

RIT | University Council

Meeting Minutes: November 8, 2023

The meeting was called to order at 3:02

Approve Minutes of October 11, 2023 Meeting:

Minutes approved 44-0-0

President's Report:

TECH HUB INITIATIVES

- Hearing the local news talk about the tech hub project. For those who don't know, there has been legislation that was championed by Senator Chuck Schumer to increase the competitiveness of the United States in the STEM disciplines, including manufacturing of integrated circuits. The US is setting aside money for the development of mini silicon valleys across the United States.
- The proposal process that Upstate NY participated in was a collaborative effort between Rochester, Buffalo, and Syracuse to become a conjoined tech hub, with partner universities in the area convening to draft a strategic plan. We have been successful in Phase One of the process to be recognized, but Phase Two is where the real money is, and there are few of those awards available.
 - Our collaboration is key to getting Phase Two seed money, but we feel we have a good shot of getting the money. Our focus is on the supply side of the semiconductor manufacturing industry, dubbing our tech hub the "Semiconductor Highway."
- While a lot of people are taking credit for the pursuit of this project, RIT has been an integral part of the process, with our VP of Research being a key player in identifying the sweet spot for our proposals and hosting the consortium to further discussion.

BRICK CITY HOMECOMING WEEKEND

- The last meeting was right before Brick City Homecoming, and it was the biggest bash we've ever seen from the event. The attendance numbers were triple last year, and it was thanks to all the councils and alumni groups being on campus simultaneously.
 - Our advancement team has regional teams for fundraising, and everyone was here for meetings and to enjoy the weekend.
- The opening of the SHED was held and was accompanied by a gala that ran a little long Friday night to celebrate the SHED. The Melissa Villasenor speaker event, men's hockey game, and other programming made the night large.
- Credit to the colleges that participated and set up their programming, and the performing arts department for the large number of performances held during the weekend.

MENTAL HEALTH

- Campus administration has seen and heard the challenges being faced on campus regarding mental health and a lack of space following the recent losses of students.

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- With the November and December blues setting in, the status of mental health on campus has been getting more difficult.
- On October 23, we lost a student to suicide. While we do lose one or two students each year given the size of our campus, the fact that it happened on campus rather than off makes it a rare occurrence. This is especially different since typically families ask us to not release details of the student's death, whereas the family of this student asked for the cause of death to be stated publicly along with identifying information.
 - Once word is out there, then it becomes all students talk about and social media gets lit up with people advising us what we should be doing better. I had a conversation with the new CAPS director to talk about ways we can be better.
- The day after this incident, another student passed away due to a traffic accident. With all these incidents and the timing of the semester, this has been an extremely important topic of discussions among administration.
- These incidents are following the tail of the current political issues occurring in the Middle East where many innocent lives are being lost. There is no way to acknowledge this issue without being criticized as a university, and it has become important to do what we can to ensure our community is stable and able to move forward, even if we cannot solve the issue from here.

THE SHED

- On a positive note, the SHED is looking good with many students sitting inside, happy with the development. There are a lot of fun things we have been seeing open this year. We wanted to try and make it happen earlier and have dealt with the challenges accordingly. We are waiting for the maker spaces to be opened, and it will happen over the next month or two, and once they do open, you will see so many students working on their projects and getting involved with other disciplines and interests.
 - Once the building finalizes over the break, we are looking to have another celebration for the full SHED opening on January 18th.
- The research side of RIT is becoming fuller as we look toward becoming more of a research institution, which has led us to expect our faculty to do more than just teach. We are making sure our tenure track faculty are engaged in research and things have been booming as a result, as we have set a record in number of dollars in research for the university.

Policy C19.0 (University Closings) change from Governance to Administrative Policy (*presentation files available on the [University Council website](#)*)

President David Munson

DISCUSSION

- In cases where changes of policies are minor, the executive council does not put through those minor word changes through the governance process.
- As a result, we have moved this policy to make it an administrative policy instead of a governance one.

Preamble P03.0 (Honor Code) Update (*presentation files available on the [University Council website](#)*)
President David Munson

DISCUSSION

- There was an update to this preamble in which the responsible office and a related policy was corrected within the Honor Code.

