



MIDDLE OF THE FIFTH INNING

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President

Rochester Institute of Technology

Community Address
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WELCOME

Good morning and welcome. As an institution of higher learning, we are a special community – students, faculty, staff, administration, and trustees – all working together for a common goal. That goal is the education and graduation of our students. Along the way, we will advance the frontier of knowledge and enrich and serve the greater community outside of the campus. Individually, each of us will grow professionally and will experience the satisfaction of knowing we are achieving our individual and collective goals.

Valued faculty and staff have retired and left the university since last year, and last year's seniors and many graduate students have graduated. However, new students, faculty, and staff – to whom I now offer a special welcome – have taken their place. The ranks of RIT alumni and retirees have increased, and to these individuals I say “thank you” as well as “welcome”.

In what follows, I shall remind you of some of the accomplishments of the past year and alert you to some of the important challenges for the year ahead.

YEAR IN REVIEW

Enrollment

Student enrollment continues to set records. Freshman and transfer student applications for the September 2000 class established a new record of 11,400 – plus. Of these students, 66% were accepted, also a record low, which means student selectivity increased. The freshman class was the largest in RIT's 171-year history, reaching 2,350. The average SAT score for the class exceeded 1,200 for the first time (compared to a national average of 1,016). Forty-eight percent of the freshman class comes from outside of New York State, also a record (the total student body consists of students from 90 foreign countries).

Vice President Jim Miller, working with our very effective deans, continues to provide outstanding leadership and performance interacting with this dynamic, complex, and continually evolving student population, which is the lifeblood of any university.

Students

Efforts to contain student risky behavior (suicide, alcohol and drug abuse, depression, and unprotected sex) continue at a high level on three connected fronts.

First, a three-year \$200,000 grant has been awarded by the Bader Foundation to the Division of Student Affairs to research and reduce the occurrence of binge drinking. Student peer groups will work with staff members to alert all students to the norms, actual experiences, and expectations surrounding abusive drinking at RIT and other campuses, with the objective of curbing alcohol and drug abuse by identifying, establishing, and accepting reasonable norms. This activity will be supplemented with a comprehensive multi-media campaign.

Second, a \$400,000 grant from the U. S. Department of Justice to the Women's Resource Center and the Department of Criminal Justice will fund the application of social norming theory (as in the Bader Foundation Grant) to reduce violence against women by changing attitudes and behavior.

Third, after a year-long debate that was tortuous and sometimes acrimonious, an innovative program for all freshmen is now being implemented by the Division of Student Affairs. The program, called First Year Enrichment/Wellness (FYE/W), has approximately 2,300 first-year students registered in 80 sections that meet once a week for two hours during the Fall quarter. There will be a follow-up voluntary Winter quarter program. Each

student will meet regularly, on an individual basis, outside of class during the first year with a “coach” who is also their FYE/W instructor.

Eight new staff, teaching half of the sections, were hired this summer to work full-time to teach in and support the program. Fifty-one Student Affairs staff, Educational Development Faculty, and regular faculty will teach the other sections. The formal classroom and teaching will be complemented with outside speakers and college and residence hall programs.

The purpose of FYE/W is to improve in a major way high school transition and college integration for first-year students, so that student success and retention will be enhanced. Risky behavior, wellness, time management, learning styles, and support systems are some of the topics to be covered. A comprehensive assessment program has been developed to monitor the impact and effectiveness of the program.

I want to take this opportunity to thank Linda Kuk and her staff for fulfilling my request to design, adopt, and implement an innovative program to confront risky behaviors and the retention problems they foster.

Academic Portfolio

RIT continues to add curricula in support of its overall mission. For example, RIT is uniquely positioned with a strong College of Liberal Arts (COLA) framed within a setting of strong and comprehensive technological programs. As such, RIT can readily develop application-oriented social science and liberal arts programs, which draw on the strong technological curricula. To this end, following-up on the psychology program introduced several years ago, this year saw the introduction of a BS/MS program in Public Policy within COLA, and an Environmental Science BS/MS program implemented jointly between the COLA and the College of Science.

In addition, the scope of NTID was broadened with the introduction of a BS degree in ASL and English Interpreting.

