DATE: May 3, 2013

TO: Academic Senate Executive Committee
FROM: Academic Senate Ad Hoc Committee on Diversity and Inclusion

On 1 November 2012 the Academic Senate resolved, to “create an ad hoc committee for the 2012-2013 AY to support the ongoing Inclusive Excellence Framework collaborative review and to consider whether or not a standing committee be established to deal with matters pertaining to diversity. The committee shall consist of nine tenured faculty members, each elected by his or her collegial faculty, three members at large elected by the Academic Senate, and the Vice President and Associate Provost for Diversity and Inclusion or his or her delegate (ex officio).”

We, the members of the Academic Senate Ad Hoc Committee on Diversity and Inclusion, respectfully submit this letter for your consideration. The committee was constituted in winter quarter 2012, and held its first meeting on 11 December 2012, and elected Sylvia Perez-Hardy and Benjamin Lawrance as Co-Chairs. We met during the winter and spring quarters on seven occasions. We discussed a variety of issues relevant to our broad charge. We have identified a number of aspects of institute policy, practice, and campus life that would benefit from our continued attention. We recommend that the ad hoc committee continue in its present form and that its charge be renewed for the AY 2013-14, with the objective of producing a comprehensive report about the appropriateness of establishing a sub-committee to one of the Senate Standing Committees to report on the Inclusive Excellence Framework and institute efforts to affect diversity and inclusion.

We have identified the following reasons for the continued operation of the ad hoc committee and renewal of its charge. Below we discuss each of these in detail.

A. Late Appointment, Constitution, and Assembly of Committee

The Ad Hoc Committee was constituted in the winter quarter. Each division developed its own mechanism for identifying, nominating, and, in some cases, electing its representative. During AY 2012-13 the committee convened seven meetings. The co-chairs met twice as an executive with Kevin McDonald and Laurie Clayton during winter quarter. We met almost weekly during the spring quarter. But possibly because of the late constitution of the committee, we were unsuccessful in filling one of the at large positions. We have had no student participation, despite several appeals to the Student Government. We formed the opinion that the optimal time for engaging student interest is the beginning of the academic year. We are concerned about the imbalance in the committee structure and composition. There is no representation from non tenure-track faculty (e.g. Lecturers), although from AY 2013-14 they have voting rights in the Academic Senate. As an ad hoc committee of the Academic Senate, we are in no position to instruct the Staff Council or the Student Government to convene a similar, parallel committee. Alternatively, to restrict our responsibilities and agenda to faculty issues exclusively may perpetuate existing inequalities and contribute to the emergence of new problems.
B. On-going Implementation Challenges Pertaining to the Inclusive Excellence Framework

The 2010 – 2015 Inclusive Excellence Framework (IEF) reaffirms RIT’s commitment to growing and sustaining a diverse and inclusive learning, living, and working environment. The framework is designed to support campus stakeholders with the integration of diversity initiatives and assessment of the quality of the efforts. The IEF currently has four dimensions: 1) Access and Success, 2) Campus Climate and Intergroup Relations, 3) Education and Scholarship, and 4) Institutional Infrastructure. Each dimension has an overarching goal with a series of objectives, and suggested strategies (activities) and indicators – standards from which to measure diversity and inclusivity results.

Over the past year, the Director for Diversity Assessment and Research Management has assessed institutional initiatives and has identified several challenges during data collection efforts. Challenges include:

1. Competing Institutional Demands. The IEF was adopted during a transformative period at the university. Semester conversation has required respective colleges, academic units and divisions to devote additional staff hours and resources to the quarter/semester planning and implementation process. Combined with college/division specific competing demands has led to some variability in committing time, staffing and resources toward integration of the IEF into individual unit’s strategic plans.

2. Senior Leadership Changes. New college dean appointments slowed the adaptation, integration and implementation of the IEF into college work plans.

3. The Framework – Recognition, Understanding and Implementation. Anecdotal information shared by leadership, faculty and staff through the initial IEF data gathering process confirmed a general lack of recognition, understanding and varying levels of implementation across colleges and divisions. While much progress has been made in capturing initial IEF evidence, further work needs to continue in working across the campus and one on one with diversity partners to support greater understanding of the IEF and support its implementation using the most appropriate strategies and indicators to measure our success.

