Faculty Senate Minutes of Meeting

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

Thursday, February 5, 2026   12:15 - 1:50 PM   Slaughter Hall 2220-2240

Attendance: See Below

Agenda Item No. 1: Call to Order; R. Zanibbi (12:15)

Meeting called to order by R. Zanibbi

Agenda Item No. 2: Approval of Agenda; R. Zanibbi (12:15)

Motion to approve the Agenda (S. Johnson/D. Johnson)
Motion Passes without objection

Agenda Item No. 3: Communications Officer's Report/Approval of Minutes; M. Laver (12:16)

Motion to approve the minutes (R. Zanibbi/M. Anselm)

Motion passes without objection

January 22, 2026 Faculty Senate Meeting Minutes

Agenda Item No. 4: Executive Committee Report; R. Zanibbi (12:17)

R.Zanibbi
    -Google Drive has lots of materials for senators.
    -New link put in that highlights the role of the committee chair and other committee related
information
    -We have a policy board to keep track of all policies that come through senate with time stamps
    -mini gavels are available for senators' gratification (left over from retreat)
    -B2 votes are in
        -motion to put two voting students on the academic affairs committee: 246 votes (78% yes/22%no)
        -add associate and clinical faculty to voting faculty: 244 votes (87%yes/13% no)
        -all B2 changes are now voted on up to now. Sent to president for final approval
     -Policy D8 is under review and has been for 10 years at least
        -is available for comment: 2 versions: a red line and a clean version.
        -faculty should feel free to add comments
        -encourage faculty to have a look at the policy
    -LRPEC is now defunct, but was assigned policies not looked at in the last 5 years
        -FSEC looked at 11 policies and made minor revisions.
        -6 were approved and they will be updated

-some changes were more substantive and so we will bring these to senate.
   -Think about nominations for senate ExCom positions: will happen later in the semester.
      -be in touch with any FSEC member if you wish to run and would like some more information
      -L. Vllasmil: Is there a policy that someone on FSEC should stay for continuities' sake? T. Brown: not a policy, but in fact, only a small number of positions have actual elections
      -C. Hull: FSEC amongst themselves have ensured that there is some continuity
      -B. Thomas: Seems like not enough faculty have voted for the changes to B2. R. Zanibbi: policy says that it is ⅔ of faculty who cast votes. About a third of respondents is normal for surveys.

Agenda Item No. 5: Shared Governance Update I. Politai (12:28)

No report today

Agenda Item No. 6: Provost Report; P. David (12:28)

Strategic Framework document will be sent to BOT for approval 2/25

Middle States Accreditation campus visit is March 29-April 1

3 gen ed working groups established to act on recommendations of the GE revision taskforce

   -first year writing, first year course, GE framework

Initiatives to be presented to the BOT

   -AI, Health, Student Success

Enrollment

   -2026 UG Fall Applications: 34.6K compared to 28.9K in 2025

   -2026 Grad Fall applications: 1.9K vs. 3.3

   -Too early to predict deposits and enrollment, but we are preparing for a drop in enrollment

Academic Affairs Actions to address potential budget deficit

   -managed vacancies

   -sunsetting and consolidating master's programs to redirect teaching resources

   -consolidating programs into larger units based on intellectual coherence and admin. efficiency

Questions:

   -R. Zanibbi: is there a time when specific master's degree decisions will be released? P. David: Yes; deans are working on APR spreadsheets now and we will release when ready.

   -H. Nikisher: Is there room for a first year course to do with pluralism rather than just AI and society? -P. David: that is not the proposal from the task force

   -B. Thomas: Some of us have not heard anything about master's program decisions. P. David: If you have not heard anything it is likely because your programs are not affected.

-L. Villasmil: Strategic Framework: are we collecting feedback from students, faculty, and staff, or is that later? P. David: lots of feedback already collected and now we are tweaking in response. Phase 2 is to flesh out the details of the framework with specific items

-K. LeBlevec: Clarification on enrollment numbers and how does it affect the budget? P. David: undergraduates up but graduate down. Reasons for masters/PhD decrease is that foreign students are not applying in the same numbers. All tuition go to the same pool of money, so this is all related

-C. Hull: If we are to have a common first year course, wouldn't we want upperclass people to take them too? Also, concerns about teaching loads with the new budget scenario, especially if we want to be R1. Strategic Framework: any changes reflecting the value of the faculty to the institution? P. David: Yes, the president took all suggestions seriously. Also, teaching load concerns will be addressed. R. Zanibbi: have seen a draft and it seems that your concerns have been addressed.

