

The Inauguration of
Grace J. Wang, PhD

17th President
Worcester Polytechnic Institute

Friday, March 22, 2024

Grace J. Wang, PhD

Impact Driven: Honoring Tradition, Innovating the Future



President Grace J. Wang is an accomplished materials scientist and esteemed leader in higher education, government, and industry. Elected by the WPI Board of Trustees after an extensive national search, she began serving as the 17th president of WPI on April 3, 2023. Honoring our rich history and traditions, she will guide WPI toward the future by championing community and inspiring innovation.

President Wang has a deep background in empowering STEM leadership, education, and industry. Prior to WPI, she served at The Ohio State University (OSU) as executive vice president for research, innovation, and knowledge, and as a professor of materials science and engineering. Wang helped expand the university's research and innovation ecosystem by supporting curiosity-driven research, attracting external funding for research centers, launching campus-wide entrepreneurial activities, and enabling experiential learning opportunities.

Before OSU, Wang held a series of leadership roles within the State University of New York (SUNY) System. As senior vice chancellor for research and economic development, she advanced the research enterprise's growth strategy, significantly expanded research capacity in key areas, and was instrumental in fostering tentpole

university-industry partnerships. During this time, she also served as SUNY System interim provost for one academic year and as SUNY Polytechnic interim president for two and a half years.

Earlier in her career, Wang held multiple positions at the National Science Foundation (NSF). She started as a program director, focusing on investing in small businesses in the areas of nanotechnology, advanced materials, and manufacturing. Then, she directed the Industrial Innovation and Partnerships division. Later, she served as acting assistant director for engineering, where she invested in research, education, and commercialization.

In 2022, Wang was appointed by the White House to serve on the National Quantum Initiative Advisory Committee. She is a council member of the Government-University-Industry Research Roundtable (GUIRR) at the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine; a member of the Board of Governors for the New York Academy of Sciences; and a member of the Board of Directors for the Massachusetts High Technology Council (MHTC).

Wang has a PhD in materials science and engineering from Northwestern University and holds seven US patents.

Congratulations, President Grace J. Wang, PhD

A visionary leader for a world-leading university

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Many congratulations to President Wang on her role as leader of the next generation of innovators, problem-solvers and technology pioneers.

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W O R C E S T E R

Inaugural Ceremony

Seating

Medwin Honors String Quartet

Prelude

Led by Faculty Marshal
Art Heinricher, Interim Senior Vice President
and Provost

Processional

WPI Brass Ensemble
Grand March From “Aida,” Giuseppe Verdi
“Where'er You Walk,” George Frideric Handel

Fanfare for the President

WPI Brass Ensemble
“Limitless,” Composed for the Inauguration
by Robbie Oleynick '24

National Anthem

WPI Festival Chorus

Invocation

Rev. Debora Jackson '89 (MS), '00 (ME)
Dean of WPI Business School

Opening Remarks

William Fitzgerald '83, Presiding Officer
and Chair of WPI Board of Trustees

Welcome From the MA Senator

Sen. Edward Markey

**Welcome From the
WPI Undergraduate Student Body**
Gabriella Rios '24, Biomedical Engineering

Welcome From the WPI Graduate Student Body

Jezabel Aleyda Aponte Figueroa '24 (MS),
Science and Technology for Innovation
in Global Development

Welcome From the WPI Alumni Association

Pamela (Giasson) Lynch '05,
President of WPI Alumni Association

Welcome From the WPI Staff

Rev. Calvin Cummings, Assistant Director
of Religion and Spiritual Life

Welcome From the WPI Faculty

Mark Richman, Associate Professor of
Aerospace Engineering; Secretary of WPI Faculty

Welcome From the City of Worcester

Joseph M. Petty
Mayor

Remarks

Terrence Sejnowski, PhD
Francis Crick Chair, The Salk Institute
for Biological Studies

Investiture

William Fitzgerald;
Mark Richman;
George Heineman, Associate Professor of
Computer Science, Chair of WPI
Faculty Committee on Governance

Inaugural Address

President Grace J. Wang, PhD

Conferring of Presidential Medals

President Grace J. Wang, PhD

Closing Remarks

Art Heinricher

Recessional

WPI Brass Ensemble
“Trumpet Voluntary,” Jeremiah Clarke
“Bugler’s Holiday,” Leroy Anderson

Postlude

WPI Marching and Pep Band will line the
walking path to the reception on the third
floor of Rubin Campus Center

Inauguration Steering Committee

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Academic Costumes and Degrees

The tradition of academic attire stems from medieval European universities, where gowns served as everyday attire. Beyond distinction, they likely provided warmth during extended study hours in unheated buildings. Today, on American campuses, academic attire graces formal occasions like commencements, Founder's Day celebrations, dedications, and inaugural ceremonies.

