GREATNESS THROUGH DIFFERENCE

2015-2025 Strategic Plan of the Rochester Institute of Technology

Submitted to the RIT Board of Trustees, 13 November 2014
**Greatness Through Difference: RIT’s 2015-2025 Strategic Plan**

**Table of Contents**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mission and Vision</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Case Statement</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dimension I: Career Education and Student Success</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dimension II: The Student-Centered Research University</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dimension III: Leveraging Difference</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dimension IV: Affordability, Value, and Return on Investment</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dimension V: Organizational Agility</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Epilogue: Of Geeks and Greatness</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Greatness Through Difference:
RIT's 2015-2025 Strategic Plan

Mission
Rochester Institute of Technology prepares its graduates for a future of positive impact on their career areas of choice. Through unique interdisciplinary research and creative partnerships, RIT faculty and students collaborate to deliver and apply solutions to the 21st century’s most vexing problems.

Vision
RIT will emerge from the coming decade as a great global university that applies its distinctive assets to solve the complex problems of a shrinking world and a complex planet.
Preface

Born from the unlikely union of an influential cultural association (The Rochester Athenaeum) and a technical training school (The Mechanics Institute), Rochester Institute of Technology has always been a different kind of educational institution. When most colleges were teaching ancient languages, theology, and the law to the sons of prosperous families, the Rochester Athenaeum and Mechanics Association was preparing young men and women for local employment through a combination of technical training and courses in the sciences and fine arts.

Embedded within the unusual circumstances of RIT’s origins was a set of principles that would become the shaping credo of the young institution: the innovative potential of unlikely partnerships—between and among institutions, individuals, and disciplines; the importance of educating students to do as well as to know; and the propulsive power of difference.

This practicality, attention to student needs, and taste for doing things differently would fuel the many early instances of multi-disciplinary integration, cooperation, and risk-taking of the institution’s first 100 years. And they would account for RIT’s 20th-century reputation as an innovative university whose programs, partnerships, and practices were increasingly the first of their kind in higher education.

When the economic, technological, and demographic transformations of the late 20th-century threatened to disrupt the largely conservative higher education industry, RIT found itself perfectly positioned to meet these challenges and to address the attendant demands of a public increasingly disenchanted with the traditional model of higher education. As our competitors struggle to recruit and support a very different student demographic, to contain unsupportable tuition hikes, and to provide an education leading to gainful employment, RIT can turn its attention to anticipating and addressing the next set of opportunities.

The strategic plan before you, Greatness Through Difference, provides the design by which we will hone the proven tools of difference, innovation, and student-centeredness and apply them to the next generation of possibilities.

The next 10 years will be treacherous ones for higher education, and not all institutions will survive. But by building upon its talent for distinctiveness and innovation, its record of successful change management, and its visionary approach to education, RIT will emerge from the coming decade as an incontestably great university, fully prepared to supply the new world of 2025 with the graduates, the new discoveries, and innovative educational model that it will require.
A University of Firsts: The Past

At its founding in 1829, RIT launched a trajectory that in 2015 remains unique among the more than 4,000 U.S. colleges and universities occupying the higher education landscape. Consider the following early instances of “difference”:

The provision of lifelong learning has been a strand of the RIT DNA from the inception of the Rochester Athenaeum, which offered evening lectures to the people of Rochester and was for a time the young city’s dominant cultural force. From its founding, RIT allowed women into every academic program.

The Rochester Athenaeum and Mechanic’s Association (the institution that would become RIT) commits itself to educating young men and women in the technologies necessary for successful careers—a mission that endures to this day. Early in its history, RIT becomes one of the first schools to integrate applied technical study with curricula in the humanities, the arts, and design. RIT may have been the first school to introduce “design thinking” into its curriculum.

With the initiation of its cooperative education program, in which students secured paid employment in their major field, RIT becomes a pioneer in experiential education, or what today would be called competency-based education.

The Graphic Arts Research Center is established to apply scientific and engineering principles to the printing and publishing industry. RIT becomes a center of research on all aspects of the graphic arts.

School for American Craftsmen, founded by Aileen Vanderbilt Webb and now called School for American Crafts, moves to RIT. The school offers undergraduate and graduate programs in ceramics, glass, metals and jewelry design, and furniture design.

RIT appoints the first female dean of a U.S. business college.
National Technical Institute for the Deaf opens at RIT, revolutionizing technical education for the deaf and hard of hearing. At least two dozen universities vied for the privilege of hosting NTID, but RIT’s strong post-secondary technical curricula and cooperative education programs gave it the edge.

RIT delivers its first distance-learning course via closed-circuit television.

RIT enrolls students in the first undergraduate program in micro-electronic engineering in the U.S.

RIT becomes the first university in the nation to offer a bachelor of science degree in biotechnology.

RIT’s Ph.D. program in imaging science opens—the first doctoral program at RIT and the first such program in the United States.

RIT delivers its first fully online program—years before the rest of higher education enters the online arena.

RIT offers the first nationally recognized bachelor of science degree in information technology.

RIT becomes the first university in the United States to offer a bachelor’s degree in software engineering.

The Kate Gleason College of Engineering is founded, becoming the first engineering school in the country named for a woman.

