



**WPI**

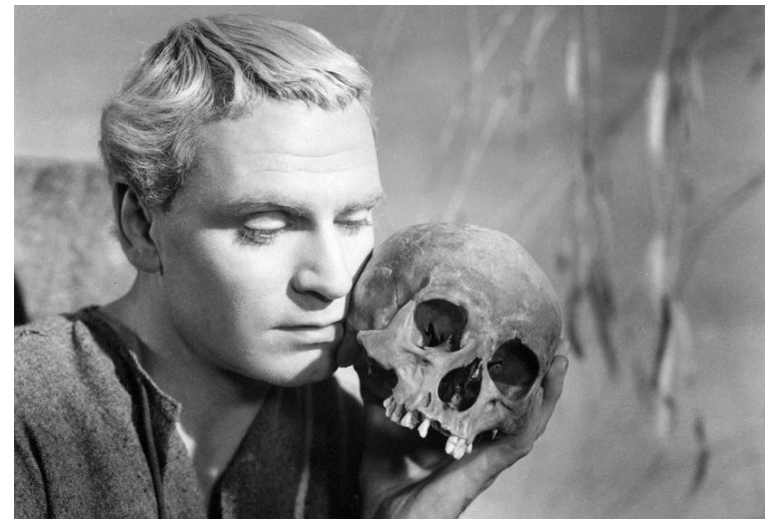
## Some Thoughts on Why We Need Deans at WPI

*Bruce Bursten, Provost*

*Faculty Meeting, October 16, 2015*

**W W M D:** Wordplay! Humor! Movies! Explicit language!

**The Dane Thing**



# Looking Back: A Contentious Recent History of Unit Deans at WPI



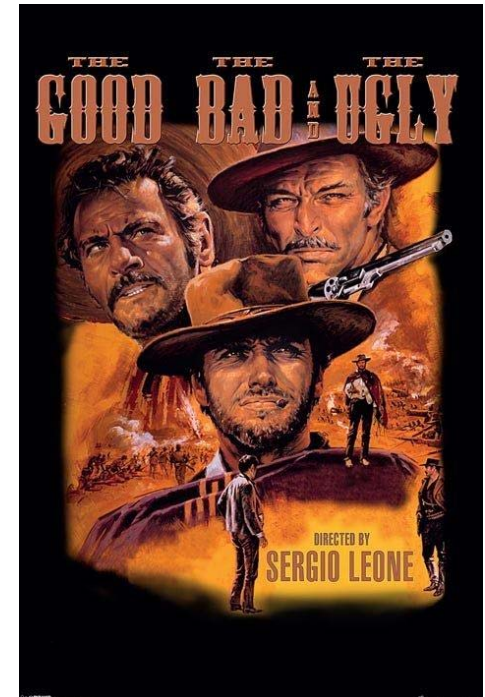
# WPI

In 2007, three new deans of **A & S**, **Business**, and **Engineering** (“Unit Deans”) were introduced. Led to a number of concerns:

- **Top-down rollout** with little building of consensus among Department Heads and faculty.
- **Lack of clarity** with respect to roles and responsibilities of the deans.
- Challenges in determining the **desired characteristics of decanal candidates**.

*Concerns about purpose, process, and price-tag...*

*To paraphrase Cool Hand Luke: “What we had here was failure to communicate...”*



- 2014: **President Leshin addresses the faculty** on the issue of deans. Commitment to **doing it right** with a good process.
- 2015: Here we are today...

