

LDC *Lately...*

Learning Development Center

Volume 1 No. 2 Winter 1999
Learning Communities Issue

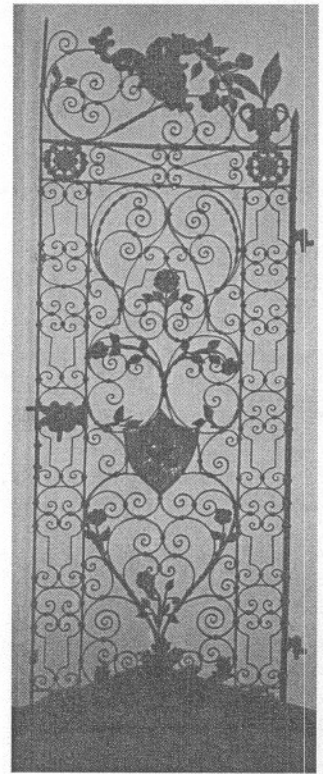
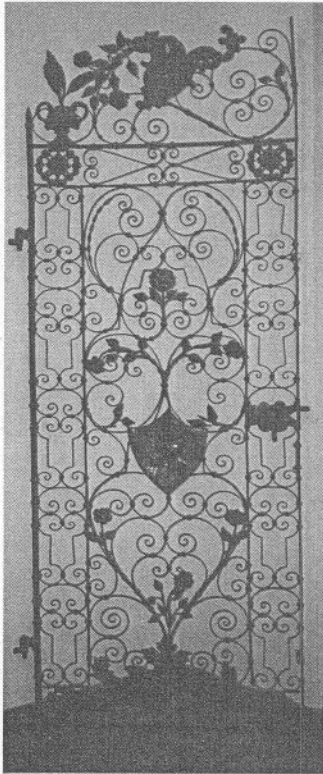
★ Workshop and
Lunch 'n' Learning
Schedule enclosed

Learning Communities

True/False Quiz

- T F 1. The major reason for students to leave college is financial problems.
- T F 2. Programs organized around learning communities generally exhibit higher retention and better performance.
- T F 3. RIT has no learning communities.
- T F 4. To be successful, learning communities must be highly structured.
- T F 5. Generation Y tends to have highly developed interpersonal skills and places value on learning for learning's sake.

(answers on page 3)



Community matters. Current research credits a sense of belonging for extending life expectancy, for improving mental and physical health, ...and for retaining students in colleges and universities. We have known for a long time that the most important retention factors are the meaningful connections students make with faculty and peers. Students who leave college often say loneliness, isolation or alienation is a major factor. It's in the first two years that as many as 50% of students leave (Gabelnick, et al. 117).

We have also known for several years that cultural trends have been making community-building on campuses a difficult proposition. One such trend is the student-as-consumer, where the emphasis is on convenience (evening classes, distance learning, weekend MBA programs, etc.) and the race for

credentials. Generation Y, those born from 1980 on, presents a particular challenge to community. Besides being more ethnically diverse and larger in number, their interpersonal skills may be underdeveloped from spending so much time on the computer or playing video games. Also, their values and objectives are focused more on product --a college degree which will land them a good job (one that pays well), rather than on process--actively learning about themselves and the world around them. Generation Y in particular needs help in making "community" connections, because as a group, they don't know how, even though they might want to.

Arthur Levine and Jeanette Cureton, authors of the book *When Hope and Fear Collide: A Portrait of Today's College Student*, note that students

today are more psychologically complex. Eating disorders, classroom disruptions, drug and alcohol abuse, gambling and suicide attempts have all increased. Levine and Cureton observe that "the effect of the accumulated fears and hurts that students have experienced is to divide and isolate them" ("What We Know" 7).

Dr. Simone's remarks in his Opening Day Address focused on breaking the "stubborn plateau of a 62% graduation rate" and increasing student retention at RIT. Our president astutely points out the complexity of the issue: "It is the collusion of negative circumstances across the breadth of a student's experience at RIT that explains the departure, just as it is the synergy of positive circumstances that accounts for another student's success" (Memo, 30 Sept. 1999).

