

## Citation of Mark Richman for the 2024 DENISE NICOLETTI TRUSTEES' AWARD FOR SERVICE TO THE COMMUNITY

The Trustees' Award for Service to Community is presented in memory of Denise Nicoletti, a professor in the Electrical and Computer Engineering Department from 1991 to 2002, whose passion for life and outreach to underrepresented groups touched many lives. Among her activities, Denise co-founded Camp Reach, a widely acclaimed summer program that introduces seventh grade girls to the excitement of engineering and science. The recipient of the 2024 Nicoletti Trustees' Award for Service to Community is Mark Richman, honored for his service to the community for nearly 40 years.

Mark's commitment to WPI is evident in his long history of service to the university's students, faculty, and staff. Whether he is working behind the scenes to ensure a smooth process as the secretary of the faculty or with students in his capacity as associate professor of aerospace engineering, he understands that supporting and elevating the people of the community is at the root of WPI's true culture. Mark has dedicated countless hours of conversation, mediation, paperwork, planning, and championing to elevate the people and processes that make this institution distinctive, demonstrating his genuine care for the community.

Mark is well known for his work as the secretary of the faculty. With his three terms earning him the title of the longest-serving secretary of the faculty, his efforts have shaped real change at WPI. The secretary of the faculty is often considered akin to a full-time job—one that requires careful negotiations, clear communication, steady leadership, and enduring patience. His nine years in the role shows significant dedication to WPI's mission, faculty support and fairness, and an understanding of how both have a ripple effect on many other university systems.

Charged with listening carefully to faculty members, he has worked for a better university that begins with balance. As secretary of the faculty, he knows anything the faculty are concerned about will impact WPI as an institution. Throughout his years in this role, he redesigned and implemented processes that simplify and

streamline meeting requirements so valuable time during monthly faculty meetings could shift toward discussion of more substantive issues.

Known for his focus on efficiency and fairness, Mark implemented secure electronic faculty voting, so that all faculty could have their votes counted even if they were thousands of miles away at a conference or advising at one of WPI's global project centers. Despite his own deep commitment to face-to-face meetings, he helped establish a hybrid approach to faculty meetings to make sure each and every faculty member had the opportunity to be heard. He recognized how the complications of faculty lives required remote options for fairness and inclusivity, and he worked to make that a reality.

Notably, Mark was a primary driver of what became WPI's progressive and groundbreaking policy on teaching to tenure path. He first proposed tenure for teaching faculty to offer an innovative opportunity that recognizes and rewards faculty members who focus primarily on teaching. The resulting change created a new tenure track exclusively for teaching faculty and provided more job security in terms of long-term contracts for all secured full-time non-tenure track faculty. This effort has forever shaped the fabric of how WPI faculty experience equity, and the efforts were nationally recognized when WPI won the 2021 Delphi Award for this work.

While the work of the secretary helps the faculty, everything that happens in a faculty meeting has a ripple effect throughout the campus community. Mark's deep understanding of how faculty governance meeting materials affect many students and staff on campus translates into a meticulous approach. The university's robust faculty governance system is structured to support and determine direction for WPI's academic program, to allow it to grow and change with new ideas and technologies, with new pedagogies and world events, while ensuring it continues to produce well educated, top-notch students. The meeting materials offer concrete direction for those who implement the decisions made at faculty meetings. His painstaking attention to detail ensures that the many motions and proposals are consistent, complete, and easily followed so people understand what needs to be done. Mark has a knack for taking the complicated layers of faculty meeting decisions and distilling them into something that can be easily acted upon. In real time, that has helped students get diplomas on time,

ensured a smooth Commencement preparation, and even led to a restructured *Faculty Handbook*.

Mark's drive to make WPI better always comes down to the decades of students he has had the pleasure to know. Inspired by their endless curiosity, he is always willing to offer support and guidance as students navigate their WPI journey. The recipient of the distinguished Trustees Award for Outstanding Teacher in 2013, he is both respected and liked by his students—a feat that any faculty member knows isn't automatically given. When the campus was coping with tragedy, he recognized the need for the WPI community to come together. Mark and a team spearheaded "WeConnect," a day focused on fun, joy, and making connections to help the community lean on each other a little more.

Whether he is working with a big group of faculty or one-on-one with students, Mark's great strengths include necessary skills like organization and clear thought and writing, and he has used these skills to save other people time. His other strengths are more difficult to measure and include a propensity to motivate students and to help them find an action plan that works for them, mentoring them as they figure out what comes next after WPI, or offering an ear to listen to and to distill the pain points faculty and staff have and to find solutions that work. A reliable and enthusiastic fan of WPI student athletes, Mark shows up for the games and supports students both on and off the field.

A perpetual collaborator, he will never ask someone to work on something without exerting equal efforts himself. He will always be found joining forces with people who can help make change happen—and sometimes he brings along unsuspecting colleagues who possess what he sees as untapped potential. Even if they have a similar goal, Mark's colleagues may not always see eye-to-eye with him. But that's okay with him; he knows that progress can come from being uncomfortable until the right path is clear.