RIT offers a doctoral program in sustainability, the first program in the world to focus on sustainable production systems.
A University of Innovation: The Present

Given the distinctiveness of its origins, it should come as no surprise that in this second decade of the 21st century, RIT has kept pace with the relentless acceleration of scientific and technological discovery and the resulting economic, social, and cultural transformations. One hundred and eighty-six years after its founding, RIT has matured into one of the world’s most innovative, agile, and foresighted universities. Consider the following:

- As a member of the Association of Independent Technological Universities (AITU), RIT is among the world’s leading technological institutions. RIT was recently ranked in the top 40 “most technologically advanced” universities in the world.

- Today’s program portfolio boasts award-winning programs in a host of nontraditional disciplines—in film and animation, industrial design, sustainability, photography, medical illustration, microelectronic engineering, packaging science, museum studies, and diagnostic medical sonography. The RIT portfolio is among the richest and most diverse in the world.

- RIT is a world leader in experiential education. Our cooperative education program is the fourth oldest and one of the largest in the world.

- RIT is one of the largest private universities in the U.S. based on full-time undergraduate enrollment.

- With full residential campuses in Dubrovnik and Zagreb, Croatia, in Kosovo, and in Dubai, our global presence is far-reaching and unique.

- RIT’s growing research portfolio includes unique interdisciplinary centers such as the Center for Applied Psychophysiology and Self-Regulation (a program integrating education, research, and clinical care around the autism spectrum); the National Center of Academic Excellence in Information Assurance/Cyber Defense Education; and the Image Permanence Institute (a world leader in artifact preservation).

- The new Wegmans School of Health and Nutrition is based upon the premise that anticipating public health concerns is more effective than reacting to them.

- RIT’s sustainable architecture program is among the first to consider sustainability as a curricular element equal in importance to design.

- RIT sustains the sound fiscal policies that have enabled its remarkable growth and stability.

- RIT commits to carbon neutrality, LEED-certified buildings, and sustainability-focused degree programs.

- In 2014, RIT was named “the nation’s geekiest campus,” a distinction we embrace with pride.
A Responsive University: The Context

At a time when the public disenchantment with higher education is growing, and disruptive (often commercial) alternatives are looking more and more appealing to prospective students and their families, the real measure of a university’s success is the degree to which its offerings satisfy the demands of its many stakeholders. The current list of these demands is lengthy and all too familiar—including calls for lower tuition, higher return on investment, and graduates who are competitive in the job market. It should be no surprise that RIT is aggressively addressing these demands. Leveraging its appetite for difference, its talent for adaptation, and its commitment to student success, RIT has listened and acted.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The public is demanding</th>
<th>RIT has responded with</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Career preparation for jobs at graduation (parents and students)</td>
<td>A 95% employment/graduate school acceptance rate six months after graduation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Return on tuition investment (parents and students)</td>
<td>A combination of a strong career-oriented mission, curricular currency, and excellent relations with business and industry, yielding one of the best ROI’s in the nation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affordability (parents and students)</td>
<td>Need-blind admissions; tuition below the national average for private institutions; intervals of paid cooperative employment; historically high percentage of PELL-eligible (low income) students.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Breadth and depth in content mastery (employers)</td>
<td>Education in fields with high employer demand integrated with design, management, critical and innovative thinking, and data management. Broad participation of undergraduates on funded research teams, which sharpens critical and innovative thinking, data analysis, and problem-solving skills.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More STEM graduates (employers)</td>
<td>The second highest number of STEM graduates among U.S. private universities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experiential education and work experience (employers)</td>
<td>An educational experience that includes considerable time learning outside of the classroom—either working in a paid cooperative education position, designing new products and businesses in the Simone Center for Innovation and Entrepreneurship, or participating on interdisciplinary research teams.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Groundbreaking research in multiple disciplines (business, industry, government, society)</td>
<td>Interdisciplinary Ph.D. programs—ranging from imaging science to microsystems to sustainability—dedicated to providing solutions to complex problems that defy a single-discipline approach.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anytime, anywhere learning (students, alumni, community members)</td>
<td>A program (the Center for Multidisciplinary Studies) that gives credit for prior learning; an Innovative Learning Institute providing credit and non-credit experiences to traditional and nontraditional students in multiple electronic formats.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diverse population</td>
<td>Over 50% international students at the graduate level; 1,200 deaf and hard-of-hearing students on the Rochester campus; and a history of serving low-income students.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Global reach</td>
<td>Unusually high number of international students; four international campuses with multiple opportunities for student exchange; courses in ten languages.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Power of Diversity: The Future

The university that was born of an unlikely institutional marriage; that welcomed women into its 19th-century technical classes; and that combined curricula in technical skills, the arts, and the humanities was a university destined to understand the creative power of diversity. The RIT of the future will be powered by an intellectual and social diversity unmatched within higher education—a diversity that distinguishes its academic and research portfolios, its richly diverse population, and the multiple modes of learning, thinking, and knowing taught and practiced daily. In the coming decade, RIT will intentionally assemble and leverage its many forms of diversity in order to invent and discover new solutions, new programs, new kinds of graduates, and the highest levels of stakeholder satisfaction.

- Imagine the new questions that might be asked, the new solutions posed, and the innovations achieved by a team of glass artists, imaging scientists, and physicists.

- Imagine the new courses and research projects emerging from the collaboration of a biomedical engineer, a materials scientist, a three-dimensional designer, and a physician’s assistant student.

