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# WPI

## Worcester Community Project Center



### [re]connect: WCPC in Action



*“Through policy oriented IQPs, students are exposed to the nuances of working with municipal and state governance and the importance of being civically engaged.”*

**Corey Dehner**  
WCPC Director



#### WCPC Research Influences Legislation on Beacon Hill

Over the years, the Worcester Community Project Center (WCPC) has worked on several projects with local cities/towns and members of the Massachusetts State Legislature. The research WCPC students conduct on these projects is often used to craft future legislation.

These projects give students the opportunity to dig into an issue that is effecting the lives of residents of the Commonwealth. WCPC Director, Corey Dehner believes that “by pairing with state legislators, WCPC students are exposed to the inner workings of governance. Students are given the opportunity to fully engage in a community issue at the intersection of policy, science, and technology.”

In the Spring of 2017, a group of students worked with State Senator Harriette Chandler to address a contentious situation in Northborough, Massachusetts where a large-scale composting operation was the source of numerous neighbor complaints. The issue arose in 2014 when the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (MassDEP) established the Commercial Food Waste Disposal Ban which promotes food waste composting on a large scale.

The students conducted extensive research on best practices related to large scale food waste recycling operations and how to mitigate adverse impacts on the surrounding community. In their findings and recommendations, the students advocated for large-scale composting operations to be placed under the stricter regulations of MassDEP rather than the less strict Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Regulations (MDAR). During their research, the students uncovered one farm in Western Massachusetts that was voluntarily complying with MassDEP regulations. Using odor prevention methods and strict monitoring of compost content, this farm operates without a single neighbor complaint.

*“The student research helped us make the case that changes [to current policy] were needed and possible.”*

**Bryan Barash, Deputy Chief of Staff for Policy and General Counsel to State Senator Harriette Chandler**

WPI student Brett Carbonneau explains that “most composting operations would prefer less restrictions while most neighbors would prefer more restrictions. As a result of these differences and the amount of time it takes for any bill to become a law, we did not expect our research to go anywhere anytime soon.”

When their project wrapped up at the beginning of May 2017, the students submitted their findings and 133 page report to State Senator Harriette Chandler who picked up where they left off, turning research into action. Bryan Barash, Senator Chandler’s Deputy Chief of Staff for Policy and General Counsel, said that “the student research helped us make the case that changes [to current policy] were needed and possible.” There is legislation currently pending in the Senate Ways and Means. In addition, Barash believes that the research “led to productive conversations with the administration and they may have another path [to resolution] through administrative action.”

Often when students are conducting their research they do not know what the final result will be. Sometimes it can take years for the research to turn into legislation and even longer for it to become law. Corey Dehner, WCPC Director explains, “of course, as an educational institution our primary goal is the educational impact these project experiences have on our students. Through these policy oriented IQPs, WCPC students are exposed to the nuances of working with municipal and state governance and the importance of being civically engaged.”

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### **WCPC Team Named as Finalist for the President’s IQP Award**

The WPI President’s IQP Award is one of the most prestigious awards given to an undergraduate research team whose conception, performance, and presentation of their Interactive Qualifying Projects (IQPs) have been judged outstanding in focusing on the relationships among science, technology, and the needs of society. Each year, over 60 student teams apply and just a handful of finalists are selected. Competition for this award is substantial with domestic and international teams sharing the stage.

This year, WCPC students Nick Bograd, Brett Carbonneau, Alex Krasa, and Ben Preston were among the finalists for their project titled [Northborough Composting: A Peri-Urban Land Conflict](#). Congratulations Nick, Brett, Alex and Ben!

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### **WCPC Presents 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual IQP Award**

In what has become a new annual tradition, the WCPC held an IQP Awards Presentation this Spring. All student teams who completed their IQP during the 2016-2017 academic year were eligible to apply. The top two finalists, presented their projects at the WCPC’s 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual IQP Awards Presentation on March 20, 2018. The audience had the opportunity to ask questions about the projects and the two judges, Melissa Belz, Assistant Teaching Professor and



Director of the Costa Rica Project Center, and Courtney Kurlanska, Assistant Teaching Professor, selected one team to receive the top honor. The audience and judges were impressed by the knowledge and depth of both projects and the judges faced a difficult decision. In the end, the judges noted that it came down to the strength of the winning team's background research.



### *WCPC Award Winner*

#### Stormwater Management and Educational Materials for Central Massachusetts

Student Researchers: Alex Legere, Anthony Perullo, Amy Toscano, and Justin Waters

Sponsor: Central Massachusetts Regional Stormwater Coalition and the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection

Advisors: Corey Dehner and Purvi Shah



### *Runner Up*

#### Revealing Worcester's Hidden Gem: Promoting the East-West Trail

Student Researchers: Steve Gandolfo, Stasha Greenalch, Aaron Todd

Sponsor: Park Spirit of Worcester

Advisors: Corey Dehner and Derren Rosbach

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## Project Highlights

In cooperation with the [Boys & Girls Club of Worcester](#) staff and members, the students conducted a STEM Readiness Pre-Assessment and created a STEM Improvement Plan, volunteer guide and recommendations for long-term improvements to help sustain the Club's STEAM programs.



Students created a tool for the [Worcester Regional Research Bureau](#) to use to identify trends in opinions and perception over time and various aspects of life in Worcester. The tool will be used by the Research Bureau to continuously provide the information they collect to the city government to better influence future policy making.

A project team worked with [Habitat for Humanity MetroWest/Greater Worcester](#) to design a more aesthetic, easier to navigate, and easier to maintain website. They also developed a marketing plan for the Restore and raised awareness of the store's relocation through an article published in the [Worcester Telegram and Gazette](#) and a short promotional video.

## Project Sponsors 2017-2018 Academic Year

Abby's House  
Boys & Girls Club of Worcester  
The CASA Project\*

Creative Hub Worcester\*  
Habitat for Humanity  
MetroWest/Greater Worcester\*\*  
Park Spirit of Worcester  
Refugee Artisans of Worcester\*  
Seven Hills Foundation\*\*  
Seven Hills Pediatric Center\*  
Worcester Art Museum  
Worcester Division of Public Health  
Worcester Regional Food Hub  
Worcester Regional Research  
Bureau\*

\*new sponsor  
\*\*sponsored multiple projects



Students working with [Park Spirit Worcester](#), assisted in the planning and establishment of the Elm Park Conservancy that would be responsible for maintaining Salisbury Park, the Newton Hill Section of Elm Park and potentially other parks in Worcester. The team developed a sustainable framework that establishes a funding mechanism, management team, and volunteer engagement plan.



In partnership with the [Worcester Division of Public Health](#), students created a S.T.A.R.S criteria (Safety, Transportation, Access, Recreation, and Social Value), to assess health equity of public recreational spaces in the Worcester area. The students then developed a webpage, interactive map, downloadable guidebook, paper brochure, and video to highlight featured recreational spaces.

Working with the [Worcester Regional Food Hub](#), students researched pricing strategies and community outreach programs at successful food hubs throughout New England.



Visit the Worcester Community Project Center website to see all the projects completed in the [2017-2018 academic year](#).

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