

RIT | University Council

Meeting Minutes: March 2, 2022

The meeting was called to order at 3:03 p.m.

Approval of Minutes from February 16, 2022 Meeting

The minutes were approved unanimously.

President's Report

Comment on the Conflict in Ukraine:

Acknowledging the very disturbing situation on everybody's mind these days. The images we see are horrific. To see a sovereign nation invaded is really awful. I have been talking to Bob Finnerty about deciding whether to say anything on behalf of the university. Typically we would say that we would take in Ukrainian students as refugees who attend our university, or suggest students who are struggling to seek help through CAPS. However it is hard to know exactly what to say that would actually be helpful. But I'll continue to think about that. And if people in this group have opinions on that, feel free to convey those to me, I have multiple drafts of things I could say.

We have three Ukrainian students and several Russian students, and we have reached out to them.

Updates on the Mask Policy:

There is no final decision yet, but it looks like we will be relaxing our masking standards. This will likely be the direction that we move, and we are hearing from students with significant medical situations.

We intend to continue masking through Spring Break.

- We will continue doing wastewater testing, and it shows a reduce incidence of virus, as well as decreased cases in the student health center.
- We will look at what the cases are like in the few days after Spring Break.
- It is likely we will continue masking in the classrooms, as plenty of students are concerned about that.
- There are some universities that have already relaxed standards, and they are not seeing upticks in virus transmission. They are seeing the number of cases go down even though masking standards have been relaxed.
- Anyone who wishes to wear a mask can continue to, and those who are concerned should wear a KN5 mask.
- Last summer, we did have a brief period in July-August where they were not wearing masks, and it did not take long to get used to not wearing them. Decisions will be made in a scientific way and based on the available data.

With Imagine RIT and Commencement, we expect to require vaccination of anyone indoors, especially for visitors. We are not worried about the on-campus community, but these events draw people from

outside the community. If an event draws more than 400 people, we have a current standard that vaccinations are required. To know for sure if you can get in, you must be vaccinated.

Comment: This doesn't hold true for all students, but it is good to hear that there will be relaxing overall. They encourage restrictions in classroom, however.

Report on Budget/Capital Budget Process and Priorities

James Watters, Senior VP, Finance & Administration

We will discuss the financial condition of the institution over the last 2 years.

We have more than 19,700 students, but not all of them have the same economic impact or effect the operations of the campus. You can see within the numbers, there are lots of students that do not have the same economic value.

- Students under "Project Lead the Way" pay a small fee.
- NTID is a separate unit and revenues associated with these students – dorm and dining – are not available for the general operation of the institution.
- This narrows the financial focus onto 14,000 students producing the tuition for RIT operations.
- Additional campuses in Kosovo, Croatia, and Dubai, as well as Operations in China.

What took place since operations were shut down in March 2020:

- The institution at that time had conversation with trustees to discuss survival of the pandemic.
- The institution and Board decided that the primary objective in operation the institution was the *protection of employees and their families*. The decisions thereafter were made to protect the loyal employees of the institution.

You likely still feel some of this impact. Like most universities, there were no raises given in the following year. Other impacts have also occurred, but know that every decision was made with the attempt to preserve the employee base.

Fiscal Year 2022 Budgeted Gross Revenue:

- We are at \$976 Million with the gross budget accumulated.
- Tuition is what pays the bills around here.

Financial Aid:

- In the fiscal year of 2019, the amount of institutional financial aid was \$204 million.
- The current year's budget is \$293 million. This money is taken and recycled to provide financial aid from the universities' own resourced.

Unexpected Changes as a Result of COVID:

- The plan was 234 million, not 258 million, so there was a drop in more than 20 million in revenue.
- We decompressed the dormitories, took out over 280 beds of occupancy, and dining was decimated because everyone was at home and there were no catered events.
- Dining took a huge revenue hit.
- No parking fees, athletic fees, or dining fees. Everything was getting hit negatively and more than 24 million of unexpected aid to make RIT affordable to families under extreme economic stress.

How do you makeup 35 million in cumulative loss in a 1-year period?

- Every purchase was overseen and expenses were cut to the bone.
- Travel and hospitality were cut by 88%.
- No staff or faculty were cut, but open positions were closed to provide coverage.
 - When you look at other institutions, some had salaries cut and everyone suffered, others stopped matching 403B retirement plans and seized money immediately.