- Imagine a team of architecture students, history professors, and photographers collaborating with our Kosovo students and faculty in the repair of ancient war-damaged monuments in Pristina, Kosovo.

- Imagine the job offers received by an RIT student graduating with a double major in biotechnology and philosophy, extended membership on a funded research team, demonstrated competencies in innovative thinking and intercultural relations, and a one-year co-op with Amgen.

- Imagine RIT as a model civil community in which all difference—from ethnicity to nationality to sexual orientation to political persuasion to socio-economic level—is leveraged as an engine to solve seemingly unsolvable world problems.

RIT has all the ingredients to realize these and countless other scenarios. Through the new Strategic Plan before you—“Greatness Through Difference”—we will develop the necessary mechanisms to make them a reality while simultaneously enriching our highly student-centric environment, demonstrating a high return on tuition investment, and meeting the ever-shifting needs of the world.
Greatness Through Difference: RIT’s 2015-2025 Strategic Plan

The Strategic Planning Process
2013-2015

In the fall of 2013, following a careful analysis of the multiple factors most likely to impact higher education in general and RIT in particular in the next 25 years, the RIT community embarked upon the development of a new 10-year strategic plan. The university is proud of the depth and breadth of engagement in this process, which included the active participation of students, staff, and faculty from our Rochester and international campuses; and of alumni, employers, industry partners, retirees, and friends of the university. The resulting strategic plan is designed to leverage our institutional strengths in such a way as to ensure our ownership of the pole position in the higher education environment of 2025.

During the strategic conversations of the past year, five intersecting spheres of effort have surfaced repeatedly. Recognizing that the most successful strategic plans cover a circumscribed range of territory, we have elected to concentrate on these dimensions:

1. Career Education and Student Success
2. The Student-Centered Research University
3. Leveraging Difference
4. Affordability, Value, and Return on Investment
5. Organizational Agility

Within each of these five Dimensions is a set of what we call “Difference Makers”—strategic goals whose achievement will make a significant difference to our stakeholders and to the direction of higher education. Each Difference Maker is in turn supported by a set of concrete objectives that chart RIT’s strategic trajectory of the next decade.
Dimension One: Career Education and Student Success

Cultivating student success is what we do—it is and will continue to be our core mission. Of course, as the world changes, so too does the definition of student success. The knowledge and skills that will be required of graduating students in 2025 are virtually unimaginable to us today, and what distinguished graduates in the job market of 1995 would be obsolete in 2015. RIT’s tradition of academic excellence, its appetite for difference and adaptation, and its commitment to students will ensure the continuation of student success as our paramount institutional mission. Recognizing that new models of “the successful college graduate” place increasing demands on the already limited time of college students, RIT will be innovative and flexible in the supplemental learning experiences it develops.

There are some elements of student success over which no institution has control; we cannot re-write students’ high school preparation or re-program their social skills or even require them to learn. But we do have control over the single most important determinant of success: the quality of our academic enterprise. Without absolute confidence in the quality of the teaching, learning, research, scholarship, and academic support services that are the student’s academic environment, we cannot expect to provide our graduates with the knowledge and skills that will guarantee their success. Only a rigorous and systematic assessment approach tailored to RIT’s unique educational model will ensure both the quality of the input (curricula, co-curricula, pedagogy) and of the outcome (successful students). Through the period of this next strategic plan, we will redouble our commitment to applying thoughtful, tested, and rigorous assessment criteria to multiple facets of the enterprise.

Difference Maker I.1

RIT will build upon its strong academic portfolio, extensive experiential learning and co-curricular offerings, and the rich diversity of its people and programs to develop “T-shaped” graduates possessing both disciplinary depth (the vertical axis of the “T”) and breadth across multiple skills and competencies (the horizontal axis, or “transversal” skills).

Objective I.1.1

Introduce a comprehensive co-curricular transcript that will reflect to employers a student’s competencies in such necessary skills as critical thinking, written and oral communication, leadership, visual interpretation, collaboration, and research.

Objective I.1.2

Develop a national reputation for applied critical thinking and ensure that it is deeply interwoven in every program and in general education.
Objective I.1.3
Develop flexibly scheduled offerings (e.g., during intersession and summer terms) that supplement course work and experiential learning with instruction and practice in transversal skills.

Objective I.1.4
Revise desired student learning outcomes in degree program and general education curricula to include T-shaped skills and competencies.

Objective I.1.5
Establish a student-alumni career mentoring program.

Objective I.1.6
Within five years, lead private U.S. universities in the number of STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Math) undergraduates enrolled at and graduating from RIT.

Objective I.1.7
Through innovative K-12 outreach activities that bring pre-college students to campus, familiarize young students with RIT and with the college experience in general.

Difference Maker I.2
RIT will offer opportunities for study at the intersections of technology and the arts, imagination and application, and rigor and curiosity—all designed to meet the demands of future careers in the complex global economy.

Objective I.2.1
Create policies and practices that facilitate the development of interdisciplinary majors, minors, and electives, as well as team-teaching, individualized majors and minors, and innovative learning delivery methods.

Objective I.2.2
Design and implement a clear, unbiased process for rewarding and encouraging faculty to work in new interdisciplinary teaching and research areas.

Objective I.2.3
Create an interdisciplinary, cross-functional team of faculty to identify and prioritize interdisciplinary opportunities for rapid implementation.

Objective I.2.4
In order to introduce a STEAM approach (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Mathematics) to STEM education, prioritize and fund the inclusion of studio and theory courses from the College of Imaging Arts and Sciences (CIAS) and the College of Liberal Arts (CLA) in STEM programs.

Objective I.2.5
Use instructional technology to extend and enrich RIT’s interdisciplinary capabilities (e.g., online, blended, flipped).
Objective I.2.6
Develop opportunities for students to work on interdisciplinary projects of their own design.

Objective I.2.7
Retool and rebrand CMS (Center for Multidisciplinary Studies) as a center for interdisciplinary and innovative learning pathways.

Objective I.2.8
Make greater use of CMS as a path for on-time graduation for students who have changed majors or whose studies have been interrupted.

Objective I.2.9
Academic departments will continue to set a high bar in faculty searches and appointments, with the goals of advancing diversity in all its forms, hiring exemplary teachers, researchers, and scholars with deep disciplinary strengths and the ability and willingness to enhance the interdisciplinary direction of RIT.

Difference Maker I.3
RIT will further enhance its position as the preeminent academic institution and model for professional and technical education for people who are deaf or hard of hearing around the world.

Objective I.3.1
Operationalize “Strategic Decisions 2020: Shaping NTID’s Future Through Innovation.”

Objective I.3.2
Through NTID (National Technical Institute for the Deaf) and in collaboration with the other RIT colleges, expand the university’s role as a national and international Resource Center of Excellence in the education of people who are deaf or hard of hearing.

Objective I.3.3
Through NTID and in collaboration with the other RIT colleges, promote technology in support of access and learning for people who are deaf or hard of hearing.

Objective I.3.4
Enhance student learning and the use of educational technology for deaf or hard-of-hearing learners at RIT, around the nation, and around the world.

Objective I.3.5
Organize research centers around NTID’s traditional areas of success-related research: Teaching and Learning; Communication; Technology, Access, and Support Services; and Employment and Adaptability to Social Changes and the Global Workplace.
Difference Maker I.4
RIT will lead higher education with a unique outcomes-based assessment model designed to ensure continuous progress in student learning, graduate success, stakeholder satisfaction, and academic excellence.

Objective I.4.1
Deploy real-time program review, assessment, and renewal to guide planning, resource allocation, continual improvement, and effective responses to opportunities and challenges.

Objective I.4.2
Regularly assess employer satisfaction with the T-shaped skills and competencies of our graduates.

Difference Maker I.5
RIT will expand and strengthen opportunities for experiential learning to the point that there are sufficient placement opportunities for all undergraduate and graduate students to participate in at least one such experience.

Objective I.5.1
Revise degree program requirements so that an experiential learning component (of which co-op is an important subset) is required in all undergraduate and graduate programs, resulting in 100% of RIT students participating in experiential learning relevant to their degree program and designed to provide skills and competencies of growing importance to employers. (In addition to co-op, variants of experiential learning to be considered include internship, research, field experience, clinical experience, and senior capstone experience.)

Objective I.5.2
In appropriate programs, and using current rigorous standards for assigning co-op status, consider including paid participation on a funded research team as a candidate for co-op status.

Objective I.5.3
Strengthen alumni connections to expand opportunities for experiential education, especially in programs in which co-op and internship placements are difficult to find.

Difference Maker I.6
Through a blend of curricular, co-curricular, and experiential offerings, RIT will build a leadership program that will equip more graduates to become leaders in their fields.

Objective I.6.1
Develop a broad institutional definition of “leadership” that applies to the spectrum of RIT programs and degrees.
Objective I.6.2
Building upon the current offerings of RIT’s Leadership Institute and Community Service Center, the Divisions of Student Affairs, Academic Affairs, and Development and Alumni Relations will create an exemplary learning community that offers RIT students and alumni multiple opportunities for learning about the contemporary theories and practices of leadership associated with the fast-paced, high-tech, and boundary-blurring careers of the next decade.

Objective I.6.3
Create an Alumni Leadership Advisory board at the university or college level charged with mentoring high-potential students; planning leadership workshops, seminars, and events; and recruiting other alumni to contribute to the development of a strong leadership program.

Objective I.6.4
Provide student leaders with a broad range of leadership development opportunities during their time in office.

Objective I.6.5
Where appropriate, include a “leadership potential” category in evaluation instruments submitted by co-op employers.

Difference Maker I.7
RIT will make the on-time graduation of its undergraduate and graduate students a highly visible university priority.

Objective I.7.1
Students and their advisors will develop comprehensive, multidimensional educational plans designed to ensure that students maximize RIT’s learning resources while also graduating on time.

Objective I.7.2
Identify existing and develop new policies, procedures, practices, and conditions that support progress toward on-time degree completion.

Objective I.7.3
Set on-time graduation goals for five, four, and two-year programs.

Objective I.7.4
Eliminate existing policies, procedures, practices, and conditions that impede progress toward on-time graduation (e.g., revision of the “W” policy; investigation of pass/fail option).

Objective I.7.5
Incorporate the on-time graduation priority into recruitment and marketing materials.
**Difference Maker I.8**
RIT will be a center of innovation, creativity, and entrepreneurship that serves as an important economic engine for Rochester, the region, and the nation.

