

2000 Board of Trustees' Award for Outstanding Teaching Recipient

Professor Stephen J. Weininger

Professor Stephen J. Weininger has dedicated himself to the education of WPI students for 35 years. Professor Weininger was one of six members of the President's Planning Group that submitted an educational program for WPI in March 1969, which led to the development of the WPI Plan. Since its adoption, this innovative, project-based curriculum has offered WPI students a flexible, exciting, and academically challenging program aimed at helping them learn how to learn. In selecting Professor Weininger for this award, the Committee recognizes his long and outstanding contributions to the entire range of activities that define what it means to be a teacher within the innovative WPI Plan. Students and colleagues alike regard Professor Weininger as a highly gifted teacher who brings his broad interests, deep knowledge, and love of learning to the classroom, laboratory, and projects.

To be an outstanding teacher at WPI, a professor must excel in the traditional lecture and classroom format. In describing Professor Weininger's classroom performance, students consistently mention his enthusiasm, his dedication, and his respect for his students through all phases of the learning process. His lectures are described as "magic," and one student wrote: "In the classroom, he challenges students and requires them not only to learn the material, but also to apply it in solving real life problems." A faculty colleague noted Professor Weininger's ability "to explain the most complicated organic chemistry reactions in a way that is well comprehended by the students." Another student wrote: "He is so excited about his classes that the students can't help but become excited," and a graduate student observed that he is "out to 'educate' the students." As a classroom teacher, Professor Weininger has taught large numbers of WPI students who have consistently rated him as one of WPI's best.

To be an outstanding teacher at WPI, a professor must go beyond the traditional lecture and classroom format. The distinguishing feature of the WPI Plan is the Projects Program, especially the Interactive Qualifying Project. Advising IQPs requires a different dimension of teaching, which often obligates professors to acquire background knowledge outside their area of expertise. Professor Weininger's record of outstanding IQPs, both on and off campus, demonstrates his commitment to excellence in this critical and uniquely meaningful part of each student's WPI education. Professor Weininger is cited by students, colleagues, and alumni who appreciate "his great sense of humor to complement his vast knowledge," his "caring" in urging them to become better writers, his maintaining of regular office hours, and his willingness to "always" be there "if any of us needed help" in all areas of their global IQPs. Professor Weininger has been instrumental in developing and advising IQPs as they have extended to project centers around the world. Additionally,

Professor Weininger was active in developing WPI's Technical, Scientific, and Professional Communications major, an interdisciplinary program offering broad career possibilities for undergraduates.

For his dedication to the education of his students in Chemistry and Biochemistry, for his excellence in creating and advising WPI's programs and projects, we proudly present the 2000 Board of Trustees Award for Outstanding Teaching to Professor Stephen J. Weininger.