

Faculty Senate Minutes of Meeting

Regularly scheduled meeting of the Faculty Senate of Rochester Institute of Technology

Thursday, February 27, 2025

12:15 - 1:50 PM

Zoom

Attendance: See Below

Agenda Item No. 1: Call to Order; A. Newman (12:18)

Agenda Item No. 2: Approval of Agenda; A. Newman (12:19)

Motion approved by acclamation

Agenda Item No. 3: Communications Officer's Report/Approval of Minutes; S. Aldersley (12:30)

I received no suggested edits to the draft minutes so I ask that they be approved. I will say that getting to do the minutes is a very interesting task. You get to relive everything and last meeting was more than usually interesting. So if you've forgotten what happened on February 6th, I recommend that you take another look at the minutes, because we did a lot.

Motion approved by acclamation

[February 6, 2025 Meeting Minutes](#)

Agenda Item No. 4: Executive Committee Report; A. Newman (12:20)

- This week I attended the February Florida meeting of the BoT. The President talked about the Federal executive orders and he was very optimistic about being able to minimize the impacts on our community. He pointed out that out of 462 active Federal awards, only two have received stop work orders; an interesting statistic was presented in the Research and Faculty Success Report, which noted, surprisingly, that 99.7% of our faculty salaries are at market rate; undergraduate tuition for next year is going up 4.2%, graduate tuition by 4.5%; 57 of our master's programs have an enrollment of less than 50.
- March 27th is our annual luncheon with the President.
- RIT is hosting the annual NYS AAUP conference on April 5th. Non-members may attend with registration \$40. The link to register is: <https://nyscaaup.org/registration-spring-2025/>
- This morning, the Executive Committee met with Shelitha Williams AVP, Student Development, Chris Licata and the Provost, to discuss DSO-related matters. It seemed to be a positive conversation. We were pleased to receive data that we had asked for regarding the DSO operation, including a master list of all accommodations. One of the things Shelitha has done is to reach out to each dean to ask that they nominate a college faculty member to interact with the DSO. Please stay tuned for further outcomes.

Agenda Item No. 5: Staff Council Update; Georgeann Hogan (12:25)

United Way gave a presentation at our last meeting and we had an update on the staff career architecture project from the vendor. We also voted on a number of changes to our bylaws.

Agenda Item No. 6: Student Government Update; J. Anderson (12:26)

SG is busy with petitioning and we assigned a number of PawPrints at our last Senate meeting related to facilities, parking, snow-clearing, accessibility (low level Frank Gannett Hall) and transportation.

Agenda Item No. 7: Executive Committee Nominations; C. Hull (12:28)

We don't yet have a complete list from the colleges as to who will be on Senate next year, but as with Student Government, now is the time to think about nominating yourself or nominating somebody else to serve on the executive committee. If you wish to, please do so by sending me an e-mail. Please note that neither Atia nor Sam will be returning to their present positions as chair and vice-chair.

Agenda Item No. 8: Policy E01.2 (Nepotism) Edits; M. Polowchak (12:31)

I'd like to present a number of proposed language, punctuation and reordering changes to the Nepotism Policy E01.2. The policy applies to applicants for employment at RIT, and existing faculty, staff and students. Its purpose is to provide procedures to avoid or manage circumstances that create or appear to create conflicts of interest based on nepotism. It defines nepotism as favoritism in the workplace based on familial relationship and ordinarily consists of making employment or evaluative decisions, which in turn are defined as the full spectrum of academic actions or employment-related decisions that impact or may have an effect on an individual's professional or academic standing at RIT. Where there is a situation which has the appearance of nepotism, the policy describes the responsibility of supervisors to create a management plan to ensure that there isn't an ongoing conflict of interest.

I. Puchades: How does the dual career program which is meant to improve recruitment fit within this policy?

M. Polowchak: I will make a note that this is something the Policy should make reference to.

B. Thomas: I'm aware of a situation where someone with a grant wanted to hire their child to work during the summer and they were told they cannot do that.

M. Polowchak: Yes, hiring and supervising your own child would be a violation of this policy. However, as the policy suggests, there are certain situations in which a management plan for a nepotism situation can be put in place to resolve any perceived conflict.