**Objective I.8.1**
Launch 20 startup companies per year.

**Objective I.8.2**
Leverage university resources and expertise in entrepreneurship to create entrepreneurship curricula (i.e., programs and minors), applied research, business development, and technology transfer opportunities.

**Objective I.8.3**
Develop an investment model to fuel entrepreneurial activities.

**Difference Maker I.9**
RIT will establish a campus-wide culture that embraces alumni, contributes to their lifelong learning, and relies upon them for counsel and support.

**Objective I.9.1**
Establish an alumni loyalty program that recognizes and rewards those alumni who engage, volunteer, mentor, give, and promote. Use loyal membership as a launch pad for leadership roles.

**Objective I.9.2**
Expand opportunities for alumni to serve on college and program advisory boards.

**Objective I.9.3**
Design and implement “RIT for Life,” a program for alumni that serves as a catalyst for their lifelong learning and continuous career development. Consider offering online and nontraditional courses and learning packages at a significant discount.
Dimension Two: The Student-Centered Research University

As a student-centered research university, RIT combines the mission-critical activities of research, scholarship, artistic creation, creative inquiry, teaching, and learning across all degree levels and disciplines. By conducting government-funded, interdisciplinary, high-impact research and by partnering with business and industry in private R & D, we will advance the boundaries of knowledge and the application of new technologies. Recognizing that participation on research teams enhances critical and creative thinking, collaboration, and cross-disciplinary competencies, we will facilitate the participation of undergraduate and master’s degree students on funded research teams. We will enrich the graduate student experience through a holistic approach to their success, and we will develop opportunities for all students to collaborate across international and intercultural borders.

Difference Maker II.1
RIT will be internationally distinguished as a research university through its focus on and investment in specific inter- and trans-disciplinary research areas identified through a systematic and inclusive selection process.

Objective II.1.1
Continue adding interdisciplinary Ph.D. programs that are in line with the university’s research strategy.

Objective II.1.2
Develop a systematic, transparent, and data-driven process for identifying a limited set of signature interdisciplinary research areas in which RIT can become a global leader. This structure will 1) promote collaboration across colleges, departments, and centers; 2) make strategic investments in interdisciplinary focus areas to catalyze further growth; 3) eliminate barriers to participation in interdisciplinary research for faculty and students across RIT; and 4) ensure stable financing for research infrastructure in research focus areas.

Objective II.1.3
Develop and communicate a strong, data-based research vision that focuses on a set of transformative, interdisciplinary, and inclusive research areas.

Objective II.1.4
Create an external research advisory board comprised of impartial, recognized experts to guide the selection and evaluation of strategic research areas.

Objective II.1.5
Using the methods described above, investigate the potential of the following research areas: Digital Media and Imaging Science; Global Resilience; Accessibility and Inclusion; Advanced Design and Manufacturing.
**Difference Maker II.2**

RIT will maximize the impact and financial support gained through its research programs by collaborating more extensively with business and industry to yield $100M in total research funding annually.

**Objective II.2.1**

Develop multiple compensation models for research conducted under the Corporate R & D Program, including RIT’s acceptance of company equity in lieu of cash in return for intellectual property rights.

**Objective II.2.2**

Create a special program to encourage collaboration in research activities with alumni-led businesses.

**Difference Maker II.3**

RIT’s research enterprise will be a national model of leveraged diversity (disciplinary generational, global, and experiential) based upon the principle that teams constituted of members with diverse expertise, talent, experience, and backgrounds drive the best questions, the best processes, and the best solutions.

**Objective II.3.1**

Increase the number of master’s and bachelor’s level students on funded research teams.

**Objective II.3.2**

Develop a mentoring/orientation program for undergraduate and graduate students that extends beyond the classroom to develop their capacity to add value on funded research teams.

**Objective II.3.3**

Map research skills acquired by undergraduates to the T-shaped competencies increasingly required by employers.

**Objective II.3.4**

Establish research partnerships in emerging international centers of excellence.

**Difference Maker II.4**

RIT will enlarge its graduate portfolio through adding professional and research-focused programs in STEM fields, the humanities, social sciences, and arts, bringing the graduate population to 30% of the total student population. New programs will include experiential learning, research, scholarship, and co-curricular opportunities. All programs will strive for the highest levels of excellence and global recognition.

**Objective II.4.1**

Ensure that graduate programs include innovative curricula, capstone projects, cooperative education, and international collaboration.
Objective II.4.2
Using existing program structures and course work, create innovative, interdisciplinary graduate degree packages, such as minors, Ph.D./MBA pathways, and co-curricular options for Ph.D., MFA, and MS degrees.

Objective II.4.3
To improve continually the quality of graduate education at RIT, develop a holistic graduate program portfolio and a data-driven assessment plan.

Objective II.4.4
Develop and implement a 10-year plan for increasing and enriching library and electronic resources to accommodate the planned growth in graduate students and the graduate program portfolio.

