

Applied Critical Thinking at RIT

RIT will support and growing applied critical thinking by:

- engaging with the whole community,
- growing faculty, staff and especially student capacity to do ACT,
- contributing to our world through our responsible thinking and quality scholarship;

History: The Applied Critical Thinking initiative began in 2012 with the establishment of the Eugene H. Fram Chair in Applied Critical Thinking (ACT). Much effort went into the laying of the foundation for the ACT at RIT, including establishment of the annual Fram Lecture series, the creation of an advisory board, exploration of the essence of critical thinking and why it seems to be lacking in today's young people, evaluation of the opportunity for RIT within Critical Thinking, and the writing of the Critical Thinking Across the Curriculum, 'CTAC' (Jan 2014). This action plan moves forward from that foundation toward an active implementation plan.

Structure of the initiative: The growth and longevity of the Applied Critical Thinking effort depends upon the engagement of the whole community. Therefore, to support this engagement, the Eugene H. Fram Chair for 2015-18 is Dr. Jennifer Schneider, a professor of risk engineering of the College of Applied Science & Technology. Dr. Evelyn Brister, associate professor of philosophy, has been appointed the Fram Faculty Fellow. Supporting and advising their efforts is a Fram Advisory Board.

Fram Advisory Board (FAB) for 2015-2016: In October 2015, a new Fram advisory Board was seated. This board has representatives from almost all colleges at RIT. The duties of the board members are to:

- Guide Applied Critical Thinking efforts at RIT, including creation and stewardship of this strategic action plan.
- Advocate for/be a conduit for Applied Critical Thinking within the colleges at RIT.

2015-2016 Fram Advisory Board	
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Definitions of Applied Critical Thinking: Currently, there are at least four definitions at play at RIT. The Fram Advisory Board recommends that establishing a single definition is not useful at this time, rather we should let the definition (s) evolve and possibly coalesce over some time. Due to our diverse domains, Applied Critical Thinking can be represented in many ways.

Theme(s): Applied Critical Thinking is a wide and deep construct. Therefore, it is useful to select a series of themes to guide our programming over the next few years. During the 2015-2018 cycle we will focus our efforts around the themes of “*Diversity & Complexity of Thought*” (2015-16), “*Uncertainty*” (2016-17) and “*Creativity*” (2017-18). While each theme has been assigned a specific year, we will not be bounded by that year, but instead see this as an interrelated arc of knowing from which to draw.

Creating Engagement: Creating engagement and alignment with this initiative is a crucial step toward building capacity and reputation in ACT, and supporting the implementation of the strategic action plan. This will be an ongoing process, however, planning and communication are priorities.

2015-16

Strategy/Action	Description	Metric of Performance/ Deliverables	Responsible party (Target date)
Create Fram Strategic Action plan	Revise based upon input	Completion of Fram plan Prep budget request;	J. Schneider, FAB (by Jan 2016) possible campus wide publication/presentation
Continue Fram lecture series	Determine annual theme and select, schedule & host event	Fram Lecture	J. Schneider, FAB (Spring 2016)
Develop communication plan including brand, recognition and presence, especially student centered;	Create a communication plan to get the ‘message’ across to various stakeholders and audiences	Recommendations & initial implementation	J. Schneider, E. Brister & FAB (Feb 2016)
Improve student engagement (in conjunction with communication plan)	Plan & execute activities/events & opportunities to increase student engagement (Especially website, logo, social media)	Track engagement profile	J. Schneider, A. Brodie (ongoing)

2016-

Strategy/Action	Description	Metric of Performance/ Deliverables	Responsible party (Target date)
Implementation of ongoing engagement & communication plan	Continually refine messaging and communication	Measures of the engagement of community	J. Schneider, E. Brister & FAB (ongoing)

In order to reach toward our goals for this initiative, RIT must support and grow three interrelated pillars of excellence. Each of these pillars is vital to our long-term success in Applied Critical Thinking, both internally with our students and externally, by building uniquely skilled alumni and reputation. This plan outlines our efforts to drive RIT's contribution and recognition in the domain of Applied Critical Thinking. While each is presented separately, it is recognized that the work is interrelated.

Pillar 1: Pedagogy: Teaching & Learning

Effort in ACT must be led by the faculty and staff at RIT. Therefore, we must support efforts to develop this capacity in our faculty and select related staff (eg. student services) to teach this complex skill to our students. It is our goal that all UG will satisfy RIT's applied critical thinking student learning outcomes through *integration of outcomes* within each program of study and a suite of outcomes within general education framework; Elements of this effort include the assessment of the state of teaching and learning of applied critical thinking at RIT (See Appendix A), the development and delivery of pedagogy and increasing faculty capacity to teach applied critical thinking. It is imperative that we begin by establishing a *community of practice* through which faculty can exchange information and learn about applied critical thinking. The measureable outputs will be opportunities and events for building faculty and select staff capacity. This can also be a mechanism to create engagement with the entire effort and share best practices, celebrate exemplars, and support further creation and delivery of pedagogy.

