

# Things to Consider

- **Build Relationships:** Begin by building relationships with faculty, other students, and the wider community on-campus and beyond. Form a good relationship with your faculty advisor, your professors in courses, work supervisors or other mentors, and seek their advice often. In your academic and extra-curricular activities, you will build relationships with many other people. The relationships that will make you a strong scholarship candidate are also the same relationships that will enrich your time at WPI and your life after graduation.
- **Volunteer:** Volunteer with organizations, on campus and off, and take an active role. Display your initiative and leadership in service to others. Consider coaching kids or becoming a tutor to help with math or writing skills.
- **Study Abroad:** Plan an overseas study experience at a Project Center to broaden your cultural awareness or improve your foreign language proficiency.
- **Use your Imagination:** Use your summers creatively, to learn research skills, master a foreign language, or perform community service. Devise imaginative ways to bring different aspects of your life together -- perhaps by finding a community service project that requires you to apply skills you have learned in classes, or by doing an off-campus project related to your interests.

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## Faculty Relationships

Perhaps the most important relationship to cultivate is with faculty. To make the most of college, you need to get to know people who can provide information and wisdom, candid appraisal as well as encouragement, and who are able to sing your praises in letters of recommendation. Faculty mentors can do all these things -- but you cannot expect them to track you down in your dorm room and hope that they get to know you. Most often, faculty are waiting for you to take the initiative. So, even if faculty members in your field of interest seem too busy or remote at first, take advantage of their office hours to get advice on a class assignment, or an internship, or foreign study, or any other topic that might help you to form a relationship and give evidence that you wish to make the most of your WPI education. And keep in touch with them. If you had terrific teachers in your first-year courses, continue to seek

their guidance when you are a sophomore and a junior. Work closely with the advisors of your humanities and arts project, interdisciplinary project, and major project. Most fellowship applications require detailed letters of recommendation from three or more faculty members. If you build mentoring relationships with faculty as you go through WPI, it will be easy to meet this requirement. And along the way, you will have enriched your education and formed relationships that you will treasure long afterward.

## Making Connections

Self-reflection is the first step in the application process. Ask yourself, "What am I looking for?" and "What do I want to do?", and think about your answers in ideal terms. "What is the connection between my academic work and my interests outside of classes?" Such questions are fundamental yet too often forgotten. Perhaps you already have found your life's passion, but if you are like most people, you are taking the courses and projects that you like, in a major that you hope will help you to find a good job, and thinking vaguely about a career that will bring you wealth and happiness. So, ask yourself questions like these:

- When have I been so immersed in what I was doing that time seemed to vanish?
- What errors or regrets have taught me something about myself?
- To what extent do my current commitments reflect my most strongly held values?
- Under what conditions do I do my best, most creative work?
- What really makes me angry?
- To what extent am I a typical product of my generation and/or culture? How might I deviate from the norm?
- What ideas, books, courses, events have had a profound impact on me? How so?

Personal essays addressing such open-ended questions are almost invariably required in fellowship applications. In essence, you present a selective life history and life plan. It is hard work, but it can also be a rewarding and intensely satisfying process. For what may be the first time in your life, you will be asked to put your deepest convictions into words, to step outside yourself, to think about where you came from, where you are standing now, and what your ultimate destination might be. You will be challenged to justify yourself by making connections between your academic and other interests. Simply put, who are you, and who do you want to be?

## Thinking About the Future

As you look ahead, you will discover that there are many options available as pathways to your future. For some students, it may be appropriate to go directly into the work world. For others, graduate school may be the next appropriate and even necessary step. For still others, there is the lure of travel and exposure to environments different than Worcester. Postgraduate fellowships can be an exciting aspect of any of these directions. Thinking about your future will help you to identify the fellowships that are appropriate for your personal goals and professional interests.