A very exciting opportunity awaits us. Now is the time to introduce an innovative and leading-edge Honors and Leadership Program for our very best students. Such a program – creatively designed and appropriately funded – can significantly raise the quality of our student body and curricula, and reinforce our ***First in Class*** initiative. The program can offer significantly enhanced

international, interdisciplinary, applications-focused, service-oriented, undergraduate research, and team-directed learning opportunities for our students. A pilot program involving 80 students from departments in 4 colleges is being introduced this quarter.

First in Class

Last year was a defining year for the ***First in Class*** (FIC) initiative. Don Boyd was named Associate Provost for Outreach and Director of FIC.

FIC is a set of academic and applied research programs formed as strategic partnerships with industry and government. Three interconnected areas, each of them interdisciplinary, have been identified under FIC. They are: Imaging and Publishing; Information Technology; and Design, Development, and Manufacturing. Business plans have been approved for each of these areas.

A number of FIC programs were initiated or enhanced during the past year. They include:

- A new laboratory in Advanced Spectral Sensing (LASS) under the leadership of John Schott in the Center for Imaging Science. Currently, the two programs under LASS are a \$2.5 million partnership funded by

Boeing Aircraft, Kodak, ITT, and U.S. Government National Reconnaissance Office, and a \$3 million partnership being negotiated with NASA.

- A \$3 million continuation of a program funded by the Office of Naval Research to develop sustainable design of ships. This partnership with the Federal Government and a shipbuilding firm in Hawaii is under the leadership of Nabil Nasr, Director of the National Center for Remanufacturing and Resource Recovery (NCRRR) in CIMS.
- Partnerships under NCRRR with entities such as Agfa, Detroit Diesel, and the State of New York in environmental remanufacturing.
- An Information Technology (IT) laboratory to work with companies such as Sun Microsystems in the area of networking and integration of IT applications.
- A symposium held at RIT this past June, which brought together 120 Rochester business leaders and government officials to discuss the needs, opportunities, and solutions that exist in IT and telecommunications. I shall discuss an outgrowth of this symposium a little later.

- Planning for a laboratory for electronic learning to advance our distance-learning program with new information technology and pedagogy appropriate to on-line learning.
- Planning for a bachelor's degree in Bioinformatics.
- Planning for a related program in Micro-Electro-Mechanical Systems (MEMS) and Electronic Manufacturing and Assembly.

Personnel and Human Resources

I am very pleased to acknowledge, recognize, and applaud the following key appointments:

- Don Boyd, Associate Provost for Outreach Programs and Director of *First in Class*
- Don Hudspeth, President/Dean, American College of Management and Technology (Croatia)
- Harvey Palmer, Dean of the College of Engineering
- Laurel Price Jones, Vice President for Development and Alumni Relations
- Bill Trachtenberg, President, RIT Research Corporation

RIT is fortunate to have these very able individuals as part of the RIT team to provide strong leadership in areas pivotal to our move to the next level as an academic institution.

Physical Facilities

This past year we completed:

- 16 fully furnished new apartment buildings
- Boat house for the RIT crew
- Renovation of the ground floor of Bausch & Lomb Center
- Renovation of the Liberal Arts building
- Acoustical, audiovisual, and seating improvements in the Webb

Auditorium and Frank Ritter Ice Arena

Currently under construction are the following:

- An 18,000 square foot open market food court facility with seating for 195 which will house a convenience store, 6-station dining room, an Alumni Center, and Copy Center (cost of \$3.7 million). It is located between the College of Science and the Riverknoll Apartment Complex.

- A pre-engineered 11,400 square foot building on the site of the former trailers connected to the College of Science, which will house classrooms, labs, and faculty offices (cost of \$825,000).
- The last phase of the \$51.5 million renovations to the RIT residence halls. Renovation of the NTID residence halls will begin in January 2001 (funded by the Federal Government at a cost of \$13.5 million).
- Reconstruction of Lomb Memorial Drive (cost of \$625,000).
- Renovations and enlargement by 20,000 square feet of the College of Engineering building (cost of \$15.5 million).

