

RIT

UNIVERSITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON GENDER-RELATED EXPERIENCE

24 September 2026



RIT

Who we are:

- Neeraj Buch, Dean of Undergraduate Studies and Associate Provost for Student Success
- Aaron Deever, Principal Lecturer, GCCIS
- Rich DeJordy, Department Chair, Department of Management, SCB
- Kathy Ehrlich-Scheffer, Director WE @ RIT, KGCOE
- Olivia Gauthier, MBA, SCB
- Sofie Herbeck, PhD student, COS
- Malar Hirudayaraj, Associate Professor, SCB
- Jacquie Ludwig, Asst. Director of Access and Belonging Initiatives, COS, and UACGRE Co-Chair
- Kelly Norris Martin, Dean, CLA
- Heidi Nickisher, Principal Lecturer, CAD, and UACGRE Co-Chair
- Cat Sakin, Undergraduate, KGCOE, CLA
- Elizabeth Schwartz, Asst Director, Women and Gender Programs and Outreach
- Alan Smerbeck, Associate Professor, CLA
- Alexis Smith, Undergraduate and Women's Senator, KGCOE
- Taj Smith, Exec. Director for Community and Education, Access, Engagement, and Success
- Amy Stornello, Adjunct Faculty and NTID Deputy Title IX Coordinator

Our charge:

The role of the University Advisory Committee on Gender-Related Experience is to discuss and share observations regarding the gender-related experiences of students, faculty, and staff, with specific attention to the learning environment and institutional climate. (Our findings will be submitted to university leadership to inform policy decisions, program design, and resource allocation.)

Scope:

Receive annual updates on the gendered experience from operational units, including, but not limited to AdvanceRIT; the Women, Gender, and Sexuality Resource Center; Human Resources; Office for Compliance and Ethics; Enrollment; Access, Engagement, and Success; Student Affairs; and Academic Affairs:

- Identify and summarize recurring themes or concerns related to gendered experience(s).
- Annually share feedback with the Provost and President's Cabinet for awareness and consideration.
- Annually present at University Council

■ What we're hearing:

1. Faculty bias and workplace climate

- Ongoing concerns about gender bias among faculty, including:
 - Women receiving lower evaluations due to bias (e.g., expectations around friendliness)
 - Bias normalized (masquerading as neutrality)
 - Reports of women bullying women
- Some faculty (both tenured and pre-tenure) feel afraid to speak up due to potential retaliation.
- Student course evaluations may contain biased or inappropriate comments, with little filtering or accountability.

2. Student-to-Faculty behavior

- Female faculty experience:
 - > More interruptions in class
 - > Gendered or disrespectful language
 - > Lower evaluations tied to bias rather than performance
- Discussion on whether and how to address harmful student feedback.

And Staff?

- Are *you* aware of issues or concerns from your constituents that fall within our committee's charge that you would like to see addressed? If so, what are they?
- Are you willing to ask your constituents and solicit feedback?
- The UACGRE would like to send out a short “temperature check” survey to all staff and welcomes your input. What we might glean from survey results could be used to generate a **staff-centered initiative**.

Thank you for your time.

Any comments, questions, and/or concerns, please feel free to contact me, Heidi Nickisher, at hcnfaa@rit.edu.