In his theory of student departure, Vincent Tinto designed a model which focuses on the influence of intra-institutional aspects on the student throughout his or her college career. He theorized that entering freshmen bring with them certain patterns of personal, social and academic characteristics which include dispositions and intentions about college. These intentions naturally change and are reformulated as the student interacts with the academic and social systems of the college. "Satisfying and rewarding encounters with the formal and informal academic and social systems of the institution...lead to greater integration...and thus to student retention" (Pascarella and Terenzini 51). The key word here is *integration*, referring to "the extent to which the individual shares the normative attitudes and values of peers and faculty in the institution and abides by the formal and informal requirements for membership in that community" (51-53). Conversely, "negative interactions and experiences tend to reduce integration, [and] to distance the individual from...the communities of the institution, promoting the individual's marginality and, ultimately, withdrawal" (53).

For several years, educators have been exploring ways to build a community framework on college campuses. Broadly defined, a learning community is "a purposeful attempt to create rich, challenging and nurturing academic communities" (Smith 32). There are different models of learning communities, such as freshmen interest groups, clusters, coordinated studies and campus housing arrangements (Gabelnick, et al. 105). Some models require substantial restructuring of curriculum and extensive faculty development. An example would be linked classes in chemistry, calculus, and writing for science majors. Curriculum is organized around themes, for instance "The Order of Nature" (Smith 39). Schools such as Ball State University, Western Michigan University and Evergreen State College have put considerable time and effort into designing course work that is organized around learning

communities. The focus is on collaboration and active learning at three levels: teacher to teacher, teacher to student, and student to student. Discussion groups, peer revision, writing, critical thinking, presentations, group projects, and field trips are just some of the activities that can foster community in college classes.

Here at RIT, the College of Science, through the efforts of John Waud, Ph.D., and the College of Liberal Arts, through the efforts of Ann Howard, J.D., have teamed up to create a thematic course sequence that serves as Liberal Arts credit for general education or for math and science requirements. The interdisciplinary curriculum begins with a fall quarter class that focuses on team-building in relation to content. Water quality issues are examined through various interdisciplinary perspectives from people at RIT colleges, as well as from the professional world. Concurrently, Long Pond in Greece serves as the field site where students apply what they're learning in class. In the winter quarter, the course turns to Lake Ontario and its lake-wide management plan, which serves to teach further the principles of environmental science. By spring quarter all five Great Lakes are subject to inquiry. "The purpose is not to cover the entire topic of the Great Lakes," says John Waud, "but rather to provide an interdisciplinary approach to learning about environmental science, which is inherently multi-disciplinary, and to foster community-building between students and faculty." The spring quarter curriculum also includes a weekend camping trip for students and faculty. Dr. Waud and Professor Howard have worked to modify this multi-disciplinary approach for the new B.S. and M.S. degree programs in environmental science slated to begin in the fall of 2000.

In addition to the explicit curriculum of learning communities, there is the implicit curriculum, "the pedagogy, values, and culture of place" (Smith 32) which posits learning as integrated and knowledge as whole. The various disciplines share common concerns, and a "collaborative pedagogy promotes awareness of and respect for the contributions of different individuals and different areas of knowledge. From all points in the learning cycle, faculty and students who participate in learning communities find that they come face to face with numerous issues which define academic competence. Their ability to address some of these issues collaboratively is the sign of a successful learning community" (Gabelnick, et al. 114).

Students enrolled in programs organized around learning communities "generally exhibit higher retention: it is not atypical for a learning community group to exhibit a 90-100 percent rate of completion in the program" (Gabelnick, et al. 117). In addition, these students are more persistent in college, and they out-perform their peers who are not in learning community programs (117).

