

# On-Time Graduation: Path Forward

## June 2015

### **CHARGE STATEMENT**

RIT's Strategic Plan: "Greatness Through Difference (2015-2025)" articulates the continuing importance of student success to RIT as it moves into the next decade. The dimensions and objectives outlined in the Strategic Plan place on-time graduation of undergraduate and graduate students as a highly visible priority and campus imperative.

This priority is certainly not unique to RIT. National attention is increasingly focused on the affordability, accessibility and student success outcomes of higher education. The federal government continues to wrestle with ways to make institutions more accountable for demonstrated outcomes. These external forces in combination with RIT's mission and historical commitment to fostering student success provide the appropriate context for RIT to redouble its efforts and distinguish itself as a leader in the "completion agenda."

The Student Success Steering Committee is directed to provide leadership for implementation of RIT's strategic objectives with respect to on-time graduation goals for undergraduates. In particular, the steering committee is asked to provide recommendations for how the following strategic plan objectives should and can be implemented:

Objective 1.7.2: Identify existing and new policies, procedures, practices and conditions that support progress toward on-time degree completion

Objective 1.7.4: Eliminate existing policies, procedures, practices and conditions that impede progress toward on-time graduation (e.g. revision of the "W" policy; investigation of pass/fail option, etc.)

Objective 1.7.5: Incorporate the on-time graduation priority into recruitment and marketing materials

Objective 1.7.1: Students and their advisors will develop comprehensive, multidimensional educational plans designed to ensure that students maximize RIT's learning resources while also graduating on time

DM IV.2: Publicize and deliver on a guarantee that no student in good standing within 15 credits of graduation will drop out because of insufficient funds for remaining tuition.

### **IMPORTANT DEFINITIONS**

THIS WORK WILL BE GUIDED BY THE FOLLOWING DEFINITION AND GOALS:

- **DEFINITION OF ON-TIME GRADUATION**

On-Time Graduation is defined as degree completion according to the expected years as outlined in the University Bulletin and as registered with New York State Education Department. Four year programs will be completed in four years. Five year programs will be completed in five years.

- **GRADUATION GOALS:**

RIT has set the following targets for accomplishing this on-time graduation imperative for bachelor's degree-seeking students:

Goals:

On-Time Graduation Rate (4/4, 5/5) —————>63%  
150% Program Time Graduation Rate (6/4, 7.5/5) ———>80%

It should be recognized that these completion goals are both bold and aspirational given where RIT's current graduation average rates stand:

Current average on-time graduation rate: 45%

Because of this current pattern, interim goals will need to be established.

### **IMPLEMENTATION APPROACH**

The SSSC will initially form two (2) action-oriented working groups that will include members from the SSSC and additional functional partners (faculty, staff and students) from across the University.

Each Working Group will formulate recommendations for how the associated Strategic Plan objectives should be addressed and achieved. The recommendations should include timeline priority, resource requirements and any other important implementation considerations.

In order to ensure coordination, the chairs of each working group will meet on a regular basis to discuss progress, potential overlap and common needs. It is expected that the working group chairs will update the SSSC on a regular basis and will make sure that appropriate coordination also occurs with other Strategic Plan implementation groups.

### **WORKING GROUP FOCUS**

The working groups will organize and prepare recommendations around the following Strategic Plan deliverables:

#### **Group #1: Policies, Procedures, Practices and Conditions to Facilitate On-Time Graduation**

Objective 1.7.1: Students and their advisors will develop comprehensive, multidimensional educational plans designed to ensure that students maximize RIT's learning resources while also graduating on time

Objective 1.7.2: Identify existing and new policies, procedures, practices and conditions that support progress toward on-time degree completion

Objective 1.7.4: Eliminate existing policies, procedures, practices and conditions that impede progress toward on-time graduation (e.g. revision of the "W" policy; investigation of pass/fail option, etc.)

DM IV.2: Publicize and deliver on a guarantee that no student in good standing within 15 credits of graduation will drop out because of insufficient funds for remaining tuition. This goal falls into the purview of Group 2; however, the work of Group 1 will influence this objective and therefore, both groups should collaborate to the degree needed on this goal

The SSSC Priorities Document (March 2015--attached) should be used and information from priorities #1, 2, 3, 5, 8 and 9 incorporated, to the degree appropriate, in final recommendations.

