

20 August 2021

Dear Students,

It is a pleasure to welcome you all to campus for the 2021-2022 academic year. I hope you had a great summer and found time to rest and recharge.

Despite the challenges of the past year and a half and the continuing presence of COVID-19, I am very pleased we are coming back together as a community. Vaccination rates among students, faculty, and staff are high. Currently, the student vaccination rate is about 95% and the faculty/staff rate is nearly 92%. The entire campus is masking when indoors to provide an additional layer of safety. It is good to see the campus bustling with people and activity and I'm very glad to see everyone masking up.

You may notice one exception to the masking rule. Faculty who are fully vaccinated for COVID and who are teaching in large auditoriums or in rooms equipped with plastic barriers have the option to remove their masks while lecturing. This is to allow you to more easily hear them and to support access for deaf or hard of hearing students.

The few first weeks of the semester are critical to your academic success. You will be challenged by faculty as they help you grow and achieve, but there are many resources available to you for managing stress and overcoming challenges. First and foremost, connect early with your faculty. Let them know if you are struggling with a concept, have to miss class for any reason, or just want to chat. Visit the [Academic Success Center](#) for tutoring or help with managing your time. Check in with your academic advisor. Get involved in activities that support your physical health and your outside interests. RIT has extensive [health and wellness services](#) – take advantage of them. Don't be afraid to ask for help whenever you need it.

Although we are in a much better place this fall than we were last year, COVID is still with us. Your health and wellbeing is very important to us. Please continue to mask when indoors and if you don't feel well, stay home. Contact the Student Health Center as needed. Let your faculty know that you are ill (you do not have to share details). Remember that you will still be responsible for making up any missed work/assignments so stay in touch with your instructors.

### **ACADEMIC AFFAIRS UPDATES**

- There are two important policy revisions that apply to undergraduate students to support their academic progress – the course withdrawal policy found in [D05.0](#) –

[Grades](#) and the academic probation and suspension policy found in [D05.1 – Academic Actions and Recognitions](#). Additional details about the changes are provided below.

- The course withdrawal policy revisions, [D05](#), section IV, apply to undergraduate students. It requires students, including part-time students, who wish to withdraw below 12 credit hours to request approval from academic department leadership. Situations will vary, and decisions will be based on each student's circumstances. It is possible that some requests may not be granted. If you are thinking about withdrawing from a course, I encourage you to talk with your faculty, access support resources, and check in with your advisor before withdrawing
- The revisions to the academic action/probation policy, [D05.1](#), section II, also apply to undergraduate students. Academic probations will be limited to two over the course of a student's degree program. Academic suspension will be for a minimum of one term rather than a year. If a suspension appeal is granted, a student will be placed on deferred suspension. Students on academic probation, deferred suspension, or returning from suspension will work with their program to create an academic success plan.
- I'm sure you have noticed the construction of a new building in the middle of campus –the Student Hall for Exploration and Development, better known as the [SHED](#). When it opens in the fall of 2023, it will offer makerspaces, a dance studio, a black-box theater, project team spaces, and collaboration spaces for your use. This is just one very visible element of RIT's efforts to ignite your creativity and support your intellectual development. It is an exciting time to be at RIT!
- The RIT Library is also undergoing extensive renovation. Many services and student study spaces have been relocated to the Ritter Ice Arena. For more information and updates, please [click here](#).

Our goal is to help you achieve your goals. I look forward to seeing you on campus and encourage you to take advantage of all RIT has to offer. I always welcome your questions or comments. Feel free to contact me at [provost@rit.edu](mailto:provost@rit.edu). Best wishes for a rewarding fall semester!

Sincerely,

Ellen Granberg, Ph.D.  
Provost and Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs