

CONSTITUTION OF THE TECHNOLOGICAL FREEDOM FORUM AT WORCESTER POLYTECHNIC INSTITUTE

Preamble

Technology opens the door to many paths; some lead to prosperity—others to adversity. The technology user decides which path to take. Few remain stalwart facing this choice: the path to ruin lures with promises of wealth and power. We must be vigilant for those who abuse technology for their own gain at the expense of others.

Technology magnates insidiously conflate convenience with dependence to satisfy their rapacious desires. They pocket undeserved profits and toy with people's blind trust—or pocket undeserved profits still and relish when people reluctantly submit to their incursion. Technological oppressors absolve themselves with a hollow guise of virtue and hyperbolize their righteousness, suggesting opposition is depravity. They masquerade their technology as a servant of the people, while under the mask it only serves their pernicious agendas.

We are on a sinking ship: subscription services abruptly change their terms, taking silence for agreement, and may rescind access on a whim; manufacturers restrict repairs to their certified personnel, and redefine purchase to mean lease; "Big Tech" endeavors to centralize the internet, vesting power for themselves—they desire to become the internet's stewards, and to hold custody of our digital possessions, identities, and memories: the pictures, videos, e-mails, messages and documents we all have saved in "the cloud": *their* computers. Your right to property is being exfiltrated—will you stand by or stand firm?

Advertising platforms use technology to surveil to the maximum extent, they indiscriminately hoard private and public, embarrassing and mundane information from anyone caught in their net, and buy, sell, trade and exchange it in a perversion of the free market; home security companies justify always-connected doorway camera systems with facial and object recognition as convenient for finding lost pets, but the real motive is the subtle assembly of a nonvoluntary crowdsourced surveillance network at the national level; politicians unilaterally advocate for gating the internet behind identity verification, smuggling their malice beneath vacuous appeals to emotion; government agencies knowingly trespass the fourth amendment's spirit when they purchase information from data brokers, silencing dissent with extortion. You are witnessing the beginnings of totalitarianism.

We hereby assemble a forum to disseminate and defend technological freedom.

Article I. Name

The official name of this organization is **The Technological Freedom Forum at Worcester Polytechnic Institute**. It may also be referred to as **The Technological Freedom Forum**, and abbreviated as **TFF**. Within this document, **The Technological Freedom Forum** is also referred to as **The Forum**.

Article II. Definitions

Technological Freedom is on the individual level, one's intrinsic agency over technology's role in their life. On the societal level, it is the capacity of the people to collectively determine how technology will be used by them, for them, and on them.

WPI Worcester Polytechnic Institute

SAO The Student Activities Office at WPI

SOC The Student Organization Council at WPI

SGA The Student Government Association at WPI

Term One academic quarter of the WPI academic calendar.

Board Position A role defined in **Article V**.

Board Member An individual fulfilling a Board Position.

Board The Board Members as a whole.

MyWPI The online platform provided by CampusGroups for student organizations, used at WPI.

Workday The online platform provided by Workday, Inc. for WPI enterprise resource planning.

Article III. Purpose

The Technological Freedom Forum stands against the use of technology to control—rather than benefit—humanity, and endows the individual with agency in the digital aspect of life.

We of **The Forum** will realize this mission using a twofold approach: we tear the veil of ignorance obscuring moves facilitated by technology to seize power over the layperson, expose the chains of dependence lurking behind the facade of convenience, and evince the erosion of technological freedom. On the other front, we will unify the disgruntled, start them on the path toward technological freedom, and federate with others in support of the mission.

The Forum will convene regularly, where we will speak of threats to and triumphs for technological freedom, new developments in [free software](#), and methods to reduce dependence on malicious technologies; and organize workshops and seminars that unmask clandestine schemes seen so often in software and technology and close

the technical knowledge gap between unwilling conformance and technological freedom.

We will also maintain an independent digital infrastructure that serves **The Forum**, the people of WPI, and the public interest; we strive to take pride in it as a shining example of technological freedom.