The work was done primarily to protect employees and their families. This is still affecting travel budgets, as well as some people are having to work harder. However, it is important to recognize the tradeoffs and where the cuts were made

Discounts:

- We are trying to manage back the discount amount. If you look at the data, you will see dips from the prior year.
- Auxiliaries took a hit, and there were decreases in revenue accounts.
- Salaries and benefits are funds are in the core operating budget.
- Previously, we had a 58.5% discount off the public rate of the institution, and we are currently at 54%. They are working to bring down student financial aid to have more net revenue.
- They are trying to restore some of the financial benefits of the institution, and are also trying to fund strategic initiatives.

Going forward:

Looking at 3,100 freshman in the incoming class, targeting a 53.5% discount.

- RIT has an acceptance rate of over 70%. For a private institution, this acceptance has to come down.
- We are targeting to try and get down to the mid 60%. We are creating some contingency. The ultimate goal is to get it down to the low 50%. This is primary to reputation the institution.

We have 3 tiers of admissions, and the third tier is the most expensive.

- They were hoping to do less than a 3% increase in tuition, but inflation impacts are across the board.
- Increase in bus services.
- We see construction material costs through the roof
- Room and board will go up by 4%, the Student Health Center will be provided additional money to support their services.

Capital Budget:

- At the same time we do the Operating Budget, we are investing in the university.
- We are taking out the grass soccer and lacrosse fields and replacing them with turf. This will provide modern programs for athletics.
- The SHED is on track for the 2023 Fiscal year.
- We will see expansion of the Lowenthal building this spring as well.

What is the next wave?

- Investments into the College of Art and Design, as well as the College of Science. These will be multi-year projects.
- We will also turn attention to dormitories as well. They were built in the 1960s. It is a very competitive environment for capital at the moment as the cost of each project has skyrocketed.

All eyes are on getting back on track. We are in good shape and expect to be in better shape as we see the discount come down in the fall.

Q: When the university increases tuition values, the Student Government receives much of the response in anger for this. Can we get some information on how to respond better to these students?

A: Yes, I can share information that I give to students directly.

We see universities getting rated. We see fully remote upstate work with downstate pay. Now we are seeing groups in RIT being rated and it is an interesting dynamic going on with labor. We have a lot of front line people, but not enough filling in position and need to increase starting rates and pressure in student wages.

When we started this year, we had more than 30 openings in the custodial staff, we have 11 still open in dining, and we're trying to fill a lot of frontline people. There's not enough candidates and not enough positions being filled, so we've had to increase starting rates in some of these select areas.

Comment: Our faculty are being sought by other institutions, especially in the Health Care Field. This is problematic to us, because we are working more with less resources. So that is extra burden on the departments or the colleges

Q: When it comes to tuition, you mentioned the rate for the fiscal 23 year. Is that rate of \$53,720 is effective this fall or the fall after?

A: Students entering in fall of 2020 and later have the Tier 3 value as their base rate.

Applies to→	<u>Tier 1</u>	<u>Tier 2</u>	<u>Tier 3</u>
	Entering Before Fall 2018	Entering Fall 2018 thru Summ' of 2020	Entering Fall 2020 and later
FY22 Rate	\$45,550	\$ 48,326	\$ 52,030
Rate Increase	3.25%	3.25%	3.25%
FY23 Rate	\$47,030	\$ 49,896	\$ 53,720

Q: We are getting competition from public institutions with good programs, our high school pool of graduates is diminishing, and the competition for staff and students are increasing. Now that we have an increase in tuition, some may turn away from the school. What is the strategy to go to the parents and say that we are the best and the value is worth it? What can we do in this situation to boost our abilities to convince people say come to RIT?

A: This is where financial aid comes in. This is the published rate. Only 8% of students pay the published rate, these are high networth students paying this full rate. The experts in student financial aid are using the values to model the classes that they want. While we have this published rate, there is an implicit pricing scheme. For example, with the Physicians' Assistant (PA) Program, if you have 25 PA's for every spot, you will not provide as much institutional aid to fill the class. If there is a class with a lot of empty seats and need to attract students in, you provide more financial aid to bring more students in. There is work to provide more access to those on the lower socioeconomic status. Students and families are more sophisticated in applying to schools and they are shopping for the best deals.