-P. Padmanabhan: Our department has lots of master's applications from students in other colleges, and we put forward a proposal for a bridge program to smooth these students into engineering, but received some pushback and little support. P. David: have not heard about these challenges, but we do want to convert undergraduate students to master's students.

Provost Report

Agenda Item No. 7: BS in AI Degree Proposal; E. DeBartolo and M. Huenerfauth (12:46)

Please see slide deck in meeting materials for full details

-Overview and motivation: a premier technical program building on strengths of GCCIS and RIT. 122 credits in 4 years with co-op. First cohort in 2027.

-RIT will be one of the first BS programs in AI in the country

-topics are machine learning, LLMs, Natural Language processing, etc.

-List of core courses provided with approvals for courses in other colleges

-Elective List provided as well.

-Fit with strategic plan: "develop unique academic programs at all degree levels that capitalize upon our core…"

-Strategic hiring initiatives.

-Demand from employers according to enrollment management. Students also prepared for advanced degrees. Several strong letters of support.

-approvals: GCCIS and ICC (January 20, 2026)

-Questions

-B. Thomas: one of the electives was at the 600 level: are these cross-listed? Also courses at the 500 level. R. Zanibbi: Yes, courses are at different levels depending on the college and the specialization, and faculty teaching these courses have the appropriate specialization, so no concerns.

-H. Nikisher: How will this program allay parent fears that AI will take away their students' jobs? M. Huenerfauth: This is for students who really want to be involved in building the next AI models. Faculty portfolios in our college have had a lot of different innovations, and so we are trying to be cutting edge in our research and in our course syllabi. But, we do concentrate on student basics in their first year, including the responsible use of AI, but then they have to learn how to use AI to build code,

for example, because that's very important. And then there's some additional topics you bake into the curriculum later where maybe professional workflows change. So I think how this would relate to that broader picture, I think it demonstrates expertise for RIT that within the portfolio of your college offers, there's a whole core degree in artificial intelligence and then also some of these courses could be taken as an elective by somebody from a different program or something like this. The minor is also available to all students in any degree program, so this suite of programs hits many needs at the university.

-A. Ray: I voted against this because we are not addressing things like humanistic and ethical concerns, and not just environmental concerns like . but really about how AI is trained, how language models and the ways in which we're being deployed. A one credit course which nobody is going to take seriously, isn't going to be able to address those kinds of concerns in any meaningful way. I circulated amongst the ICC group and a recent article from Legal Scholars on how AI destroys institutions. I've recently published on AI and production of ignorance. These are really important elements. We are being sold something by Silicon Valley and if we don't take into account that Silicon Valley has sold us in the past with mantras like move fast and break things, the things that we've broken we're not going to get back. And the fact that we're not getting them back means that our society, our culture is moving into terrain that looks very different and not in good ways. M. Huenerfauth: So there's a one credit class that's on artificial intelligence and law and then in four other required courses in the curriculum of the program, there's an explicit learning goal around ethical issues around AI. So an area of a lot of pedagogical research in the field of computing is how you best educate students on matters of cross-cutting issues like ethics or accessibility for people with disabilities or other topics. And what a lot of that pedagogical research has shown is that if you try to isolate all of that teaching into a single three credit course and degree program, they walk into that classroom and now it's about professional ethics and computing. They walk out of that classroom and then it's not about that topic anymore. And so interweaving it in multiple points of curriculum where it's integrated in multiple courses, especially those courses actually happen to occur in multiple years of the program, allows a repetition and an integration of that throughout and then it positions it as something that's actually responsibility for them as a professional to be thinking about. And so having it woven in multiple points is actually kind of a better strategy. The purpose of the 1 credit AI and law course is to focus on law intersection actually. So I mean there's an ethical layer to that certainly, but actually this is fast moving–we expect that that's going to be an area where current trends change rapidly. And we do think that folks that are working in this field need to have the opportunity to know what the legal landscape is. Isolating it as a one credit course also allows us to make sure that the person who will teach this course at times is actually a legal scholar and not necessarily a computing person. Or it could be both, right? And so actually isolating this piece on the law in the one credit mechanism operationally allows us to make sure that somebody with expertise is the one speaking to that law issue.

