

August 24, 2021

Dear Faculty,

As you start the fall semester, I want to take this opportunity to share with you some thoughts about our new students and returning second year students. While I am thrilled that we are back to a nearly normal start, I think it is also important to reflect on what they experienced last year and how that may impact instruction and learning this year.

As I'm sure you know, high school educations varied widely last year. Some students had a fairly normal senior year while others experienced fully remote or hybrid instruction. Some students suffered significant personal losses or serious economic dislocations. For all these reasons, students' preparation and readiness for college is likely to be much more variable than in past years. In a similar vein, we also have to be mindful of our rising sophomores – students who not only missed their final months of high school, but also their first year of college. Students are very excited to be back on campus but there is also a different level of anxiety about academic work that wasn't there before the pandemic.

Given these factors, I offer the following suggestions for meeting students where they are without significantly changing your course plans:

- Let students know your expectations; that they will be challenged; that they may feel anxious, and that it is ok to ask you for help.
- Schedule an opportunity early in the semester to calibrate where your students are in their preparation for the class.
- Use the Starfish Alert system to alert advisors and others of students who may need help to stay on track.
- Be aware of students who may be struggling and use the resources we have to assist them. In addition to Starfish alerts, the [Red Folder](#) offers tips on identifying and helping students who may be struggling by listing indicators of distress and a detailed list of resources both on and off campus.
- Take care of yourselves. You too have been impacted by the pandemic and may need help in readjusting to a more normal semester. The [Employee Assistance Program](#) is

available to all faculty and staff – don't hesitate to reach out to professionals through the program.

We are certainly in a far different place now than we were a year ago and I look forward to seeing many of you this year. As always, I welcome your thoughts, questions or comments. Feel free to contact me at provost@rit.edu. Best wishes for a rewarding fall semester!

Sincerely,

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