Q: At faculty senate, the question comes up of why the goal is to pay the faculty at the average (50%) and it would be great to see it at 51% to be able to say that we are paid “above average.”
The actual question is - How do improvements in the dormitories and other longer term projects get paid for?

A: Well, specifically, when you take housing you look at application of a fee to specific service. They have to run as a business and have to pay all of their expenses – labor, occupancy, debt service. In Auxiliary enterprises, you usually lose money on new construction, and have to have enough legacy properties in the portfolio to help subsidize the new building coming in the future. After six years, these dormitories will gain revenue.

Parking is a loser, no one wants to pay for parking, but they want structured parking. Parking is still going to be difficult on this campus given that we have so much flat, developable land. We have a user base here that doesn't want to pay for the service. There are so many demands on tuition dollars right now.

Q: A lot of students are taking about the mice situation in dorms. Is there increased work towards renovating the existing dorms?

A: The current fee structure is for existing properties. Some of the issues relates to what we've been though in the last two years. Decompression in dining facilities, and movement of more food into the rooms, there are now refrigerator and microwave units. There is a lot more food and the students have not been removing food, and field mice have been driven in to the buildings due to the land development. The question is, do we take out the source of the food from dorms, by removing the microwaves? That is a question for the future.

Q: We hear about how much money RIT spends that may seem wasteful, but there are nuances of budget. How does your team calculate ROI on things like strategic initiatives? Are there ways to be more transparent about the financial ROI on these kinds of initiatives?

A: When you look at our investments into academic facilities – Institute Hall is a good example. It was built in 2008 and 2009 because we took advantage of the financial marketplace. When you look at some of those projects, the investment is growth in academic programs. This added Biomedical and Chemical Engineering Sciences. This was an opportunity to attract more Women in Engineering. We are able to calculate the ROI on these kinds of programs due to the direct return of revenue as well as checking boxes of diversification.

Comments from John Trierweiler: Spending on financial aid has more than doubled since FY 2016. Including 1% of that in terms of trying to market awareness so there is more consumer pull – increase the pricing power. What they do helps to support and make strong investments. Look at metrics like the website and open houses. A while back we increased the marketing budget. We did increase this budget and targeted high school students to increase undergraduate students and we saw a good reaction to those.

Q: What is the role of private philanthropic fundraising? How does this fit into the budget? Can we reduce our dependence on tuition?

A: We are doing as much as we can to help stimulate the endowment of professors. We are going to do some things to leverage institution move with donor money and this may create opportunities in the budget. The president is working to build more long term connectivity to the instruction from Alumnus. This is mostly “gifts in kind” - discretionary expenses that help advance the strategic plan.

- There were \$50 million given to help underwrite much of the strategic plan. There are people hard at work on this.
- The fundraising operation has been completely redesigned.

Ombuds Annual Report (*presentation files available on [RIT Digital Archive](#)*)

Joe Johnston, Ombudsperson

They are excited to be at full staff now.

A lot of COVID workplace variations have led to flexible work arrangements. They are building office presence while adapting to the new hybrid method

- Zoom has continued to be offered as a meeting option.
- Currently going 4 days in office and 1 day at home

Visitors and day to day operations scheduling/ Updates:

- There is a rising number of visitors, and they are continuing to see numbers increase.
- They are focusing on rebranding and coming more in-brand with RIT.
- Their policy has not been updated in a while, so they are working on this.
- They are redoing the office and creating some more space.

Involvement:

- As part of the Cultural Humility Certificate, they will present anywhere they can. They participated in RIT 365 as well this year. As for governance attendance, they have attendees at almost 100% of governance meetings.
- Involved in committees about COVID and Sexual Harassment.

Visitor Data:

Our numbers of visitors are at about 300% of where they were at 2016.

- Currently at 480-500 visitors projected for this year.
- Being able to have walk-ins has increased numbers. They are keeping busy and it has been wonderful to help so many people.
- They all came from Student Affairs Division, and they were attracting 43% students last year. They are working to attract faculty and staff into the office.
 - Grew the amount of vitiation from faculty and staff from 24-36%.
 - The decrease is mostly with parents – this is usually with coaching about how to talk with students or help them understand what there student needs to do.
- They are working on how to create different approaches with different students.

