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"Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the government for a redress of grievances."

— FIRST AMENDMENT TO THE UNITED STATES CONSTITUTION

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EDITORIALS

RIT's new mission

■ Fundraising campaign will accelerate efforts to make school a first choice.

Amid a sputtering national economy, this is hardly the best time for the Rochester Institute of Technology to conduct an ambitious \$300 million fundraising campaign. Yet, to their credit, RIT's leaders understand that they must not be tepid about looking ahead to the future.

That kind of foresight is, of course, vital to RIT President Albert Simone's worthy goal of making the school as attractive to top high school graduates as Harvard University and Massachusetts Institute of Technology. But it's also critical to the future vitality of this region. Remember, RIT has 28,000 graduates in the Rochester area and employs 2,800 people.

Already RIT has raised \$151 million, which includes \$14 million donated by B. Thomas Golisano, the Paychex Inc. founder. Over the next four years, the "Powered by the Future" campaign hopes to raise the remainder of its goal by strategically targeting alumni, friends and the community in general.

There is every reason to believe

the campaign will succeed. A 20 percent increase in enrollment since the mid-1990s is a strong indicator that RIT is in demand. Of nearly 10,000 applicants for the freshman class this year, only 2,400 were admitted.

Indeed, with so many top students seeking admission to RIT comes increased stature in the academic world, which can give the fundraising campaign a huge boost.

Alumni and other RIT supporters will surely recognize that growth necessitates the expansion of programs and facilities. At least \$75 million will be earmarked for student scholarships and fellowships while \$50 million will be spent on faculty recruitment and retention.

It shouldn't go unnoticed that RIT is making huge strides in attracting faculty and students from minority groups. This year, 31 percent of new faculty hires were African American, Latino or Native American. Too, students of color represent a record 10 percent of this year's freshman class.

RIT is clearly on its way to joining the top tier of the nation's universities. The "Powered by the Future" campaign almost guarantees a successful journey. □