The following projects are under consideration:

- Coffeehouse and space for student performances in the Wallace Library.
- “College Town”, a commercial/residential community located on 138 acres on the northeast corner of the campus. Ponds and streams would connect housing for 600 students with 150,000 square feet of commercial space (bookstore, art gallery, coffeehouse, and restaurant). Private funding of \$22 million would be required.
- Reconstruction of Andrews Memorial Drive (sidewalks, bike lanes, new lighting) at a cost of \$5.5 million.

- “RIT Residential Village”, a retirement community for RIT retirees, alumni, and friends, offering patio homes, townhouses, and apartments. It would be located on 35 acres at the current Racquet Club site, and funded by a private developer.
- Greek residential community, composed of 12- and 16-person houses together with social gathering and chapter facilities. This community, part of the RIT student housing system, would replace a portion of the aging Riverknoll complex. Each house will cost \$600,000.
- Four additional apartment buildings, similar to the University Commons complex.
- A field house, to support convocation, graduation, concerts, lectures, and athletic activities, with seating for 8,000 people. Private funding of \$18 million is required (\$5.4 million is already in hand).
- A facility to house a proposed College of Computing and Communications Technology (to be discussed later) at a cost of \$20 million to be privately financed.

As you can tell, some people have been extremely busy. Vice President James Watters is leading these efforts aggressively and creatively. He brings a broad perspective and coordinated approach to the construction and financing

of these facilities, balanced with a keen sensitivity to the curricular and extra curricular needs of the campus as a whole. We are fortunate, indeed, to have his insight and energy working for us.

Development and Community Relations

Laurel Price Jones, Vice President for Development and Alumni Relations, began her tenure at RIT in January. In characteristically speedy fashion, she has reorganized the division and expanded the RIT network of donors and volunteers. Her primary focus is to provide leadership for the Capital Campaign, which I shall address later.

Alumni Relations is on the web and has an online community. For the first time, a full program of alumni reunions is being planned and implemented.

Many distinguished visitors appeared on campus. They include General Colin Powell (Horton Lecture Series), U. S. Secretary of Education Richard Riley and Hollywood film producer Norman Jewison (Commencement), and New York City Mayor Rudy Giuliani as a guest on the “Hardball with Chris Matthews” live TV show filmed on campus.

THIS YEAR'S CHALLENGES

The preceding sampling of last year's accomplishments is impressive. All of you should be proud of what we have accomplished together.

However, this year's challenges are equally impressive, and we again shall have to pull together to meet them successfully. I shall turn to these next.

Capital Campaign

Many of the initiatives we will undertake this year – and in the years to come – will be supported by gifts from friends and alumni.

We are now planning a major, several hundred million dollar Capital Campaign. The precise goal will be established at the November 2001 Board of Trustees meeting. To date, we have raised \$60 million, and our goal is to raise \$120 million by November 2001. The Campaign will raise funds for endowment and current use to support scholarships, professorships, an Honors and Leadership program, other programs, facilities, and equipment.

A lot of organization, coordination, strategy, feedback, assessment, energy, and hard work go into an endeavor of this magnitude. Laurel Price

Jones is providing the leadership in support of this activity, and you will be hearing directly from her as we move ahead.

College of Computing and Communications Technology (C³T)

IT breadth and depth. Three thousand students now major in computer and information fields housed in all of RIT's seven colleges, and between one-third and one-half of RIT's students – majors and non-majors – take computer-based courses each quarter. The majors – at the baccalaureate, master, and Ph.D. levels – include computer science, computer engineering, telecommunications technology, software engineering, information technology, management information systems, computer animation, digital publishing, new media, imaging science, bioinformatics, biomedical computing, and so on.

A significant packaging problem exists. It is difficult for students and employers to identify the program that most clearly matches their interests and needs. Coordinated, efficient, and synergistic growth, development, and communication are difficult. Yet properly planned growth in this arena is essential to RIT's future and to the economic development of the Rochester region.

IT growth and cost. Jim Miller's research shows that over the past five years, while the number of high school graduates entering college increased 10%, their interest in computer-related fields has increased 90%, and RIT's enrollment in these areas has increased 150%. Just last year we constructed a 55,000 square foot building to meet the increased demand and already we are at full capacity.