People often ask them about trends. There is a general idea of people feeling they have to do more work because of COVID or having new responsibilities, as well as deal with mandates, and other concerns.

Updates on policy:

- The go-to: Academic Dishonesty – the policy doesn't match the spirit of what they are trying to accomplish.
- Relationship between supervisors and subordinates: Miscommunication and power dynamic issues. Work with HR, or sometimes just come to them practicing what they need to say.
- Morale is in reaction to the administration having an open forum. They are getting a good reaction to the day off, and feel the administration is hearing them.
- They are also getting information about issues that don't rise to policy discrimination. There is an increase in use of communication like Slack or Discord and there is a lot of issues in misinterpretation of writing.
- They are working on rebranding and intentional campus outreach and they want to do more outreach and explore data collection options.

Policy C24.0 Ombuds Office – REVISIONS (*presentation files available on [RIT Digital Archive](#)*)

Joe Johnston, Ombuds

Ashley Meyer, Associate Ombuds

Policy C24.0 was last edited in 2010, changed in 2013 for calendar conversion. It needed work and feedback was given by an advisory board and governance groups as well as connecting to the previous employees. There is no pressure on passing the policy.

- It would be good to officially establish an Associate Ombuds position.
- Other offices don't need a policy. Most Ombuds offices either have a policy or charter. They are confidential, independent, do not take records, and have access to different parts of the campus – therefore they have policy.
- Removing the Advisory Board Policy:
 - The point of the advisory board was back when the office was in infancy. This was how to help market the office. The board could not talk about the specific people and it was just there as an advisory tool. No one has brought any concern about the idea of removing the advisory board.
- They modernized the language and are now official "Ombuds" and not ombudspersons.

They won't be called into a legal proceeding, but RIT has no authority to say whether or not they could be subpoenaed. NYS does not have any true Ombuds protections. They have informal conversations and any notes taken are destroyed.

The last thing required was to change the wording stating that they would not "maintain" records to say that they would not "create" any records. They only track the types of issues brought forward.

Q: Are you changing the existing policy or making a new one?

A: Changing the existing policy. We have not had an existing advisory board for over a decade.

Time for the periodic review of the administrative Policy - [Development, Maintenance and Publication of Academic Calendars](#) (*presentation files available on [RIT Digital Archive](#)*)

Joe Loffredo, Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs and Registrar

Starting the process to review the calendar policy and the changes recommended for the next calendar year.

We have an administrative policy on creating the academic calendar. When this was developed, it took a good part of an academic year to create a set of characteristics. There are specific characteristics for each semester:

- Seventy class days and fourteen weeks. There is the same number of weekdays of each class (Ex: 14 Mondays, 14 Tuesday, etc...), and this dictates when the breaks occur.

As a part of the policy there is a requirement for five year reviews. It should have been done last year but needed to be pushed back. We will be forming the committee and it will be begin this semester. It will be completed no later than December of next year.

Provost Granberg is thinking about the composition of the committee. There will be two representatives from each of the governance groups, additional groups appointed by the appropriate vice presidents, and they expect to have co-chairs leading the committee.

- Governance groups and divisions will be asked to appoint people.

There are some aspects that will be decided this year, and the rest will happen in the Fall.

They have a proposal that has been endorsed by each groups, and they want final endorsement. Next spring, they propose to move the start of the semester up by one week and one day, and no changes will be made to the fall semester.

- Fall of 2023 does not change. This will create an extra week in summer. This will not impact the number of weeks in spring and traditional summer is the same.
- The following academic year, in the spring, they are already beginning on the 16th.

The only concern by delaying spring semester, is that this shortens the period in the summer where students can be working. For the summer, there will be students that will work a week less than otherwise. Students will need to determine that they want the longer winter break. The proposal for the 2023 year moves commencement a few days later. This timing is consistent with other universities.

Q: Is there a way to allow some individuals to take their finals earlier if they have a co-op with a starting date at this time?

A: This would be difficult to guarantee.