2015-16:

Strategy/Action	Description	Metric of Performance/ Deliverables	Responsible party (Target date)
Collect, Collate, Assess where ACT is currently taught at RIT	Work with assessment office	Produce report	J. Schneider (May 2016)
Recognition of ACT pedagogy	Work with assessment office and FAB to gather best practices	Recognize and publicize best practices (ongoing faculty lectures?)	J. Schneider & FAB (Spring 2016)
Evaluate implementation of campus wide assessment model	Benchmark best practices and determine path forward	Draft results for consideration by provosts, assessment office, academic senate	J. Schneider (Dec 16) (Note: longer than first year as other results inform this)
Develop, implement ACT GE course	Work with COLA to ensure scheduled	Successful course	E. Brister (May 2016)
Develop modules/curricula to insert in other courses	Create curricula	Plan piloting of curricula within other courses	E. Brister (May 2016)
Support faculty ACT capacity development <i>through a community of practice</i>	Evaluate and offer (workshops, etc.) for faculty to learn and increase ACT capacity	Offer opportunities for faculty to increase capability in ACT pedagogy	J. Schneider & E. Brister (May 2016)
<i>Assess efficacy of GE immersion & internal certificate in CT (was Sheffield, CTAC goal 2);</i>	Benchmark best practices & evaluate RIT path forward	Draft plan	J. Schneider & ICC/ GE committee, FAB (May 2016)

2016-

Strategy/Action	Description	Metric of Performance/ Deliverables	Responsible party (Target date)
Evaluate the implementation of internal grants for creation & delivery of ACT related pedagogy	Assess need & opportunity, benchmark similar programs at RIT.	Report and possible draft plan, determine funding level required,	J. Schneider (Dec. 2016)
Ongoing Assessment of ACT	Work with assessment office and FAB to gather best practices	Produce report, recognize and publicize best practices (ongoing faculty lectures?)	J. Schneider (annual)
Update assessment process	Use process to support & inform ongoing efforts	Set up system to support ongoing assessment	J. Schneider (ongoing)
Run ACT GE course(s)	Work with COLA to ensure scheduled	Successful course(s)	E. Brister (May 2017)
Integrate modules/curricula to insert in other courses	Engage other professors and courses	Piloting of curricula within other courses	E. Brister (May 2017)
Support faculty & staff ACT capacity development	Evaluate and offer (workshops, etc.) for faculty to learn and increase ACT capacity	Offer opportunities for faculty to increase capability in ACT pedagogy	J. Schneider & E. Brister (annual)
Encourage new & cross disciplinary ACT teaching	Determine best practice methods of encouraging new & co-curricular programming	Report with resulting action (s)	J. Schneider & E. Brister (2016-2017)
Explore creating of active ACT experiences student engagement	Create opportunities for active participation in ACT that spans domains.	Assess and implement based upon results	FAB, J. Schneider & E. Brister (Spring 2016)

Pillar 2: Scholarship: Scholarship is a crucial part of our long- term contribution to applied critical thinking external to RIT. It also builds our external recognition and reputation for our efforts. Early feedback on our efforts highlighted RIT’s noted strength in a wide spectrum of education and research. By leveraging that diverse capacity, we can contribute much to the ongoing discussion in applied critical thinking. Further, our history as an experientially focused institution gives us a deep foundation in the application of applied critical thinking to today’s challenges.

Strategy/Action	Description	Metric of Performance/ Deliverables	Responsible party (Target date)
Ensure RIT presence at well-known ACT conferences/ journals	Author/present within venue (E. Brister) Attend & outreach (J. Schneider)	Measureable scholarly outcome(s)	E. Brister, J. Schneider & RIT scholars (Spring 2016)
Seek funding sources (e.g. grants, foundations, development) to support ongoing efforts and conference	Seek funding	Determination of possible funding sources, possible grant application	J. Schneider & E. Brister (Spring 2016)
Evaluate the opportunity to engage RIT pedagogy scholars in the effort	Assess interest in developing ACT pedagogical scholarship	Active outreach to RIT scholars	J. Schneider & E. Brister (Spring 2016)

2016-

Strategy/Action	Description	Metric of Performance/ Deliverables	Responsible party (Target date)
Ensure RIT presence at well-known ACT conferences/ journals	Author/present within venue (E. Brister) Attend & outreach (J. Schneider)	Measureable scholarly outcome(s)	E. Brister & J. Schneider (Spring 2017)
Plan & Execute ACT conference (dependent on funding level)	Conduct a 1 day conference in conjunction with Fram speaker event	Successful event	J. Schneider, FAB (Spring 2017)
Evaluate & support the development of further RIT scholarship in ACT domain	Seek out opportunities to build the RIT scholarly brand in ACT	Scholarly outcomes and recognition	J. Schneider, E. Brister & RIT scholars (ongoing)

Pillar 3: Practice: Practice is the outcome of the entirety of the efforts. It is evidenced by an RIT community that exhibits and actively demonstrates applied critical thinking. Not only do our students gain applied critical thinking skills from within our classrooms, they also gain from exposure in extracurricular activities, and through cooperative education, internships, etc. Further, critical thinking is a skill that supports the growth of leadership, innovation, diversity and contributes to the ability to be good citizens. We aim to integrate applied critical thinking within the whole student experience, by leveraging efforts in corollary initiatives at RIT such as, T-shape, the Simone Center for Innovation, Leadership, International Education, Grey Matter, and various student experiences at RIT.

