Colleagues,

While the university converted from quarters to semesters, faculty, deans, department heads, staff and advising offices have worked tirelessly to implement two major curricular initiatives forwarded by faculty and approved by the Academic Senate over the past three years: the General Education Framework and the Institute Writing Policy.

Both of these curricular reforms have and will continue to have demonstrable benefits for students.

We are at a point in our planning for full implementation of the Institute Writing Policy (IWP), however, where a special intervention is needed in order to ensure that students are able to complete their degree requirements on time.

As you know, students entering in fall quarter 2012 and beyond are now required to complete the First Year Writing course; a Writing Intensive (WI) general education course and a WI program course. In order to support these requirements, during this past year, we have added resources to the University Writing Program (UWP) so that all students have access to writing support in their first year. In addition, we have hired a UWP director, moved the former Writing Center (now called the Writing Commons) over to Academic Affairs and under the IWP; provided new space for the Writing Commons in the Wallace Library and have begun to develop the infrastructure for peer and professional writing consultants to assist faculty and students in completing the IWP requirements outlined in Policy D 16.

The University Writing Program, along with the Institute Writing Committee (IWC), has collected data regarding the availability of seats for Writing Intensive general education courses. Their analysis indicates that we are only at about 46% of the required seat capacity for this requirement. I have explored all possible options with them and have accepted their recommendation that the general education Writing Intensive requirement of Policy D16.0 be waived for incoming students who began their enrollment in academic years 2012 and 2013. This waiver ensures that no students are delayed in completing their degree. The timing of this decision is critical because students are now beginning pre-registration for spring semester.

At the same time, I have asked Dr. David Martins, director of the University Writing Program and Dr. Richard Zanibbi, chair of the Institute Writing Committee, to work with their teams in concert with Senior Associate Provost Christine Licata to provide me with a plan moving forward for how we can fully implement the IWP general education WI requirement, including any resource implications that were not originally anticipated. I expect this plan by March 15, 2014.

This action should not be interpreted in any way as a lack of commitment to providing our students with necessary instruction and educational experiences to develop effective writing and communication skills. Nor should this be viewed as our backing away from our writing policy expectations. This action gives us the time needed to ensure that we can implement the requirement in a quality way.

Jeremy Haefner, Ph.D.
Provost and Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs

For more information on this and other topics, please visit http://www.rit.edu/provost/