



# Zahra Zarei

PhD in Interdisciplinary Studies

## Why did you choose to study at WPI?

There are several reasons why I chose WPI. The primary reason was the interdisciplinary approach of my major. During my master's studies in my home country, I developed an interest in sustainable development and wanted to apply my engineering skills to the field of development. The interdisciplinary nature of the program at WPI perfectly aligned with my goals.

## How are you involved with the WPI community?

As president of the Iranian Student Association at WPI, I organized two Persian New Year events. My involvement in this club stems from my passion for introducing the beautiful, ancient Persian culture to others and fostering a sense of community among our small group here. Being an outgoing person, I also enjoy attending weekend trips organized by the Graduate Student Government (GSG) or Student Government Association (SGA) and have participated in some unofficial trips with the outing club.

## What's your favorite thing about WPI?



**Hometown**  
Iran

## Mentor/Advisor

- Robert Krueger

## Interests

- Going out in nature
- Hanging out with close friends
- Getting to know different cultures

## Campus Activities

- Iranian Student Association
- Graduate Student Government
- Outing Club

In terms of education, the project-based approach at WPI is my favorite aspect. Applying theories to real-world problems helps solidify my knowledge. I also appreciate how supportive the WPI community is. From faculty to staff, everyone strives to be understanding and helpful when challenges arise. Additionally, I love the cultural events at WPI. They have given me the opportunity to learn about different cultures and broaden my horizons simply by being on campus.

“From faculty to staff, everyone strives to be understanding and helpful when challenges arise.”

Do you have a faculty or staff mentor?

My advisor, Rob Krueger, has been the most influential person in my journey. First, by giving me the opportunity to join his program, and second, by being supportive at every stage of my education. As an international student thousands of miles away from home, his support and understanding have made both my academic and personal life much easier and more fulfilling.

What projects are you working on?

My PhD program combines social science and data science. The primary goal of my research is to use new technologies, like AI (artificial intelligence), to address social problems and foster development. In my current research, I am using AI and machine learning models on poverty datasets to identify job and market opportunities that can improve people's lives.

9AM	12:30PM - 1:30PM	1:30 - 6PM	6
go to campus, check emails, and then work on my research	lunch time	work on homework and research	le o th e

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