

THE LEADER

RIT Student Affairs Quarterly Newsletter
Developing the nation's most engaged campus community.

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Mark Twain is quoted as saying, "If you don't like the weather... wait a few minutes." This can also be said about student life at RIT. Our students run around with broomsticks playing Quidditch, log thousands of hours in community service projects, celebrate a variety of religious traditions, and keep track of each other's whereabouts on FourSquare. The difference between the weather and student life, however, is that the Division of Student Affairs isn't waiting for change to happen, we are planning for change, and making change happen to enhance the student experience. Whether thinking about the semester conversion, student wellness, or our ever-expanding religious community, Student Affairs is continuously working to assess how students live and learn at RIT and what our role is in adding value to students' lives. We have to be proactive because, as soon as we think we understand student interests-- they change. Sometimes in only five minutes.

Regards,
Mary-Beth Cooper, Senior Vice President for Student Affairs

Student Affairs Spotlight: The Center for Religious Life

By Belinda Dunwoody, Student Health Center

For many students and other members of the RIT community, the Center for Religious Life (CRL) is a meaningful and important resource in their lives. Over the years the center, housed in the Kilian and Caroline F. Schmitt Interfaith Center, has emerged as a focus for RIT's increasingly diverse religious traditions and communities. To date nine constituent traditions share space for prayer, religious services, meditation, and community gatherings. Catholic, CRU (Campus Crusade for Christ), Gospel Fellowship in the Black Church Traditions, Jewish, Inter-Varsity Christian Fellowship, Lutheran, Muslim, Orthodox Christian, and Zen Buddhism, along with student based clubs, gather in the center facilities.

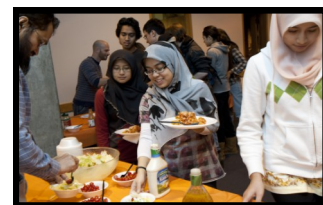


On any given weekend approximately 1,000 students associated with the center religious communities gather for religious services, meetings, and social events. According to Jeff Hering, Director of the Center, the various groups have a genuine respect for the religious traditions of others. "In many ways the center is a microcosm of the world - very diverse, and very global," Hering says with a smile adding, "It's really wonderful." And in each of these traditions there are cultural, ethnic, racial, and national subsets.

The center's 'Pasta Nite' has been a means by which students engage with campus chaplains for over a decade. Every 1st and 3rd Tuesday, up to 100 students relax while campus chaplains and program directors serve a cost-free meal. "Pasta Nite is not only a student outreach by the center," says Hering, "but it is a chance for community building. Just as importantly for our chaplains, it is a chance for them to meet students in a unique setting. Some chaplains are cooking, some are serving, and others are just schmoozing. It's a lot of fun for all of us."

While each center community is student-focused, faculty and staff along with alumni and off campus people participate in center services and events. Chaplains are open to the entire campus community. Students of each tradition may seek the counsel of specific CRL religious professionals or simply "walk in" to chat. "Student needs", commented one chaplain, "can range from a personal crisis to an interview for a class paper. I'm happy to help out in any way I can."

If you are interested in any of the diverse religious groups you can find more information on the website for the Center for Religious Life. <http://www.rit.edu/studentaffairs/religion/>



For information, stop by the center office to inquire about gathering times and special events. Or better yet, come down for "Pasta Nite."

Parallel Universes

If we at RIT had a crystal ball and could glimpse into the future to see how semesters will look for us in 2013, what would we most like to see? Student Affairs professionals had the opportunity to entertain these types of questions when they “met” their Otterbein University colleagues during a videoconference on January 6th. Otterbein University, located in central Ohio, just switched from quarters to semesters.

With tech support from NTID, about 30 RIT professionals from areas such as Campus Life, the Academic Support Center, the Counseling Center, Student Health, Athletics, Wellness, Residence Life, Orientation, International Student Services, Institute Advising, the Registrar’s Office and others gathered to learn about Otterbein’s experiences. Otterbein just completed their first fall semester and started their first 3-week January intersession. Dr. Latty Goodwin, who coordinated the program and directs the calendar conversion project for student affairs noted, “Otterbein stressed that this is a cultural transition, not just a calendar change, and the major challenges they’ve experienced so far have come with the new ways of experiencing terms.”