Objective II.4.5
Provide a range of professional development opportunities throughout graduate students’ RIT career, including:

- professional and personal development workshops and training (e.g., research methods, communication, thesis preparation, grant writing, teaching);
- graduate career and placement counseling;
- teaching experience;
- recognition and awards for student excellence.
**Dimension Three: Leveraging Difference**

RIT has long recognized the importance of diversity to organizational growth and synergy. Beginning in the early 19th century, when we welcomed women into our classes decades before other colleges even considered co-education, we have intentionally sought students, faculty, and staff from multiple backgrounds, ethnicities, and countries. The 1968 addition of NTID (National Technical Institute for the Deaf) brought an intellectual, linguistic, and programmatic diversity to RIT that is unmatched in higher education. We are likewise proud of the high percentage of low-income students enrolled at RIT (as measured by the number of Pell grants awarded annually) as well as of our growing ranks of minority and international students. The unmatched diversity of our academic programs is a direct result of the diverse voices that constantly participate in the RIT conversation.

Through our new strategic plan, we will intentionally develop practices, opportunities, and programs that harness the power of difference to drive creative solutions, innovative combinations, and productive collaboration.

**Difference Maker III.1**

RIT will be among the top five national universities in global engagement, as measured by the breadth and size of its international student and alumni populations.

**Objective III.1.1**

Establish research partnerships in emerging international centers of excellence.

**Objective III.1.2**

Deploy innovative ways to educate international students.

**Objective III.1.3**

Establish an RIT Global Faculty Exchange/Symposium Program and International Collaboration Grant Program to support faculty collaboration and student interaction across RIT’s network of international partners and sites, as well as with our international student population.

**Objective III.1.4**

Identify select new academic programs that could be developed through international partnerships and offered within emerging international centers of excellence.

**Objective III.1.5**

Develop strategic alumni engagement activities to connect RIT with alumni around the world. Leverage these connections to build robust experiential educational opportunities for students abroad.
Difference Maker III.2
RIT students will be internationally recognized for their global experience, their mastery of intercultural competencies, and their engagement with globally relevant problems.

Objective III.2.1
All undergraduate programs will identify a place in their curricula for a specific program opportunity through which students can participate in a global, international, or multicultural educational experience.

Objective III.2.2
The Office of the Associate Provost for International Education will transform study abroad into “RIT Global Experiential Learning,” with a focused commitment to developing a new model of international experiential education.

Objective III.2.3
Ensure the intellectual interaction of international and U.S. graduate students in research teams, project teams, and course assignments.

Objective III.2.4
Establish a reverse study abroad option to allow faculty from our global campuses to study at the Rochester campus during summer and intersession.

Objective III.2.5
Develop a set of curricular and co-curricular offerings through which graduate students may achieve the global and intercultural competencies valued by employers.

Difference Maker III.3
RIT faculty will be internationally recognized for their global experience, their mastery of intercultural competencies, and their engagement with globally relevant problems.

Objective III.3.1
Increase the opportunity for professional interaction among RIT faculty at U.S. and international locations.

Objective III.3.2
Develop and fund a faculty exchange program through which faculty from all RIT sites can pursue research and teaching interests on any RIT campus.

Objective III.3.3
Encourage faculty to take international sabbaticals and provide associated resources.
Difference Maker III.4
RIT will establish targeted centers of collaborative research with international universities, laboratories, and/or corporations in areas of common expertise and aligned goals.

Objective III.4.1
Develop a strategy and associated protocols for the internationalization of research to enable faculty to secure international funding and expand their international research capabilities in targeted strategic areas.

Objective III.4.2
Create a program of faculty and graduate student rotations through these centers for both U.S.-based and international students and faculty.

Difference Maker III.5
RIT will be the largest producer of female, minority male, and deaf or hard-of-hearing STEM graduates among all private colleges in the U.S.

Objective III.5.1
Develop 10-year plans for increasing the number and percentage of females, minority males, and deaf or hard-of-hearing students in STEM majors.

Objective III.5.2
Examine the current marketing strategy for each STEM program and set annual goals for increasing the number and percentage of female, minority male, and deaf or hard-of-hearing undergraduates in each.

Objective III.5.3
Develop pilot recruitment programs for partner charter school H.S. girls and boys to attract them to STEM colleges and careers.

Objective III.5.4
Conduct an analysis of attrition patterns from STEM programs for these three populations and develop an action plan for increasing retention rates.

Difference Maker III.6
RIT will eliminate the achievement gap between minority and majority students, becoming a model of inclusive excellence for all students.

Objective III.6.1
Using an asset-based assessment and research model, develop a profile of success factors and institutional challenges for minority males.

Objective III.6.2
Develop a comprehensive mentoring program for minority males in which two mentors are assigned to each student throughout his RIT career, engaging alumni where possible.
Objective III.6.3
Using the model of the bi-annual attrition study conducted in the President’s office, interview minority students who leave RIT before graduating.

Objective III.6.4
Develop a national model for the preparation, recruitment, and financial support of urban, minority, and low-income high school graduates through the Rochester City Scholars program and the RIT-Rochester Prep Charter School partnership.

Difference Maker III.7
RIT will become a model of inclusive excellence for all faculty and staff in the areas of professional development and promotion.

Objective III.7.1
Increase the number of female and minority employees in supervisory and management positions.

Objective III.7.2
Increase and enrich professional development opportunities for all faculty and staff.

Objective III.7.3
Design, distribute, and publicize a set of career ladders and lattices for advancement and promotion within each RIT division.

Objective III.7.4
Examine the current RIT Mentoring program to determine if it addresses the personal, professional, and career advancement needs of minority and female faculty and staff.

