



# Sophia Kouznetsov '26

**BS in Psychological & Cognitive Sciences and  
Bioinformatics & Computational Biology**

## Why did you choose to study at WPI?

During my visits to WPI and in online presentations, I saw examples of the actual “fabric” of the university - the warp and weft of what makes WPI unique - the flexible curriculum and seven-week terms. These are ideal for pursuing the two fields I'm interested in, which are neuro/cognitive science and bioinformatics. Examples of the motto “I innovate” are everywhere – from the Innovation Studio to the students brimming with ideas and energy. I'm drawn to WPI's unique learning model, extensive research opportunities, and meaningful connections with local and global companies through their co-op programs, internships, and qualifying projects.

WPI's hands-on and project-based learning model is deeply empowering. I can apply what I learn in the classroom to real-life problems, even from the first day. The Interactive Qualifying Project and the Major Qualifying Project I will pursue in future years will allow me to delve deep into my interests and make a formidable impact on communities in need. From the first day at WPI, I could pursue my passion for global health through the Great Problems Seminar “Heal the World” course. My teammates and I researched congenital heart disease in Kerala,



## Hometown

West Boylston, MA

## Mentor/Advisor

- Richard Lopez
- Tatiana Doytchinova

## Achievements

- Winner of Outstanding Women Award: Gertrude R. Rugg Award
- Charles O. Thompson Scholar
- People's and Judge's Choice Award winner for Poster Presentation Day

## Interests

- Dance (dancing and coaching)
- Health and Fitness
- Walking

India, and developed solutions to reduce the prevalence of the disease in that nation and mitigate the mortality rate of the disease. This culminated in a Poster Presentation Day in which our team received the People's and Judge's Choice awards!

### **How are you involved with the WPI community?**

Something that drew me to WPI was the unique undergraduate research opportunities. Since the beginning of my freshman year, I have been a research associate in the SNAP (Social Neuroscience of Affective Processes) Lab at WPI. This experience opened my eyes to the world of academia and research in a field that I am passionate about. It gave me the opportunity to connect with students and faculty that share my interests and passions. Pursuing research in the SNAP Lab has also given me the opportunity to greatly expand my knowledge and skill base, not only of psychology and neuroscience, but also of data management and analysis, coding, writing scientific literature, and presenting research.

Another activity I am involved in at WPI is ballroom dancing. I have been a competitive ballroom dancer for nearly sixteen years and, while I have taken a step back from my competitive career, I am still a part of the ballroom dancing community at WPI and share this passion with other students!

In the upcoming academic year, I am excited to start working as a PLA (Peer Learning Assistant) for the math department and take on EMT training!

### **What's your favorite thing about WPI?**

One of my favorite things about WPI is the close-knit community and collaborative environment. It not only serves as a liaison in effective teamwork and project implementation, but also plays a salient role in helping students find their voice at WPI and build a sense of belonging within the student

- Hiking
- Swimming
- Travel
- Reading
- Cooking and Baking
- Tutoring

### **Campus Activities**

- Research Associate in the SNAP (Social Neuroscience of Affective Processes) Lab
- Ballroom dance team
- Peer Learning Assistant (PLA) for math department

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community. Interconnected with the community at WPI is the intellectual and identity diversity of the students. Everyone can bring their unique skillset, knowledge base, and personal experiences to a team, which fosters collaboration and creativity. Another one of my favorite things about WPI is "Mindful Wednesdays" and "Wellness Days." I take these days to catch up on assignments, but also to take time to let my mind and body rest and recover before the busy week ahead.

### **Do you have a faculty or staff mentor?**

One faculty member who has been a mentor for me is Professor Richard Lopez (from the department of Social Science and Policy Studies). As the primary investigator in the SNAP Lab and instructor of several psychology and neuroscience classes, Professor Lopez has guided and inspired me through every challenge and plateau. Delving into psychological research and advanced courses as a freshman seemed intimidating, but Professor Lopez's approach to learning and research allowed me to overcome my apprehension and tackle any challenges that arose. Rather than viewing setbacks and challenges as negatives, Professor Lopez encouraged me to perceive them as opportunities for learning and growth. The emphasis on the process rather than the outcome allowed me to develop resilience and perseverance in the face of challenges and enabled me to push beyond my comfort zone.

A second staff member that has been influential for me is Emma Moughan (lab coordinator for SNAP Lab). Emma has not only been an inspiration for me throughout my academic career thus far, but also a true friend. She is always happy to lend a helping hand, both with lab work, other coursework, or even just providing moral support. From our first interaction, her commitment to fostering an environment of trust and collaboration among lab members was evident. By creating a safe space

where we felt comfortable sharing our thoughts and ideas, we could establish strong working relationships and lasting friendships.

Professor Tatiana Doytchinova (math department) has also played a pivotal part in my academic career thus far and has been a true inspiration and mentor for me. Her dedication, passion for teaching, and belief in me has inspired me to believe in myself and never give up, even in the most challenging moments. Professor Doytchinova is always there to lend a helping hand and truly goes above and beyond to guide her students.

### **How has WPI's project-based learning influenced your education?**

Project-based learning at WPI has transformed my educational experience by fostering deep understanding, critical thinking, collaboration, and creativity. Rather than simply memorizing facts and information in preparation for exams or essays, I actively apply the material I learn in the classroom in everyday life. This can include anatomy labs and dissections, using my business analytics knowledge to expand my tutoring business, or applying my knowledge of psychology in anecdotal situations or in research, to name a few. This practical engagement helps me grasp and master concepts more effectively, as I see firsthand how theoretical knowledge translates into practical applications. By working on projects, I gained a holistic understanding of complex topics by connecting various concepts and seeing their relevance in a practical context. Project-based learning has also honed my teamwork skills. By engaging in group discussions, brainstorming sessions, and delegation of tasks, I have learned how to collaborate effectively, leverage diverse perspectives, and work towards a common goal. It is also really cool to experiment with different approaches, explore ideas, and find innovative solutions, which not only enhances my learning, but also mirrors real-world situations where teamwork is essential.



▼

**6:00am**

wake up, skincare, coffee  
and breakfast while  
reading, studying, or  
listening to a podcast

▼

**7:30am**

leave home to go to  
campus for classes (I'm a  
commuter student)

▼

**8:00am-3:00pm**

lectures, meetings,  
studying on campus,  
hanging out with friends

## Discover more about WPI students

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