E. Williams: Can you clarify whether the Policy applies to the situation where you have two faculty members who are married to each other and collaborating on a research proposal. One is the PI who makes a decision about summer salary for the other.

M. Polowchak: Again, I would first go back to the Policy and ask if there is an evaluative relationship that's happening here? Secondly, if there is, then is there a management plan that can be put in place to address it?

R. Zanibbi: What if you have dual applicants for a PhD program who are partners. Does the policy apply to that situation?

M. Polowchak: I don't see an evaluative relationship there.

[Policy E01.2 Presentation](#)

Agenda Item No. 9: Research and Scholarship Committee (RSC) Charge; S. Hubbard (12:51)

The Research and Scholarship Committee has been working on a number of concerns which have been raised about the new tuition policy. This wasn't part of one of the original charges to the Committee, but we would like to propose as a self charge to "Investigate and report on RIT's new PhD tuition policy in comparison to similar policies at other R1 and R2 universities."

Although it's an administrative policy and there's nothing we can really do, the Committee thinks we can take a look at it and report back to the Faculty Senate. The rationale is there have been a lot of concerns raised by faculty. There was a poll in KGCoE as to how this is going to affect our ability to fund Phd. students. You can see the list of faculty concerns here on Slide 3. The biggest one to me is increasing the cost to Phd. students by \$20k/year which makes us less competitive compared to what you're charged at other universities. Are there other ways to recoup this, like changing the F&A rate?

B.Thomas: I'm not comfortable with this charge. What are we trying to do here? How does it affect Ryan Raffaelli's office and the grants we submit? I agree, this makes us less competitive. But what is the charge supposed to do? I don't see any benefit to us here.

S. Hubbard: That's a fair question. We don't have much power, because it's an administrative policy. But I think it is important to do some research and discuss the claims that the administrators are making. At the end of the day faculty are the ones who are peer-reviewing grants. We have anecdotal evidence of what other institutions are doing and some of us feel this is not in line with our peer institutions. We want to present the case based on our research, and then see the administration's response.

C. Hull: This is an approach Senate has followed in the past, and sometimes it's worked. I see a lot of merit to this self-charge.

Motion to approve self-charge.

Passed: 33/0/1

[RSC Presentation](#)

Agenda Item No. 10: Long Range Planning and Environment Committee (LRPEC) Policy Edits; J. Cody (12:58)

Responding to the charge to “review policies that are due for their 5-year review and update them in a manner more suitable to the RIT ecosystem, which now includes Lecturer ranks and other faculty roles,” the LRPEC recommends various minor language edits to policies D01.3, D01.4, D01.7, E22.0 and E12.7. The committee reviewed but did not suggest edits to policies D01.2, D.09.0, D11.0, E03.0 and E.19.0.

A. Newman: With regard to E12.7, ‘Outstanding Teaching Award for Non-Tenure Track Faculty,’ the Provost recently informed me that the Richard and Virginia Eisenhart Provost Award has been renamed the Richard and Virginia Eisenhart Early Career Award. In addition, the Eisenhart Foundation is supportive of sponsoring an Outstanding Teaching Award for Non-Tenure Track faculty. I am not sure whether these changes require a Senate vote.

C. Hull: Tina Collison manages these awards, and I would prefer not to vote on any changes unless she has been consulted.

J. Cody: We can table it because title changes are beyond the scope of our original charge.

M. Anselm: You changed the phrase from ‘in the preceding 7 years’ to ‘preceding the nomination’. Does that mean someone would not be eligible for the Eisenhart if they’ve been nominated before? Many professors apply multiple times before they actually win the award and I don’t think we should prevent someone from reapplying if they didn’t win it. The previous version sounds like you can’t apply if you’ve won. But now it sounds like you can’t reapply, even if you’ve only been nominated.

A. Newman: So it should say ‘Candidates shall not have been recipients of this award within the seven years preceding the nomination. To Clyde’s point, I understand the title changes have already been made and Tina is aware of them. Also, the Non-Tenure Track Award is under LaVerne.

P. David: We can give Laverne and Tina one more opportunity to look at this again.

C. Hull: It strikes me as odd that whereas you can win the other awards only once, we’re saying you can win this one again after seven years. If this is going to be reconsidered anyway, maybe we should consider making them consistent.