-K. LeBlevec: surprised that no HCD or STS courses are involved. M. Huenerfauth: We have 122 credits,and more than half is the liberal arts and sciences. Half of what they study will be general education. Students will surely be drawn to things like HCD.

-P. Padmanabhan: My concern was more about faculty workload. I think there was a comment about new AI faculty being hired, but I wasn't clear if that was just the CIS or if it was across all the colleges. So can you briefly just touch upon the impact on faculty workloads and how many actually new hires were made for this program or in GCCIS with AI expertise?

M. Huenerfauth: Faculty cluster hire was across all RIT. Five year budget model for this talks about the faculty who will be hired and when. 5 lines mentioned, but also budget items to support the institute like General Education.

-Jien: SCB is infusing our curriculum with AI, so there will be some overlap. I hope you will work with Saunders to eliminate too much overlap. M. Huenerfauth: Yes, our students will be free to pursue

opportunities in other colleges through the electives, and what is listed in this degree is only for the students interested in this specific professional AI pathway.

-C. Hull. Agree with my colleague. A student who finishes this degree could roll into an MBA program, so maybe courses can be included in the electives that will facilitate students who want to do this. M. Huenerfauth: We are open to this combination.

-R. Zannibi: Electives list will improve the synthesis between the colleges and so I urge the electives list to be expanded.

-H. Ghazle: Aligning this program with RIT strategic initiatives. Healthcare is also a strategic initiative. How would this program set up students to succeed in the healthcare industry? Can we set up certificates, like some Ivy Leagues schools, to address this?   M. Huenerfauth: What we need is the space for individual students to pursue their own interests. This is where minors, certificates, and electives come in. Faculty in the health area should probably address this first.

Motion: Senate recommends the approval of the proposal for a BS in AI (B. DeBartolo/J. Brown)

-C. Hull: Should we postpone this proposal to another meeting? M. Huenerfauth: Critical deadlines for us to hit in order for admissions to list this degree program for student enrollment in fall 2027. The admissions office needs a lot of lag time. R. Zanibbi: Could we approve pending an expanded elective list? M. Huenerfauth: Yes, elective list will have to be expanded.

Motion passes (25-8-3)

BS in AI Presentation

BS Proposal

Agenda Item No. 8: MS in Deaf Education; E. Ruder, M. Lynn and P. Graham (1:17)

This is a program modification not a new degree program

-Program purpose: to prepare students to teach deaf students in pre-K though 12th grades;

-teaching standards and requirements: interstate teacher assessment and support consortium; council for exceptional children, new york state teaching standards, etc.

-Proposed modifications: triple the courses that cover assessment methods; replace one practicum course with 4 courses; expand literacy development content to cover all grade levels; update classroom management content, enhance multiple language and instructional mode content; eliminate the one-semester research course, incorporate several administrative modifications.

-Graduate Council Review: We found the proposal to be thoughtful and well-motivated. Unanimously approved.

-Motion that faculty senate approve this proposal (E. Ruder/C. Hull)

-B. Thomas: why reduce credits from 62 to 58? M. Lynn: So the complete description is in the proposal. What I can say here is there's one three credit practicum course that becomes four one credit courses. So that's an increase of one, but then we removed the research course, so that's subtracting three and I don't know that that consists of 58, but there's one other change that happens in there with taking some of the assessment courses and modifying them. There's a little bit of addition and subtraction. Thank you.

Motion Passes (39-0-0)

Agenda Item No. 9: College Governance Reports: CLA, CHST, GIS; M. Laver, H. Ghazle and J. Chiavaroli (1:26)

CLA:

   -CLA elects a faculty moderator as well as an agenda committee. Elections are held for all intra-college and university level committees. Faculty meeting the first Friday of every month. Deans attend at the invitation of the faculty and give updates. We have committees who propose policy changes, for example, and then the faculty votes on them.

