RIT | Rochester Institute of Technology

Dear Colleagues,

This is clearly a time of change in higher education. September's **State of the University** address asserted that RIT was built for this moment — with our strong emphasis on career-oriented education and world-changing research — and outlined how we are putting the **2035 Strategic Framework** into action. We described this as our next build: setting clear priorities, strengthening how RIT works, and making deliberate choices about where to focus our efforts and invest our resources so we can deliver the outcomes that matter most in today's world.

Today, we want to share how we are beginning that work.

Where We Stand

RIT's strength and increasing momentum are real. Last spring, we awarded a record of more than 5,400 degrees, and nearly 93 percent of our graduates secured a meaningful first destination within six months. This fall, we saw gains in the number of new first-year, transfer, and Ph.D. students. At the same time, however, the number of new Master's students fell short of expectations, driven in significant part by the national decline in international graduate enrollment. Student retention also fell short of expectations.

That resulted in about 300 fewer students enrolled this fall than last year, and a $5.8 million reduction in Fiscal Year 2027 projected revenue compared to what we anticipated in our June preliminary budget. Despite this reduction, we

remain confident that we will end the year with a positive financial result and a balanced budget.

To deliver on our ambitions, however, we must not be content with simply filling this year's budget gap but instead finding better ways to operate on an ongoing basis so we can further invest in the people, programs, and priorities that will drive RIT's continued strong upward trajectory.

In short, the question before us is not whether RIT will continue to balance its budget, but how we should respond to today's challenges and opportunities to achieve the ambitious vision, mission, and strategic goals we have set for ourselves.

Building Operational Excellence

We thus are launching "Building Operational Excellence," a university-wide initiative focused on strengthening how RIT organizes its work, uses its resources, and supports its vision, mission, and strategic goals. Thanks to the dedication of our talented faculty, staff, and leadership, RIT has a solid foundation of excellence, which we will build upon in this work.

The initiative will examine our structures, systems, processes, use of technology, and allocation of resources. Our goal in doing so is to reduce unnecessary complexity and duplication, improve effectiveness and accountability, strengthen important capabilities, identify sustainable savings, and create greater capacity for strategic investment. Savings are an important outcome of this work, but the goal is broader: to strengthen RIT's ability to invest in its people, programs, and priorities.

At its heart, this initiative is about ensuring we are utilizing our resources in the most effective way possible to make it easier for people to do great work at RIT and achieve our ambitious institutional goals.

How the Work Will Proceed

Building Operational Excellence will examine administrative and operational functions across RIT, including those within administrative divisions, colleges, and other academic units. The work will consider organizational structures, processes, responsibilities, technology, and how services are delivered across the university.

We will engage the higher education practice of Bain & Company to support this work. Bain representatives will conduct analyses, compare RIT with peer institutions, and help identify opportunities and options. RIT will oversee their work and determine what opportunities we will pursue and implement.

The work will be guided by the Building Operational Excellence Steering Committee, representing administrative and academic leadership, Faculty Senate, and Staff Council. We are grateful to those listed below who have agreed to serve and contribute their time, expertise, and perspective to this important effort.

The initial phase will begin this month, with the first six weeks focused on gathering significant data and understanding how we work today. We will then, in a second phase, spend six weeks planning and formulating recommendations. Implementation will begin as opportunities are identified and decisions are made and will continue until all chosen actions are completed, with work likely extending into the next academic year.

The steering committee will provide institutional perspective, help assess opportunities, and advise the President, Provost, and Chief Financial Officer concerning actions that should be taken as the work progresses. Decisions will be grounded in facts, informed by input, and made with careful consideration of their impact on our people and our mission. This work will inform future planning and resource allocation, including development of the Fiscal Year 2028 budget.

This work will proceed alongside efforts to strengthen RIT's academic portfolio (led by the Provost) and broader cross-divisional efforts to strengthen enrollment.

Your Ideas and Questions

We welcome your ideas and questions. We have created a **website** where you can learn more about Building Operational Excellence and follow work on the initiative as it progresses. Questions and ideas may also be sent to **operationalexcellence@rit.edu**. As the work moves forward, we will seek input from across the university, and we will continue to share what we are learning and where the work is headed.

For nearly 200 years, RIT has met changing times by building on the strengths that make us distinctive. We are confident that we will do so again.

Thank you for the care and expertise you bring to our students and to one another every day.

Sincerely,



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Building Operational Excellence Steering Committee

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Phil Castleberry, VP for University Advancement
Bobby Colon, VP and General Counsel
Prabu David, Provost and Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs
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Doreen Edwards, Dean, Kate Gleason College of Engineering
Sandy Johnson, Senior Vice President, Student Affairs
Michael Laver, Faculty Senate Representative and Professor, Department of History
Jo Ellen Pinkham, Chief Human Resources Officer
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Katey Sackett, Staff Council Representative, Asst. Director, Corporate and Foundation Relations

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