

RIT | University Council

Meeting Minutes: April 22, 2026

The meeting was called to order at 3:10

Approve Minutes of March 25, 2026 Meeting:

Minutes approved 32-0-1

President's Report:

CAMPUS EVENTS

- The new Performing Arts Center was dedicated and opened on April 10, including an event featuring the current RIT president and three former presidents, followed by the inaugural performance.
- Last weekend, we officially opened Judson Stadium, which will host the 2026 NCAA Division II and Division III Women's Lacrosse semifinal and championship games.
- Liberty Hill continues to host student receptions and campus events, including the recent reception for the Presidential Awards for Outstanding Staff.

ENROLLMENT UPDATES

- Enrollment data is still developing ahead of the May 1 national deposit deadline, with deposits slightly down as of April 15 but still within the initial budget predictions.
- Lower deposits combined with the higher admits this year indicate our yield rate will go down.
- Transfer enrollment increased from 108 to 154 deposits, largely due to faster transcript processing in a coordinated effort with the Registrar and IT offices.
- Online master's program enrollment is up from last year and follows the trend from two years ago, while the on-ground deposits are up from last year and trending slightly lower than the previous year. PhD deposits are up by 6.

ADVANCEMENT AND RESEARCH

- RIT has raised approximately \$30 million this year and continues to expand alumni outreach and engagement efforts.
 - An upcoming signature event in NYC to increase RIT community engagement has over 400 people registered.
- RIT is hosting the sixth U.S.–Japan University Partnership for Workforce Advancement and Research & Development in Semiconductors (UPWARDS) Network convening in collaboration with 11 universities, the National Science Foundation, and Micron Technology.

BUDGET AND FINANCIAL PLANNING

- The board is developing their preliminary budget to be approved in June.
- Increasing tuition and associated student financial aid is leading to a flat projected revenue, alongside rising healthcare, debt, and energy costs, creating an estimated \$9 million budget gap.
- Academic and administrative departments have been asked to model 4% and 7% budget cuts to identify efficiencies, though no cuts have been finalized.
- RIT remains financially stronger than many peer institutions despite current challenges.

Q: Question about the students who are enrolled in a combined accelerated bachelor's/master's program. How are they counted if they are a first-year student and they are planning to get their master's in their fifth year?

A: They get counted as first-year and then get counted as a continuing graduate. Their progression into the graduate program is dependent on their success here.

A: The conversion fraction is relatively low. If you said this was something you planned to do in your first year, by the time you are graduating, maybe only 30% of students chose to continue. But 30% is better than zero. Secondly, these are domestic students, so that helps us in domestic graduate enrollment. Quite frankly, a good fraction of first-year students view the ability to be treated as a combined student as a benefit of RIT, which helps our recruitment.

Policy D18.2 (Student Appeals Process) Edits Vote (*presentation files available on the [University Council website](#)*)

Nicole Boulais, Assoc. VP, Student Affairs

Policy changes to D18.2 were presented to UC in Jan 2026 and were unanimously approved by all 3 governance groups.

Policy D18.8 edits were endorsed 31-1-0 by University Council.

Policy E12.4 (Staff Recognition Awards) Edits Vote (*presentation files available on the [University Council website](#)*)

Gene Vogler, Staff Council Chair

Changes to E12.4 were presented to UC in March 2026 and was approved by all the governance groups.

Policy E12.4 edits were endorsed 32-0-0 by University Council.

Advancement Update (*presentation files available on the [University Council website](#)*)

Phil Castleberry, VP, University Advancement

RECAP OF FY2025

- FY2025 was the second-best fundraising year in RIT history, with approximately \$46.9M in commitments and \$26.7M in cash.
- Annual fund contributions have tripled since 2019, a lot of which was driven by the Sentinel Society.

FY2026 YEAR-TO-DATE

- Metrics are trending positively, with commitments exceeding \$30M towards our \$36.2M goal.
- Cash and annual fund contributions continue to grow.
- Major gift asks are slightly up, with closures up significantly.
- Prospect and donor visits are slightly below target due to reduced fundraisers.

SENTINEL SOCIETY

- Sentinel Society just passed 1,000 members, generating over \$10M in commitments.
- Membership within the Society requires a five-year pledge of at least \$1,000 annually.
- It allows University Advancement to develop a community of habitual donors that can contribute frequently.

MAJOR GIFTS AND DONOR DEVELOPMENT

- Major gifts (\$100K+) show growth, with asks up 2% and closures up 19%.
- Advancement has begun engaging parents over the last two years, and eight parents contributed \$100K+ this year.
- Forty donors made their first major gift this year.