An established Academic Costume Code, adopted by most universities since 1895, facilitates the identification of a wearer's degree, awarding university, and field of study. Key distinguishing features include the cut of the gown, length and color of hood, and color of tassel.

Gowns signifying bachelor's and master's degrees are typically plain black cotton, lacking adornment. The bachelor's gown has long, open sleeves, while the master's has longer, closed sleeves with elbow slits. The doctoral gown has black or colored velvet facings and three matching bars on the sleeves, which are bell-shaped and extend to the wrist.

Hoods are made distinct by their length and color. A bachelor's hood measures 3 feet long; a master's, 3.5 feet; and a PhD's, 4 feet. The color of the hood's velvet trim, wider for degrees above bachelor's, corresponds with the subject area. Doctoral hoods are the exception, as they are typically dark blue regardless of subject. The hood's lining displays the official colors of the awarding institution.

A black mortarboard cap with a tassel accompanies each gown type. Bachelor's and master's degree recipients traditionally wear black tassels, while doctoral graduates wear gold tassels. However, in recent years, it has become customary to adopt colored tassels reflecting the graduate's field of study.

Variations to traditional costumes are occasionally seen. For instance, certain academic processions may feature attire deviating from the standard. Academic administrators often wear gowns that incorporate a gold braid. Faculty members who hold degrees from foreign universities may follow distinct attire requirements.

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1787 <i>University of Pittsburgh</i> William Tita	1865 <i>Dean College</i> Kenneth Elmore	1948 <i>Brandeis University</i> Roger Gottlieb
1793 <i>Williams College</i> Warner Fletcher	1874 <i>Worcester State University</i> Barry Maloney	1950 <i>Mercy University</i> Scorpio Rogers '23
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1829 <i>Rochester Institute of Technology</i> Nicholas Schneider	1887 <i>Clark University</i> David Fithian	1963 <i>Quinsigamond Community College</i> Kathy Rentsch
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1855 <i>Bates College</i> Drew Weymouth	1898 <i>Northeastern University</i> Jared Auclair '01	2013 <i>Higher Education Consortium of Central Massachusetts</i> Jeanine Went
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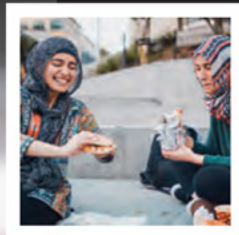
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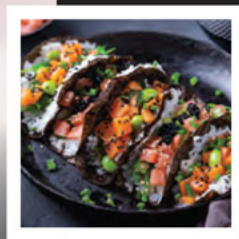
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1913-1925

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1955-1962

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1985-1994

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1883-1894

Ralph Earle
1925-1939

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1962-1969

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1995-2004

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1939-1952

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1969-1978

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2004-2013

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1901-1911

Alvin E. Cormeny
1953-1954

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1978-1985

Laurie A. Leshin
2014-2022

History of WPI

Worcester Polytechnic Institute is the nation's third-oldest private technological university. Founded in 1865 amid the bustle of the American Industrial Revolution, the Institute took a unique approach to preparing the professional scientists and engineers who would make the discoveries, invent the technologies, and found the companies needed to drive the development of a young nation.

WPI's distinctive approach to education began with a compromise that led to a breakthrough. John Boynton, a successful tinware manufacturer, wanted to start a college that would provide a scientific education to young people destined for emerging technical careers.

Ichabod Washburn, who built the nation's largest wire-making enterprise in Worcester, dreamed of starting a school to elevate the traditional apprenticeship system for mechanics and other technical tradespeople.

Theory and Practice

By blending these visions, WPI created a new approach to higher education unlike any that had come before—one that combined theory with practice.

This groundbreaking model took concrete form in the university's first two buildings. Under the clock tower of Boynton Hall, students learned the theory of engineering and science in classrooms and labs.

Next door in the Washburn Shops, with its cupola topped by an arm-and-hammer weathervane, they applied that theory in a working manufacturing plant.

This Two Towers Tradition has guided the Institute for more than 150 years. It lives on today in the form of the half-century-old WPI Plan, the university's groundbreaking undergraduate program.

Ever since, like-minded men and women have invested their ideas, their labor, and their fortunes in WPI, assuring that it could continue to prepare graduates with the knowledge, the practical skills, and the passion to change the world for the better.

Search Committee for the 17th President

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Undergraduate Student
Worcester Polytechnic Institute

Terrence Sejnowski, PhD

Keynote Speaker



A trailblazer in neural networks and computational neuroscience, Terrence Sejnowski seeks to understand the principles linking brain and behavior. Using both experimental and modeling techniques, Sejnowski examines the biophysical properties of synapses and neurons, as well as the population dynamics of large networks of neurons. He has developed new analytical tools and computational models to uncover how the brain stores information for different activities and forms new representations of the world. Drawing from his extensive research, he has published over 300 scientific papers and 12 books, most notably *The Computational Brain*, with co-author Patricia Churchland, and *The Deep Learning Revolution*.