- Because the work of Group 1 is expansive, it is suggested that this team divide into four sub-teams:
  - Team A: Course planning, degree audit, annual registration, full-time status, and tools and systems to support these efforts (essential SSCR priorities 1, 3, 5)
  - Team B: Policies – Strategic planning 1.7.4 and SSCR priority 5 and 9
  - Team C: Development of Holistic Student Risk Model: SSCR Priorities 2 and 8

### **Group #2: Embedding On-Time Graduation into the Culture at RIT**

Objective 1.7.5: Incorporate the on-time graduation priority into recruitment and marketing materials

DM IV.2: Publicize and deliver on a guarantee that no student in good standing within 15 credits of graduation will drop out because of insufficient funds for remaining tuition.

### **Group #3: Programmatic or curriculum design that may impede on-time graduation (e.g. course sequences, students' options for internal transfer, etc.)**

The work of Groups 1, 2 and 3 should be aligned and calibrated. In addition, in the case of DM IV.2, collaboration with the Division of Enrollment Management and Career Services will be critical, given that EMCS has been assigned primary responsibility for implementation of this goal.

### **FIRST YEAR TIMELINE (Multiple Year Plan)**

August 2015	Begin Work
December 2015	First Progress Report Due
February 2016	Second Progress Report Due
May 2016	Third Progress Report Due
September 2016	Final Recommendations Submitted

### **SSSC COMPLETION AGENDA PRIORITIES (March 2015)**

## **SSSC PRIORITY #1:**

### **MULTI-TERM REGISTRATION (8)**

- Multi-term registration (2-3 terms out)
- 1<sup>st</sup> year students to register for whole year – advisor makes a full year academic plan

## **SSSC PRIORITY #2:**

### **HOLISTIC ASSESSMENT OF FIRST YEAR ATTRITION RISK (7)**

- Design/implementation of a holistic risk model (7)
- Predictive data:
  - Predicting persistence/graduation early with a system to identify at-risk students – use academic, personal, and motivational characteristics to persistence in various programs and colleges. (3)
  - Focus on lower income quartile
  - Using available swipe/student data. How can we get this in one place? What types of data would we get? SSSC brainstorm?
  - Analysis of “entry” data/demographics
    - What % of RIT students are low income?
    - Is RIT the 1<sup>st</sup> choice?
    - Did the student gain admission to major program of their choice?
  - Data on mid-career attrition
- Centralize to support students – too much is done separately and competitively in silos
- How do we select students who can self-direct?
- Streamline re-admission process – Make it easy, rewarding, and consistently applied
- Look at early intervention strategies for private comprehensive universities to identify and utilize the right retention strategies.
  - Who are RIT students?
  - What are our unique strategies?
  - What are the unique challenges our students face beyond academic/GPA?

## **SSSC PRIORITY #3(PERHAPS THIS SHOULD BE A GROUP#1, TEAM B ITEM?):**

### **FULL TIME STATUS / ON-TIME GRADUATION (7)**

- Redefine and market full-time as 15+ credits/semester for on-time graduation (7)
- Check student credit completion rates often – include rules regarding course withdrawal as a component – look beyond GPA (2)
- Students to take advantage of RIT (?) summer classes
- Intervention with students not completing sufficient credits to stay on-time – attempted hours vs. completed/earned hours
- “Satisfactory Academic Progress” – a financial aid term
- Scholarship for students who complete 30 credits every year

## **SSSC PRIORITY #5:**

### **DEGREE MAPPING (5)**

- Creating degree maps – “Meaningful Milestones” with co-curricular built-in (5)
- Computer based degree mapping with more barriers to bad choices for students
- Reconfiguring student experience in PS – I have found it very non-intuitive and often difficult to navigate.
- Analysis assessing incoming population and progress to degree
- Senior degree audit with action plans for those in jeopardy of not graduating

**SSSC PRIORITY #8:**

**MURKY MIDDLE (2)**

- Redirect resources and efficiencies better for 1<sup>st</sup> year at risk students so we can re-allocate toward “Murky Middle” **(2)**
- Use analytics to efficiently examine the details behind the GPA. Example on slide 17 of EAB presentation: two students both with 2.7 GPA and the dramatic difference in academic progress for each
- Smooth pathway to graduation for 2-3 year students and 3-4 year students
- Any case studies looking at schools that tackled the Murky Middle? For example, targeted students with 2.2 GPA to see how it improved retention and graduation rates?

