

APPENDIX A

Reexamining Aspects of Our Own History

RIT recognizes that we gather on the traditional territory of the Onöndowa'ga: or "the people of the Great Hill." In English, they are known as Seneca people, "the keeper of the western door. They are one of the six nations that make up the sovereign Haudenosaunee Confederacy."¹¹ Their history, among others, remains important as RIT endeavors to understand and acknowledge both our past and the present. For example, it remains unclear when RIT first admitted students who identified as African, Latinx, Asian and/or Native American (ALANA). According to the RIT Archive Collections, "it appears as though the first African American students entered the Rochester Athenaeum and Mechanics Institute (renamed RIT in 1944) during the early 1900s. For instance, in 1906 Fredericka Sprague, the granddaughter of Frederick Douglass, took classes at the Institute. There are several other instances of African American students attending the school during the early 20th century as well."¹²

The Black Awareness Coordinating Committee (BACC), RIT's first cultural club, first formed in October 1968 and was officially recognized as an organization the following year. The founding members included Laura Delaney '01, Herb Elchelberger '70, Kenneth Everett '69, Thomas Gray, Eddie Hill '70, James Manning '70, Ostein Truitt '70, Alvina Walker, Gil Whisnaut '72, Walter Whitney '69 and John Wilson '70. Today, more than 28 cultural student clubs and organizations are recognized at RIT¹³.

When BACC was founded, there were few students at RIT who identified as Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC). BACC worked to increase representation on campus, build a strong voice for the African American student, and educate the RIT community about Black culture. According to its founders, it was not easy but within the first year, RIT formed a committee to recruit more Black students and agreed to offer Black history courses. RIT Archives Collections explain, "In 1969, a Black studies program was offered with courses such as "Afro-American History," "Nativism, Racism, and Anti-Semitism," "West African History," and "Sociology of Intergroup Relations." BACC was also the first RIT organization to honor the great civil rights leader, the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and that effort continues today with our annual Expressions of King's Legacy programming.

In addition to BACC, RIT's historical roots saw the welcoming of the National Technical Institute for the Deaf (NTID) and the Higher Education Opportunity Program (HEOP) in the '60s.

¹¹ Native American Future Stewards Program. [Land Acknowledgement](#).

¹² RIT Archive Collections. [Minority students collection](#). Historical Information for Minority Students at RIT. 1906, 1961 – 1989.

¹³ Campus Life: [Clubs & Organizations](#). 2020.

The following table from the RIT Archives Collection provides information on the number of African, Latinx, Asian, and Native American (ALANA) students at the Institute at the start of the fall term from 1976-1979 and in 1984.

| | Black Non-Hispanic | American Indian or Alaskan Native | Asian or Pacific Islander | Hispanic | White Non-Hispanic | Total Minority | Percent Minority |
|-------------|--------------------|-----------------------------------|---------------------------|----------|--------------------|----------------|------------------|
| 1976 | 295 | 29 | 67 | 50 | 11,651 | 441 | 3.65% |
| 1977 | 327 | 28 | 65 | 66 | 11,932 | 486 | 3.91% |
| 1978 | 460 | 33 | 114 | 84 | 11,698 | 691 | 5.58% |
| 1979 | 337 | 26 | 132 | 96 | 13,315 | 591 | 4.25% |
| 1984 | 413 | 37 | 252 | 138 | 11,568 | 840 | 6.77% |

In 1980, a plan was developed to increase the number of minority and disadvantaged students in the RIT community, both faculty and students¹⁴.

Gradually more services were added to support AALANA students. For example, “The Rochester Institute of Technology’s (RIT) Office of Minority Affairs was established in 1982 under the direction of Fred W. Smith, [vice president for Student Affairs]. The number of students from minority populations attending the Institute had been gradually growing. The school’s administration hoped that by increasing its number of services, programs, and aid provided to minority students, the Institute could encourage more minority students to attend RIT. Over the years, the office sponsored various events such as a Black History Month celebration, Hispanic Heritage Month, and orientation activities for campus freshmen¹⁵.”

In the years that followed, RIT’s commitment to diverse student, faculty and staff populations increased. RIT established a President’s Commission on Cultural Diversity in the ‘80s, later changed to the President’s Commission for Promoting Pluralism in 1991 “because it was felt that the title, ‘promoting pluralism,’ better mirrored the work that needed to be done by the commission¹⁶”. University Diversity Plans, an Assistant Provost for Diversity, and the Center for Women and Gender were established in the ‘90s. A “faculty recruitment manager” dedicated to recruiting and retaining diverse faculty of color and women, the Multicultural Center for Academic Success (MCAS), the Future Faculty Career Exploration Program (FFCEP), a President’s Commission on Women (PCW), an Office of Faculty Diversity & Recruitment, and the RIT Board of Trustees Diversity Subcommittee were all established in the 2000s. A host of other diversity initiatives supported through the President’s Office, RIT Divisions and Colleges in the 2000s and 2010s, were established, including RIT’s Vice President & Associate Provost for Diversity & Inclusion; the Division of Diversity & Inclusion (DDI),

¹⁴ RIT Archive Collections. [Minority students collection](#). Historical Information for Minority Students at RIT. 1906, 1961 – 1989.

¹⁵ RIT Archive Collections. [RIT Office of Minority Student Affairs records](#). 1984-1993.

¹⁶ RIT Archive Collections. [RIT Commission for Promoting Pluralism records](#). “Historical Information for Commission for Promoting Pluralism. 1985 – 2011.

the [Destler/Johnson Rochester City Scholars](#), [AdvanceRIT](#), [Diversity Education](#), [Diversity Theater](#), the [Center for Advancing STEM Teaching, Learning and Evaluation \(CASTLE\)](#), [Men of Color, Honor and Ambition \(MOCHA\)](#), [Mosaic Center](#), the [Native American Future Stewards Program](#), [No Voice Zone](#), the [Q Center](#), [Society of Women Engineers](#), [Spectrum Support Program Services \(SSP\)](#), [Women of Color, Honor and Ambition \(WOCHA\)](#), several groups supporting Women—in “Science” ([WISe](#)), “Engineering” ([WE@RIT](#)), “Technology” ([WIT](#)), and/or “Computing” ([WiC](#)), the Executive Diversity Advisory Committee (focused on staff diversity) and a College of Science (COS) [Howard Hughes Medical Institute Inclusive Excellence Program \(HHMI\)](#). Add to this tapestry of initiatives through several decades, diverse curricular options and over 300 total student clubs and organizations to capture a university committed to diversity and inclusion.