Policy Changes for D19.0 (Student Gender-Based and Sexual Misconduct Policy) – REVISIONS VOTE
(*presentation files available on the [University Council website](#)*)
Stacy DeRooy, Director of Title IX and Clery Compliance

D.19 POLICY CHANGES REFRESHER

- Substantial revisions and updates to the language and definitions in the D.19 policy were developed to better enable the process for investigations and protections for all parties involved.
 - Language regarding advisor choice was updated to ensure that the “advisor of choice” process in investigations held the same rights for all parties.
 - New language surrounding the opening statement process to support quicker investigation processes.
 - Mutual conduct reports enable better transparency between parties.
 - Non-member procedural rights were enhanced to better ensure all individuals have access to the same rights that students hold.
- We initially proposed removing the hard timelines entirely from the language of the policy, however through the governance process, Student Government expressed great interest in retaining the timeline language. The compromise is reflected in the updated language of the policy, where no specific timeline is specified, however the flowchart is updated with estimations of a process timeline for reference.
- The witness list gathering process language now specifies that additions cannot be made less than five business days from the cutoff date.
- Incorporated a change that places a hold onto a student’s transcript upon the commencement of an investigation, so that if an involved student transfers from RIT to another school during an investigation, there will a notation on the student’s transcript.
- The bill of rights in the policy has been updated to remove the “student” language from the rights to reflect these rights apply to more than just students.
 - Timeline estimations for the process have been updated in the flowchart.

MOTION TO PASS CHANGES OUTLINED TO POLICY D 19.0

- Discussion: NONE
- Vote: 43:0:1
 - Motion passes.

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

Neeraj Buch, Dean of Undergraduate Studies and Associate Provost for Student Success

Shelitha Williams, Associate VP, Student Development

RETENTION UPDATE

- This presentation exemplifies the ongoing partnership between university departments in enabling student success throughout the retention process.
- Following the 21 Day Report, there were approximately 14,000 students on the main RIT campus in Fall 23', with about 3,300 students being first-year students.
 - This new class of Fall 23' demonstrated increases in the enrollment of women, as well as the racial distribution of students.
 - 4% of the class population represent India, China, and Canada. 17% of the student population come from NY state, with a bulk of overall students coming from the Eastern seaboard.
 - The distribution across colleges shows that GCCIS continues to be the largest, holding the top five majors as well.
 - The Spring 23' GPA for undergraduate students averaged 3.29.
- Defining student success by the numbers, comparing against the 2025 Strategic Plan:
 - The six-year graduate rate is 72.6%, with the target goal being 78% by 2025.
 - The on-time graduation rate is currently at 68%, below the goal of 72% by 2025.
 - Our ALANA population is at 9.4%, a positive step forward.
- There is a persistence rate of 95% between the first and second semester, and an increase of 3.5% to the first- and second-year persistence. Persistence is a strong indicator used to determine student success, since these metrics are interconnected with other factors on campus, so these increases are positive.

STUDENT SUCCESS UPDATES

- Initiatives have begun across campus to further student success by identifying and amending the disconnects students are feeling across campus.
 - The above identified completion and persistence rates provide a strong insight into what is happening to students but is not a holistic picture.
 - To accommodate for that, we look to ask and figure out what students identify as success, and what our students are missing based off these metrics.
- It is critical to remember that higher education is not a straightforward path for everyone, all students have very specific reasons for pursuing a degree, so the value add they seek out of RIT is very tailored to everyone.
- Year One Programs is responsible for the coordination of RIT 365, a required transitional course for First Year students; they are coordinating 3,300 students this year. A lot of work is done backstage to make this flow, because of how critical this course is to connecting students to the institution.
 - These courses, as a facilitator, are uncomfortable, because you are not a teacher, you lead conversations, and it does not come naturally for most. But the coaching meetings that prompt class conversations lead to a lot of insight into student interests and definitions of success.

- Every student on campus has so far said they wanted to feel “connected,” not that they wanted a 4.0 GPA, because they want something different and unique out of their experience.

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- These current and upcoming classes are unique as well, in that the pandemic interrupted their school experience, and they are looking to make up for lost time.
- Students are genuinely looking to chase their aspirations, not simply be “retained” through a college experience. This is critical to the approach of amending these issues.

