



Speaking at a reception at the Computer History Museum in Mountain View, Calif., President Bill Destler urged alumni to help spread the word of RIT's growth.

RIT goes west

Board of Trustees and administrators visit top tech companies in Silicon Valley

Need a drink to go with that popcorn at the ballgame, but don't want to miss the action? Simply place an order by cell phone for delivery to your seat. That way you won't miss the home run, and you can also watch the replay on your phone, and then forward to a friend to view.

A scene from *The Jetsons*? Hardly. Rather, a scene being developed at Cisco Systems Inc.'s world headquarters in San Jose, Calif. The technology giant's vision is "to change

the way we work, live, play, learn," explains Kathryn Hill '78 (mathematics), a senior vice president of the Access Networking and Services Group at Cisco. "Our mission is to shape the future of technology and the Internet. We are just now writing the next chapter. It will look nothing like it does today."

Hill's message was given to a delegation of 60 RIT trustees and campus leaders who traveled west this summer on a quest "to

become a new kind of university in which innovation and creativity are at the core of everything we do," says RIT President Bill Destler.

The RIT delegation met with corporate leaders at 22 companies to form strategic relationships with companies that are noted for their innovative approaches to the development of new products and services. The visit was based in Silicon Valley, the renowned high-tech corridor between San



"The trip reinforced our strategic direction. It also demonstrated the need for us to explore other areas of opportunity for RIT. ... I believe we will expand our position on the West Coast in areas of student admission, placement of cooperative education students and graduates, and new ideas and opportunities for corporate research and development."

Michael Morley '69 (business administration), chair, RIT Board of Trustees

Francisco and San Jose where about 1,500 RIT alumni reside. Discussions centered on innovation, corporate research and development, sustainability (or “clean tech,” as they say in California) and collaborative models. Corporate leaders were asked what they would like to see infused in the college experience for RIT students, who will help write the next chapter on innovation.

“The trip was an exciting adventure for RIT,” says Michael Morley '69 (business administration), chair of the Board of Trustees. “We are hoping this will lead to great opportunities for RIT students in the co-op program as well as in the workforce after they graduate. We are enhancing existing and establishing new relationships on the West Coast. A lot of these companies do not know the scope and breadth of RIT.”

Among the lessons learned and brought back to RIT:

- Take risks and accept failure: The ability to innovate requires a culture in which failure is an acceptable outcome.

- Value teamwork over individual effort: RIT graduates must learn to work and problem-solve collaboratively and within diverse environments.

- Experience entrepreneurship: Ensure that all students have the opportunity to experience the adrenaline rush that comes from starting something new. Entrepreneurial experiences must be injected into all parts of the undergraduate and graduate curriculum.

- Go green: The use of clean technologies to support movement toward a more sustainable future must be a priority in education as well as in the public and private sectors.

RIT trustees, many of whom are Rochester business leaders, gained new ideas on how to spark innovation within their own companies. “These are valuable lessons that we have brought back to Rochester to infuse into the Rochester and New York economy as well,” says Destler.

So why would firms from coast to coast – globally for that matter – consider partner-



At Cisco, members of the RIT delegation see a demonstration of a new technology called ‘TelePresence’ that allows business leaders to meet through video and surround sound from anywhere in the world.

ing with RIT? Morley and Destler noted that with 16,000 students, RIT is now the 15th largest private university (undergraduates) in the U.S. It has rapidly grown to become the third largest provider of science, technology, engineering, math (the so-called STEM disciplines) bachelor’s degrees in the nation among all private colleges and universities. And RIT’s co-op program attracts more than 1,900 employers nationwide who employ more than 3,300 RIT students each year.

Destler and Morley said they also received a very positive response from the West Coast companies to RIT’s new corporate research and development program (www.rit.edu/research/corporate). Here, RIT has established a program to accept a modest up-front payment – to be shared by the students, faculty, and the university – in return for relinquishing intellectual property rights associated with company-sponsored research. This program has the potential to change the way universities and companies do business and to encour-



About 1,500 RIT grads now live in the San Francisco and Silicon Valley area of California.