Motion: To approve the LRPEC policy-editing recommendations with the exception of E12.7
Passed: 34:0:2

[LRPEC Presentation](#)

Agenda Item No. 11: Provost Report; P. David (1:15)

I know you have many questions about current events facing the university. Unfortunately, I may not be able to give you crystal clear answers. Things are rapidly changing, and while we are trying to figure things out, I ask that you bear with me a little bit.

- The new President: I have met Dr. Sanders on a few occasions and he's committed to student academic success, and he understands the challenges of being a faculty member with so many tensions.
- The strategic plan is progressing. I think ultimately Dr. Sanders will shape the plan.
- The Board of Trustees have been meeting frequently on various matters, including the Executive Orders. The meeting this week was very productive. Many of the Deans were invited and Academic

Affairs had a strong say in ideas that were exchanged.

- Salary benchmarking. It's been 5 years since we looked at our benchmarks. The faculty committee is working with Segal, the consultant, and Laverne is leading this effort. I'm hoping we can release some findings before the end of this semester.
- The DSO. This morning the Senate Executive Committee and I met with Shelitha Williams, AVP for Student Development, who oversees the DSO. We learned that there are currently 134 different accommodations at RIT. In the Fall semester, 1,845 students received accommodations, up from 1,360 two years ago. The median number of accommodations per student is five and the average is 6.3, some students having just one accommodation and some with more than ten. I know that all of this affects what you do as faculty and I thank the Executive Committee for taking this on. We know we have some challenges, but I think we are on the right track towards coming up with meaningful solutions.
- Okanagan charter. I view our joining the Charter as a way to embed health into all aspects of campus culture. It does say that in various aspects of curriculum and courses there must be a commitment to this. but it's a very soft commitment. No one's going to come and inspect your class and audit it and say you didn't do this. Many top notch universities have signed on. However, I take responsibility for not reading the fine print there and not bringing it to the Faculty Senate for a vote. I understand your argument here, but I hope it will not come to a vote and cause unnecessary news and publicity.
- Executive Orders. There have already been many executive committee sessions on campus, including at this week's BoT meeting. I want to emphasize that there are no new laws, only new interpretations. There have been a total of 70 orders, only two of which have so far had a significant impact on our community. One is the Department of Education memo that restricts DEI activities and the other relates to affirmative action in college admissions. It's true that these two are now being extrapolated to all kinds of activities. The question we face though is whether any of this will stand up in court. An additional major concern is the order to lower the F&A cap on NIH grant awards from 48% to 15%. This would have a major impact on our campus. So how are we responding? The president has established an internal task force chaired by Bobby Colon charged with monitoring all this changing guidance, looking at potential responses and making recommendations. The Task Force is overseeing a major internal audit to look at all DEI-related programs, scholarships, hiring practices, and anything that has to do with racial preference. We're also looking at our website, communications, policies and bylaws as part of this review, anything that is public facing, not with the goal of indiscriminately scrubbing anything to do with DEI, but rather to look at it carefully on a case by case basis, to see what we can do to make sure we are compliant with the law. What is currently under review includes the required diversity statement for faculty candidates, the future faculty career exploration program, and institutionally-sponsored scholarships for African American and Latino students. Our race and ethnicity action plan is also being evaluated. On the other hand, we think many things in Student Affairs, student clubs, and so on, are protected by the First Amendment, and we believe that they may not be affected. Our overall strategy here is simple: do what is necessary to comply with the law but don't overcorrect. We don't want to be the university that dismantles DEI. To the extent possible, we should stay committed to our institutional values and all the hard work that has gone into building diversity and inclusion as core values on this campus. LaVerne is a member of the task force, and I would like for her at some point to talk to Senate about the very detailed issues that are under consideration.
- There is also an Administration-Trustee group that meets every week to plan for different scenarios, for example, with regard to the proposed cut in F&A. And finally, we are advocating with Federal officials and working with various academic organizations that are collectively taking this on.
- Let me talk more about the research impact. We currently have 462 active Federal grants and so far we've had 2 stop orders, one of which has turned into a defunded award. We've made three decisions to this point: first, similar to during COVID, we will accept impact statements from affected faculty, and that can include requests for tenure clock extensions. Second, there is no current initiative to extend employment for those affected, although we do want to make sure we help and there are many positions open on campus which at least some people may be able to transition into. The third is related to graduate student enrollment. This is an area where we've made significant progress and we will continue to give a

one year guarantee to students, and do our best to fund the students while they're here.

