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From: RIT Message Center [msgctr@rit.edu]
Sent: Monday, February 20, 2012 1:54 PM
To: RIT Message Center
Subject: Calendar Conversion - Midpoint Update

Colleagues,

Two years ago February 10, President Destler announced that RIT would be switching its academic calendar from quarters to semesters. The announcement, which set the stage for the three-year calendar conversion project, was the culmination of intense debate across campus. As we prepared to launch the calendar conversion’s first step, the program conversion process, fall 2013 was still four summers away, we had many more questions than answers, and the calendar conversion committees were just coming together. Though we knew where we needed to be about three-and-a-half years hence, the totality of the calendar conversion project struck me as large, very large. This view was stressed every time I talked with colleagues from other universities that were a year or two into their calendar conversion processes, and those which had already gone through the conversion. The task was daunting, but our determination to get the job done was its match.

Today, with hundreds of questions asked and answered, numerous deadlines met, and countless documents typed, discussed, filed and approved, we are just two summers from fall 2013. The feeling around campus, while not laid back, is more relaxed. We still have a ways to go, but semesters seem more tangible now as conversations around campus gradually shift from converting programs to implementing courses, from academic calendar formats to course scheduling models, from identifying advising needs to advising students.

We have come a long way and I’d like to share with you a few highlights of your accomplishments:

- **Converted programs.** Of the 202 marked for conversion to semesters, the Academic Senate has approved 189, and New York State Education Department (NYSED) has registered 157. Each of these programs was reviewed and approved by their respective department and college curriculum committees, sent out for approval by ICC or Grad Council, sent to the Academic Senate for university approval and finally, from the office of the Senior Associate Provost for Academic Affairs, sent out to NYSED for registration. Our faculty, program administrators and directors, and department chairs took the lead on the production and delivery of the converted program documents.

- **Program assessment.** As part of the calendar conversion process, academic programs were required to develop or refine programmatic student learning outcomes and prepare a new or revised outcomes assessment plan. Today, 100% of our academic programs have well-defined semester program-level assessment plans. In addition, programs have the opportunity to move those program-level assessment plans into a new assessment management system. The goal is to have all programs actively using this system for implementing their semester program assessment plans by summer 2014. Currently, the first phase of training on the new assessment management system includes the College of Science, College of Liberal Arts, and Golisano College for Computing and Information Sciences.

- **General Education Student Learning Outcomes Assessment.** During semester conversion, RIT’s General Education Student Learning Outcomes were aligned to the semester-based General Education Framework’s *Foundation* and *Perspective* courses to ensure that RIT provides students with opportunities to demonstrate achievement of the expected learning outcomes. Each general education course proposed in the semester model must identify and measure the expected General
Education Student Learning Outcomes in order to receive approval from the General Education Committee. With the implementation of the new Student Information System (SIS), faculty and students are able to search by Perspective categories for courses that meet specific outcomes. In SIS, there is direct articulation of which courses are aligned to the General Education Student Learning Outcomes.

- **Course database.** Designed to meet specifications proposed by the Registrar, *SemCon*, a transitional Web-accessible semester course database, was constructed by a software engineering senior team. It provides anyone with an RIT e-mail account Web access to semester course information. Our scheduling officers and staff from the Registrar’s office led the effort to upload data to *SemCon*, which currently holds about 3,676 semester course records. *SemCon* was also used to populate the new SIS, whose implementation is nearing completion.

- **Advising staff.** To help our colleges meet their calendar conversion advising needs, ten new student advisors have already been hired. Before fall 2012, there will be a total of 15 new student advisors in place to help with the Individual Advising Plan (IAP) process scheduled to start in fall 2012 for the great majority of the programs; NTID’s associate degree programs will start their IAP process this spring.

- **Student advising and Individual Advising Plans (IAPs).** Much of what we have accomplished and much of the work that lies ahead is geared to help our students. The first time that most of our current students will come face-to-face with semesters will be when they meet with their academic advisors to discuss their IAP. With input from numerous groups, including associate deans, student advisors and department chairs, the IAP delivery process created by the Deans Delegates for Advising is now documented and in stable form. It can be found in the calendar conversion website under the faculty and staff menu tab. A prototype IAP template has also been developed with input from the aforementioned groups. It is available now from each college’s Deans Delegate for Advising. Most colleges have chosen to use or adapt this template for their specific programs needs. Industrial Engineering, for example, developed a more sophisticated IAP template of its own which will be used throughout KGCOE. Programs that choose to use an IAP template different from the prototype will need to have their document approved by the Calendar Conversion Office.