Difference Maker III.8
RIT will reflect diversity and inclusion as core values in assessing performance and promotion at all levels and in all functions of the university.

Objective III.8.1
The President will include “attention to diversity and inclusion” as a performance criterion for his leadership team.

Objective III.8.2
“Attention to diversity and inclusion” will be considered as an addition to the tenure criteria.

Difference Maker III.9
RIT will be a model of excellence in its deployment of difference to solve problems and practice innovation.
Objective III.9.1
Ensure that all policy- and decision-making bodies contain diverse voices and viewpoints.

Objective III.9.2
Create a mechanism by which students participating in faculty and/or staff committees receive co-curricular credit.

Objective III.9.3
Encourage the productive interaction of students from multiple disciplines in academic, co-curricular, and social settings.

Objective III.9.4
Create undergraduate and graduate multidisciplinary capstone projects in which students from distinctly different disciplines collaborate on a common project.

Objective III.9.5
On all RIT campuses, create curricular and co-curricular forums that encourage the interaction of international students, alumni, and visiting scholars with resident students, faculty, visiting scholars, and alumni.

Difference Maker III.10
RIT will initiate a comprehensive marketing campaign to make all current and potential stakeholders and higher education at large fully aware of the university’s extraordinary history, its unique character, and its exceptional record of success.

Objective III.10.1
Create a Chief Marketing Officer position charged with overseeing all university marketing efforts and leading an associated marketing unit.

Objective III.10.2
Constitute an inter-divisional committee of high-level stakeholders led by the CMO to develop an integrated strategic marking-communications plan for the university.
Dimension Four: Affordability, Value, and Return on Investment

Dramatic changes in the demographics of the college-going population will make it more important than ever for RIT to continue its tradition of affordability and access. Increasing the amount of financial aid available to students will help us sustain and enrich the student diversity so necessary to the creativity and productivity of the university community. RIT is committed to leading the affordability charge by addressing price and student financial capacity, by ensuring ample financial aid to accommodate high-need students, and by introducing technological solutions to reduce costs while improving learning outcomes.

Recognizing that affordability is as much about quality outcomes as costly input, we will provide the next decade’s students with the skills and knowledge necessary to succeed in satisfying and remunerative careers that will justify the expense of undergraduate and graduate education. Our students’ return on their tuition investment will come not only in the material form of future earnings, but also in their ability to effect positive change, contribute to the social good, and continue on a path of lifelong learning.

Difference Maker IV.1

RIT will be the university with the best placement rate and return on investment of all private universities in the United States.

Objective IV.1.1
Include the criteria of “academic program currency,” “student employability,” and “post-graduation success” in program assessment and program review.

Objective IV.1.2
Without sacrificing quality, streamline approval processes for new academic programs and courses to ensure their timely introduction.

Objective IV.1.3
Publicize and deliver on a guarantee that no student in good standing within 15 credits of graduation will drop out because of insufficient funds for the remaining tuition.

Objective IV.1.4
Programs with a required or optional co-op will work with the ILI to develop a set of differentially priced online courses that can be taken when students are on co-op assignments.

Objective IV.1.5
Include in our calculation of return on tuition investment the provision of discounted online courses designed to keep alumni current in their careers.
**Difference Maker IV.2**

RIT will become the university that best utilizes educational technology to improve access, maintain academic quality, and achieve desired learning outcomes while balancing costs.

**Objective IV.2.1**

Using the model of “RIT Online,” the ILI (Innovative Learning Institute) will identify, develop, and deliver courses and competency instruction to enhance the career advancement of alumni.

**Objective IV.2.2**

Following extensive market research, the ILI will add innovative workforce preparedness programs in areas of highest need (locally and nationally). Programs will likely reflect a shift to learning-centered, competency-based delivery.

**Objective IV.2.3**

Make available through the RIT portal third-party learning packages such as Mozilla Open Badges.

**Difference Maker IV.3**

Through a tuition containment program and a capital campaign drive for additional scholarship support, RIT will address the financial needs of promising low-income students.

**Objective IV.3.1**

Direct a specified amount of funding from capital campaign scholarship drive to support low-income and underrepresented students (e.g., Rochester City Scholars, Pell-eligible students, SAY Yes students).

**Objective IV.3.2**

Create a Study Abroad/Co-op Abroad scholarship fund for low-income students.

**Objective IV.3.3**

Double the number of Rochester City Scholars attending RIT.

**Difference Maker IV.4**

RIT will launch a blended capital campaign entitled “Greatness Through Difference” to raise the public, private, and research funding necessary for the achievement of critical “Difference Makers” in the 2015-2025 strategic plan.

**Objective IV.4.1**

The capital campaign decision makers will develop a prioritized list of those Difference Makers most likely to be attractive to potential funders, most likely to lead us to our goal of greatness, and most marketable to potential stakeholders.

**Objective IV.4.2**

Set a capital campaign goal sufficient to fund the new strategic plan.
Difference Maker IV.5
RIT will develop alternative methods of raising revenue, including developing innovative, fully online workforce development programs to nontraditional students, increasing opportunities for venue rentals by external parties, and providing services to the Rochester community.
Dimension Five: Organizational Agility

RIT owes much of its past success to the alacrity with which it has been able to anticipate and respond to changes in multiple environments in which it operates. In the next decade, these shifts will accelerate and in some cases expand to the level of seismic change, requiring us to develop innovative practices and policies that facilitate and encourage good ideas and the changes they lead to. In other words, we need to maximize our organizational agility.