Sejnowski earned his PhD in physics from Princeton University in 1978 and completed his postdoctoral fellowship at Harvard Medical School in 1981. A former faculty member at Johns Hopkins University, he now holds the Francis Crick Chair at the Salk Institute for Biological Studies. He is also a Distinguished Professor of Neurobiology at the University of California, San Diego, where he serves as co-director of the Institute for Neural Computa-

tion and co-director of the National Science Foundation (NSF) Temporal Dynamics of Learning Center.

Sejnowski is the president of the Neural Information Processing Systems (NeurIPS) Foundation. He is also a fellow of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, a fellow of the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers (IEEE), and a former investigator with the Howard Hughes Medical Institute. In addition, he serves as the founding editor-in-chief of *Neural Computation*, a monthly journal from MIT Press.

Throughout his career, Sejnowski has won several prestigious awards, including the Young Investigator Award from the NSF, the Wright Prize for interdisciplinary research from Harvey Mudd College, the Neural Networks Pioneer Award from the IEEE, and the Hebb Prize from the International Neural Network Society. He is one of only 10 living individuals elected to all three national academies: the Institute of Medicine, the National Academy of Sciences, and the National Academy of Engineering.

The WPI Presidential Medal



Since 2001, the Presidential Medal has honored outstanding individuals from all backgrounds and disciplines who, through their professional or personal accomplishments, embody the “technological humanist,” an ideal that has been at the heart of WPI’s approach to education since its founding in 1865.

Keep reading to learn about the two individuals selected by President Wang to be her first medalists.

Judith Nitsch '75 Hon '15, PE, LEED AP

Presidential Medal Recipient



After earning a BS in civil engineering at WPI, Judith Nitsch spent the next 45+ years in the field, becoming a registered professional engineer in 27 states and a LEED Accredited Professional. As a civil engineer, she has focused on designing, permitting, and managing projects related to site development and infrastructure.

In 1989, she established [Nitsch Engineering](#), Inc. Today, the firm comprises 125 people with three offices in Massachusetts and one in Washington, D.C. Much of the firm's civil engineering work specializes in designing and consulting for the sustainable aspects of green building projects.

Also in 1989, Nitsch became the first alumna elected to WPI's Board of Trustees, where she served for 23 years, including 16 years as chair of the Facilities and Campus Infrastructure Committee. During this time, she oversaw the development and construction of multiple LEED-certified buildings on campus.

She received an honorary Doctor of Science degree from the Massachusetts Maritime Academy in 2010 and an honorary Doctor of Engineering from WPI in 2015.

Nitsch is a fellow of the American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE), American Council of Engineering Companies (ACEC), Society of Women Engineers (SWE), and Society for Marketing Professional Services (SMPS). She has served as president of several organizations, including the national CREW (Commercial Real Estate Women) Network, ACEC of Massachusetts, Boston Society of Civil Engineers Section (an ASCE chapter), and SWE Boston. Currently, she's chair of the Board of Trustees at The Boston Architectural College, her late husband's alma mater.

Diran Apelian, ScD

Presidential Medal Recipient



Diran Apelian is a Distinguished Professor of Materials Science and Engineering and director of the Advanced Casting Research Center at the University of California, Irvine (UCI). There, he serves as a senior advisor to the dean of engineering. He is also provost emeritus and founding director of the [Metal Processing Institute](#) at WPI.

Apelian received his BS in metallurgical engineering from Drexel University in 1968 and his ScD in materials science and engineering from Massachusetts Institute of Technology in 1972.

He is recognized for pioneering work in solidification processing, metal processing, powder metallurgy, and digital manufacturing. Founding editor of the *Journal of Sustainable Metallurgy*, he has significantly contributed to the establishment of research in resource recovery, reuse, and recycling. During his tenure as WPI's provost from 1990 to 1996, he was instrumental in establishing the Metal Processing Institute, which has become one of the largest industry-university consortiums in North America.

With over 700 publications and 22 patents to his name, Apelian serves on several technical, corporate, and editorial boards. He has partnered with colleagues, including former students and WPI alumni, to co-found widely known companies like Materials Strategies, Ascend Elements, Melt Cognition, and Solvus Global, among others.

Throughout his career, Apelian has received many distinguished honors and awards, both national and international. He was recognized as WPI Innovator of the Year in 2018 and received the same honor from UCI in 2020.

In addition to being a researcher, innovator, and entrepreneur, he has also been an active leader of multiple professional organizations, serving as president of The Minerals, Metals & Materials Society (TMS) in 2008–2009 and as chair of the ASM Educational Foundation Board of Trustees in 2016–2018. He is a fellow of TMS, ASM, and APMI International, as well as a member of the National Academy of Engineering (NAE), National Academy of Inventors (NAI), European Academy of Sciences, Chinese Academy of Sciences, and Armenian Academy of Sciences.