C. Raising Awareness of Diversity and Inclusion Issues Across Campus

The continued existence of an ad hoc committee would address diversity and inclusion issues across the campus and among our partners as well as support data analysis and assessment efforts. The committee takes the view that there exists a need to annually assess and report on our institutional diversity and inclusion efforts beyond the four areas identified in the Inclusive Excellence Framework, and beyond the data collection that the Office for Diversity and Inclusion currently provides. With future reports shortly forthcoming from the President’s GLBT Task Force and the President’s Commission on Women, it merits consideration how RIT may be held accountable for meeting the needs of its diverse constituents.
D. Existence of Multiple, Conflicting, and Overlapping Programs at Institute Pertaining to Diversity and Inclusion

The 2012 charge to form an ad hoc committee for the monitoring and coordination of diversity and inclusion initiatives resulted in more questions than any one clear direction. We noted that the Office of Diversity and Inclusion and its related offices (Future Stewards Program, McNair Scholars Program, Multicultural Center for Academic Success) has the staffing level similar to that of the smaller colleges and academic units. In addition, we learned that there are several additional offices and initiatives related to diversity and inclusion issues, which operated outside the official Office of Diversity and Inclusion. Given the number of offices and individuals associated with D&I, it was unclear if the formation of a committee was warranted or if the communication and coordination of existing efforts needed to improve or take a different form. Each topic that was brought up at a committee meeting of our ad hoc group had an existing entity or title for an individual who could assume or was already working on the responsibility. The inter-relationships among the various initiatives merits further exploration.

E. Perception Among Ad Hoc Committee Membership that Inequalities Among Faculty are Increasing

Members of the committee reached the conclusion that there exists substantive anecdotal data to support the contention that present conditions and recent changes with respect to the expectations for tenure-track faculty – for promotion to Assistant Professor with tenure, and for promotion from Associate Professor to Professor – are having unforeseen impacts, including diminishing morale and increasing inequalities. Whereas these observations are not currently supported by data, we contend that a comprehensive report on these perceptions and attitudes would be a valuable contribution to understanding the institute experience from the perspective of faculty. Within a hierarchical academic system there is an assumption that access to promotion is available to all. Yet as individuals and as a committee we are cognizant of the existence of structural inequalities that inhibit equal access to advancement. At present, the Ad Hoc Committee can only speculate about possible reasons for the perception that promotion is becoming more difficult, such as, isolation within a department; lack of support, mentoring, and guidance from administrators (chairpersons, deans, etc.,); and the existence of few role models beyond the associate level. A renewal of the charge of the committee may be able to develop a mechanism to address these issues.

In summary, the charge of this committee was to:

- To support the ongoing collaborative review of the Inclusive Excellence Framework
- To determine if there is a need to establish a standing committee to deal with matters pertaining to diversity

In a relatively short amount of time this committee has been able to define a number of issues that need to be addressed pertaining to our charge. However, given the amount of
work necessary to address more fully the scope of these two charges, the committee requests that the executive committee of the Academic Senate extend our charge for another academic year so that we can develop and present a more thorough assessment in response to our charge.

Respectfully submitted by the Ad-Hoc Committee on Diversity and Inclusion

- Beth Carle, Associate Professor, CAST
- Juan Cockburn, Associate Professor, KGCOE
- Henry Hinesley, GLBT Center Coordinator
- André Hudson, Assistant Professor, School of Life Sciences, COS
- Benjamin N. Lawrance, Hon. Barber B. Conable, Jr. Endowed Chair of International Studies, COLA
- Joy Oguntebi, Assistant Professor, COB
- Marianne O’Loughlin, Associate Professor, CIAS
- Sylvia Perez-Hardy, Associate Professor, GCCIS
- Charlotte Thoms, Associate Professor, NTID
- Kristen Waterstram-Rich, Professor, CHST

[Motion to approve the contents of above letter and send to the President of the Academic Senate, by Beth Carle, seconded by André Hudson. Motion carried unanimously. 9.20 am, May 3, 2013]