In its broader definition, creating learning communities means creating a positive culture and establishing "a shared ethos of caring and concern, and a shared commitment to helping students learn" (Peterson and Deal 29). College faculty may confuse young people's need for personal connections with gratuitous hand-holding. What this generation doesn't need is for things to be easier, just more meaningful. To combat the disengagement and learned helplessness that characterize our students, teachers need to provide more than just content. There also needs to be relevance, an understanding of context and overall patterns, and, most importantly, meaningful engagement. If community is lacking, there may be a sense of fragmentation, which, in any kind of group situation, fosters fear, frustration and hopelessness. Little learning takes place.

To its credit, RIT has embraced certain tenets of the learning communities movement in some of its programs: the First Year Experience Program continues to encourage collaboration among professors and Student Affairs professionals in designing and teaching the various Freshmen Seminars; the College of Liberal Arts has developed a two-quarter course, Writing and Literature I and II, which is being piloted this year; the summer Higher Education Opportunity Program follows an integrated curriculum for teaching reading, writing, and study skills; the Mechanical Engineering department has a mentoring program which pairs upperclassmen with first-year engineering students; the Office of Residence Life has a Faculty-in-Residence program and also the special interest houses. There are probably many more examples at RIT.

Philosophically, few would dispute the power of integration, interdependence, and community. However, developing learning communities in higher education requires time and energy. The it-takes-a-village-to-raise-a-child mentality may be dismissed as idealistic and unrealistic for a competitive, technical university like RIT. However, there are some effective things teachers and departments can do to establish a stronger sense of community without completely overhauling the curriculum. The following are just a few ideas for instructors to consider:

***ESTABLISH RITUALS.** This is perhaps the simplest and most powerful way to create cohesion. Rituals build community, engage emotions, focus attention, and help to bring individuals to a common state--a state ready for learning. For example, begin class with a group activity to share homework results. This provides feedback for the teacher on what the students are or are not understanding. Short breaks can be a ritual, especially for longer classes. Close each class with a problem or thoughtful question, then open the following class with the solution or a short discussion.

***LEARN NAMES.** Make a point of learning the names of your students, even if it takes all quarter with a large class; conversely, make sure the students know your name and how to spell it. Is your name clearly stated on the syllabus? Write it on the board. Tell them how you want to be addressed. Try including a "What's my name?" bonus question on the first exam.

***USE ICEBREAKERS.** Utilize some kind of activity or assignment whereby students can learn something about their classmates and something about you--icebreakers create belongingness and take the edge off a formal atmosphere.

***ENCOURAGE PROCESS.** Provide opportunities for small group processing of newly learned material (see article in our last issue of the LDC newsletter on Collaboration). If students are actively engaged, their learning becomes more effective, thereby enabling the professor to teach more content.

***BE ACCESSIBLE.** Is there a way students can find you? Whether full-time or part-time, all faculty should honor regular office hours. Being accessible also means leaving time for questions during class, making eye contact, praising students whenever they've contributed something valuable, and smiling. These implicit forms of accessibility can profoundly encourage student engagement. People automatically work harder when they believe the person in charge knows them and cares.

The following ideas could be used by departments:

***DESIGNATE AN AREA FOR GROUP STUDY.** A walk-in study lab or just a classroom that's identified as the department's study lounge encourages students to stick around between classes and study. The impact of a study environment is critical, as learning style theorists Kenneth and Rita Dunn have pointed out. Procrastinators are more likely to pull out a textbook in a room where peers,

upperclassmen, and maybe even instructors are present and doing work.

***DESIGNATE AREAS FOR SOCIALIZING.** Students love to "hang out." So why not provide an informal area where teachers and students can interact? Including a water cooler or coffee pot further encourages people to take a moment and get to know each other.

***ACKNOWLEDGE ACCOMPLISHMENTS.** This can be done easily by having a department bulletin board in a common area for posting both student and faculty accomplishments. Using students' initials rather than their full name, or identifying the individual as, for example, a third-year student, can be a tactful way of sharing while avoiding the perception of favoritism. Also, the accomplishments don't necessarily have to be academic. They could be related to almost anything.