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Grace Wang
on her Inauguration as 17th President of
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Wang on your appointment
as WPI's 17th President!

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Mikayla Almeida '26

Matthew Foster
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Student Affairs

Michaela Cluett '25

Haley Gilbert '24

Samuel Griffiths '24

Duyen Le '26

Celebratory Video

Composed by Professor David Ibbett
Humanities & Arts

Produced by Michael Kozlowski
Marketing Communications

ROTC Color Guard

Quinn Mullaney '27
*Economics, Army ROTC,
College of the Holy Cross*

Alexander Tomellini '26
*Electrical and Computer Engineering,
Army ROTC, WPI*

Samuel Hubert '27
Civil Engineering, Army ROTC, WPI

Audrey Stroupe '26
Biochemistry, Army ROTC, WPI

Medwin Honors String Quartet

Matthew Scinto
Director of Orchestra

Vivek Voleti '25

Darren Kwee '24

Seth Frank '25

Emma DeMartino '25

WPI Festival Chorus

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Director of Choral Activities

Ajay Bhagavatula '26

Ricardo Croes-Ball '26

Douglas Blinn '26

Nic Culkin '24

Brianna Ankstitus
Graduate Student

Erik Breiling '25

Jack Curtis '27

Bethany Atwood '25

Maxwell Brown '26

Haley Day '27

Grace Audette '25

Nicole Calandra '25

Ryan Dieselman
Graduate Student

Anna Balin '25

Riley Chin '27

Joe Dumas '26

Adam Bartlett
Graduate Student

Grace Connell '27

Gavin Elwell '27

Joey Berthiaume '25

Caleb Cotoia '26

Carys Evans '27

WPI Festival Chorus (continued)

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Ryan Fish '27	Matt Liliedahl Graduate Student	Morgan Reilly '25
Brian Fried '27	Uma Mandapati '27	Vivian Reno '24
Tyler Garofalo '27	Jenna Marcinkowski '25	Arianna Russo '26
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Mele Hooper '27	Annabelle Mullins '26	Nathan Smith '25
Chima Ibebunjo '25	Anna Musteata '26	Mukundan Srivasta '26
Matt Jauchler '27	Noelle Noons '24	Annika Swanson '27
Liany Kasten '27	Alisha Peeriz '25	Natalie Sysko '27
Mia Katz '25	Zackary Perry '27	Gabrielle Van Kammen '25
Ellie Kim '26	Charles Phelan '24	Prior Waskan '26
Tom Kohen '26	Hannah Picchioni '24	Brody Watson '27
Yonatan Konstantine '26	Chloe Polit '27	Jay Weil '26
Aayan Krishan '25	Natalie Prezhdo '26	Ilana Whittaker '24
Jason Kuehne '26	Daniel Raymond '26	Aria Yan '24
Charlotte Larson '26		April Zingher '27
Jared Lasselle '24		

WPI Brass Ensemble

Robbie Oleynick
Trumpet

Heath Bastow
Horn

Matthew Resmini
Euphonium

Nathaniel Rubin
Trumpet

Heath Bastow
Trombone

Nicholas Culkin
Tuba

Christian Rua
Trumpet

Connor Ehrensperger
Trombone

Anthony Berry
Tuba

Kyle Schmottlach
Trumpet

Ethan Lockhardt
Trombone

Jonathan Martin
Percussion

Tommy Kneeland
Horn

Jack Ostrander
Trombone

Keith Mesecher
Timpani

Rubik's Cube Mosaic by the 2023–24 WPI Rubik's Cube Club

Madison Brown '24

Jeffrey Li '26

Sequoia Truong '24

Daniel Cappuccino '26

Joshua Meesarapu '27

Krish Shah-Nathwani '24

Harshith Iyer '25

Sofia Murphy '27

Morgan Temple '25

Mayis Jraghatspanyan '27

Nathan Nguyen '27

Tim Kwartler '25

Damon Ren '27

LEGO Club Podium Piece

Andrew Gattineri '26

Patrick Nieman '23

Andrew Salls '24

Built by: Members of the 2023–24 *LEGO® Club*

Special Thanks

Justin Amevor
Information Technology

Arthur Carlson
University Archives

Patrick Crowe
Humanities & Arts

Joseph Dumas '25

Albert Enyedy
Information Technology

Joshua Konadu '26

Dawn Lemay
Office of the President

Tessa Lytle
Graduate Student

Samuel Sands
Graduate Student

Erica Stults
Information Technology

Peter Thompson
WPI Bookstore

University Advancement Team

Campus Police

**Chartwells Staff
and Culinary Team**

**Facilities: Custodial,
Trades and Grounds**

Image Productions

**WPI Staff and
Student Volunteers**



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