

Program Description

All Juniors at WPI must complete an Interactive (society-technology) Project and seniors complete a second project in their major. WPI holds two 7 week terms each semester and the projects are equivalent to their coursework for 1 term.

Nearly 70% of juniors complete their Interactive Project at one of WPI's 29 project centers in 25 countries. Seniors have off-campus project opportunities at another 14 centers.

Typically, 24 students will travel with two faculty advisers to work in teams of four on six projects that are hosted by local organizations. For the junior year program, most sponsors are local governmental agencies or non-profit organizations. For the seniors, most projects are hosted by corporations.

Students prepare for the Interactive Project in a course in which they work in teams to develop a research proposal to guide their work at their project site. These courses also introduce students to the local history, culture, and sometimes, language of the host country.

Program Highlights

Students complete research projects that are identified by local sponsoring organizations and guided by WPI faculty. Instead of working as interns in these organizations, the students function more like consulting teams to them. At term's end, the teams present their findings and recommendations and also give a formal presentation of their work. Some sponsors support WPI financially for these services. Seniors completing projects in corporations often take jobs with these companies following graduation.

Tips for Replication

Campuses are unlikely to replicate the term system at WPI, but, if calendars and logistics can be managed, placing teams of students in external organizations to pursue projects with faculty supervision can be managed. Pilot programs, perhaps as summer opportunities, might be a good first start.

It is important to note that each project center has a faculty director who is the "champion" for that site and works to secure project opportunities for students.

Kent Rissmiller, Dean
Interdisciplinary and Global Studies
kjr@wpi.edu

<https://www.wpi.edu/academics/undergraduate/interdisciplinary/global-project-program>



Program Details

- Tenure of the program:
 - Begun in 1974 in Washington, DC
- Participation rates (annual):
 - About 79% of Junior Class – 721 in 2016-17
 - About 10% of Senior Class - 92
- Target population:
 - Primarily Juniors in all majors
- Duration of experience:
 - 2 month study away follows 2 month preparation course
- Engineering related?
 - Junior year program is interdisciplinary
 - Seniors complete engineering capstone projects
- Course credit?
 - 9 credit equivalent plus 3 credit of preparation
- Service component?
 - Projects serve local sponsors
- Reflection component?
 - Varies somewhat by site



**Hallmarks
Of
Success**