We may not be able to solve all the problems of student disengagement, but following some of these ideas can only help. They don't cost money, but they do require effort. However, the payback on your investment in creating a sense of community will be tenfold. Young people need attention. If they perceive that faculty and department heads care about them, they're more likely to strive and persist. As stated in WXXI's recent installment of "The Lost Children," if young people don't get good attention, they will take bad attention over no attention at all.

What do you think? We'd like to hear from you and we invite your responses. Are there other examples of learning communities on this campus? Let us know.

Article by: Belinda Bryce, Director of the College Restoration Program.

- | |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Answers to True/False quiz:
1. False
2. True
3. False
4. False
5. False |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

LDC Workshops...

All workshops are free to all RIT students, faculty & staff

Learning Style Workshops

The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People by Stephen Covey

Do you have a negative habit that limits you from realizing your full potential? Learn to re-program such habits by listening to Stephen Covey's audio program under the direction of a Learning Specialist. In his program, Covey reveals a step-by-step process for learning the seven winning habits of happy, productive and successful individuals.

12:00-1:00 on Wednesdays in room 01-3367
1/5, 1/12, 1/19, 1/26, 2/2, 2/9, 2/16

Anatomy of Spirit by Carolyn Myss

C. Myss is a pioneer in the field of energy medicine and human consciousness. This audio series includes segments from her three books: Spiritual Power/Spiritual Practice, Why People Don't Heal, Spiritual Madness.

12:00-1:00 on Tuesdays in room 01-3335
1/4, 1/11, 1/18, 1/25, 2/1, 2/8, 2/15

Call Carla Katz (x55296) for a presentation on the following topics:

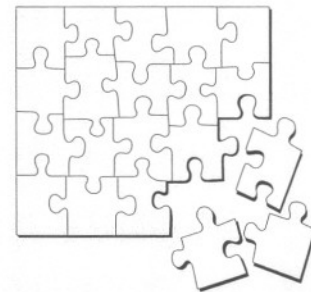
Theory of Multiple Intelligences
Mindmapping
Infinity Walk



Lunch 'n' Learning Series

(all Lunch 'n' Learning sessions run from 12:00-1:00 in room 01-2358)

Getting Organized	M 12/6
Goal Setting for Study	R 12/9
Increasing Motivation	M 12/13
Attacking a Text	R 12/16
Techniques for Better Concentration	M 1/3
Effective Time Planning	R 1/6
Textmarking and Notemaking	M 1/10
Customizing Your Career Choice*	T 1/11
Taking Good Lecture Notes	R 1/13
Preparing for Exams	M 1/17
Depression and Its Impact on Academic Performance*	T 1/18
Studying Lecture Notes	R 1/20
Memory Improvement	M 1/24
Self-advocacy and Assertiveness in the Academic Setting*	T 1/25
Stress Management	R 1/27
Stopping Procrastination	M 1/31
Surviving a Relationship Breakup*	T 2/1
Preparing for Exams	R 2/3
Effective Test Taking	M 2/7
Dealing with Grief and Loss*	T 2/8
Memory Improvement	R 2/10



* denotes sessions that are offered in collaboration with the Counseling Center

LDC is hosting a reception for
all new RIT Faculty
Wednesday, January 12
from 3:00-4:30
01-2372

More LDC Workshops...

