

*This message is sent on behalf of Jeremy Haefner,
Provost and Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs*

Colleagues,

For the past three years, the Academic Senate and the office of the provost have partnered to evaluate our approach for student ratings of teaching effectiveness and make recommendations on how we might best use this valuable student input to assist faculty. I am pleased to write that the Academic Senate recently endorsed the final report from the academic affairs committee; this report contains principles and recommendations that enable the university to move forward with implementing a new platform beginning this fall. This message conveys some basic information regarding this new system and the implementation process.

The reasons for this initiative are many but include the following: our Scantron system can no longer be supported effectively; there is a good deal of variation in the methodologies used and questions asked across the colleges; and new platforms exist that provide a much richer set of features and benefits than our current technologies. There have been many faculty engaged with this topic, but since 2011, the academic affairs committee of the Academic Senate has had the lead on researching the topic, conducting a pilot, and making the final recommendations.

As a result, the campus will use the SmartEvals product for student ratings. This online platform, which was developed in upstate New York, offers a great number of benefits including the ability to create customized questions, the option to collect mid-semester feedback, and the ability for students to complete the ratings survey using their mobile devices, to name but a few. You can learn more about this product on [the SmartEvals website](#). In addition, the Senate endorsed a number of principles that will guide our implementation. Please see the [final report](#), which is posted to my website. At this same location, you will also find the taskforce reports from [2011](#) and [2012](#). Finally, my communication last spring can be found on [my website](#).

The implementation of SmartEvals will be a change for the university and as such requires careful campus coordination and communication. As part of the final year of conversion, I have asked Fernando Naveda to lead this effort for 2013-2014. I am convinced that with his experience on the semester conversion, the campus will be in good hands for implementing this new system of student ratings. As part of his charge, he will establish a website where information will be shared about the new system and the process ahead. In addition, the colleges will appoint liaisons to work with Fernando, the departments and the faculty for a seamless transition.

At the same time, it has been my position that the effective evaluation of teaching requires multiple data points including student ratings, peer observations, as well as supporting work such as curriculum development. This multiple methodology approach means that the university will not rely on just one input and therefore have a more accurate assessment of teaching effectiveness. I have asked the deans

this year to develop clear processes for how each college will accommodate these multiple methodologies and I am pleased to report that this work is making great progress.

I am proud of the work that the Academic Senate did to help move this effort forward. The faculty on the academic affairs committee worked diligently to collect important feedback from faculty and students, gave careful consideration to a variety of concerns, and provided the campus with an excellent set of recommendations which we will adopt. My special thanks go out to the academic affairs committee and to the entire Academic Senate.

RIT prides itself on placing teaching and learning at the forefront of what we do. Collecting student feedback, as well as information from other assessment methods, is an important part of our continual improvement efforts. I am convinced that with the SmartEvals system, together with the principles put forth by the Academic Senate and multiple means of teaching assessment, RIT will establish a truly robust, useful, and fair system for gathering student input on teaching effectiveness.

Jeremy Haefner, Ph.D.

Provost and Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs

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