See below the mission of Worcester Polytechnic Institute:

WPI transforms lives, turns knowledge into action to confront global challenges, and revolutionizes STEM through distinctive and inclusive education, projects, and research.

— Worcester Polytechnic Institute Board of Trustees, October 29, 2021

The Forum's mission is of the same essence. We transform lives to be less dependent on the technological elite, turn knowledge into action to confront technological oppression, and aim to revolutionize the role of technology in society.

Article IV. Membership

Any current WPI student is eligible for membership; eligibility comprises both graduate and undergraduate students. While SAO policy forbids individuals who are not current WPI students from being members in an official capacity, we encourage participation in **The Forum** by non-members: we invite faculty, staff, and others interested in discovering technological freedom.

Members may vote in Board elections and run for Board membership; this is the only distinction between a member and non-member. In particular, non-members may not vote for or nominate people to be Board Members, run for a Board Position, or hold a Board Position in the **Technological Freedom Forum**.

The Technological Freedom Forum does not discriminate on the basis of race, creed, religion, color, age, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability, veteran status, marital status or national origin, and does not tolerate any physically or psychologically abusive hazing behaviors. Such behavior is grounds for judicial action (see **Article VIII**).

Membership Acquisition

Membership is obtained by any of the following:

Membership by Attendance.

Current WPI students attending one-half or more of the meetings in a Term are considered members for the current and coming Term.

Appointed Members.

Current WPI students can become members by the Board's majority vote, but only in certain circumstances. They are as follows:

- The prospective member has made a significant non-financial contribution to **The Forum** in one of the following areas:
 - **The Forum's** public image
 - **The Forum's** ethos
 - **The Forum's** digital infrastructure

Appointed members are considered members in the Term following their appointment.

Board Members.

Board Members are automatically considered members while they are in office.

Membership Revocation

Membership status may be revoked for any of the following reasons:

Voluntary Membership Revocation.

Any member of **The Technological Freedom Forum** may quit their membership status by notifying the Board. The change is effective immediately.

Automatic Expiration.

Members by attendance and appointed members lose their membership automatically at the end of the Term following their acquisition of membership. If said member satisfies the criteria for membership during the Term following their acquisition, the expiration is deferred later by one Term. That is, membership can be "renewed".

Board Members' status does not expire as long as they are in office.

Judicial Action.

Membership status may be revoked as a result of judicial action (see **Article VIII**).

Article V. Board Positions, Duties, and Requirements

The Forum's Board consists of four positions: the Chair, the Vice Chair, the Treasurer, and the Clerk. All Board Members serve from the start of A term until the end of D Term, unless they were elected via the special election procedure (see **Article VII**). In that case, they serve from the day they were elected until D Term.

The Chair represents the interests of the **Technological Freedom Forum**; the Vice Chair, among other duties, acts as the Chair when the Chair is unable to fulfill their duties; the Treasurer handles matters of finance; the Clerk manages **The Forum's** records.

Board Members are obligated to fulfill the duties specific to their role and the shared duties.

Only full-time WPI students are eligible to hold Board Positions.

Role-Specific Duties

Chair.

- Operate the Forum's digital infrastructure
- Maintain relations with non-WPI organizations
- Serve as the master of ceremonies in General Body Meetings
- Make available the version history of this document to the public

Vice Chair.

- Oversee the voting process during elections
- Is the webmaster for the Forum's public website, if it is active
- Serve as the Chair when the Chair is unable to fulfill their duties
- Maintain a technical knowledgebase of the Forum's digital infrastructure

Treasurer.

- Author funding requests and the Forum's budget
- Comply with SGA and SAO regulations for treasurers
- Report all financial costs and changes in funding to the Board with clarity and punctuality
- Record financial information in a medium accessible to the Board at any time, separate from Workday

Clerk.

- Manage the MyWPI portal
- Schedule and reserve spaces for meetings
- Notify individuals of changes to their membership status
- Supervise the list of current members and ensure its accuracy
- Announce the time and location of General Body Meetings to the public

Role-specific duties may be designated to other Board Members or shared by several Board Members with mutual agreement between the pertinent Board Members.