BOOK OF BUSINESS AND PLEDGE PIPELINE

- The pipeline of committed but unreceived funds continues to grow at a record level.
- Growth includes both short-term pledges and long-term commitments.

INTRODUCING PRESIDENT SANDERS

- The inauguration marked a major milestone in FY2026.
- President Sanders has held over 115 meetings with alumni, donors, and partners to date.
- Corporate engagement has expanded, including partnerships with L3Harris, Micron, Paychex, GE Aerospace, and Texas Instruments.

FUTURE CAMPAIGN PLANNING

- Planning is underway for the next fundraising campaign aligned with the strategic framework.
- The campaign is expected to move away from a blended model toward a traditional philanthropic approach.
- Initial efforts may include targeted campaigns such as student aid with defined goals and timelines.
- These efforts may scale into a larger comprehensive campaign.

Q: Looking at the blended campaign fundraising summary. Can you tell me what the research grants and contracts mean within the campaign? Researchers were all very confused when we saw the reports, as it's the largest number by far.

A: The three subtotals for philanthropic, research and contracts, and government fundraising add up to a number bigger than \$1.059 billion. The research number encompasses government grants that were research-focused and research-targeted philanthropic donations.

Comment: Blended campaigns are not unheard of in the marketing world, but they are not modern best practices. Generally, reporting your numbers like this is confusing to people. Middle States, when they saw that number, immediately asked how much was actually philanthropy, and we were clear in our answer. Presumably, this blended campaign was performed to promote both research and philanthropy, or maybe because they wanted a number that sounded big. We won't do a blended campaign like this again, but it does present a challenge for us, because we can't present a campaign that is half the size of a campaign we just completed without explanation.

Employee Health and Wellness Update (*presentation files available on the [University Council website](#)*)

Jo Ellen Pinkham, Assoc. VP and Chief Human Resources Officer

Stephanie Smith, Leave Administration Manager

WELLNESS DIMENSIONS

- RIT supports a culture of employee well-being and belonging where all community members can grow and thrive.
- There are 6 dimensions of employee wellness: physical, mental, financial, occupational, social, and environmental.

PHYSICAL WELLNESS

- Healthcare costs continue to increase, driven primarily by pharmacy costs. Affordability remains a concern for both the university and employees.
 - Efforts focus on managing future cost increases rather than reducing costs.
 - 2027 purports to be a substantial increase in costs.
- The most common conditions among RIT employees include depression and anxiety, heart disease, asthma, and diabetes, consistent with national trends.
 - These chronic conditions follow regional and national trends.
- On-campus care is available through RRH, with no-cost preventive services.
- Approximately 80% of eligible faculty and staff are enrolled in RIT medical coverage and 52% of employees utilize primary care well visits.
- Better Me Wellness provides resources for physical activity, healthy habits, and long-term wellness.
 - These include group fitness classes, wellness coaching, annual benefits fair and recurring educational sessions.

MENTAL WELLNESS

- The Employee Assistance Program (EAP) provides free and confidential services for employees and dependents.
- The university transitioned to Bree Health as the program provider in 2025 to expand access, including ASL-supported and on-campus services.
- Over 377 employees and their dependents utilized the EAP for behavioral and mental health services.
- There was a ten-point improvement on generalized anxiety and mental health screenings over the past year.
- RIT also offers Mental Health First Aid training for the community which includes topics on open mental health discussion, self-care strategies and providing support for other RIT community members.

FINANCIAL WELLNESS

- Financial wellness programs include retirement planning and matching, budget support, and financial education.

- Free and confidential services are available through Fidelity, TIAA, and CAPTRUST, including investment advice and financial planning support.
- There was a nearly 50% increase in utilization of one or more of these providers from 2024 to 2025.
- RIT also offers entertainment and shopping discounts through Bree Health, free BJ's membership at the Henrietta location and more.

OCCUPATIONAL WELLNESS

- Professional development includes leadership programs, tuition waiver benefits, LinkedIn Learning, and external training support.
- Career mobility at RIT is high, with approximately 30% of staff hires being internal.

SOCIAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL WELLNESS

- The university continues to support programs focused on community engagement (employee awards ceremonies, staff appreciation picnic, SHED Maker Space and RIT athletic events).
- Sustainability is also a priority and that includes nature trails around campus, community gardens, recycling, etc.

LOOKING AHEAD

- Future efforts will focus on improving communication, expanding wellness programs, and incorporating employee feedback.
- These efforts will be aligned with the Strategic Framework to support a culture of well-being and belonging.