ADDRESSING CLASS SEATING

- A critical goal of the project was to meet the need of all first-year students in the fall semester, ensuring they were all in the critical required class sections without a single student falling behind because of a lack of seats they could not control.
- We are happy to report that this goal has been met, with all students in the Fall 23’ first year class being in these core classes, thanks to the incredible support of the many individuals on the strategy team that worked with enrollment management to accommodate students.
 - RIT 365 classes have been tweaked and accommodated for all students who have in previous years had to struggle with overlapping core classes that impeded their ability to go to RIT 365.
- The key to accomplishing these goals was the effective management of the waitlist cap on the seats in classes, and we have been able to achieve it through closely working with students, family, and faculty that enabled the 11-member taskforce to organize these achievements.
- These efforts allowed us to secure 24,000 seats across nine different math courses and 35 programs across nine colleges for critical core classes. Alongside this was the doubling of the CLA general education seats to allow for students to fit in these classes for immersion and minors.
 - The RIT 365 overlap solution allowed the 3,400 students affected to not have any core class conflicts with their RIT 365 sections.
- This success met the goals for all students to get registered and we will continue these efforts as a task force for another year as we transition this to become more automated as a collective.
 - These efforts have been achievable only through the partnership of many individuals and groups across the institution and are an indication of our future efforts to improve our student success in the coming years.

Q: The current freshman of 2022 experienced schooling entirely remote right?

A: Not entirely, only about three years were remote for them.

Q: You showed the average GPA as 3.24, but do you have the breakdown for each grade level?

A: We don’t have that on the slide deck but that information will most likely be available in a dashboard.

Q: One thing that comes across in teaching, students essentially need a nudge for success in first year courses, and anyone who reads the RIT Reddit will see there is a population that struggles with comprehension, rather than just a course here or there. A lot of students report mental health issues

upon starting college, tied up in many complicated problems. Are there efforts that go beyond the Academic Affairs side to make it more comprehensive to be a more “college in general” solution?

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A: That is what this partnership is all about. The services that we have in Student Affairs to engage and connect with the institution is the rationale of the joint presentation; not strictly in the classroom but acknowledging the holistic experience at the institution. I teach a course this semester, in which I provided a kudos and alert for students. A line of students began forming after sending the alert, raising the awareness that my instructor is not just a person that gives content, they also care about the performance of students. Performance is just one metric, but engagement matters more, and the best way to improve it is through communication. Open up with the students, lower the wall and the power differential, and students will be more open to talking to the professors and continue from there.

Q: Congratulations on getting the students enrolled before they come into RIT. Did the taskforce come up with a template or a best practice that all colleges can implement to make it easier for all college freshman transitions?

A: At some point Dr. Robinson will pass this information along as she has come up with color coded spreadsheets to automate the process, and there has been a lot of communication efforts with the different units to meet the constraints and generate a meaningful 12 to 18 credit schedules. The prerequisite chains are long and variable, and the task force are the folks on the ground fielding the questions from students and parents to have better input on the process to make sure the system works.

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

Kathleen Davis, VP, Enrollment Management

ENROLLMENT UPDATES

- The bulk of revenues for the university comes from tuition, and when we miss enrollment targets, it becomes a difficult challenge for the institution to manage our finances.
 - I am a new player at RIT, only about two and a half months into this role, however I wanted to present on the question of who the Fall 23' class is, and the outlook for 2024.
- The Fall 23' class on the Rochester campus was looking to be a smaller class size, and we were able to accomplish that goal. Meanwhile our transfer student population increased.
- Students in their first year of a bachelor's degree have increased their GPA and SAT score averages when applying for RIT. AALANA student population has decreased, alongside in-state enrollees, while PELL eligible and international student population has increased.
 - After applying, students are surveyed as enrolled or not enrolled to get a better grasp of the decision-making process for incoming students.
- Students show they are choosing to come to RIT primarily because of affordability, followed by academic reputation, career and job opportunity, and other reasons. Non-matriculated students, when comparing RIT to their top choice, say we are lower than their top choice and that they want to be closer to home. The surveyed students said RIT is great for experiential learning and job opportunities for matriculated students.

- To amend these shortcomings, our strategy is to speak to the incoming students through our marketing and have them come on campus and have memorable experiences to reach the critical core of differentiating RIT as an institution.