**SSSC PRIORITY #9:**

**WITHDRAWAL (2)**

- Change withdrawal policy **(2)**
  - Move withdrawal dates to week 9 or 10
  - No withdrawals without advising

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**WORKING GROUP PROPOSED MEMBERSHIP:**

Group 1: Coordinator: Joe Loffredo

Team A:

Joe Loffredo, Registrar – *Working Group Chair*  
Tina Sturgis, Sr Associate Registrar, Office of the Registrar  
Scott Grasman, Department Head, KGCOE Industrial & Systems Engineering  
John Smithgall, Assistant Dean, CLA  
Matt Coppenbarger, Associate Chair, Math, COS  
Fernando Naveda, Director, Office of Intersession and Summer  
Dan Hickey, Assistant Director, Academic Support Center  
Gary Johnson, Associate Director Institute Advising Office  
Stephen Turner, ACE Fellow  
Student (TBD)

Team B:

Nicole Boulais, Associate Vice President for Student Learning, Support & Planning – *Working Group Chair*  
Lynne Mazadoorian, Director, Institute Advising Office  
Mohan Kumar, Department Chair, Computer Science, GCCIS  
Rebecca Fletcher Roberts, Assistant Dean CHST  
Nick Giordano, President, Student Government  
Verna Hazen, Assoc. VP & Dir Financial Aid and Scholarship  
Belinda Bryce, Director, HEOP  
Stephen Turner, ACE Fellow  
Raja Kushalnagar, Instructional/Support Faculty, NTID Information and Computing Studies  
Megan Fritts, Academic Advisor, Computing Security, GCCIS

Team C:

Nilay Yildirim, Sr Research Associate, Institutional Research – *Working Group Chair*  
Joan Graham, Assistant Vice President, Institutional Research  
Jodi Boita, Director, Assessment, Research & Tech Services  
Mike Long, Data and Research Analyst, Office of the Registrar  
Stephanie Bauschard, Assistant Director, Institute Advising Office  
Kevin Dudarchik, Director, ITS Applications Development  
Dave Pecora, IT Manager, ITS Support  
Candice Baldwin, Sr Director for Academic Success, Multicultural Center for Academic Success  
Rachel Silvestrini, Associate Professor of Industrial and Systems Engineering, KGCOE  
Stephen Turner, ACE Fellow

Group 2:

Ed Lincoln, Assistant Vice President, Enrollment Management & Career Services – *Working Group Chair*  
Bob Finnerty, Chief Communications Officer, University News  
Chelsea Petree, Parent Liaison  
Shawna Lusk, Director, Center for Orientation & Transition  
Luke Auburn, Communication Specialist, Human Resources  
Jenny LaFlam, Retention and Technology Manager, Institute Advising Office  
Stephen Turner, ACE Fellow

Group 3 (Formerly Team D):

Fred Walker, Dean, CAST – *Working Group Chair*

Laura Tubbs, Assoc. Dean of Undergraduate Education, COS

Robin Cass, Assoc. Dean, CIAS

Charlie Border, GCCIS

Tony Smith, Associate Professor, Criminal Justice, CLA

Lisa Boice, Assistant Dean Student Services, SCB

David Wick, Director Diversity Assessment/Research Management, Office for Diversity and Inclusion

Heath Boice-Pardee, Associate Vice President, Student Development

Stephen Turner, ACE Fellow

**SCHEDULE:**

Working Group Chair Council: Meet with Chris once a month (meetings established by Karel Shapiro)

- Thursday, 9/24/2015 from 9:00am-10:00am
- Wednesday, 10/28/2015 from 10:00am-11:00am
- Tuesday, 12/8/2015 from 3:00pm-4:00pm

Working Group Chairs and Working Group Members: Meet with Student Success Steering Committee on:

- Tuesday, 9/1/2015 from 1:00pm-2:00pm
- Wednesday, 10/21/2015 from 11:00am-12:00pm
- Wednesday, 12/9/2015 from 11:00am-12:00pm
- Wednesday, 2/10/2016 from 11:00am-12:00pm
- Monday, 5/2/2016 from 11:00am-12:00pm