Colleagues,

I have attended a number of college meetings where the calendar has been discussed. The discussion, while difficult, has been an earnest one and one that makes me proud to be a part of the RIT community.

During these discussions, I have often heard the question why is a calendar change being considered?

This is a very valid question and one that warrants an answer. So, after conferring with President Destler, I decided to offer the following answer as to why we are discussing calendars at this time.

No calendar is perfect; each has its strengths and weaknesses. In this light, the reason for this discussion is to answer the question: Is the current calendar optimal for our current state and is it optimal for the future? Let me elaborate.

**Is the calendar optimal for RIT today?** Over the past 30 or so years while the current calendar has remained essentially unchanged, RIT has changed considerably. We have certainly seen new programs, new buildings, new technology, new expectations, and new mission and vision statements. Has the calendar kept up with these changes?

Specifically, the vision statement of RIT is now “RIT will lead higher education in preparing students for innovative, creative, and successful careers in a global society.” Is the calendar optimal for preparing students for innovative, creative and successful careers in a global society? For example, does the calendar lend itself for making a study abroad experience easy for our students?

Student success is another key area of our current strategy. Many faculty and students believe the split winter quarter is disruptive to the learning process; others, however, do not feel it is a problem. Nonetheless, the D, W, F rates for our students do increase in winter quarter over the other quarters, and so I ask is the current calendar optimal for student success?

**Is the calendar optimal for RIT tomorrow?** This is really where we must center our hearts and our minds. In the documentation on the Provost’s website ([http://www.rit.edu/~w-aa/priorities_initiatives.php](http://www.rit.edu/~w-aa/priorities_initiatives.php)), there is data about the trend of colleges and universities shifting away from the quarter system and to the semester system. In 1988, 25% of higher education institutions used the quarter system; by 2012, it is estimated that this number will be less than 10%. Put another way, by 2012, over 91% of all colleges and universities will be on the semester calendar. It is my expectation that after 2012, more quarter calendar schools will make the shift to semesters.

So what might this mean to RIT if it remains on the quarter system? To some, it may mean that we remain distinctive and therefore attractive to a certain kind of student. On the other hand, there may be challenges if RIT was to be one of a very small number of universities still on the quarter system. For example, students wishing to transfer from a semester school to RIT are
currently faced with the fact that the quarters do not line up with the semesters so they can only effectively transfer at the beginning of the year. If over 90% of all universities are on the semester system, will RIT be able to effectively compete for these transfer students?

This shift might also impact the co-op experience. With more schools on the semester system, and more employers catering to those students, will RIT students be able to compete for these co-ops?

The question of whether the current calendar system is optimal for RIT now or in the future is a very complex question – one where the answer will not be obvious nor will there be conclusive data to fully support any approach. It will, however, be a strategic decision – one made with the best interests of the institution in mind.

I hope this short note has helped put in perspective why the President and I are interested in having this calendar discussion. As we break for the holidays, I wish you all a very joyful respite filled with family and friends.

Best wishes,

Jeremy Haefner, Provost and Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs