Building a healthy future together

Partnership will strengthen two Rochester institutions and improve health care in the region

Under the umbrella of a new strategic alliance, RIT will become the Rochester General Health System’s official academic affiliate and RGHS will become the university’s official affiliated medical center.

“Biomedical science is fast becoming a kind of information science in which RIT’s expertise in areas such as information technology, nanotechnology, robotics and imaging can play an increasingly important role,” says RIT President Bill Destler.

“This alliance will build on these and other strengths to create tremendous opportunities for our students, faculty and staff, as well as the Greater Rochester community.”

As technology continues to transform biomedical science, academic areas like computing and information sciences and digital imaging offer increasing relevance to future advancements in medicine.

Through the alliance, RIT and RGHS will collaborate on education and research programs in these and other key areas – a collaboration that will include mutual access to each institution’s expertise and facilities.

Areas of collaboration include engineering, microsystems, medical imaging and medical device research. Such an alliance offers broader application opportunities to faculty and students in existing RIT academic areas such as medical illustration, biomedical photographic communication, medical informatics, physician assistant education, medical sonography, biomedical science and technology, biochemistry, health management and public health policy.

RIT and RGHS already have many points of connection. Currently, RGHS provides approximately 42 percent of the clinical training placements for students in RIT’s Physician Assistant program. A number of the program’s clinical instructors and adjunct faculty are affiliated with RGHS. RIT students in the diagnostic medical sonography program train in the Radiology and OB/GYN departments at Rochester General, and the majority of sonographers on staff trained at RIT.

“Rochester General Hospital and its

RIT President Bill Destler, left, and RGHS President and CEO Mark Clement announce the strategic partnership at a press conference.
**About the RIT-RGHS alliance:**

**Q:** What is the basis of this strategic alliance?

A: RIT and Rochester General Health System are community-focused, public service, not-for-profit organizations dedicated to education and service.

Because of the rapid pace of advancement in the biomedical sciences and biotechnology, universities and medical centers together must test and research the latest developments in these areas to capitalize on regional, national and international opportunities.

Medical science and practice are increasingly benefiting from disciplines such as information science and technology, robotics, service management and digital imaging, all areas of strength at RIT.

**Q:** Why now?

A: Biomedical science has moved rapidly in recent years toward a predictive science in which the decoding of the genome, effectively the ‘software’ that determines and operates living things, has allowed us to understand and manipulate organisms in such ways as to make possible a new world of medical treatments. Thus biomedical science is fast becoming a kind of information science in which RIT’s expertise in areas such as IT, nanotechnology, robotics, and imaging can play an increasingly important role.

**Q:** How does this fall in line with RIT’s mission?

A: RIT has a long tradition in the biosciences. In 1983, RIT became the first university in the nation to offer a Bachelor of Science degree in biotechnology. RIT has established academic programs in such areas as medical illustration, biomedical photographic communication, medical informatics, physician assistant education, medical sonography, biomedical science and technology, biochemistry and health management.

In 2007, RIT dedicated its Center for Bioscience Education and Technology, offering comprehensive academic, community and career-training programs in biotechnology and medical sciences.

CBET is geared to fill an increasing demand for skilled workers in the regional and statewide bioscience and health care sectors. The facility was built with $8 million in New York state funding to support the growth of the biotechnology and biosciences industry.

**Q:** What are the advantages for RIT students?

A: RIT will have access to RGHS expertise and facilities that would support research and academic programs of mutual interest.

RIT faculty and students would have access to RGHS medical staff, facilities and patients for studies and tests of advanced biomedical devices developed at RIT.

RIT students interested in biomedical careers might arrange for cooperative education/internships at RGHS.

RIT graduates could be considered for employment in the RGHS medical system.

**Q:** How does RGHS benefit?

A: RGHS will have as its partner a large, technologically focused university with education and research programs in areas of current interest to support RGHS’s education, research and public service programs.

RGHS will have access to RIT faculty, facilities and educational offerings (e.g. in imaging or the information sciences) to enhance its existing educational programs for medical students and residents.

RGHS would have an affiliated university to work with in offering additional educational programs that would advance its ability to serve the public.

RGHS will team with RIT on grant proposals to state and federal agencies and private foundations for support of education, research and public service programs.

**Q:** How will this be funded?

A: This alliance doesn’t necessarily need extra money to be launched. RIT and RGHS are simply linking current programs and services seen as mutually beneficial.

**Q:** How will this benefit the Greater Rochester Community?

A: A formal association between RIT and RGHS would concentrate intellectual resources in such a way as to draw additional students, professionals, and business ventures to the Rochester area.

The Greater Rochester region is home to about 70 biotechnology and life science-related companies. The Greater Rochester Enterprise has identified this area as a targeted cluster in its business development strategy. The region was identified as one of the top 40 biotechnology locations in the United States by a noted site-selection journal.

Education and health care account for 52 percent of jobs in the Greater Rochester region. RIT and RGHS together employ nearly 11,000 and have annual budgets totaling about $1.4 billion.