The WPI Plan

In 1970 WPI adopted a revolutionary new undergraduate program known as the WPI Plan. The Plan replaced the traditional rigidly-prescribed curriculum — typical of conventional engineering and science education — with a flexible, exciting, and academically challenging program aimed at helping students to learn how to learn. The Plan continues the "Two Tower" tradition by synthesizing classroom experience in projects that solve realworld problems. The WPI project program prepares graduates for their future professional lives by helping them learn how to identify, investigate and report on open-ended problems. Alumni indicate that project experiences also prepare them uniquely well for managing team efforts, and for communicating both in oral and written forms according to professional standards.

All WPI students complete two major projects in addition to requirements in general education and in their major fields. The Major Qualifying Project (or MQP) challenges students to solve research and design problems typical of those encountered in their professional discipline. The Interactive Qualifying Project (or IQP) presents an issue at the intersection of science, technology, and culture, and emphasizes the need to learn about how technology affects societal values and structures. Students also achieve intellectual breadth through degree requirements in the social sciences and humanities and arts. In addition, students achieve some depth within the Humanities and Arts by completing an Inquiry Seminar or Practicum on a theme emerging from a self-selected series of courses. Taken together, these activities emphasize that professionals must learn not only to create technology, but also to assess and manage the social and human consequences of that technology.