   -S. Aldersley: If changes to promotion policy were to occur, would the dean propose those changes? M. Laver: Well it depends. I mean some changes have to happen because university level policy changes and we have to comply with those. I suppose deans have a prerogative to propose changes as well, but in all cases it would go through the faculty policy committee.

CHST:

   -We started our faculty meetings this academic year. First meeting was in the fall. The meeting was vibrant, productive, informative, collegial!

   -we were pleased to have FSEC members there. Good discussion of shared governance.

   -Tenure and promotion policy is under review with a faculty taskforce. Dean was in agreement that faculty should take the lead (T&P committee).

   -We run elections for university level service

   -Jien: Who facilitates the meeting? H. Ghazle: we are working on this, but for now the senators run the meeting

GIS:

   -Not as robust and vibrant as others, but minimal expectations!

   -We are very small, not technically a college, and all faculty have big service commitments.

   -Our programs are very different! We help each other, but do very different things.

   -Meetings tend to focus on large things such as tenure and promotion, etc.

   -Basically everyone is on every institute level committee.

   -R. Zanibbi: Can senate do anything to help GIS manage service load or anything else? GIS can submit a charge if they want. J. Chiavaroli: There is a taskforce looking exactly at small units and their service obligations.

   -C. Hull: Okay, follow up question to the provost and I want to be clear, I'm not talking about these specific small units. In your presentation you were saying maybe some departments might like to be combined and so forth. The follow up question that occurred to me is what if a small department in one college would like to be merged into a larger department in a different college? P. David: So it's not just the dean, there are also multiple deans involved. I don't want to cause unnecessary panic, but at the same time it's a reasonable thing to ask, right? If there are units and if it comes from faculty interest, it has to

come through the deans, and department chairs, it comes through the appropriate channels. I'm supportive but I don't want it to seem like I'm trying to impose expectations on the group at this point.

Agenda Item No. 10: New Business; R. Zanibbi (1:39)

-Taskforce has changed a bit with people leaving and coming in.

-Brought a proposed change here: if someone changes their major in which they struggled, they can have an additional probation.

-Draft policy on BA degrees. We will work with the ICC who can then work with the senate.

-Extending the drop period for longer. In discussions with students. This may help graduation rates. MIT, for example, has good graduation rates, and a longer drop period, so maybe some correlation there. Some technical proposals along these lines (e.g. Math181 To Math 171–why are students not able to change courses mid semester but rather have to wait till the next semester, losing time. .

-M. Beck: How long are you tinking about the drop/add period? C. Hull: our main concern is to make sure that Fs do not appear on transcripts because students did not drop in time. R. Zaniibi: Are you asking ICC to look at a specific BA or BAs in general? C. Hull: we are not proposing a specific degree. P. Padmanabhan: Would help us to see the data. C. Hull: Yes, this is just a summary, but we will bring data. C. Alm: Not proposing the extension of the add date, right? I am worried about seats being occupied and there are students who want in. A. Kwasinski: We have a late drop process, so why need a longer drop period? C. Hull: That is a very good point and that problem is one of the reasons why we haven't actually come forward with anything yet because we're trying to come up with a solution for that. Some of the classes I teach, it would be okay for a student to add a week, two or even three weeks in. I would have to meet with them outside of class. But I would do that just like sometimes if you meet with athletes outside of class because they missed six or seven classes for travel, it's excuse absence, I'd treat it like that. Some of the other classes I teach, there was no way I could let you add after week one. And so just within the classes I teach, I see that. So we're still trying to figure that out. I don't think that extending add period would work for all classes. Like I said, we're working on it. If you have more thoughts, please let me know.

-R. Zanibbi: You are not looking to bring a specific BA to ICC, right? C. Hull: Well actually one of the things that struck me when I started looking at this is that we do not have any policy about the BS degree. We have 42 different policies and you have to be compliant with all of them. So what we're proposing here is a policy for how a BA degree works and then we're not proposing any specific BAs at all.

-H. Nickisher: We inherited BA degrees when we bought Eisenhower College. C. Hull: We technically do, but we don't have a policy that says this is what a BA looks like and this is how you make one and so forth. That's what we're working on. And you're right, that does make it easier for us to actually turn it on if we decide to.

