Colleagues,

Every once in a while we are fortunate to witness significant change in the making – change that fundamentally affects our work for years to come; it is an exhilarating feeling.

Yesterday was one of those defining moments for RIT as the Academic Senate approved the new General Education Framework by a vote of 24 in favor, 1 against, and 5 abstaining. The discussion was superb as concerns, issues and questions were vetted and changes made to the document. All of these points will be factored into the work that remains ahead.

The approval of the General Education Framework marks a complete transformation for our core general education program, one that will take effect in 2013 when we launch semesters. The last major revision to our general education curriculum occurred over 30 years ago. Combined with our General Education Student Learning Outcomes, which were approved in May 2009, this framework now constitutes the foundation of our new program. The final piece is, of course, the curriculum itself that will populate the Framework and deliver the content and material of a liberal education in support of the student learning outcomes.

I have been so proud of the faculty throughout this process. In all the discussions, the faculty put the needs of the students as paramount. The result is a scaffolding that will drive a new intentional, innovative and integrative curriculum based on the principles of liberal education and putting our students first.

All of this would not have been possible without the incredible work of the General Education Curriculum Committee: Elizabeth Hane (chair), Franz Foltz, Erhan Mergen, George Zion, Rajendra Raj, Surendra Gupta, David Templeton, Naomi Orwin, Amit Ray, Glenn Kist/Robert Ulin, Dick Doolittle and Anne Wahl. Chris Licata also played a helpful and supportive role. I will especially call out a tribute to Elizabeth Hane who served as the chair of this committee and who, over the course of 3 months, made over 21 presentations throughout the campus community. Please join me in thanking Elizabeth for her outstanding leadership through this process.

The next step for the committee will be to formulate a more detailed proposal for the First Year Seminar, a key course in the new framework; devise criteria, based on the principles of liberal education for advancing courses in the General Education curriculum; and then work with the faculty in a process for vetting and approving courses into the curriculum.

On behalf of the Office of the Provost, I thank the Academic Senate for their role in this significant change and in the process of shared governance that was demonstrated yesterday.

And, to all the faculty and staff, I extend my wishes for all to have a very Happy Thanksgiving.

Jeremy Haefner
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