*No more looking back! We must look forward and get it right.*

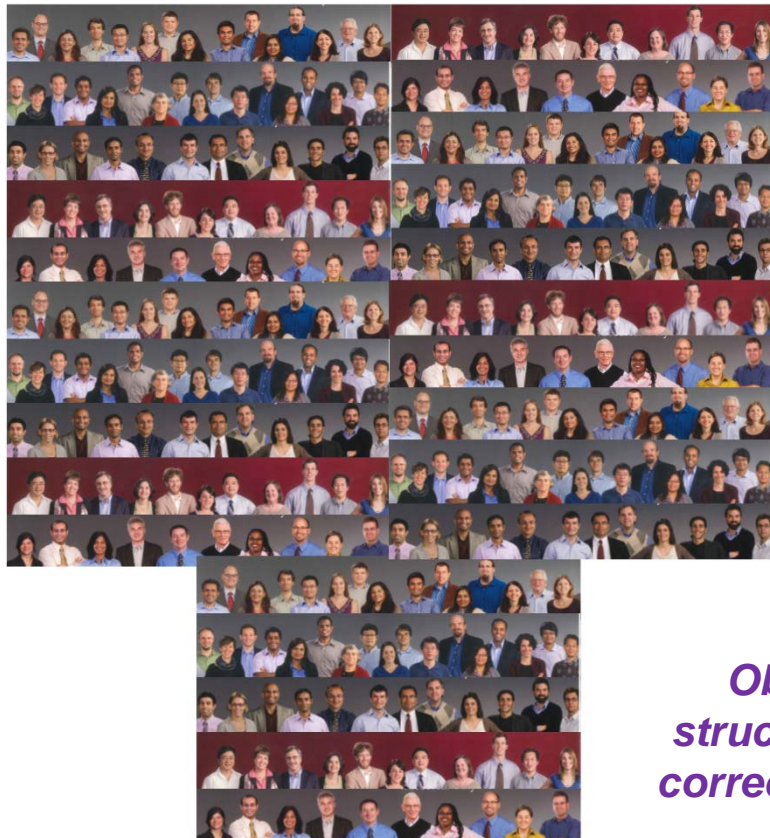
# Management: What Is the Best Organizational Structure for WPI?



# WPI

**Full-time faculty count, Fall 2014:**  
**248 T/TT + 111 NTT = 359 faculty**  
**colleagues**

**Two possible endpoints for the reporting structure for faculty:**

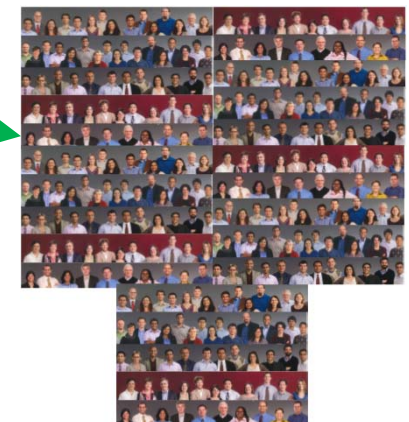


**Model 1: Each faculty member reports directly to President Leshin.**



**Model 2: Each faculty member has her or his own supervisor.**

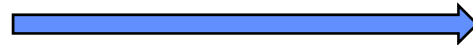
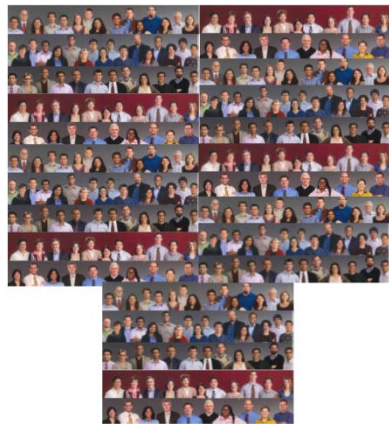
**Obviously, neither of these structures can work. What is the correct sweet-spot between these two extrema?**



# Academic Departments: Our First Structuring of Faculty



*Like most all universities, our first “**bucketing**” of the faculty is into **Departments**, which are centered on specific areas of scholarship.*



## 14 academic departments

BBT	BME	MG
CBC	CEE	
CS	CHE	
HUA	ECE	
MA	FPE	
PHY	ME	
SSPS		

Why have Departments? Both **strategic leadership** and **management** functions:

- Create a **collaborative structure** for the teaching and scholarship of the faculty.
- Build **synergies and collaborations** among colleagues with similar interests.
- Design a cohesive curriculum that leads to excellence in **student learning**.
- Provide a **natural and manageable reporting structure** for faculty.
- **History**—departments exist because departments have always existed.