Shared Duties

While each Board Member has role-specific duties, all share a common set of responsibilities:

- General planning of meetings and events
- Schedule special elections when they are needed
- Train the elected Board Members before they step up

When there are vacant Board Positions, the Board should distribute the unassigned responsibilities amongst themselves; however, this is not a requirement.

Article VI. Meetings

There are two types of meeting:

General Body Meeting.

These meetings are always open to the public. The Board shall decide all other details of these meetings on an individual basis.

Board Meeting.

The Board Members will confer information relevant to **The Forum's** operations during these meetings, such as event planning, budgeting, outreach, and system administration. When the Board is required to vote on a matter, scheduling it during a Board Meeting is preferred. All Board Members are expected to attend Board Meetings.

The Technological Freedom Forum shall host a General Body Meeting at least once per week in a Term, except if a majority of the Board deems it unnecessary, or if no Board Member is available to host the meeting. The same applies for Board meetings. Any Board Member (and only Board Members) may host General Body Meetings, but if the Chair is available, the responsibilities of the master of ceremonies fall upon them (see **Role-Specific Duties**).

Article VII. Elections and Board Member Replacement/ Removal

Board members are elected through procedures following democratic principles.

Anyone may nominate an active member to run for specific Board Positions, and active members may nominate themselves. The nominations should be communicated to the current Board in advance, but spontaneous nominations are also accepted. The nominee must accept the nomination for it to be effective; they do so by notifying the Board. For each Board Position, active members cast their one vote via paper ballot or email, or abstain. The candidate with the largest number of votes for a specific Board Position is elected for that Board Position.

Elections shall be held no later than the end of C Term, allowing D Term to be a training period for the new Board Members. Due to their four-Term term, new Board Members are inaugurated the academic year after their election.

If there is a tie for a Board Position, all voting members recast their vote for those who tied. Should this vote still result in a tie, no candidate is elected and the Board Position is considered in a second election in D Term. The second election is described further on.

Multiple Board Positions cannot be held by one person. However, one candidate may run for several Board Positions. If said candidate gets the necessary number

of votes for more than one Board Position, and they are physically or remotely¹ present at the election, they choose which Board Position they will fill. If said candidate is not present at the election, another vote is held to determine which Board Position the candidate fills. The Board Positions which said candidate won but chose not to fill are given to the candidates with the second largest number of votes for that Board Position.

The election procedure so described is referred to as a “general election” henceforth.

Should one or more of the Board Positions fail to be filled in the first election of the academic year, a second general election is to be held in D Term for those Board Positions. The current Board decides when it will happen. If Board Positions still remain vacant for the coming Term, the recently elected Board appoints active members to shadow the current holders of those Board Positions. The shadows become interim Board Members the following Term. So long as there are interim Board Members appointed in this fashion, the Board, including the interim Board Members, must at least once per Term schedule a special election for the Board Positions held by interim Board Members according to **Special Election Procedure**.

Interim Board Members

If a Board Member is unable to fulfill their duties or in circumstances allowed by this document, an interim Board Member may be appointed by the remainder of the Board. Interim Board Members serve until the original Board Member can return to their role, or until the next Board Member is inaugurated for that Board Position.

When it is the Chair who cannot fulfill their duties, the Vice Chair automatically becomes the interim Chair while still holding the Vice Chair position for the current Term. The Vice Chair Board Position is considered vacant the Term after the Vice Chair becomes the interim Chair.

Board Members that are unable to fulfill their duties due to an academic project (such as the Interactive Qualifying Project) or to extenuating circumstances are permitted a leave of absence for one Term. They must request leave from the other Board Members without unreasonable delay, and should it be approved, the Board schedules a special election for that Board Position according to **Special Election Procedure**. If the special election is inconclusive, the Board appoints an interim Board Member.

¹Remote presence is defined as being able to see and hear the location in which the election is being held in addition to all people physically present at the election being able to hear that person's voice when they speak. Furthermore, no intentional restrictions shall be placed on the remotely present person's ability to speak to those in the room.