Math (One-time workshops)

Calculus I Review	W	12/8	4:00-5:00	01-2372
Calculus II Review	R	12/9	4:00-5:30	01-2372
Classic Errors in Algebra	R	12/16	4:00-5:00	01-2371
How to Create a Study Group	R	1/6	4:00-5:00	01-2371

Math (On-going classes)

Individualized Math Classes	M 12/6 - R 2/17 (meets M,T,W,R)	9:00-10:00 or 10:00-11:00	01-2372
MATH POWER Naturally with the Infinity Walk*	W 12/8 - 2/16	3:00-4:00	SAU M-1

* for info about this workshop contact Karen Quinn, 475-2833 and for all others contact Gail Gucker, 475-6944

Special Services Workshops (open to all students)

Personal Development

Communication Skills	T	1/11	4:00-5:00	SAU M-2
Financial Aid Seminar - Getting Ready for Next Year	W	1/26	4:00-5:00	SAU M-2
Think Tank #6: Current Events	M	12/13	4:00-5:00	SAU M-2
Think Tank #7: Stress Management & Relaxation	T	1/12	4:00-5:00	SAU M-2
Think Tank #8: Ways to Manage Your Debt	M	1/24	4:00-5:00	SAU M-2
Think Tank #9: HUMOR	M	2/7	4:00-5:00	SAU M-2

Career Seminars

Career Seminar: Interview - How to Sell Yourself	M	12/6	4:00-5:00	SAU M-2
Why Graduate School? "The 2 nd Time Around"	W	12/8	4:00-5:00	SAU M-1
Career Seminar: Professional Roundtable #1	W	1/19	4:00-5:00	SAU M-2
Career Seminar: Dealing With Conflicts on the Job	M	1/31	4:00-5:00	SAU M-2
Career Seminar: Professional Roundtable #2	R	2/10	4:00-5:00	SAU M2

Academic Skills

Academic Power Series: Time Management	R	1/6	1:00-2:00	SAU M-2
Academic Power Series: Study Habits & Learning	R	1/3	1:00-2:00	SAU M-2
Academic Power Series: Textbook Reading Seminar	R	1/20	1:00-2:30	SAU M-2
Academic Success - Getting Back on Track	R	1/20	3:30-5:00	SAU M-2
Academic Power Series: Lecture Notetaking	R	1/27	1:00-2:00	SAU M-2
Academic Power Series: Test Prep/Test Taking	R	2/3	1:00-2:00	SAU M-2

R & R

Films at noon in room SAU M-2

Scrooged	M 12/6 and F 12/10
Cool Runnings	M 1/3 and F 1/7
The Air Up There	M 1/17 and F 1/21
Eddie	M 2/7 and F 2/11

Tuesday Morning "Welcome 2000" Snack 'n' Chat T 1/11 and T 2/8 9:30-11:00 01-2378

Learning Communities - Works Cited...

Gabelnick, Faith, et al. "Learning Communities and General Education." Perspectives n.d.: 104- 120.

Levine, Arthur, and Jeanette S. Cureton. "What We Know About Today's College Students."

About Campus Mar./Apr. 1998: 4-9.

---. When Hope and Fear Collide: A Portrait of Today's College Student. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1998.

Pascarella, Ernest T., and Patrick T. Terenzini. How College Affects Students. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1991.

Peterson, Kent D., and Terrence E. Deal. "How Leaders Influence the Culture of Schools." Educational Leadership 56.1 (Sept. 1998): 28-30.

Simone, Albert J., Ph.D. RIT Faculty and Staff Memo. 30 Sept. 1999.

Smith, Barbara Leigh. "Creating Learning Communities." Liberal Education Fall 1993: 32-39.

Waud, John. Phone Interview. 26 Oct. 1999.

There were errors on the Web Resource List in the Last Issue - This is a corrected list.