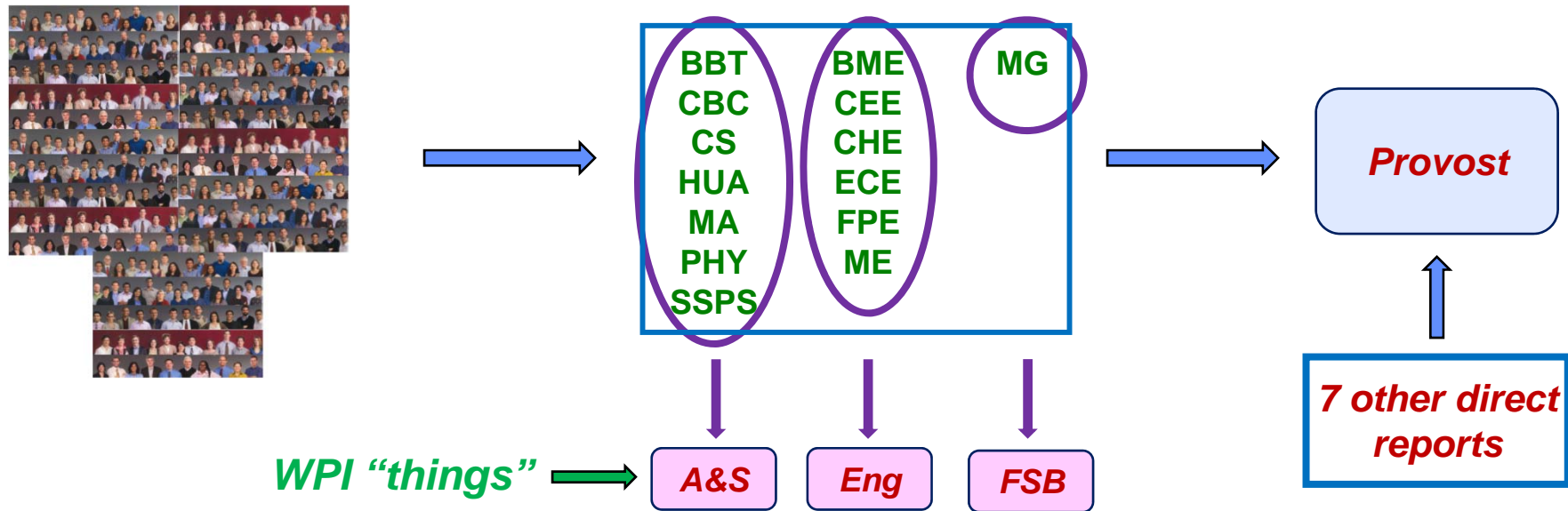
# The Way It Used To Be...



# WPI

*Until the creation of the unit deans, all of the departments **reported directly to the Provost**. Not an optimal organizational structure...*

**14 academic departments**



Harvard  
Business  
Review

LEADERSHIP

## How Many Direct Reports?

by Gary L. Neilson and Julie Wulf

FROM THE APRIL 2012 ISSUE



Leading People.  
Leading Organizations.

**Span of Control: What factors should determine how many direct reports a manager has?**

4/25/2013

Permissions

# Even More Compelling: WPI Is Not the University It Used To Be...



Back in the day, WPI was a **smaller**, more undergraduate-focused institution—part of a **different peer group** than today. The changes from 2005 to 2015 have been dramatic:

## Faculty Headcount

	2005	2010	2015
T/TT	208	224	248
Fulltime NTT	44	55	111
<b>Total</b>	<b>252</b>	<b>279</b>	<b>359</b>

## Enrollment (FTE)

	2005	2010	2014
Undergrad	2,824	3,540	4,151
Graduate	678	982	1,287
<b>Total</b>	<b>3,502</b>	<b>4,522</b>	<b>5,438</b>

## Research Expenditures

2005	2010	2015
\$11,965,752	\$15,117,369	\$28,663,914

*We are a much larger, **more complex** organization than we used to be!*

*And yet, the most compelling reason for deans is not organizational efficiency...*

