Proposal to Establish a New University-Level Policy:

*Development, Review, Approval, and Promulgation of University-Level Policies*

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Submitted to Academic Senate by the Policy on Policies Task Force

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In our democratic society, our policies are us.

- David Cay Johnston

Introduction

The work of the Policy on Policies Task Force has progressed steadily over several months and the task force is pleased to submit the enclosed draft of Development, Review, Approval, and Promulgation of University-Level Policies (hereafter referred to as the policy on policies) for review and feedback.

Although RIT’s processes for review and approval of university-level policies have been long-standing, they have been conveyed and understood historically through the “oral tradition.” Members of Institute Council Executive Committee (ICEC), in response to recommendations from the 2009-2011 University Policy Project Committee, agreed with the need to develop a policy to document these processes. To accomplish this, ICEC established and charged the Policy on Policies Task Force in November 2011.

The draft of the proposed policy on policies, which is documented separately, reflects the following parameters established by ICEC in its charge to the task force:

- Generally collect and codify RIT’s existing policy-making processes.
- Propose new or revised procedures that could improve RIT’s policy-related processes without significantly altering them.
- Limit the scope of the proposed policy to addressing the development, review, approval, and promulgation of university-level policies.

In addition, because the task force was developing a policy related to policy development, the importance of submitting a proposal that abides by the provisions in the proposed policy quickly became apparent. With this in mind, the proposed policy includes the following provision related to policy development:

*Individuals or groups developing policy proposals must be faculty, staff or students at the university and are hereafter referred to as policy authors. Policy authors are expected to 1) seek legal and policy-process guidance, 2) request input from stakeholders, and 3) engage in the fact-finding, research, and analysis needed to develop a thorough proposal. The results of all these efforts must be documented separately, and submitted with the first public draft for formal review by the applicable governance group(s).*

In compliance with this provision, a summary of the task force’s policy development efforts follows.

Summary of Policy Development Efforts

To ensure the submitted policy-on-policies draft has been thoroughly developed, the task force invested significant time and effort seeking guidance on process, doing fact-finding, research, and analysis, and requesting input from stakeholders. The resulting insights and information have been incorporated and refined throughout the policy development and drafting stages.
These efforts have included:

- **Establishing a task force of manageable size that includes individuals who are subject matter experts as well as stakeholders and represent diverse points-of-view.** Collectively, the task force membership reflects:
  - A variety of colleges and divisions.
  - Experience applying and interpreting different types of policies.
  - Legal counsel and policy administration.
  - Faculty, staff, students, and administrators.
  - Representation from Academic Senate, Administrative Council, Staff Council, and Student Government.

- **Studying the policies, policy structures, and policy-related information of RIT and other colleges and universities.** Many methods and sources were used to locate and review policy information to 1) document historical practices at RIT, 2) compare RIT to others, and 3) identify best practices. Examples of methods and sources include:
  - Interviewing internal subject matter experts.
  - Conducting an inventory of RIT’s twenty-nine benchmark schools.
  - Reviewing websites of, and seeking referrals from, professional associations such as CUPA-HR and the Association of College and University Policy Administrators.
  - Attending Cornell University’s annual policy development forum.
  - Conducting topic-specific internet searches and documenting the results.

- **Seeking formal and informal feedback from stakeholders at different stages of the policy development process.** Examples of stakeholders who have provided input to-date include:
  - Members of the Policy on Policies Task Force.
  - Members of Institute Council Executive Committee (AY11-12).
  - Members of Institute Council (AY11-12).
  - Members of Administrative Council.
  - Former members of the University Policy Project Committee.
  - New leaders of Student Government and Staff Council (AY12-13).
  - Individuals with subject-matter expertise.
  - Individuals with policy-related responsibilities.

In addition to the steps taken thus far, the task force looks forward to incorporating feedback from members of Academic Senate to further strengthen the draft of the proposed policy.