Removal

A Board Member may resign from their role at any time by notifying the other Board Members in a written² communication. The resignation is effective immediately, unless an effective time is specified in the communication.

Board Members may also be removed from their position as a result of disciplinary action in **Article VIII**.

Special Election Procedure

Special elections follow the same procedure as general elections, except in these regards:

- Interim Board Members may run for their own Board Position.
- Board Members elected in a special election are inaugurated immediately.
- Special elections can be held at any time (during the academic year) they are called for by this document.
- Vacant Board Positions after a special election do not require another one to be scheduled, unless stated otherwise in this document.

Article VIII. Judicial Action

The Technological Freedom Forum shall abide by rules and policies of Worcester Polytechnic Institute. The organization shall also accept the decisions of a Campus Hearing Board in dealing with charges brought against the organization should policies be violated.

Constitutional transgressions are grounds for the Board to enact disciplinary action. The Board may remove membership status, ban transgressors from attending meetings and events, and block access to **The Forum's** digital infrastructure. If a Board Member is found to intentionally neglect their constitutional duty or violates the bylaws of this document, the non-offending Board Members decide the nature of the disciplinary action, and they may additionally remove the offender from the Board. A special election according to **Special Election Procedure** will be scheduled by the non-offending Board Members to replace that Board Position.

Article IX. Finances

The Technological Freedom Forum may be funded by the WPI Student Government Association.

²"written" here means able to be archived by the Forum digitally or physically

Article X. Advisor

Per SAO policy, student organizations must have an advisor who is a full time faculty or staff employee at WPI, and this advisor may not possess voting rights within the organization.

The Board may change the advisor. In this case, a Board Member nominates a full time WPI faculty or staff employee who is willing to be the new advisor, and the Board shall vote on the matter a minimum of two weeks after the nomination. The advisor is replaced only when the vote is unanimously in favor of the new advisor.

Should the **Technological Freedom Forum** lack any Board Member capable of maintaining the Forum's digital infrastructure, the responsibility falls to the advisor.

Article XI. Amendments and Revisions

Standard Amendment Process.

Amendments may be proposed by any active member, including Board Members. The proposed changes must be communicated in a written² form to the Board, after which the Board will announce the proposed changes to all members in a timely manner. If the Board's announcement occurs outside of a General Body Meeting, the Board must announce the proposed changes at the next General Body Meeting. Members will vote on the amendments during the General Body Meeting following the one in which the changes were announced. An amendment passes if two-thirds or more of the voting members are in support, and if no effective date is specified within the amendment, it takes effect on the first day of the next Term.

Expedited Amendment Process.

The following conditions allow for specific amendments to be made without consensus:

- The last date of review needs to be updated.

Should this document be amended or revised in the official capacity so described, a written description of the changes shall be added under the heading **Revision History**. This description shall include the date which the changes were proposed and when they will take effect.

Article XII. Reactivation Clause

This clause provides guidance for people intending to restart **The Forum** should it lose official recognition.

The recommended path forward is SAO re-recognition, but departmental recognition is also an option. The Social Science and Policy Studies, Computer Science, and Cybersecurity departments seem most appropriate.

The Advisor is encouraged to maintain **The Forum's** digital infrastructure if **The Forum** loses recognition or is inactive. Pass on the operational knowledge to those willing to restart **The Forum**.

Lastly, despite the hardships that come with it, **The Forum** may still operate in an unrecognized state. There will be difficulty in reserving meeting spaces, securing funding, and operating a digital infrastructure, for there is no guarantee that room reservations will be approved and that IT will not interfere with the infrastructure. **The Forum** will definitely not receive funding from the SGA either. But know this: the core of **The Forum** is the united will of the people that want change. That unity does not require any funding or external recognition.

Article XIII. SOC Enabling Clause

The Technological Freedom Forum agrees to abide by the policies of Worcester Polytechnic Institute as well as all federal, state and local laws. Any changes to this constitution and/or bylaws will follow, in word and spirit, all WPI policies and all federal, state and local laws.

Revision History