Q: Is the list of chronic conditions named in order?

A: They are in order. We did group conditions associated with heart disease together. The top conditions are depression and anxiety.

Q: Have you considered the possibility that depression and anxiety may be over diagnosed in this population? If we look at epidemiological data, mental health is a serious problem within academic institutions.

A: It is a serious problem; you are right. You do see a higher prevalence of depression and anxiety as a major chronic condition in higher education institutions over other types of industries. It is typically attributed to, in the research that we have, the fact that we are a very highly educated population and there is less of a stigma to utilizing mental health services.

Q: Do you have the data for students?

A: No, we do not have the data for students.

Q: Approximately 52% of staff use primary care?

A: That number refers to the percentage of RIT employees and dependents that went to their primary care physician in 2025. Approximately 80% of RIT staff have identified a primary care physician, but that is different than the amount that utilize their providers annually.

Comment: That number is too low and may be one of the reasons why we have a high rate of chronic conditions like heart disease.

A: Which is why we try to promote the idea that these visits are no-cost.

Q: Can you comment on the escalation of healthcare costs, both at RIT and more broadly?

A: Yes, rising costs are not just a problem for us. It's a national medical trend. There are two broad components when we talk about the trend. There are the underlying trends in the medical field as well as prescription drug costs. The first is underlying medical costs, which have increased at single-digit rates for the past few years but are now trending in the double digits, around 10-13%. Prescription drug cost increases are currently in the range of approximately 9–12%, with some projections reaching as high as 15%. In addition, labor costs in healthcare are contributing significantly to overall cost increases. Nurses can quit their hospital job on a Friday and start as a traveling nurse making two to three times their previous wage the following week. That is driving individual and institutional healthcare costs. These labor and pharmaceutical cost pressures together are accelerating overall healthcare spending.

Q: Is it fair to say that national healthcare cost increases are in the range of 10–15%?

A: It's going to be more than that. We are already talking about it for 2027. It's early now, but we projected a 13.9% spending increase in 2026, and we already know we are trending to spend 20%. So, we are 6% behind for 2026 already because costs have accelerated faster than predicted.

Q: Just to move away from healthcare costs, I want to ask about Bree Health. I heard colloquially from others that they've tried getting counselors through Bree Health, and they are not available. They are not available for specific cases such as anger management or grief counseling. How would you suggest people navigate this system in order to get the help that they need, even if it's not specific, with the coaching model that Bree uses?

A: I hope this information is a bit old, because we did receive feedback that initially there were some challenges with Bree Health. We want to know so we can help and intercede. Not that we want employees to feel that they need to disclose their mental health needs to use it, but we want to make sure they are connecting with providers. We want to help facilitate that, because there is no reason employees are unable to get counseling.

Q: Is there a comprehensive list of all wellness benefits and resources available to employees?

A: Most wellness resources are currently available through the Better Me website. Some information may need to be updated. We'll make sure to work on that.

Q: Are the prerequisites for participating in management or leadership development programs listed anywhere?

A: Yes, they are listed on the Learning and Organizational Development website. You can pretty much just take classes.

Q: You mentioned Rochester Regional Health (RRH). Are they considered our preferred provider?

A: RRH is considered preferred in terms of convenience because of the on-campus clinic. In the past, there was differential co-pay pricing, but that is no longer in place, as there isn't any difference in claims. There used to be a handshake agreement to lower costs if we supported RRH, but their business model no longer allows them to differentiate from Strong.

Q: Who is considered in-network for healthcare providers?

A: Both Rochester Regional Health and University of Rochester providers are in-network. In total, approximately 98% of healthcare providers in the greater Rochester area are considered in-network.

Faculty Senate Update (*presentation files available on the [University Council website](#)*)

Richard Zanibbi, Faculty Senate Chair

SENATE ROLE

- The Faculty Senate serves as the legislative and representative body of the faculty, overseeing academic policy and representing faculty interests.

SENATE STRUCTURE

- The Senate includes 44 voting members representing all degree-granting colleges. Representation is based on college faculty size.
- Representatives from the Provost's Office, Staff Council, and Student Government also participate in Senate discussions.
- The Senate operations also include standing committees which cover areas like curriculum, academic affairs, research, budget, and faculty matters.