C. Hull: As the Faculty Senate representative on the Executive Orders Task Force there have so far been two meetings that I've attended and I have received quite a lot of feedback from faculty. Summing up, I would say faculty are concerned that we are complying in advance and in effect preparing to be complicit in what some people call fascism. This reminds me of the quote that when they came for the Socialists, I did nothing because I was not a Socialist, and when they came for the Trade Unionists, I did nothing, because I was not a Trade Unionist, and when they finally came for me there was no one left to speak for me. Right now there are maybe six people whose jobs have been placed in jeopardy. And by letting them go, we are setting a precedent for future decisions. That's a precedent that makes me very concerned.

P. David: I don't disagree with you. There are serious concerns here. Can you give me examples of where you think we are being too eager to follow the orders?

C. Hull: I would be happy to pass along to you several of the emails I've received. If I can sum up the gist, it's that we should not be complicit in unethical decisions, and that instead, RIT should take a stand like the President of Wesleyan, who has said that he is standing by his DEI people. Instead, we have a task force that's following a rubric to identify problematic programs, and has now created a precedent to solve problems by laying people off. That's really not a good look from the faculty perspective. I've received a lot of comments along those lines. It's true that the task force has said that we're trying to do no more than comply with the law and that executive orders do not change law. But there's still a lot of concern that what we're doing now is taking the first steps towards major levels of complicity, and we would like to not see RIT do that.

P. David: Fair enough. I do want to say again that we do not want to over-correct.

R. Zanibbi: Another concern many of us have is that there is a risk in collecting an exhaustive list of these programs. On the one hand, we can use such a list to find ways to protect those programs, but at some point if somebody has access to the list, they can become viable targets. So I'm not sure how wise it is to have that list in the first place.

P. David: That is a good point.

S. Johnson: You mentioned something about the lecturer title changes, but I didn't hear you discuss that.

P. David: I think that's going to happen. But it's going to take a little bit more time. The President has asked for information about what other institutions are doing. I'm working with Heidi and we will try and get it done within the next month or so.

I. Puchades: Can you comment on the extent to which RIT depends on Federal Government money and grants?

P. David: We are not dependent on them to survive as a university, but to survive as a research university, we are fully dependent. If the rate goes down to 15%, I don't think even some of the very big name universities can survive. The super elite may have enough money to weather the storm from their endowments, but we would not be able to. If the 15% rate is imposed, I think we would have to fold up research. Currently, we get about 10 to 15 million dollars in research overhead, so yes, it would be a huge loss for us from a research standpoint.

S. Aldersley: Dr. David, you mentioned disability is not under consideration right now, but I'm wondering if you have any update on the significant appropriation NTID gets from the Federal

Government.

P. David: Yes, NTID relies heavily on the Federal Government. NTID people have been in DC almost every day working with our legislators.

H. Ghoneim: What kind of support package will RIT give to those who are impacted?

P. David: It wasn't until yesterday that we had a full-on cancellation of a grant. We're still trying to figure out what we could do in the most humane way possible. Please give people time to think about this.

C. Kray: On the slide about the programs that are under review, I didn't see any mention of curriculum.

A. Newman: To extend Christine's question a little further. Does academic freedom protect us?

P. David: Yes, both academic freedom and First Amendment rights. But at the same time we want to be within reason. We don't want to be provocative. We don't want to sacrifice our values, but we also need to be sensitive to other points of view.

A. Newman: Good to know. Obviously, our goal is to make sure that we protect our values in the best possible way. If I may make a personal observation, I feel that RIT tends to be legally on the more timid side, like we try not to rock any boats. Could we not put this idea of identifying programs to one side for now and instead sit back and wait for things to settle before we take action? I think it was Richard who made the point that a list can be weaponized against us.