2015-16

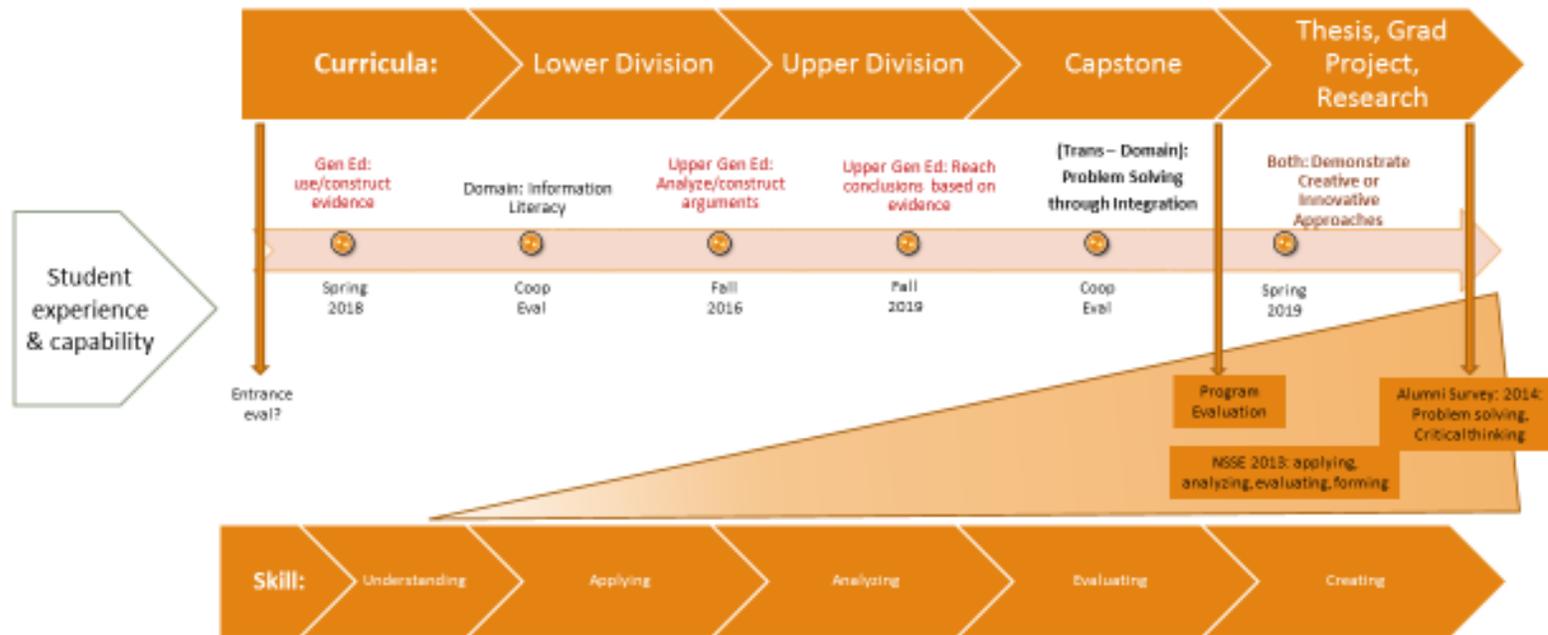
Strategy/Action	Description	Metric of Performance/ Deliverables	Responsible party (Target date)
Explore leveraging of Writing Across Curriculum agenda with ACT	Significant opportunity exists, determine best path	Report & draft plan	J. Schneider & David Martens (May 2016)
Explore leveraging of corollary efforts with ACT	Significant opportunity exists in existing and new efforts	Implementation where appropriate, and report & draft plan	J. Schneider, FAB, & other leadership (May 2016)
Evaluate the implementation of recognitions (e.g. imagine prize, etc.)	Create process for best ACT related	Implement selected	J. Schneider, FAB, & other leadership (May 2016)

2016-

Strategy/Action	Description	Metric of Performance/ Deliverables	Responsible party (Target date)
Commence leveraging of corollary efforts with ACT	Where significant opportunity exists	Implementation where appropriate, and report & draft plan	J. Schneider, FAB, & other leadership (ongoing)

Appendix A: Assessment of Applied Critical Thinking at RIT:

The following graphic is a representation of the process of practicing applied critical thinking at RIT. It visually represents the state of the ‘pipeline’ of creating the skillset in our students and the assessment process, both by what is currently available and what is planned to be measured. This forms the foundation for further development of assessment at RIT.



Assessment Planning for Applied Critical Thinking at RIT (2015)

Figure 1 Map of assessment for ACT at RIT