AY 2025-26 ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- Faculty Senate updated their academic charter (Policy B02.0), including committee structure changes and adding two student voting members to Academic Affairs.
- Approved and published the Student Academic Integrity Policy (D08.0) after extended development and review.
- Senate assisted with incorporating the Chicago Statement into Policy E02.0 - Principles of Academic Freedom.
- The group also approved new programs, including a BS in Artificial Intelligence, an accelerated BS in Nursing, and a PhD in Physical Therapy.

LOOKING AHEAD

- Senate will focus on supporting faculty scholarship, research, and instructional work through improved resources and policies.

- Senate will also work on prioritizing student recruitment and retention.
- The Senate Task Force on Student Retention will be exploring the option of offering Bachelor of Arts degrees which could provide more curriculum flexibility.

Student Government Update (*presentation files available on the [University Council website](#)*)

Rafael Gilboa, Student Government President

STUDENT GOVERNMENT STRUCTURE

- The Student Government (SG) elected president and vice president appoint a cabinet to work on a number of initiatives.
- There are also committee chairs that work on SG internal committees, focusing on different topics.
- Representative Student Organizations (RSOs) help to organize and coordinate student clubs and organizations with similar identities and/or community groups.

EXTERNAL PROJECTS

- SG piloted a downtown Rochester bus program to take students into Rochester to explore and connect with the area. There were three trial runs throughout the semester and the program broke even on costs after charging approximately \$5 per ticket.
 - There are plans to expand in the future.
- SG also held their first spring club fair to complement the fall club fair. Over 250 clubs expressed interest despite limited advertising and space. Next year, they aim to host the event earlier in the semester.
- There was also an on-campus job opportunities fair, focused on internal employment on campus. The event included over 30 hiring partners and more than 400 student attendees. There are plans to expand event marketing and improve the timing.
- SG supported additional initiatives, including period product dispensers, expanded club engagement efforts, and campus employment programming.
- Additional initiatives included advocating for student concerns, like the Dining Commons closure prevention, bus route adjustments, and flag-raising policy updates.

INTERNAL PROJECTS

- SG launched PawPrints 2.0 to improve access to student petitions and feedback.
- Student Government committees were restructured to better allocate Paw Prints.
 - This included reestablishing the SG Global Committee, addressing prior petition imbalances and creating an accessibility-focused senator role.
- SG reduced the three-year backlog of student petitions and improved follow-through across committees.
- The group also allocated funding to support student organizations and events.
- SG continued participation in 17 university committees and various campus initiatives.

THE COMING YEAR

- Next year's SG president and vice president have been elected – Yasmine Ibrahim and Nkodia Ndongala.
- SG plans to continue college collaborations since the deans were quite interactive with SG.
- SG will be sending their annual end of year report shortly with will the include the information in this presentation and more.
- RIT students appreciate many parts of RIT but they are hoping to see improvements in areas like co-ops (more employers at career fairs) and dining (too expensive and not open enough).

Budget/Capital Budget Process and Priorities (*presentation files available on the [University Council website](#)*)

Leanne Hill, Assoc. VP, Budget and Financial Planning Services

STUDENT INFORMATION AND ENROLLMENT

- Just under 14,000 students support the RIT main campus operating budget.
- Undergraduate enrollment is growing in CET and KGCOE, while GCCIS has declined.
- Masters programs enrollment are down, while PhD enrollment has increased. Combined accelerated bachelor's/master's programs are helping offset declines.
- First-year retention remains a key driver of tuition revenue. Retention and graduation rates remain below peer institutions, including within RIT's ranking range.
- Fewer high school graduates are projected in the Northeast, with limited growth nationally and most growth occurring in the South.

OPERATING BUDGET

- The FY2026 operating budget is approximately \$1.2 billion.
- Tuition and fees account for roughly 65% of total revenue.
- After restricted funds, approximately \$450 million is available for operations.
- Institutional financial aid is the largest expense, around \$390 million.

DISCRETIONARY EXPENSES

- Outside of institutional aid, salaries and employee benefits are the largest expense, 82%, with healthcare costs continuing to increase.
- Debt service accounts for approximately 5% and is fully built into the operating budget. It is a low-risk, conservative approach to debt management.
- Other expenses include supplies, capital, and professional fees.

ENDOWMENT

- The endowment distributes approximately 5% every fall to support operations.
- Funds support operations, professorships, scholarships, and other institutional priorities.

DEBT

- Total long-term debt is approximately \$377 million and is primarily tied to capital projects, including academic facilities and housing.
 - Approximately 75% supports the academic mission and 25% supports auxiliaries.
- Debt levels remain conservative relative to peer institutions.

Comment: RIT's retention and graduation rates are lower than those of similarly ranked institutions, indicating that current performance is below peer expectations and not solely a function of institutional ranking.