<http://darkwing.uoregon.edu/~tep/index.html>

<http://darkwing.uoregon.edu/~tep/ideas/groups.html>

<http://minerva.acc.Virginia.EDU:80/~trc/tccoop.htm>

<http://www.lgu.ac.uk/deliberations/collab.learning/panitz2.html>

<http://ghurrell.mtx.net/docs/cooperative.html>

<http://www.aln.org/alnweb/magazine/issue1/sener/cooplmg.htm>

<http://www.wpl.edu/~lsg501/bridget.html>

<http://www.ntlf.com/html/lib/bib/92-2dig.htm>

<http://www.ntlf.com/html/lib/bib/digests.htm>

http://imctwo.csu Hayward.edu/faculty_dev/weblinks.html

<http://reach.ucf.edu/~fctl/research/methods.html@collaborative>

http://tecfa.unige.ch/tecfa/research/CMC/colla/iccai95_14.html

How to contact LDC:

Web: <http://www.rit.edu/SA/LDC>
Location: George Eastman Building (01)
Phone: 475-6682

FAX: 475-5832
Director: Susan Donovan

LDC Walk-in Lab Hours...

Math Lab

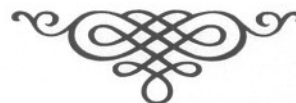
Monday	10:00 am - 7:00 pm
Tuesday	10:00 am - 9:00 pm
Wednesday	10:00 am - 9:00 pm
Thursday	10:00 am - 4:00 pm
Friday	10:00 am - 2:00 pm

What the Math Lab can do for you:

Help with questions from:

- homework
- lecture notes
- textbook
- practice quizzes and tests

(But we can't help with take-home quizzes or tests, and questions not from your text.)



Writing Lab

Monday	9:30 am - 12:00 pm 1:00 pm - 4:00 pm
Tuesday	9:30 am - 12:00 pm 1:00 pm - 7:00 pm
Wednesday	9:30 am - 12:00 pm 1:00 pm - 7:00 pm
Thursday	9:30 am - 12:00 pm 1:00 pm - 7:00 pm
Friday	9:30 am - 12:00 pm

Services of the Writing Lab:

- Writing instructors work with students at every stage of the writing process.
- Students come to the lab to practice for the Liberal Arts Exit Exam or to seek help writing papers, research projects or resumes/cover letters.
- Instructors will read up to five pages of a Master's thesis for structural and mechanical errors.
- A computer is available for students working with an LDC writing instructor.

(However, instructors will not work with ungraded papers for English Composition, Writing and Literature class or take-home exams.)

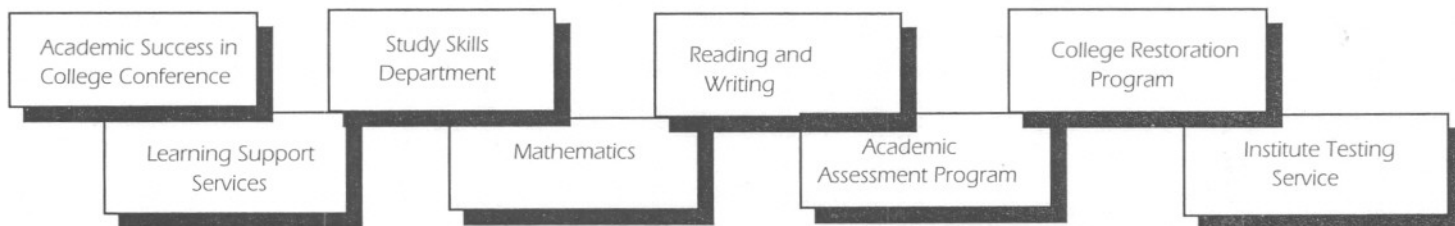


Also available:

If you are a deaf student in a two-year program and need help with reading, you can come to the Writing Lab and sign-up for an appointment.

The Learning Development Center...