The Division of Student Affairs at RIT has explored the impact of the calendar conversion on the diverse programs and services it provides for students and gained insight into what is to come, hearing first-hand how colleagues in Ohio are navigating similar changes. Questions about planning for something as nebulous as intersession are of primary concern for the Division as services will need to be available for students no matter how many may be on campus during this optional term. Shawna Lusk, Director of New Student Orientation at RIT said, “Hearing from colleagues who have recently gone through a similar conversion process was eye-opening and gave us a glimpse into some of the challenges and triumphs we might face as we move forward. In our day to day movement

towards semesters we are often so focused on the bigger picture that we miss the details. The conversation with Otterbein’s Student Affairs team really helped me to refocus my efforts so nothing is missed when we begin planning for our fall 2013 orientation programs.”

The Wellness Initiative Progress Report

The Student Affairs Wellness Initiative has taken off! At the completion of fall quarter, 13 Wellness Teams with membership of more than 70 people from various areas of Student Affairs and throughout the Institute were formed, most including student representatives. Each team’s task is to review what RIT has in place in each topical area, address gaps, recommend, plan, initiate, and work toward collaborative wellness education, experiences, and services for students. Many of the teams coordinated initial programs during fall quarter.

The teams include Addictions/Bader Team, Residence Life Wellness Floors, PEERS, Stress Management, Relationship Skills, Fitness, Technology, Marketing, Nutrition, Spirituality, Academic/Career, Sexual Health, and Financial Literacy.

The Technology Wellness team is helping to get a Student Wellness website launched and is working with our colleagues in GCCIS to infuse a Student Affairs and Wellness dimension into the new Just Press Play program.

The National College Health Assessment, a web-based survey to assess students’ health behaviors, habits, and perceptions was sent out as a pilot to some of our students this month. We will get a report of those survey results in the spring which will help us with our wellness programs and plans for next year.

More is on the way for winter and spring, so stay tuned! Please direct your questions and ideas to Donna Rubin, Assistant Vice President for Student Wellness at donna.rubin@rit.edu.

Keeping Track of Progress

By Bernadette Lynch, TRiO Support Services



The Division of Student Affairs is in the first year of implementing a five year strategic plan. Each center or unit in the Division wrote objectives with measurable outcomes. In an effort to help track our efforts, the Division is using Taskstream. Taskstream is an online assessment management system that was purchased last year in cooperation with the Student Learning Outcomes and Assessment Office.

The system helps the Division of Student Affairs document our assessment activities to show continuous movement toward each strategic goal. It also provides a central location and a consistent format for each unit to document their results. Every unit in the Division has a workspace within Taskstream pertaining to all departmental outcomes. Each unit has identified an Assessment Coordinator who is responsible for managing the assessment plans and the Taskstream workspace. In fall quarter, the Assessment Coordinators and all Student Affairs unit directors were trained on the use of Taskstream led by RIT Taskstream Coordinator, Grace Rubin.

Taskstream not only is advantageous for all units in tracking their strategic planning goals, but is also extremely useful for divisional leadership. Simplified and centralized assessment documentation and file storage offers units a reliable way to keep track of their plans and will also help monitor progress of the overall division plans. Additionally, as units complete portions of their plan, the Division is able to track precisely how each unit supports division and university goals through the process of mapping. This is a process in which unit level objectives are aligned to the various university and divisional goals.

Taskstream and overall unit assessment plans are taking the Division of Student Affairs to higher levels in the effort to achieve goals within the strategic plan by documenting and tracking all results. The ultimate goal is improving our student experience and achieving our vision of developing the nation’s most engaged campus community.

For questions or comments about The Leader, please contact Heath Boice-Pardee, Associate Vice President, h.boice@rit.edu