Agenda Item No. 11: Adjournment; R. Zanibbi (1:53)

Attendance 2/5/2026

Name	Relationship to Senate	Attended	Name	Relationship to Senate	Attended
Adrion, Amy	Alternate CAD Senator		Lapizco-Encinas, Blanca	KGCOE Senator	X
Alm, Cecilia	CLA Senator	X	Laver, Michael	Communications Officer/CLA Senator	X
Anselm, Martin	CET Senator	X	LeBlevec, Kevin	CLA Senator	X
Arena, Jason	Alternate CAD Senator		Liao, Wenjie	Alternate CLA Senator	X
Barone, Keri	Vice Chair/CLA Senator	X	Mardini, Ihab	Alternate CAD Senator	x
Beck, Makini	SOIS Senator	X	McCalley, Carmody	Alternate COS Senator	
Brady, Kathleen	NTID Senator	X	McLaren, Amy	CAD Senator	X
Brown, Jeremy	GCCIS Senator	X	Nickisher, Heidi	CAD Senator	X
Brown, Tamaira	Senate Coordinator	X	Officer, Cindy	Alternate NTID Senator	X
Butler, Janine	NTID Senator	X	Olles, Deana	COS Senator	X
Butler, Joshua	Alternate NTID Senator		Olson, Rob	Alternate GCCIS Senator	
Chiavaroli, Julius	GIS Senator	X	O'Neil, Jennifer	Alternate CET Senator	
Chung, Sorim	SCB Senator	X	Osgood, Robert	Alternate CHST Senator	
Cody, Jeremy	COS Senator	X	Padmanabhan, Poornima	KGCOE Senator	X
Coppenbarger, Matthew	COS Senator	X	Perry, Andrew	Alternate SOIS Senator	
Cromer, Michael	Alternate COS Senator		Ray, Amit	CLA Senator	X

Cui, Feng	Alternate COS Senator		Reinicke, Bryan	Alternate SCB Senator	
DAmanda, Elisabetta	Alternate CLA Senator		Reisch, Mark	CAD Senator	
David, Prabu	Provost	X	Rich, Lexi	Alternate CET Senator	
Davis, Stacey	NTID Senator	X	Ross, Annemarie	NTID Senator	X
De Wit Paul, Alissa	Alternate GIS Senator		Sanders, Cynthia	NTID Senator	EXCUSED
DiRisio, Keli	CAD Senator	X	Shaaban, Muhammad	Alternate KGCOE Senator	
Eirikur Hull, Clyde	SCB Senator	X	Song, Qian	SCB Senator	X
Ghazle, Hamad	Operations Officer/CHST Senator	X	Staff Council Rep		
Ghoneim, Hany	Alternate KGCOE Senator		Student Government Rep	Igor Polotai	X
Hardin, Jessica	CLA Senator	EXCUSED	Sweeney, Kevin	Alternate SCB Senator	
Hartpence, Bruce	Alternate GCCIS Senator		Thomas, Bolaji	CHST Senator	X
Hoople, Jason	Alternate KGCOE Senator		Tsouri, Gill	KGCOE Senator	X
Jadamba, Basca	COS Senator	X	Villasmil, Larry	CET Senator	X
Johnson, Dan	CET Senator	X	Warp, Melissa	Alternate CAD Senator	
Johnson, Scott	GCCIS Senator	X	Weeden, Elissa	GCCIS Senator	X
Kavin, Denise	Alternate NTID Senator		White, Phil	Alternate GCCIS Senator	
Krutz, Daniel	Alternate GCCIS Senator		Wiandt, Tamas	Alternate COS Senator	X
Kuhl, Michael	KGCOE Senator	X	Zanibbi, Richard	Chair/GCCIS Senator	X
Kwasinski, Andres	Alternate KGCOE Senator	X	Zlochower, Yosef	COS Senator	X
Lanzafame, Joseph	Treasurer/COS Senator	X			

Interpreters: Sonya Chavis and Dana Cardona

Student Assistant: Ella Kolodziej

Presenters: Prabu David, Beth DeBartolo, Matt Huenerfauth, Elizabeth Ruder, Matt Lynn, Patrick Graham, Michael Laver, Hamad Ghazle and Julius Chiavaroli