Comment: Faculty Senate unanimously endorsed this. A fair number of faculty would accommodate students with issues. Unless there was a provost mandate, there are pretty good odds anyway they would.

Comment: It was not long ago that the spring semester did end that late into May. Something like that seems like it would be a non-issue for a majority of students. I don't perceive it do be an issue going forward.

Q: Will Juneteenth be added to the calendar as it is now a federal holiday?

A: This matter has been approved to the Senate and recommendation was sent to senior administration. This vote occurred in the fall.

Comment: A lot of students were happier coming back from a longer winter break.

A: Yes, it was a 5 week break.

Straw poll

For those in favor of the one week delay of starting the spring semester, there was general overall support, with few abstentions and no oppositions.

New Business

Consider what topics would like to be discussed at future meetings this semester.

Meeting adjourned at 4:20 p.m.

Attendance – see next page.

Attendance March 2, 2022

UC-68-2021

Name	Relationship to UC	Attended	Name	Relationship to UC	Attended
Abushagur, Mustafa	Member-FS	x	Laury, Dino	Member-FS	x
Aldersley, Stephen	Member-FS	x	Loffredo, Joe	Non-Voting Member	x
Betlem, Carla	Member-SC		Maggelakis, Sophia	Member-Dean	
Buckley, Gerard	Member-Dean		Merrick, Alexa	Member-SG	
Button, Amy	Member-SC		Milliken, Renee	Member-SC	x
Carrington, Keira	Member-SG	x	Moore, Emily	Member-SC-Alt.	x
Castillo, Jaime	Member-SC		Mortimer, Ian	Non-Voting Member	
Castleberry, Phil	Non-Voting Member		Mozrall, Jacqueline	Member & EC	
Crawford, Denton	Member-FS		Munson, David	Non-Voting Member & EC	X
Cummings, Twyla	Non-Voting Member		Nasr, Nabil	Member-Dean	
D'Amanda, Elisabetta	Member-FS	X	Pinkham, Jo Ellen	Non-Voting Member	
DeHond, Bridget	Member-SG	X	Prescott, Joanna	Member-SC-Alt.	X
Edwards, Doreen	Member-Dean		Provenzano, Susan	Non-Voting Member	
Ferrari, Christopher	Member-SG	x	Pyatt, Adrian	Member-SG	x
Finnerty, Bob	Non-Voting Member	x	Raffaella, Ryne	Non-Voting Member	
Gallagher, Maureen	Member-SC		Ramkumar, S. Manian	Member-Dean	
Ghazle, Hamad	Member-FS	x	Randrianarivelo, Lucas	Member & EC	X
Granberg, Ellen	Member & EC	X	Reeder, Gina	Member & EC	x
Haake, Anne	Member-Dean		Robinson, Natalie	Member-SG	
Hadi, Abu Syeed	Member-SG		Sheffield, Chip; SOIS (sprg 2022)	Member-FS	
Hall, James	Member-Dean		Shuey, Jay	Member-SG	
Harrington, Gabrielle	Member-SC	X	Sood, Neha	Member-SC	X
Herman, Vanessa J.	Non-Voting Member		Sparkman, Torrence	Member-FS	x
Heyman, Emily	Member-SC	x	Stenport, Anna	Member-Dean	
Hill, Jennifer	Member-SG	x	Strowe, Brendon	Member-SC	X
Hudson, André	Member-FS		Tolossa, Natnail	Member-SG	x
Hughes, Mi-Andre	Member-SG	X	Travis, Luca	Member-SG	x
Hull, Clyde	Member & EC	X	Trierweiler, John	Non-Voting Member	x
Inclema, Ali	Member-SC-Alt.		Wang, Yong Tai	Member-Dean	x
Jenkins, Keith	Non-Voting Member	X	Watters, Devon	Member-SC	x
Johnson, Dan (fall 2021)	Member-FS	X	Watters, James	Non-Voting Member	Z=x
Johnson, Sandra	Non-Voting Member		Williams, Eric	Member-FS	
Johnson, Scott	Member-FS	x			
Jokl, Todd	Member-Dean	X			
Key: EC=Executive Committee; AS=Academic Senate; SC=Staff Council; SG=Student Government					

Interpreters: Carolyn Kropp and Donna O'Brien