P. David: I'm looking for practical solutions. If you have a different, better solution, please let me know. So far, the President of Wesleyan has been the only one to speak against the orders. I admire his courage, but nobody from Harvard or Michigan or UCLA has said anything. We don't want to become a lightning rod. Instead, we should be part of a strong group of universities that is pushing back. The Supreme Court has said that diversity is commendable. We are hoping that if some of these orders go back to the Supreme Court, the Administration may not get the outcome they're looking for. At this point, the waiting game is actually the smart game..

R. Zanibbi: Dr. David, will you be reaching out to the PI whose project had staff funds canceled?

P. David: I reached out last night.

P. Padmanabhan: I want to reiterate that just seeing the names of these programs on your slide is definitely concerning. It sounds like it covers everything under the office of the VP for Diversity. It's like you have a big tree with branches. I'm afraid that by pointing out which branches to prune, people will say, 'Just take down the entire tree.' I agree that having this list is concerning.

S. Aldersley: Dr. David, I also want to reiterate the concern with this list. We've seen in the past there are people out there in the community who look for this sort of thing in order to take action against the university. Maybe the administration should really not publicize it.

C. Hull: I spoke against setting up this list at the task force meeting this morning. Given that Faculty Senate is now tolerably well informed as to what's up with the rubric, I would be happy for you to give me direction. I'm getting feedback from individuals, from departments, from schools and from colleges but not specifically from Senate as a body. So if you want to give me marching orders, I'd be happy to represent that to the task force.

S. Aldersley: Then I make the motion to remove the list from public view.

P. David: What does that mean? This is not a list that's presented anywhere. All I've said is that we're looking at these programs. Some of them could easily be exploited and weaponized by people looking at our website. I'm just showing it to you as a list of programs that seem to me could come under a lot of scrutiny.

S. Aldersley: I think the problem is that once the University is showing a slide with that list, you have no control over where it goes. For somebody who is opposed to those sorts of groups, it certainly makes their job easier.

P. David: You make a good point. But I put it together based on notes from some meetings I've participated in. I'll make sure not to use the slide again. Ultimately, though, we need solutions. Whether we have a list or not, I don't want to make it seem like we don't have a problem on our hands, and I don't want it to be a top down solution. There has to be a faculty, a collaborative solution to this. This is not going away. Race conscious decision making on campuses will not stand in the coming year or so. We have to deal with that. I would really like some collaborative discussions about this.

S. Malachowsky: This seems a little absurd to me. We were presented with this list. The entire Senate saw it. Are we really going to say we're going to delete it from the record? Forget the context of the situation, just the idea that we're supposed to be representing our constituents, and this was something that was significantly discussed at this meeting.

P. David: Again, just because these programs are under review doesn't mean we're trying to cut them all. We have to show creativity in redefining these programs, maintaining their spirit. That's why I'm talking about finding solutions. 'Review' doesn't mean 'delete'. We need creativity to preserve some of these programs, and how we do that has to be within the bounds of the law.

S. Malachowsky: I would also say we seek transparency from our administration. This is exactly the kind of transparency that we want, even if the message is difficult. I have to speak strongly against the concept of removing information that's already been shared.

R. Zanibbi: My point was more about compiling an exhaustive list of all the programs and having that readily available. I wasn't intending to modify the record, I was expressing my concern about having asked people to provide information about additional programs that could end up on this list. I just don't know that we want to try and catch all of them. That's where I worry about the list.

P. David: I agree and I think that's where the over-correction danger is, for example, what NASA did by scrubbing the word diversity from their whole website. We don't want to be in the kind of position where we're just using brute force decision making. We have to be nuanced. For example, yesterday somebody changed the language on the future faculty career exploration program. That program was intended for faculty of color, because our representation was low. If you now change the language and make it open to all faculty, then it comes across like anyone can apply for. That's where our creativity has to come to play. How do we reshape some of these things in thoughtful ways? To reiterate, we don't have to create a laundry list of all the programs we believe to be race conscious, but at least we should be cognizant of the problem and why it's important. How can we not over-react, yet at the same time make some of these programs race-neutral? In doing that, we should be as slow and creative as possible.

A. Newman: I know that both Dr. Munson and Dr. David are with faculty in supporting and protecting our institutional goals and values. Just as an FYI to everyone. There was one slide at the Trustee meeting where the President talked about RIT's strategy. I just uploaded it to the Senate drive and encourage

senators to review it.