- **2013 – 2014 academic calendar.** After long and productive conversations around campus that included input from representatives of the entire campus community, on January 20, President Destler announced that we had reached agreement on the 2013-2014 academic calendar year. Classes will start on Monday, August 26; details of our first academic semester calendar are available online.

- **Calendar conversion student guide.** A calendar conversion guide for students is now available on the Calendar Conversion website. Designed for students who will be enrolled in quarters and semesters, the online guide will help students negotiate the transition.

- **Web crawler.** A committee was organized to provide guidance to the campus on the conversion of RIT’s Web pages. To assist with this task, under the direction of ITS, a Web crawler was implemented, which will generate a directory of Web pages that may need attention. The crawler scans RIT’s pages and looks for text strings drawn from a list of “suspicious” quarter-related terms. When one of these strings is found on a page, the crawler creates a reference entry in a college or unit-specific spreadsheet; these spreadsheets will be shared with the appropriate groups within the next few days.

- **2013 – 2014 schedule of courses.** A committee was formed in early fall to lead the development of RIT’s first schedule of semester courses. The four-step process envisioned by the committee is well underway: Step 1, service course matching, is complete and Step 2, section seat matching, is nearing
completion. Step 3, which will focus on specific seat and time needs per section, is being discussed. Step 4, fine-tuning of the schedule, will take place over the summer. The goal is to have the 2013-2014 schedule of courses ready by early fall.

- **Course scheduling model.** A scheduling model is a template of daily time-blocks used to assign specific weekly meeting times to each course offered during an academic term. On January 26, the Provost presented to the Academic Senate three alternative scheduling models; members of the Academic Senate, some program administrators, and deans suggested modifications to the presented models while sharing with the Provost their views on each of the models. On February 16, the Provost went back to the Academic Senate to expand on the scheduling models he presented in January, and to share his thoughts on RIT’s classroom capacity to deliver our semester courses. During his presentation, Provost Haefner recognized the outstanding job that RIT’s scheduling officers have done in support of both the calendar conversion and the development of the Student Information System. Following the discussion the Academic Senate voted on the three models. The result of the vote was subsequently communicated to President Destler who, in the next few days, will announce his decision on which model we will use to schedule our semester courses.

Everything that we have accomplished thus far is result of conversations, presentations, and discussions at countless meetings held across campus. The effort, care for detail, and commitment to student success with which many individuals around campus have dived into their duties, are in no trivial way responsible for our accomplishments. Though there may be disagreements and alternative views on issues, there is no disagreement on our primary goal: to offer our students an outstanding academic experience. Here is a short list of campus-wide committees that have played key roles through this process.

- **Calendar conversion committees.** Very early in the calendar conversion project, calendar conversion committees were formed to help guide key aspects of the conversion. Each of these committees has made good on its respective charge and, when appropriate, has delivered formal reports that have been shared with the campus.

- **Governance committees.** We take pride on RIT’s shared governance structure. With the strong support, participation and leadership of Inter-college Curriculum Committee (ICC), Graduate Council (Grad Council), and the Academic Senate, we have been able to move the conversion project forward. Over the last year-and-a-half, these groups have made room in their busy agendas to review, discuss and ultimately approve each of our semester programs; ICC and Grad Council increased their respective memberships and added meeting times to meet the needs of the calendar conversion through 2010 – 2011. In addition, Staff Council and Student Government have each played key roles as we have come to them for advice on various aspects of the conversion.

- **Cross Divisional and Logistics Operations Committee.** With the conclusion of the first phase of the Calendar Conversion, attention around the university has gradually increased on key aspects of the implementation of the semester calendar that will require cross-divisional interaction and coordination through fall of 2013. The Cross-Divisional Logistics and Operations Committee was formed in summer of 2011 to address calendar conversion issues that will broadly impact the University. The committee is focusing on our commitment to uphold RIT’s pledge to our students and the implementation of key aspects of the transition to semesters.

Someone pointed out that the week of January 5 was the midpoint of our semester conversion timeline. It was then that I decided to look back and think about all that we have accomplished. As I collected my notes and looked back to July 1, 2010, when we started to warm-up, so to speak, I was amazed at all that we have accomplished. We have done all this in small installments: one meeting at a time, one document at a time, one conversation at a time, one question and one answer at a time. We cannot stop the clock or change our
course, and August 26, 2013 is getting closer. If our accomplishments thus far are good predictors of what we can do, the fall semester of 2013 – 2014 will be both the start of a new and bright era in RIT’s history and the continuation of our success.

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