

May 3, 2007

TO: WPI Alumni and Friends
FROM: Dennis D. Berkey, President
SUBJECT: WPI Makes SAT Scores Optional for Admissions

I am writing to share with you exciting news concerning WPI's undergraduate admissions requirements. Beginning with applicants for the class entering WPI in the fall of 2008, WPI will require neither SAT nor ACT scores for admission. Rather, applicants will be permitted to submit research papers, science projects, or other indicators of academic achievement in lieu of standardized test scores.

This decision results from nearly two full years of study, debate, and reflection by the faculty and the Board of Trustees, and with strong support from current students. The primary reason for this change is our belief that the distinctive nature of the WPI undergraduate experience, rooted in both independent and project work, and requiring a high degree of personal initiative and responsibility, is most appropriate for students whose suitability is not fully reflected in standardized test scores. We are looking for students with the potential for creativity, innovation, and leadership, and we are committed to looking beyond standard means of evaluating applicants in order to identify those applicants best suited to our programs.

Internal studies have found that SAT scores comprise the *least* predictive element of a student's success at WPI. High school course selection and grades are consistently the best indicators of future success at WPI. Our most successful students typically stand out for their high motivation level, their willingness to take initiative, and their creativity in solving problems. The option to submit documentation of actual academic achievement in place of the SAT or ACT will help the Admissions staff better gauge students' abilities to succeed in WPI's unique academic program.

WPI is making this decision from a position of strength, having experienced a record number of applications for undergraduate admission in both of the past two years. Indeed, institutions that have made the SAT score optional for admissions have generally experienced both increased numbers of applications and increased SAT averages for entering classes. Although SAT scores will become optional for the admissions decision, we will continue to require that these scores be submitted prior to matriculation, so that complete comparative data on our entering classes can be maintained.

We expect that this change will increase the number of applications, and that is our intention. Our research has shown that many capable students decline to apply to WPI out of a mistaken belief that exceptionally high standardized test scores are required for admission. We would like to have the opportunity to evaluate these prospective students on the basis of their full academic and co-curricular profile whether or not their test scores are the strongest of their credentials.

Many distinguished colleges have made similar changes to admissions requirements in recent years. WPI, however, will be the first predominantly technological university to make standardized test scores optional for admission. We expect that others will soon follow, and we are proud again to be taking a leadership position in engineering and science education. The nation badly needs to increase the number of students graduating with degrees in engineering and science, and this change will respond to that need.

I hope you will join our faculty, students, and Trustees in celebrating this bold initiative. For additional information, please go to admissions.wpi.edu/testing. Your continuing interest in, and support for, your alma mater is greatly appreciated.