All the stops

RIT administrators and trustees met with the following companies and organizations:

Adobe, Advanced Medical Optics/VISX, Apple Computer, Aruba Networks, Avery Dennison, Boeing, Cisco, Citrix, Electronic Arts, Flextronics, Google, Hewlett-Packard, IBM, Linked In, Marvell, Microsoft, Oracle, Palo Alto Research Center (Xerox), Salesforce.com, Serious Materials, Stanford University, and SONY Imageworks.



“If it is uncomfortable, you should be doing it.”

Kathy Hill '78 (mathematics), a senior vice president at Cisco Systems Inc., describing the West Coast philosophy of no fear of failure



E. Philip Saunders College of Business Dean Ashok Rao at Cisco Systems Inc.

age technology transfer, basic research and economic development. A tour of Adobe in San Jose led to a discussion about RIT's Ph.D. program in color science. University leaders are now engaged in further discussions on ways RIT can help Adobe, which employs about a dozen RIT alumni, solve problems in the area of color management.

"The trip exceeded my expectations in all respects," says Destler. "We made important connections with some of the most prominent high-tech companies on the West Coast, we learned how they foster innovation, and we have brought back many ideas that can be implemented both at RIT and in the Rochester business community."

The trip also included an alumni reception with the San Francisco and San Jose chapters. Nearly 300 attended the event at the Computer History Museum in Mountain View, Calif. Destler implored alumni to stay in touch with the university and spread the word of its growth in stature.

"Your university has come a long way in rapid time," Destler told the alumni. "You should be proud of the trajectory we are on. We need your help in telling the RIT story to your family, friends and co-workers."

Bob Finnerty '07

W Web extra:

For more photos of the trip, go to www.rit.edu/news and click on Photo Gallery Archive.



"What can RIT do to make a difference? Embed innovation into all students. Teach sustainability across disciplines. Add new degree programs. And let Silicon Valley know about RIT with marketing."

Kevin Surace '85 (electrical engineering technology), president and CEO of Serious Materials and newly elected RIT trustee

Volleyball star assists RIT's West Coast drive



Ushi Patel

Ushi Patel '00, '01 (printing management, MBA) thrives on a competitive environment. After all, the former two-time Academic All-American volleyball player is a member of the RIT Sports Hall of Fame.

Today the native of San Jose, Calif., is still competing for RIT, but she has traded Clark Gymnasium for Silicon Valley. She competes daily against the most prestigious universities in the United State and globally by representing RIT on the West Coast.

"The Silicon Valley is looking for talented individuals and RIT has a lot to offer," says Patel.

A stronger RIT presence on the West Coast was originally conceived by the Board of Trustees more than three years ago, namely by Bruce James '64 (printing management and sciences), former board chairman. At the time, now retired RIT President Albert J. Simone and James Watters, senior vice president for finance and administration, focused on the following objectives:

- Increase RIT's access to top venture capital firms for the purpose of placing endowment monies with the best investment managers in the country.
- Increase RIT's brand awareness in Silicon Valley.
- Increase RIT's connection to alumni in the area.
- Increase RIT's co-op placements in the region.
- Assess opportunities for delivery of RIT online or on-the-ground courses.

"After forming these objectives, we formed a group of 14 alumni to advise us on opportunities that could advance the execution of these objectives," says Watters. "We have been meeting regularly ever since and our alumni contacts out west are vital."

Patel works out of an office in Menlo Park, Calif., the center for venture capital and start-up activity in the Silicon Valley. RIT shares an office with the Band of Angels, an internationally recognized angel investment group comprised of some of the top venture capital investors in the world.

Patel also works with RIT's Division of Enrollment Management and Career Services to increase student applicants and cooperative education opportunities. She attends nearly 40 college fairs in the spring and fall, meeting with high school students in Arizona, California, Oregon and Washington.

"RIT has an impeccable and favorable brand out here, mostly in engineering," she says. "I let them know about all of RIT's diverse programs."

"The recent trip by the Board of Trustees to the Silicon Valley is a major statement. The trip shows that we are very serious about doing business out here."

Bob Finnerty '07

To learn more about RIT's West Coast office, contact Patel at 408-728-2048 or ushi.patel@rit.edu. She can also be reached at 535 Middlefield Road, Suite 190, Menlo Park, CA 94025.