INSERT PRESENTATION LINK

Agenda Item No. 12: New Business; A. Newman (N/A)

There was none.

Agenda Item No. 13: Adjournment; A. Newman (1:57)

Attendance 2/27/2025

Name	Relationship to Senate	Attended	Name	Relationship to Senate	Attended
Adrion, Amy	ALT CAD Senator		Lanzafame, Joseph	COS Senator	X
Aldersley, Stephen	Communications Officer/ SOIS Senator	X	Laver, Michael	CLA Senator	X
Anselm, Martin	CET Senator	X	Lee, James	ALT CET Senator	
Barone, Keri	Treasurer/CLA Senator	X	Liu, Manlu	SCB Senator	Excused
Boedo, Stephen	ALT KGC OE Senator		Malachowsky, Samuel	Vice Chair/ GCCIS Senator	X
Brady, Kathleen	ALT NTID Senator	X	McCalley, Carmody	ALT COS Senator	X
Brown, Tamaira	Senate Coordinator	X	McLaren, Amy	CAD Senator	
Butler, Janine	NTID Senator	X	Newman, Atia	Chair/CAD Senator	X
Capps, John	CLA Senator	X	Newman, Christian	GCCIS Senator	X
Chiavaroli, Julius	ALT GIS Senator		Olles, Deana	COS Senator	X
Chung, Sorim	SCB Senator		Olson, Rob	ALT GCCIS Senator	
Cody, Jeremy	COS Senator	X	O'Neil, Jennifer	ALT CET Senator	
Coppenbarger, Matthew	COS Senator	X	Osgood, Robert	ALT CHST Senator	
Crawford, Denton	CAD Senator	X	Padmanabhan, Poornima	KGC OE Senator	X
Cromer, Michael	ALT COS Senator	X	Puchades, Ivan	KGC OE Senator	X

Cui, Feng	ALT COS Senator		Ray, Amit	CLA Senator	X
David, Prabu	Provost	X	Reinicke, Bryan	ALT SCB Senator	
Davis, Stacey	NTID Senator	X	Ross, Annemarie	NTID Senator	Excused
Deese, Franklin	CAD Senator	X	Ruhling, Michael	CLA Senator	X
Dell, Betsy	CET Senator	X	Sanders, Cynthia	ALT NTID Senator	X
DiRisio, Keli	CAD Senator	X	Shaaban, Muhammad	ALT KGCoe Senator	
Eddingsaas, Nathan	COS Senator		Song, Qian	SCB Senator	X
Fillip, Carol	ALT CAD Senator		Staff Council Rep	Georgeanne Hogan	X
Ghazle, Hamad	Operations Officer/CHST Senator		Student Government Rep	Joshua Anderson	X
Ghoneim, Hany	ALT KGCoe Senator	X	Sweeney, Kevin	ALT SCB Senator	
Hardin, Jessica	ALT CLA Senator	X	Thomas, Bolaji	CHST Senator	X
Hartpence, Bruce	ALT GCCIS Senator		Tobin, Karen	NTID Senator	X
Hazelwood, David	NTID Senator	X	Tsouri, Gill	KGCoe Senator	X
Hull, Clyde	ALT SCB Senator	X	Van Aardt, Jan	ALT COS Senator	
Jadamba, Basca	COS Senator	X	Warp, Melissa	ALT CAD Senator	
Johnson, Dan	CET Senator	X	Weeden, Elissa	GCCIS Senator	X
Johnson, Scott	GCCIS Senator	X	White, Phil	ALT GCCIS Senator	
Kray, Christine	CLA Senator	X	Williams, Eric	GIS Senator	X
Krutz, Daniel	ALT GCCIS Senator		Worrell, Tracy	ALT CLA Senator	X
Kuhl, Michael	KGCoe Senator		Zanibbi, Richard	GCCIS Senator	X
Kwasinski, Andres	ALT KGCoe Senator	X	Zlochower, Yosef	COS Senator	X

Interpreters: Jennaca Saeva and Catherine Kiwitt

Student Assistant: Ben Bui

Presenters: Clyde Hull, Michelle Polowchak, Seth Hubbard, Jeremy Cody and Prabu David