Nationally, this year the demand for Information Technology (IT) professionals will be 1.6 million, half of which will go unsatisfied. In the year 2005, the estimated short-fall is 1.2 million. RIT is a leader in providing IT professionals to the field. In order to maintain our market share, we need to grow. This growth raises a number of issues – such as a balanced academic portfolio.

This growth also raises questions of financial viability going forward. Net tuition revenue clearly will cover all variable expenses associated with new growth. The fixed expenses associated with the creation of additional physical capacity are largely covered if demand develops as expected. But, if some year down the road overall demand diminishes, we could be saddled with excess capacity. Based on existing needs and expected growth, an additional 90,000

square feet would be required at an estimated cost of \$14.5 million (construction plus equipment).

FIC collaboratory. This 90,000 square feet would also include space for an IT Laboratory and an FIC Collaboratory in support of the FIC initiative. The IT Lab and FIC Collaboratory will bring together FIC partners from industry and government to work with RIT students and faculty on software, hardware, and networking development and applications.

IT incubator. The broad array – we think the broadest anywhere in the country – of IT academic programs, the FIC initiative, the IT Lab and FIC Collaboratory concepts lead to the notion of a 50,000 square foot (\$6.3 million) IT Incubator housed adjacent to the proposed new facility. The Incubator would house early-stage IT start-ups led by RIT students, faculty, alumni, and Rochester community entrepreneurs. The Incubator would begin with a \$5 million venture capital revolving fund that would make \$50,000 to \$150,000 equity placements.

Proposals and conditions. Based on analyses undertaken by Jim Miller related to demographics and enrollment, by Stan McKenzie and the deans

related to the overall balance of academic program and job opportunities, by Don Boyd related to FIC, and by Jim Watters related to financing, we are considering five proposals and two conditions at this time:

- Proposal One: IT and IT-related programs be increased according to an annually reviewed and specified growth rate. Initially the plan will call for twelve faculty members, to be recruited over four years to staff the anticipated growth. These faculty and programs will be housed and brought under the umbrella of a new college – C³T.
- Proposal Two: An FIC Collaboratory will be established and housed under C³T.
- Proposal Three: An IT Incubator will be established with a \$5 million venture capital fund and housed under C³T.
- Proposal Four: \$10 million will be allotted for the salaries and start-up costs associated with the twelve faculty members, an academic dean, the manager of the Collaboratory, and the Director of the Incubator.

- Proposal Five: C³T will be composed of three adjacent and connected buildings – the just constructed 55,000 square foot IT facility, the proposed 90,000 square foot IT/Collaboratory facility, and the proposed 50,000 square foot Incubator. The total estimated cost of the new construction is \$20.8 million.
- Condition One: C³T will be in a break-even position after four years with revenue from net tuition (academic programs), grants and contracts (Collaboratory), and licenses, fees, and equity (Incubator) covering all fixed and variable costs.
- Condition Two: RIT is able to raise \$25 million to construct the new facilities and establish the venture capital fund from a single individual for whom C³T will be named.

The plan is to start from Condition Two and move on from there.

Note that this proposition is a logical outgrowth of the FIC initiative, normal expansion of our IT area, and development of the Capital Campaign.

In the past, RIT has taken bold actions, which have defined the RIT of today. These actions include moving the campus from downtown Rochester to Henrietta; establishing NTID, the RIT Research Corporation, and CIMS; and introducing co-op education and a Ph.D. program in Imaging Science. The proposition to establish a C³T with its component Collaboratory and Incubator is offered in the same vein.

Washington Board of Trustees Meeting

Several years ago, RIT held its first-ever Board of Trustees meeting outside of Rochester. It was successfully held in Washington, D.C.

Because of the success of that meeting, the FIC initiative, the driving influence of science and technology education and research in the economy, and the positive fiscal situation in Washington, serious consideration is being given to holding the April 2001 Board of Trustees meeting in the nation's capital. By better familiarizing legislators and agency officials with RIT's programmatic strengths and personnel, we believe we can enhance our FIC government partnerships.

The decision will be made at the November 2000 Board of Trustees meeting.

