A Welcome Message from the Provost

Here’s some good news. On January 1, 2017, the length of daylight was 9 hours, 3 minutes and 52 seconds. On the first day of classes for the spring semester—today – January 23, 2017—the length of daylight will be 9 hours, 37 minutes and 8 seconds, an increase of 33 minutes and 16 seconds. Moreover, tomorrow it will be 2 minutes and 6 seconds longer than today. And Wednesday will be 2 minutes and 9 seconds longer than Tuesday! The days are getting longer and at a faster rate! (Yeah! The second derivative is positive.) Darkness is in retreat!

With that good news, I welcome the students, faculty and staff to the 2017 spring semester. I hope the holiday break and intersession were both replenishing and productive. This will be an exciting semester for the campus with many people contributing to the advancement of this university. Here are some of the activities from my office that are underway:

The Academic Affairs Work on the RIT Strategic Plan Website: I encourage the campus community to visit the Academic Affairs website on the RIT strategic plan. Here you will find the various difference makers we are working on, the taskforces and their charges, and the reports of progress. Of course, the full RIT Strategic Plan website can be found on the president’s website.

The On-time Graduation Action Plan: A key objective of the RIT strategic plan is to increase the on-time graduation rate (students graduating in 4 years for 4 year programs and 5 years for 5 year programs) for our undergraduate students. Starting in 2015, I asked the University Student Success Committee to recommend an action plan that would take our current on-time graduation rate of 45% to 58%. A terrific team worked diligently researching what other universities do, what has worked and what hasn’t, and come up with a report. I will be vetting the action plan in a presentation to the community – which I plan to share with the President’s Administrative Council, the Council of Deans, the Council of Chairs and Directors, and the governance groups.

FY 2018 enrollment projections: As is the practice, the University Budget Committee met prior to the holidays and heard a presentation from the university budget office. Based on early and preliminary projections by the Division of Enrollment Management and Career Services, the main campus is expecting an additional 274 students in 2017-2018 from the enrollments of the current academic year 2016-2017. Of these 274 students, 197 will be undergraduates and 97 will be graduate students. (This projection excludes NTID students and non-degree students.)

Move 78 – A campus retreat: The Office of the Provost is sponsoring a campus-wide retreat on the topic of machine learning, artificial intelligence, cognitive technologies,
Robotics and automation. The retreat, named ‘Move 78’ after a move in Game 4 of the now-famous matchup between Lee Sedol and the Google-sponsored computer AlphaGo, will be held on Friday, February 17 in Slaughter Hall. You can find more information on the event website and see my blog entry on the same topic.

**edX, XSeries, and MicroMasters:** RIT has become an international leader through its partnership with edX. We are currently offering a 5-course XSeries on Video Game Design and today we begin offering our first MicroMasters on the topic of Project Management. And later in March we will offer our second MicroMasters on the topic of Cybersecurity. As of today, over 57,500 students are enrolled in the RITx edX courses.

**The RIT West Coast presence:** Through a partnership with Juniper Networks, RIT will offer a limited number of workshops and lectures in the Silicon Valley area beginning this spring. The computing security faculty from GCCIS will develop and deliver workshops to augment the above-mentioned MicroMasters in Cybersecurity at the Juniper campus located in Sunnyvale, California. The workshops will be geared to RIT alumni and industry partners in the Silicon Valley area and will enable a face-to-face connection between faculty and students.

**A Wallace Center and Innovative Learning Complex:** We all know that our wonderful Wallace Center needs renovating and expanding. But we will also need additional classroom capacity as our enrollment grows with our strategic plan. These two needs are made for each other and so I am charging a taskforce to provide the programming plans for a proposed Wallace Center and Innovative Learning Complex. This complex will include the current Wallace Center along with a new proposed building dedicated to active learning classrooms and pedagogy. I will be chairing this taskforce with the help of Lynn Wild from the Wallace Center and Neil Hair from the Innovative Learning Institute.

**But wait, there’s more:** In addition to these activities, we continue to make progress on the Academic Affairs plan of work. Here are some highlighted projects:

- Our Middle States decennial evaluation and self-study is on track with the accreditation team visit scheduled for April 2-5, 2017;
- We were successful in launching a post-doc diversity strategy (the Future Faculty Fellows program) – congratulations to GIS and CHST for their winning proposals;
- Working with the finance office, we have provided greater budget flexibility to the colleges;
- A Graduate Education Taskforce is working on an action plan to address the RIT strategic plan objective of increasing graduate enrollment at RIT;
- An Interdisciplinary Taskforce is working on an action plan to address the RIT strategic plan objectives of increasing interdisciplinary work at RIT;
- The space audit is in the final stages of its work and we expect to have a report to share during spring semester;
- The Committee on the Future of Faculty is also making progress and I expect to have their report in time to share with the campus this semester;
• A proposal for addressing faculty dual career issues has been accepted and will be implemented by HR;
• My office is again sponsoring a Global Governance Forum, which will include the executive committees of all the governance groups at the RIT campuses;
• The new Academic Calendar administrative policy is now in effect;
• An administrative policy for the regular evaluation of department chairs is completed and accessible on the policies section of the Academic Affairs website;
• An administrative policy dealing with faculty family leaves is in the final stages and will be vetted across campus.

Of course, these activities are just the tip of the iceberg, and do not reflect the real work of the campus – educating our students and making discoveries and innovations that make the world a better place. To that I say to all of you, thank you.

Jeremy Haefner
Provost and Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs

For more information on this and other topics, please visit http://www.rit.edu/academicaffairs/