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RIT RANKING

- Another awesome point is our return to being ranked as a Top 100 university. It is important to acknowledge that ranking agencies are extremely variable and change what they assess each year and add schools annually to the ranking. While we did improve, we did see our competitors like Northeastern, RPI, and WPI, struggle with rankings and they all fell in rank.

ENROLLMENT STRATEGY

- Regarding how things are looking so far this year for transfer and graduate students; they tend to be on a different timeline with how they engage and participate with RIT, so we are focusing on meaningful trends and the 8-to-24-month timeline.
- The improvements to our enrollment cycle begins well before students arrive on campus, as we begin by refocusing our efforts on NYS to regain our market share in-state, as well as continuing efforts in secondary markets and national outreach efforts through digital targeting and initiatives for students and parents.
- To make families and students know we are an affordable choice, we have started using mailing, web, and email marketing to promote our new scholarship nomination program, extending it to high school juniors and seniors across the nation.
 - This program is being adjusted with competitor data in mind, as we look to target schools and students that are being contested by our peer universities.
- The campus visitation program for Open House has been adjusted to include a morning show setup, meant to mimic a morning TV program, bringing different groups on campus and President Munson together for a comprehensive segment of the program.
 - This has been extremely effective at engaging our audience and has been described as a welcome effort to show we aren't just a bunch of "talking heads."
- We are also refocusing our efforts on international student recruitment work, following an initiative to establish better recruitment in India and China by hiring on local recruiters in the respective countries to stay local and scout talent, reducing our travel expenses.

NATIONAL ENROLLMENT CHANGES

- There has been a marketplace slide noted by the EAB, which samples the national application volumes of 150+ schools. The number of applications we should forecast in future will depend on the findings of our own applications, with our Early Decision deadlines already indicating a 7.1% increase in the volume of applications for ED.
 - The increase in the marketplace of applications falls in line with our Strategic Plan initiatives, following a 43% increase in applications.
- Nationally there is a soft ending of applications with optimism being couched with FAFSA fair enrollment changes affecting the enrollment process.

Q: How has going test optional and the rising scores on the ACT and SAT affected the enrollment process and success of students found in this report?

A: Great question; it is done annually, and the report is federally done. I can tell you that nationally many schools are becoming test optional institutions, and while we did know that prior to COVID the GPA was the main indicator of quality in a student, the test score helped to predict and further project a

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student's success. We are going to have to wait nine months to see whether other universities are seeing a similar change in enrollment volumes for a better comparison.

Q: Are students not submitting test scores being seen equally with those who do submit?

A: Yes, it is practice to compare students equally to ensure equity at RIT.

Q: What differentiators is your office using, since many, many, competitors must be similar? What story are we telling?

A: Each student is different, and their interests differ so greatly that we drive our story based on what makes students make decisions. These often are the second values such as co-ops, performing arts, athletics, and other programs that showcase RIT is more than just academics. Our institution is comprehensive in offering both primary and secondary focuses to make our students holistic. Our enrollment management is already focused on athletics for enrollment and are making our marketing look and feel right to represent our student body. The entering class shows that 1 of 4 students are enrolling in a BS/MS program, and 1 of 6 students are a performing arts student. These secondary drivers are critical to enrollment success.

Q: Students are interested in the academics, but also the overall environment of the campus. For the Fall 24' class, you've shown the applicants are also curious of the financial packaging side of things. How will that play out when bringing in larger classes with lower net tuition rates?

A: It's a careful dance; you may or may not know there is a FAFSA simplification act underway, as well as the affirmative action changes that have presented major disruptions in how enrollment process are undertaken across the nation. We need to see how the FAFSA outlook for students appears before we can make any predictions. Additionally, as we are a need-blind school, our predictors won't come into play until the Spring semester or later, which puts us in a prickly position.

Q: When I first joined RIT, one thing I learned was that we tell admissions how many students we can take, and in turn we should expect about 30% more. Is there a way you can predict where your students want to go by major, or is it a broader prediction by college, hoping that they pick the right program?

A: Asking the question of what does the 17- or 18-year-old think they want in their head is asking for trouble. The Director of Admissions is looking to see inside these students' heads and figure out where they will land after a few years. There are capped programs in the university, and with later cycles this does carry over to enrollment, unless we say no to more students. What we can hope for is the best

prediction possible to get the most accurate projection, which no matter what, can never be 100% spot on if you look toward the production industry as reference.