Services Available to Entire RIT Community



This section of the LDC diagram shows the COLLEGE PROGRAM, which provides services to the entire RIT community, including students, faculty, and staff. Contact: Wick Smith, x56941

The ACADEMIC SUCCESS IN COLLEGE CONFERENCE (ASCC) is an innovative, four-day summer conference for entering freshmen. Students are introduced to the skills, strategies, resources, and self-knowledge necessary for academic success in college. Contact: Jane Munt, x56947

LEARNING SUPPORT SERVICES (LSS) provides students with regularly scheduled check-ins with a learning specialist. This academic coaching addresses organizational skills, study strategies, and advocacy. Structured monitoring is intended for students who anticipate difficulty navigating the college environment, due to learning differences or other factors. Structured monitoring is a fee-based service. Contact: Carla Katz, x55296

The STUDY SKILLS DEPARTMENT focuses on sound study strategies which promote academic success. Topics include learning style evaluation, time management, listening/notetaking, textmarking, test preparation, and memory improvement. This department oversees the popular Lunch 'n' Learning workshop series, as well as STARS (Students Teaching and Reaching Students), a group of students trained to present study skills workshops. Contact: Jane Munt, x56947

The MATHEMATICS DEPARTMENT offers direct support for RIT math courses, mathematics assessment, general skill instruction, and tutor training. The free, drop-in Math Lab is staffed by LDC faculty and trained tutors. Contact: Gail Gucker, x56944

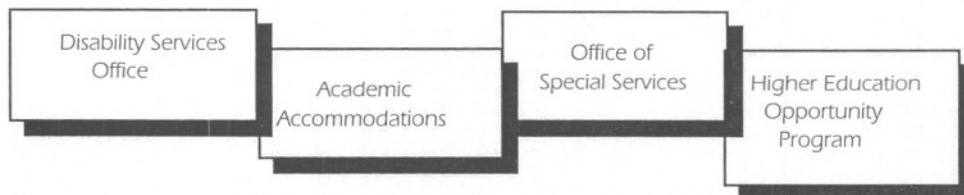
The READING AND WRITING DEPARTMENT offers assessment and instruction in college level textbook reading, speedreading, proofreading, and writing. The free, drop-in Writing Lab is staffed by professional instructors; several are fluent in sign language. Contact: Sora Sachs, x56945

The ACADEMIC ASSESSMENT PROGRAM analyzes sources of students' academic difficulty, using interviews, surveys, and tests to gather background information. Recommendations are then made for strategies and resources for addressing performance issues. If a disability is suspected, students may be referred off-campus for further testing. Contacts: Rhonda Laskoski or Enid Stevenson, x56682 v/tty

The COLLEGE RESTORATION PROGRAM (CRP) is a specialized program of instruction for students who have experienced academic difficulty and/or suspension. Suspensions are waived for one quarter, during which each participant follows a prescribed program of instruction. Successful completion of CRP qualifies students to reapply for readmission to the college or department of their choice. Contact: Belinda Bryce, x57818

INSTITUTE TESTING SERVICE (ITS) provides group testing programs for LDC and the Institute. ITS is responsible for RIT's role as a National Test Center site and supervises administration of standardized tests. Contact: Linda Garfinkel, x55728

Services With Eligibility Criteria



The DISABILITY SERVICES OFFICE ensures access to educational programs by reviewing documentation of disabilities, approving accommodations, referring students to appropriate campus services, and serving as a resource and referral for the RIT community. Contact: Pamela Lloyd, x57804 v/tty

The ACADEMIC ACCOMMODATIONS OFFICE provides academic modifications approved by the Disabilities Coordinator for students with disabilities. Frequently used

services include notetaking, textbook taping, and extended time for testing. Contact: Dottie Hicks, x55538 v/tty

The OFFICE OF SPECIAL SERVICES (OSS) is a federally funded program which provides the necessary academic and personal support that will enable qualified students to realize their full potential and to complete their college career. Services include tutoring, math support, counseling, and advocacy. Special Services supports first generation students, returning adults,

financially disadvantaged students, and students with disabilities. Contact: Marie Giardino, x52833 v/tty

HIGHER EDUCATION OPPORTUNITY PROGRAM (HEOP) is a New York State and RIT funded program which qualifies students entering RIT through the program for additional financial/academic support. Services for all HEOP students include counseling, tutoring, and advocacy. HEOP is on the second floor of the August Bldg. Contact: Linda Meyer, x56073 v/tty