“Organizational Agility” is more than a dimension: it is a strategic imperative and the linchpin of this plan. Underlying every difference-making goal in the previous pages is the assumption that our institutional culture will be agile and efficient—that we will be able to make decisions with dispatch; to move at least as quickly as the drivers of technology, science, and the global economy; and to reorganize as often as necessary to support the key themes of this plan (academic excellence in teaching, learning, scholarship and research; interdisciplinarity; diversity; and affordability). At the same time, we must recognize that a defining element of organizational agility is the ability to respond to these external dynamics and opportunities without traumatic change to the organization.

Our deep commitment to the sustainability and resiliency of the planet will require us to stay abreast of the latest research, to deploy the most current, appropriate, and efficient tools, and to move quickly in responding to sustainability imperatives.

The Difference Makers below could have introduced every dimension in the preceding pages, but they are so important to the success of “Greatness Through Difference” that we have given them pride of place as the final words of this document.

Difference Maker V.1

RIT’s curricular, administrative, and organizational structures will serve, not impede, discovery, border crossing, and collaboration among students, faculty, and staff.

Objective V.1.1
Create a collaborative and interdisciplinary structure and culture for students, faculty, staff, and alumni.

Objective V.1.2
Remove impediments to the approval process for jointly offered interdisciplinary programs.

Objective V.1.3
Using the Center for Multidisciplinary Studies as a starting point, expand and further develop a process for offering the capacity to offer individualized degrees that allow motivated students, with guidance from faculty and staff, to design and implement personalized courses of study and interdisciplinary projects.
Difference Maker V.2
RIT will reduce academic and administrative silos and diminish the lingering negative effects of a silo culture.

**Objective V.2.1**
Reward collaboration within and across colleges with regard to curricula, teaching, research, and the student-faculty-staff culture.

**Objective V.2.2**
Redesign budget and costing models to encourage savings while rewarding calculated risk through increased collaboration within and across colleges.

**Objective V.2.3**
Facilitate the movement of students and faculty across disciplines in order to engage, motivate, and maximize student and faculty innovation.

Difference Maker V.3
Following a thorough budget and space audit, RIT will create a master space plan.

**Objective V.3.1**
Develop a transparent, collaborative, and sustainable process for the assignment of space.

**Objective V.3.2**
Ensure that the interdivisional body responsible for space assignment is part of the decision-making process for the design and assignment of new construction.

Difference Maker V.4
RIT will develop a university culture that is less risk-averse and less bureaucratic; it will streamline compliance measures and empower local decision-making responsibilities.

**Objective V.4.1**
Use long-term planning opportunities and financial transparency as opportunities for taking risk.

**Objective V.4.2**
Examine best practices at comparable institutions to streamline compliance.

**Objective V.4.3**
Create a practice that regularly brings together a broad diversity of people for the discussion of new ideas, innovative solutions to old problems, and game-changing ways to instantiate the university mission.
Difference Maker V.5
In the service of ensuring a sustainable planet, RIT will restore, ameliorate, and work within the systems and resources necessary to meet the needs of the current generation in an equitable manner without jeopardizing future generations.

**Objective V.5.1**
RIT will cultivate global citizens and leaders prepared to address the interconnected ecological, economic, social, and ethical challenges of creating a sustainable future.

**Objective V.5.2**
The RIT campuses will serve as living laboratories for and international models of campus sustainability, with infrastructure and operations designed to reflect our leadership in sustainability, adaptation, and resiliency.

**Objective V.5.3**
RIT will develop innovative curricula, programs, and research that foster a commitment to sustainability.

**Objective V.5.4**
RIT will partner, locally and internationally, with the communities in which it is engaged to advance sustainability and build resiliency.
This strategic plan will challenge everyone within the university community. Were it not for the remarkable character of the institution and of all who work for it on a daily basis, we would not have had the temerity to propose such a bold vision. But every one of the hundreds of people who helped to frame this plan shares a confidence in the dedication, talents, and collective good will of the many people who will drive and carry out its implementation.

Indeed, every success that RIT has achieved is traceable to its single most powerful advantage: its people. From its inception, RIT has been blessed with extraordinarily loyal, intelligent, and creative employees who believe deeply in an institutional mission that has remained remarkably constant throughout its history: preparing students for gainful, satisfied, and effective lives. This was a school that early on earned the epithet of “the people’s institute”—reflecting a democratic, egalitarian, practical spirit that remains a strong part of the RIT ethos.

The people of RIT also relish and promote the critical institutional asset of difference—an advantage that some of us like to represent through the following (different) analogy.

The RIT of 2015 is like that somewhat geeky student who in high school did not run with the popular crowds or dress the best or go to all the parties. Instead, she stayed true to her own interests and the development of her talents. When, in 2015, this same student attends her 10-year high school reunion, she is the most successful, the most sought-after, the most interesting of anyone there. The cheerleaders and prom queens may have lost some of their early fizzle, but our geeky alum, fueled by the courage and creativity of her difference, is growing strong.

And so too is the RIT of 2015—poised for a position of greatness that is built solidly upon the work of remarkable people and upon everything we have learned through being different.