

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

Colleagues,

In his annual address to the RIT community (see <http://www.rit.edu/news/story.php?id=49329>), President Destler stated the intention to propose and launch an ***Innovative Learning Institute*** at RIT. The creation of the Innovative Learning Institute (ILI) is a strategic response to the rapidly changing e-learning and educational technology landscape in higher education. This has been exemplified by schools such as Stanford, Harvard and MIT, as well as other universities that have aggressively used technology to redesign their existing courses. In Dr. Destler's words: "We must move to ensure that RIT will be a leader, not a follower, as these new educational paradigms are developed."

Other drivers have led to the Innovative Learning Institute initiative. For example, the RIT Board of Trustees is very interested and engaged in e-learning, having sponsored a yearlong discussion through the work of our Future Educational Technology Taskforce, co-chaired by Professors Andy Phelps and Thérèse Hannigan. In addition, the RIT community, particularly those faculty members who have been passionately engaged in e-learning, has been pressing for a greater emphasis on our online course offerings. Finally, as we begin this very last year of quarters, faculty will be busy working on designing their course for semesters and will need focused support in integrating technology appropriately.

I am writing today to announce some preliminary measures to facilitate the vetting process that is a necessary part of process. First, I have recruited Dr. Neil Hair from the E. Philip Saunders College of Business, to provide interim leadership in assisting me in the vetting and initiating of the ILI. Many of you are familiar with Dr. Hair for his numerous teaching awards such as the Provost's Innovative Teaching with Technology Award, the Richard and Virginia Eisenhart Provost's award for Excellence in Teaching, and most recently the coveted the Eisenhart Award for Outstanding Teaching. Dr. Hair has always been a first adopter when it comes to educational technology, is internationally recognized for his work in Internet marketing, has published extensively and is a veteran in teaching in the Online Executive MBA program.

Second, I have asked Professor Thérèse Hannigan to join Dr. Hair, to assist in market analysis of the online space so that we can strategically position RIT with distinctive programs online. Thérèse brings an entrepreneurial spirit to the role having created and operated two successful private companies over the past twenty years in addition to her position as a tenured faculty member in the New Media program in CIAS. Thérèse was responsible for strategy and creative direction in the design and development of the new website for CIAS, which was recently recognized as a winner of the Center for Digital Education's 2012 Best of the Web Awards for American colleges and universities category. She will work collaboratively with other university departments to develop brand strategy, design and marketing materials appropriate for a national online campaign.

Finally, working carefully with the leadership and staff in The Wallace Center, we have moved 17 Wallace Center staff to a new organizational unit focused on experimentation with academic

technologies, as well as emerging modes of teaching and learning. This unit, which will become a part of the ILI, will report to me until the ILI is fully established. This unit will continue to offer all teaching and learning support services for faculty and will be led by Donna Dickson. Any teaching and learning support request, whether related to myCourses, course design, classroom support, or our academic technologies, should continue to be directed to Donna and her capable staff.

With this shift, The Wallace Center, under the leadership of Associate Provost Lynn Wild, will retain its important emphasis on student success with an expanded focus on faculty career development. RIT Libraries remain an integral piece of The Wallace Center with a focus on the delivery of vetted information resources, instruction in information literacy and unique resources such as the world renowned Cary Graphics Arts Collection and the RIT Archives. The Wallace Center will continue to direct signature events, such as New Faculty Orientation, as well as new faculty career development initiatives including academic leadership, tenure support and mentoring. Complimented by the Scholarly Publishing Studio and the award winning University Press, The Wallace Center will continue to provide broad support for both student and faculty research and scholarship. The Wallace Center's award-winning RIT Production Services team provides Institute-wide support in video production, web development, photography, media duplication and events. SportsZone, the largely student run organization, produces a bi-weekly television program featuring stories on student athletes, coaches, clubs and events at RIT and captures the spirit of RIT with live broadcasts of RIT's sporting events such as men's and women's hockey and lacrosse.

Finally, in relation to the creation of the ILI, I will be hosting a town hall meeting on Friday, September 14<sup>th</sup>, from 2 pm to 4 pm in the University Gallery. The purpose of the town hall meeting is to provide up-to-date information on the ideas for the ILI and, most importantly, to elicit a dialogue of what we need to consider in establishing this promising unit.

To be successful and to claim a leadership position in the evolving future of teaching and learning practices, we will need your help. Assist us in thinking through this opportunity and help us make the ILI a leading-edge resource for faculty to integrate technology in their teaching endeavors. The ILI will position RIT as a strong presence in the online learning space, enhance learning through best practice pedagogies that engage students, and open RIT to new markets and an even greater reputation in the future. I look forward to hearing from you and hope that you will be able to attend the town hall meeting on Friday, September 14<sup>th</sup>.

Jeremy Haefner  
Provost and Senior Vice President for Academic affairs

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