



WPI

We, the Faculty of Worcester Polytechnic Institute, note with profound sorrow and a great sense of loss the passing of our friend and colleague William R. Grogan, who died May 12, 2015. A longtime member of the Electrical Engineering Faculty and the Institute's first Dean of Undergraduate Studies, Bill Grogan's greatest legacy is his extraordinary contribution to the WPI Plan. He was among a small group of visionary faculty members who crafted the Plan in the late 1960s, and was the individual most responsible for its successful implementation and vibrant success over the course of the last 45 years.

A native of Lee, Massachusetts, Grogan gave up a planned career in journalism to enroll in the U.S. Navy's V-12 officer training program at WPI during World War II. He earned a degree in electrical engineering and a commission as an ensign in the U.S. Naval Reserve and served in the Pacific Theater toward the war's end. He then returned to WPI to join the Faculty and earn a master's degree in electrical engineering. Not long afterward, he was recalled to active duty during the Korean War.

A master teacher who kept current by consulting for the U.S. Navy, Bell Labs, and General Electric, Grogan grew dissatisfied with WPI's undergraduate curriculum, which had become rigid and undistinguished, and considered leaving the Institute in the late 1960s. An invitation from President Harry Storke to chair a faculty curriculum study committee convinced him to stay.

That committee pushed through important improvements to the curriculum, but Grogan had the opportunity to bring about much greater change when he was elected to a faculty planning committee that was charged with reconsidering the Institute's approach to education. The group ultimately crafted a radically new project-based undergraduate curriculum, which the Faculty approved in May 1970.

The WPI Plan was a breathtaking blueprint. Newly installed president George Hazzard asked Grogan to become WPI's first Dean of Undergraduate Studies and gave him the gargantuan task of turning that blueprint into reality in just a few short years—a process that required replacing virtually every aspect of the undergraduate program. A fair, diplomatic, and decisive leader who was adept at inspiring others to work together to achieve complex and daunting challenges, Grogan directed a campus wide effort to launch the Plan and also helped obtain a \$1.2 million award from the National Science Foundation to fund the implementation process.

Over the next two decades, it was Grogan's responsibility to manage the undergraduate program as it evolved and matured. His efforts enabled a WPI education to adapt to the shifting needs of society and changes in technology, enhanced WPI's status with other universities, and allowed the Institute to maintain accreditation of its engineering programs. Having developed an appreciation for the geopolitical and economic ties that were shrinking the world, he also played a pivotal role in the development and growth of WPI's first off-campus project centers, in Washington, D.C. and London, and in the growth of the renowned Global Projects Program. After his retirement in 1990, he delighted in serving for many years as an advisor at overseas project centers.

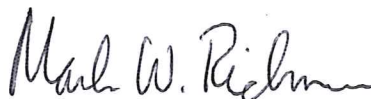
He remained active with his fraternity, locally and nationally, throughout his life. He participated in the 1959 merger of Theta Kappa Phi with Phi Kappa to form Phi Kappa Theta and served for a time as President of the national fraternity. He also served for decades as faculty advisor to the WPI chapter.

Grogan's contributions to technological education were recognized by a number of organizations, including the American Society for Engineering Education and the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers. WPI honored him with the Board of Trustees' Award for Outstanding Teaching, the first Trustees' Award for Outstanding Service, an honorary doctorate in engineering, and the Presidential Medal. The WPI Alumni Association's bestowed on him the Robert H. Goddard Alumni Award for Outstanding Professional Achievement and the Goat's Head Award for Lifetime Commitment to WPI, and also created the William R. Grogan Award for the Support of the Mission of WPI. The student life wing in the Rubin Campus Center is named in Grogan's honor.

Therefore, let it be resolved that we, the members of the Faculty of Worcester Polytechnic Institute, recognize and express our admiration of and eternal gratitude to William R. Grogan, who helped transform the Institute into a paragon of innovation and a model for successful change in higher education. It is largely due to his visionary leadership, his passion for excellence, and his amazing ability to inspire greatness in others that the Plan not only survived against all odds, but thrived and evolved into one of the most successful examples of project-based education in the nation. Let it also be resolved that this resolution be inscribed in the permanent records of this Faculty as a memorial to our beloved colleague, and that a copy be delivered to his family.



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