

Special Guest Accompanies WPI Shining Star Laurie Leshin at MassEcon Holiday Lunch December 11, 2014

It's not rocket science. Oh yes, it is. [Laurie Leshin](#), the 16th President in [WPI's](#) distinguished 150-year old history, brought her considerable intellect and charm to her remarks at MassEcon's Annual Holiday Lunch on December 11, 2014. A self-described "space nerd," Leshin came to her post as a geochemist, space scientist, and an academic and administrative leader. Leshin received her Ph.D. from [CalTech](#), served as Dean of the School of Science and Professor of Earth & Environmental Science at [Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute](#), worked as a Deputy for [NASA](#), and taught courses at [Arizona State University](#).



Laurie Leshin Delivering Keynote Remarks

With such a diverse background, Leshin brings fresh ideas to WPI, Worcester, and Massachusetts to strengthen our economy and quality of life. "I believe it's simple - all we have to do is **outeducate**, **outinnovate**, and **outcollaborate** our peers," Leshin stated.

Leshin focused her remarks on the role of academia in the Massachusetts economic landscape and the use of collaboration - both now and in the future. And speaking of the future, robots are no longer a far-off, futuristic imagined idea. Leshin brought with her a cut-out of a real robot, WARNER. Six months from now, WARNER will perform a number of tasks (including driving a utility vehicle, removing debris blocking an entryway, and climbing an industrial ladder) at the [DARPA Robotics Challenge](#) finals competition in California.



Representatives from WPI Gather with WARNER

While projects like WARNER will reach California and beyond, WPI is committed to bringing talent into Massachusetts, keeping innovations here, and growing the state's economy. WPI created the nation's first robotics engineering program, drawing talent from all over the world. And even though they may be competitors in terms of institutions, WPI is collaborating with [MIT](#) and sharing robotics ideas with each other.

"[T]he place where competition and collaboration meet will lead all of us to new paths of discovery and stronger business relationships," Leshin said. She also mentioned how WPI is collaborating with [Boston Dynamics](#) which built the body of WARNER, and the [MassTLC Robotics Cluster](#) which supports the region's thriving robotics industry.

Leshin's engaging speech followed the MassEcon Annual Meeting during which the chairman's baton was passed from [Fred Mulligan of Cutler Associates](#) (and a double-WPI graduate!)

to [Brian Cohen of Transwestern | RBJ](#). MassEcon also elected two new board members, [Bill Harris of Perkins + Will](#) and [Rebecca Frisch of TD Bank](#).

Thank you to Mark DiNapoli, a WPI alum and Corporate Chief Operating Officer of [Suffolk Construction](#) whose company graciously sponsored the event.

To read Laurie Leshin's remarks from this event, click [here](#), and follow her on Twitter at [@LaurieofMars](#). You can also follow Warner on Twitter at [@WPI_WARNER](#).