-Orientation Programs, New Student Orientation, Insight, etc.)
- **Campus Support Resources** (i.e. knowledge gaps, awareness, reluctance to use, etc.)
- **Faculty Support and Engagement** (i.e. office hours, advisee meetings, mentorship, etc.)
- **Mental Health and Well-being** (i.e. stress, anxiety, depression, racial battle fatigue, stigma, etc.)
- **Campus Climate Issues** (i.e. racism, microaggressions, group dynamics, etc.)
- **Financial Security** (i.e. basic needs, on-time graduation rate, jobs on or off campus, etc.)

Community Call To Action



Community Call To Action

Individual Professionals/Scholars/Practitioners

Offices/Academic Departments/Functional Areas

Worcester Polytechnic Institute

Community Call To Action

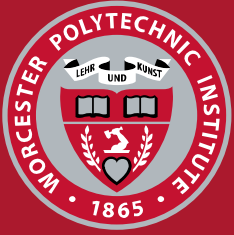
- 1. Speak to the Black students in your courses.**
- 2. Incorporate Student Success Strategies.**
- 3. Address the Hidden Curriculum.**
- 4. Reassess the relationship students have with the WPI Plan.**
- 5. Create intentional inclusive spaces.**
- 6. Watch [Master](#) (2022) on Amazon Prime.**

Community Call To Action

- 1. Speak to the Black students in your courses.** Get to know who they are and how a WPI experience can get them to where they wish to go. Offer guidance, support, coaching, mentorship, or simply a listening ear. Learn and remember their name. Notice when they are absent or not submitting work. You may have to consider having a unique approach to your normal practices.
- 2. Incorporate Student Success Strategies.** Interrupted learning due to COVID has presented unique challenges for this generation of college students. Embed student success strategies into your courses and pedagogy. Show students how to study the materials to be successful in your course. Provide time management and other success strategy tips unique to your course and teaching style.
- 3. Address the Hidden Curriculum.** There are spoken and unspoken rules of engagement when it comes to navigating the academy. There is also a history of exclusion of certain peoples, topics, narratives, perspectives, and experiences. Explore ways to surface these hidden elements to proactively support Black students (i.e. show students how to get from point A to point B without assuming they already know the answer).

Community Call To Action

- 4. Reassess the relationship students have with the WPI Plan.** We have to begin to accept that Black students are not solely coming to WPI for the plan nor the unique approach to theory and practice. Many Black students come to WPI because they received a higher financial aid package than their other schools and have to make this experience work. The fluid approach to the curriculum and limited stop gaps to address pitfalls is hurting these students both personally and financially. Since they choose us WPI has a moral and ethical obligation to do everything we can to ensure their success (academic success, sense of belonging, retention, graduation, career placement, etc.).
- 5. Create intentional inclusive spaces.** Walking into an office when people do not look like you is difficult. Offer our Black students a hospitable and welcoming environment while knowing, understanding, and accepting there may be continued apprehension and lack of trust. Despite this your Black and Brown colleagues across the Institute need your help as we cannot do this alone.
- 6. Watch [Master \(2022\)](#) on Amazon Prime.** | Three women strive to find their place at an elite Northeastern university. When anonymous racist attacks target a Black freshman, who insists she is being haunted by ghosts, each woman must determine where the real menace lies.



WPI

Questions / Comments

Office of Diversity, Inclusion, and Multicultural Education (ODIME)

diversity@wpi.edu

Arnold Lane, Jr. (He/Him)

Director of Multicultural Education and Community Engagement

alanejr@wpi.edu