Comment: A great report for anyone who is interested in a dashboard called *Knocking at The College Door*; great dashboard. It goes state by state with demographics, anything from race, graduation rate, and the cliff, the decline domestically for undergraduate bachelor degree seeking students starting in 2026. This is upon us, and we need to look to ensure we generate the appropriate revenue stream and

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recruitment targets to continue our growth through this period, which includes looking internationally for enrollment and working to improve our graduate program to offset the cliff.

New Business

NONE

Meeting adjourned at **4:20pm**

Attendance – see next page

Attendance 11/8/2023

Name	Relationship to UC	Attended	Name	Relationship to UC	Attended
Aldersley, Stephen	Member-FS		Lapizco-Encinas, Blanca	Member-FS	X
Asmorom, Naemy	Member-SG	X	Lezette, Michelle	Member-SC	X
Blixit, Hailey	Member-SG	X	Loffredo, Joe	Non-Voting Member	
Bobryk-Ozaki, Myren	Member-SG Alternate		Long, Jake	Member-SG	X
Brinkman, Olivia	Member-SG	X	Lynch, Aidan	Member-SG	X
Buch, Neeraj	Non-Voting Member	X	Masaline, Melissa	Member-SC	X
Buckley, Gerard	Member-Dean	X	McQuiller, Laverne	Non-Voting Member	
Butler, Janine	Member-FS	X	Milliken, Renee	Member-SC	X
Castleberry, Phil	Non-Voting Member	Excused	Mozrall, Jacqueline	Member & EC	X
David, Prabu	Member & EC	X	Munson, David	Non-Voting Member & EC	X
Davis, Kathleen	Non-Voting Member	X	Nasr, Nabil	Member-Dean	
Deese, Franklin	Member-FS	X	Newman, Atia	Member & EC	X
Dibble, Leah	Member – SC Alternate		Norris-Martin, Kelly (sub - Kirsten Condry)	Member-Dean	X
Edwards, Doreen	Member-Dean	X	Olabisi, Joy	Member-FS	X
Ehrlich-Scheffer, Kathrine	Member-SC	X	Pauley, Darnae (sub-Jada Jennings)	Member-SG	X
Faber, Josh	Member-FS	X	Pinkham, Jo Ellen	Non-Voting Member	
Finnerty, Bob	Non-Voting Member	X	Provenzano, Susan	Non-Voting Member	
Flowers, Rosaline	Member-SG	X	Raffaella, Ryne	Non-Voting Member	X
Giasi, Lia	Member-SC	X	Ramkumar, S. Manian	Member-Dean	X
Hall, James	Member-Dean		Redman, Emily	Member-SC	X
Harrington, Gabrielle	Member-SC	X	Santer, Jon	Member - SC	X
Herman, Vanessa J.	Non-Voting Member		Seyler, Andrew	Member-SG	
Heyman, Emily	Member-SC	X	Sheffield, Chip	Member-FS	X
Hudson, André	Member-Dean	X	Slusarski, Diane	Non-Voting Member	X
Huenerfauth, Matt	Member – Dean	X	Smith, Evan	Member - SC	X
Inclema, Ali	Member - SC Alternate		St. Jean, Bill	Member-SC Alternate	X
Islam, Sadman	Member-SG	X	Stowe, Brendon	Member & EC	X
Jenkins, Keith	Non-Voting Member	X	Thomas, Bolaji	Member-FS	x
Johnson, Dan	Member-FS	X	Trierweiler, John	Non-Voting Member	X
Johnson, Sandra	Non-Voting Member	X	Ulin, Robert	Member-FS	X
Johnson, Scott	Member-FS	X	Vogler, Gene	Member-SC Alternate	
Johnston, Joe	Non-Voting Member		Wang, Yong Tai	Member-Dean	X
Jokl, Todd	Member-Dean	X	Watters, Jim	Non-Voting Member	
Jones, Darcie	Member & EC	X	Williams, Jackie	Member - SG	X
Keeney, Morgan	Member-SG		Zehr, Jeremy	Member-SC	
Lapham, JT	Member-SG	X			

Key: EC=Executive Committee; FS=Faculty Senate; SC=Staff Council; SG=Student Government

Interpreters: Kirsten Borkowski & Nicole Lupinetti

UC Coordinator: Tamaira Brown

Student Assistant: Scott Franco