# What Do Deans Do?



**LEADERSHIP** and *organizational management*: Our deans must be **inspiring academic leaders** who enable WPI and our Departments/Programs achieve their goals. The following are **some** of the leadership they provide:

- Work with the Departments to craft a **cohesive strategic vision** for the **(thing)**. **Communicate, lead, and inspire** the faculty and staff to support academic programs and achieve the vision.
- Work well with the President and Provost while serving as an **effective advocate** for the **(thing)**.
- Establish, promote, and enhance **high standards** for our faculty; **prioritize hiring** across the Departments, including the recruitment of **diverse faculty and staff**.
- Be an **inspiring representative** with peers, stakeholders, and donors with the goals of increasing the **visibility and resource base** of the **(thing)** and WPI.
- Work with Academic Affairs to **establish budgetary priorities** for the **(thing)**; **ensure fiscal responsibility** while achieving strategic vision.
- Enable **new disciplinary and multidisciplinary activities** that enhance both the **(thing)** and WPI; lead in the development of **new opportunities**.
- **Train and develop leadership** for our Departments/Programs, including strong **succession planning**.
- As appropriate for the **(thing)**, **lead and manage** the process of **accreditation**.

# So Who Can Do This Job? Desired Core Competencies for our Deans



**LEADERSHIP** and organizational management: Our deans must have the necessary characteristics to achieve our high expectations of them. The following are **some** of the core competencies we look for in our deans:

- **Impressive credentials** in teaching and scholarship that provide a **role model** for the faculty.
- Demonstrated **leadership skills**; experience as at least a Department Head or Associate Dean, and understands principles of **shared governance**.
- **Strategic agility** and the ability to create a **compelling vision** and sense of purpose; ability to be nimble and **anticipate future trends**.
- Outstanding **listening** and **communication** skills for a wide variety of audiences.
- Strong **business acumen**; knows how to manage resources, knows the market, knows the competition.
- A deep commitment to the **importance of diversity**.
- Potential to be an **effective fund-raiser** for our Departments, the **(thing)**, and WPI.
- **Political savvy**; must know how to navigate both internal and external politics.
- Unquestioned **integrity**; must engender an **atmosphere of trust**.

**Bottom line:** *Individuals who our faculty can admire, can learn from, and can be inspired by.*



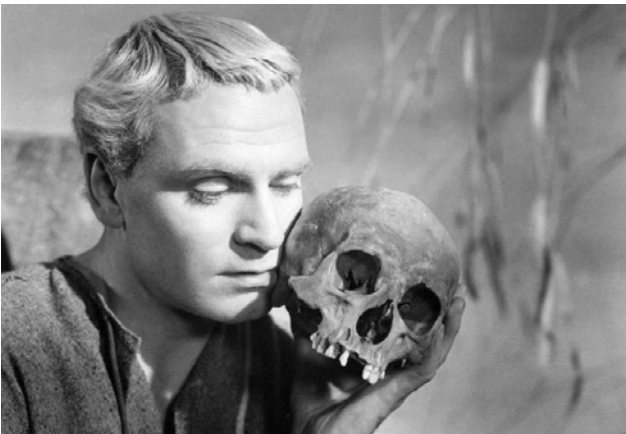
# What Next?



To improve both **leadership** and **organizational structure** at WPI, we need to establish the unit deans as even more significant academic leaders of our campus. Among the next steps we as an academic community will need to take:

- Initiate the **search** for the next permanent **Dean of Engineering**.
- Start the process of **creating empowered deans** who can create visions for their **(things)** that align with our Strategic Plan.
- **Streamline processes** between the **(things)** and the Office of Academic Affairs—eliminate redundancies, improve workflow.
- Begin **revising the Handbook** to reflect more fully the important leadership roles of the deans.

*It is time to move forward with confidence and purpose! Let's achieve our goals together with great leadership.*



## Questions?



*Nature, Vol 502 (16 Oct 2013)*