Retention and Calendar

I would like to wrap up my remarks today by revisiting a key topic in last year's address. I save this discussion for the end of the address to emphasize its importance and focus your attention on it.

Last year at this time, I asked the campus to focus on the retention rate at RIT. I was concerned then when the data showed retention fluctuating between 60% and 62%. I am even more concerned now when the latest data point shows a 57% retention rate. I see this as a significant issue and a grave problem. It tarnishes the accomplishments and opportunities I have just summarized. All of us together must work constructively and collegially – not defensively – on this issue.

Associate Provost for Academic Programs, Kit Mayberry, chaired a special task force, which has worked tirelessly over the past year to complete a comprehensive report. The task force has identified a number of strategies to improve retention. We shall initiate many of these strategies this year and

retention at RIT will improve – it has to because the enabling strategies are all within our collective capabilities. As I have indicated in an earlier memorandum to the campus, this report is available electronically or by calling Kit's office.

The task force identifies as a chief cause for student attrition and dissatisfaction a factor it calls the “campus environment” or the overall “feel” of the place. The task force reports that a number of students perceive RIT as “a high pressured, hard-hearted, excessively business-like institution offering too few of the activities, relationships, and attitudes they expect from their college experience”. I could violate my earlier admonition and become defensive by saying that I honestly do not see how students can feel this way, given the multitude of programs and activities we offer, the low student-faculty ratio, and the outstanding facilities, faculty, and programs in general.

But, I will not say that. Rather, I shall ask what we must do to change this perception and, where necessary, the reality for those students feeling this way. We all must.

To improve retention significantly, the task force states three conditions. One of these conditions is to change from a quarter to a semester calendar. Improvements can be made without such a change, but the report argues that the benefits of the retention strategies can only be fully and significantly achieved by changing to a semester system.

Because of the many costs, upsets, turmoil, and distractions associated with such a change, I asked College of Business Dean, Tom Hopkins, to chair a special study group over the summer to review the Retention Report to determine whether there is a “compelling” reason to justify the calendar change in terms of improving retention. Tom’s committee report, as I indicated in an earlier memo, is also available electronically or by request. The Hopkins committee report concludes that the Retention Committee report does not unqualifiedly establish a calendar change as a necessary condition for significantly improving retention, although it does offer certain advantages.

As President, I find a retention rate of 57% or 62% unacceptable at an institution like RIT. After reviewing benchmark data from other universities presented in the Retention Report, I believe our retention rate goal should be 75%.

Given where we are, this goal would appear to require a sea level change, not a fine tuning of business as usual. Sea level changes bring upset and discomfort. If that is what is required to get to 75%, then so be it. If the calendar change is, in fact, a necessary or “probably” a necessary condition, then we shall make the change. This decision is very likely one that cannot be “proven” before the fact one way or another. Someone – I guess me – will have to weigh all the evidence, listen closely to all the arguments, and then make an instinctive decision that can be validated only over time.

We have to decide whether a major cause of poor retention is *systemic* – e.g., the calendar – or whether the major cause is *attitudinal* or *operational*. If the major cause is attitudinal or operational, then changing the calendar will have little effect.

We need to identify early and intervene meaningfully with at-risk students. We need to have all students – especially those graduating – believe we care very much about each of them and their success. As a campus, we must muster the will and ability to do this. Will a change in calendar

significantly facilitate this? Can more attention to attitude and operations under a quarter calendar accomplish this?

We shall have full, campus-wide discussion of this issue over the next two months, proceeding throughout all of the governance groups. I shall listen carefully – I know the debates will be civil and productive. Weighing everything, I intend to present a decision to the Board of Trustees at the November 2000 meeting.

CONCLUSION

We are in the "middle of the fifth inning". The game is underway. It is an important game that is pivotal to our championship run. It is not a perfect game, but we are scoring. We are in the middle of the game, not yet at the end. The game is still ours to win or lose, although we are ahead right now.

Our retention effort, First-in-Class initiative, capital campaign, honors program, and commitment to diversity are off the bench and on base. We have to bring them home safely. Together, working and playing as a team, we can do it. Helping each other score is what it takes for RIT to win.

Thank you for your forthcoming effort and congratulations for the success that I know awaits you.