Q: Can you explain \$15 million and \$6 million associated with NTID and auxiliaries in the operating budget?

A: Those are NTID and auxiliary paying for core functions of payroll, HR, billing, and similar areas.

Q: Are we considering issuing new debt? It seems like they would mostly be dedicated to capital projects; is that something that is being discussed?

A: Not at this time, maybe in a couple years if a dorm fund would come into play.

Q: Does the university ever issue debt to cover operating expenses?

A: No. Debt is not used to cover operating expenses. Approximately 75% of the university's debt is related to the educational plant, while approximately 25% is associated with auxiliary services. An example would be the recent dorm renovations, which are absorbed into the auxiliary's budget. They are covering that portion of the debt.

Q: What are "professional fees" within the operating budget?

A: Jo Ellen mentioned actuarial calculating services earlier; that would be an example of professional fees - consultant and executive services.

New Business

None

Meeting adjourned at 5:09

Attendance – see next page

Attendance 4/22/2026

Name	Relationship to UC	Attended	Name	Relationship to UC	Attended
Antol, Jillian	Member-SC		Jokl, Todd	Member-Dean	
Beck, Makini	Member-FS		Kiely, Becky	Member-SC	X
Brault, David	Member-SC	X	Kleckley, Dianna	Member-SC	X
Brinkman, Olivia	Member-SG		Lanzafame, Joseph	Member-FS	X
Brown, Jeremy	Member-FS	Excused	Lapizco-Encinas, Blanca	Member-FS	X
Brown, Tamaira	Non-Voting Member	X	Laver, Michael	Member-FS	X
Buch, Neeraj	Non-Voting Member		Loffredo, Joe	Non-Voting Member	
Castleberry, Phil	Non-Voting Member		McLaren, Amy	Member-FS	
Cirillo, Andrew	Member-SC	X	McMullin, Noah	Member-SC	X
Chung, Sorim	Member-FS	X	McQuiller Williams, LaVerne	Non-Voting Member	X
Connolly, Sarah	Member-SC	X	Mozrall, Jacqueline	Member-Dean	
Coppenbarger, Matthew	Member-FS	X	Nasr, Nabil	Member-Dean	
David, Prabu	Member & EC	X	Norris-Martin, Kelly (sub Kirsten Condry)	Member-Dean	X
Davis, Kathleen	Non-Voting Member	X	Osei, Christabel	Member-SG	
Davis, Stacey	Member-FS	X	Pinkham, Jo Ellen	Non-Voting Member	X
Dimick, Zach	Member - SG	X	Prescott, Joanna	Member-SC	X
Edwards, Doreen	Member-Dean		Pries, Sophia	Member-SG Alternate	
Finnerty, Bob	Non-Voting Member	X	Raffaella, Ryne	Non-Voting Member	
Fokunang, Nagwa	Member-SG	X	Ramkumar, S. Manian	Member-Dean	
Gauthier, Olivia	Member-SG	X	Sackett, Katey	Member-SC	X
Gilboa, Rafael	Member-SG & EC	X	Sanders, William	Non-Voting Member & EC	x
Hall, James	Member-Dean		Sharifi, Saeed	Member-SG	X
Herman, Vanessa	Non-Voting Member	X	Slusarski, Diane (sub Lauren Cannon)	Non-Voting Member	X
Hoopes, Trishelle	Member-SG Alternate	X	Smith, Christine	Member - SC	X
Hu, Suyun	Member-SG Alternate	X	Smith, Evan	Member - SC	X
Hudson, André	Member-Dean & EC	Excused	Solomon, Caroline	Member - Dean	X
Huenerfauth, Matt (sub Mike Yacci)	Member-Dean	X	Thomas, Bolaji	Member-FS	X
Jenkins, Keith	Non-Voting Member	X	Trierweiler, John	Non-Voting Member	X
Jesse, Peyton	Member-SG		Vogler, Gene	Member-SC & EC	X
Johnson, Dan	Member-FS	X	Wang, Yong Tai	Member-Dean	
Johnson, Sandra	Non-Voting Member	X	Watters, Jim	Non-Voting Member	
Johnson, Susannah	Member-SG		Zanibbi, Richard	Member-FS & EC	X
Johnston, Joe	Non-Voting Member		Zehr, Jeremy	Member-SC	X
Key: EC=Executive Committee; FS=Faculty Senate; SC=Staff Council; SG=Student Government					
Interpreters: Dana Cardona & Jenna Stein			Student Assistant: Lee Cornell		