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Jul31

[Paul](#)

## [Least attractive campus: Seriously?](#)



On an after-work run around campus last night, I could see her head rise just a short distance ahead of me. A deer, not an uncommon sight, leapt from the woods and crossed Andrews Drive, where she paused. “Wait,” I thought, realizing another was likely to follow. Sure enough, a spotted baby deer emerged and followed mom into the wooded area on the other side.

I’m pleased that small moments like this still make an impression on me—a reminder of the good fortune I feel to work on a beautiful college campus. I try not to miss a moment to admire my surroundings. But on this occasion, it raised a perplexing question. “Why don’t RIT students seem to share my appreciation?”

I want to be careful to not offer a blanket observation, but my concern stems from the most recent “best colleges” edition released by [The Princeton Review](#) earlier this week, which bases its results on student surveys. Obviously, not every student gets to take part.



The good news is, once again, [Rochester Institute of Technology](#) is included among “the best.” But with it comes the annual thorn that also ranks us among the “least attractive campuses.” Since peeking at #2 back in 2002 (feeling a bit like Casey Kasem here), RIT has slowly worked

its way down the “least attractive” top 20, actually placing at #20 last year. Surely our momentum would finally drop us off it this year. Nope, back up to #18.

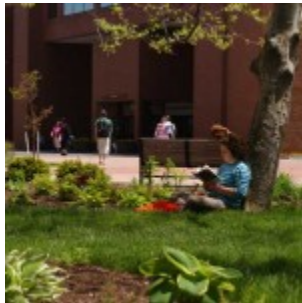
I really don't get it. It's true that RIT lacks the ivy-covered exteriors that often represent the classic image for institutions of higher learning. But a significant investment in renovations and other improvements over recent years has really transformed this place, as evidenced by the photos taken by [University News](#) photographer Sue Weisler that I've sprinkled throughout my



post.

This is hardly the same campus I came to work at in 2000, and it's always a hoot to see the reaction of alumni who return following a prolonged absence. The sense of pride on their faces is often palpable.

So what is it that students, at least the ones [The Princeton Review](#) survey, see that I don't—or don't see that I do. I wish I had more basis for comparison. Thinking back, I'm kicking myself for not stopping at [Bucknell University](#) while driving past it last month on my way to [Gettysburg](#). I guess I was just acting 'stupidly,' which, as we all know by now, qualifies me for a beer at the White House. Anyway, I wonder if some added perspective might prove insightful.



So, while I write this first and foremost as a public relations representative of the university, the passion with which I do so comes as an employee, alumnus and overall fan of RIT. And I know it's a passion I share with so many others. Maybe we all just need to do a better job of voicing it.

Let's start now! Please accept my invitation to share your observations here.

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1. [Kevin](#)

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I'm with your perspective on this one. While RIT has been under all sorts of construction and landscape changes, it's definitely become an extremely beautiful campus. I thoroughly enjoy walking around campus and seeing the contrast of the red brick vs the green around campus. It's awesome. Do I think we belong as one of the "Least Attractive Campuses"? Not at all, I've seen much, much worse. RIT is beautiful.

2. [Brent S.](#)

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Saw this pop-up on Facebook... I really don't understand how students can complain so much about our campus! So there's lots of brick, wide open fields, new buildings, what's so wrong with that? I really think a lot of it comes down to our campus being "newer" than alot of other campuses as well as the word of mouth from students complaining, not their own opinions. Actually, it more likely that many of the students complaining are those that don't get out on campus anyways!

3. [Powers](#)

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I have little basis for comparison, either, but I do remember finding the institutional feel of RIT to be much more appealing than the "here's a bunch of buildings we shoved together" look of the University of Rochester.

4. [Chris Lauretano](#)

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While I think all of the 1960s buildings on campus look a bit Soviet, the newer stuff on campus is incredible looking. Having graduated last summer, I have yet to see new annex on the GCCIS building, but I hear it looks stunning. The field house, the update to the college of business, the GCCIS building, and the new quad that formed behind the college of engineering during my time at RIT were all quite beautiful. I love the brick/glass/metal look. Then again, I love pretty much all modern architecture.

The campus itself though, it's a bit dreary still. The dorm buildings look like something you'd see in Chernobyl. Walk from the dorms to GCCIS, and aside from a small glimpse of the field house, you're walking past all original buildings, nothing even a little updated or refreshed. The infinity quad could definitely stand to be brightened up.

Much of the faults I have with the campus actually stem from the climate. You can't really make former wetlands in cold, wet, and gloomy Rochester NY look like paradise. Since most of the year everything is covered with a thick blanket of snow, landscaping-wise it's mostly hardy bushes --not a lot of color.

5. [Vienna](#)

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Paul - Really enjoyed reading your latest post about the beautiful RIT campus. I have to admit that I, too, love seeing the deer as I drive through campus when heading home. If there isn't anyone behind me, I actually stop (or pull over) and watch for a few minutes. There's nothing like walking around RIT on a beautiful summer day—this place truly has changed for the better since I started working here nearly 12 years ago.

But, I must admit, as a former student at SUNY Geneseo (another truly beautiful campus) I didn't appreciate my surroundings. The last thing I noticed when walking across the "tundra" (a walkway connecting residence halls with the main part of campus that is legendary for its whipping winds in the fall and winter) were the absolutely gorgeous views, brilliant sunsets and rolling hills. Perhaps with age comes the knowledge of taking time to appreciate beautiful surroundings.

6. [Lori](#)

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I've always loved being able to see the deers on campus-especially by Grace Watson! Gorgeous. I can remember times coming back to my apartment/dorm in the middle of the night and seeing the deers amongst the fog. Fabulous!

7. [Andrew](#)

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Great post Paul. Each day when I turn in off Jefferson Road I think about how fortunate I am to get to come to work in a park-like setting. A few of my favorites are the large trees at the main entrance, the willow tress near the Visitor Information Center and the Tojo Garden.

8. [sue](#)

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You hit a nerve with your latest post! The once stark campus has become quite beautiful with its dramatic architecture that's softened by gorgeous gardens. The wildlife that continues to thrive here is so sweet.

9. [Vanessa Mazza](#)

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I think alot of people get a bad taste in their mouth from the RIT campus solely based on the fact that half of the year it is covered in snow, slush, and ice. Not the pretty kind. A bad taste is a bad taste, and it's easy for hate targeted at the weather to transfer over to hate targeted at the campus. I also think that the RIT campus (overall) lacks alot of curves, softness, subtly, and organic form that many often think of when they consider "beauty." I haven't been back in quite a few years, but it seems like this is beginning to get addressed in a real way. Way to go tigers! Grr!

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