

**RIT: A UNIQUE INSTITUTION WITHIN  
THE FAMILY OF UNIVERSITIES**

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**Community Address**

**September 5, 2001**

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## WELCOME

Good morning and, for most of you, welcome back. For new faculty and staff, for the first time welcome to what I know you will find to be an exciting, challenging, and fulfilling next step on your career paths. I believe that RIT is unique – that is, one of a kind – among the family of universities, and I shall address this uniqueness in the latter part of the address.

For now, let me say that I know our 173 new faculty and staff will make a positive difference in enriching and expanding this uniqueness. You will build on the continuing efforts of our “veteran” faculty and staff, who, in turn, have benefited so much from the contributions of their colleagues who preceded them. Yes, there is a history and tradition here at RIT, and it is founded on the many outstanding individuals who have given so much of their lives to the Institute over so many years.

I shall turn now to a brief review of a very small representation of the many significant accomplishments of the past year across the university. I shall follow this review with a discussion of some of the challenges, opportunities, and required decisions in the year ahead.

## YEAR IN REVIEW

### Three (Four) Landmark Achievements

This past year saw three RIT-history-making achievements which forcefully thrust us along the paths delineated by our Strategic Plan and *First in Class* initiative:

- Trustee Tom Golisano contributed \$14 million to establish the B. Thomas Golisano College of Computing and Information Sciences. This is the largest gift, by far, he has ever made and the largest received at one time by RIT.

The new College, RIT’s eighth college, will house the existing departments of Information Technology, Computer Science, and Software Engineering, as well as provide support for all of the computer and information-based programs in the other seven colleges. The new college is now RIT’s largest college.

The gift recognizes, primarily, the need to graduate more students at the undergraduate and graduate levels in these areas, as well as the need to support applied research and industry collaboration in these areas.

My thanks go especially to CAST Dean Wiley McKinzie and his faculty for their spirit of collegiality that helped to frame and shape this new college.

- The New York State Office of Science, Technology and Academic Research (NYSTAR) designated RIT as one of several STAR centers which, primarily, conduct research in collaboration with industry in order to enhance employment and economic growth within the State. The other STAR centers are at leading research universities such as Columbia and Cornell.

NYSTAR is providing \$14 million to RIT to support its center, which we call the IT Collaboratory. The center will rely heavily on the faculty and facilities of our Kate Gleason College of Engineering, as well as strong support from our College of Science and Golisano College of Computing and Information Sciences. The work of the Collaboratory will focus on microsystems and photonics.

We all owe a major expression of appreciation to Associate Provost for Outreach Programs Don Boyd for his brilliant leadership of the team which brought this very competitive grant to RIT.

- Businessman Ernie Del Monte gifted a wonderful hotel – the Marriott Thruway – to RIT to support our student housing needs, establish a base for our Corporate Education and Training programs, and provide hands-on experience for our Hospitality and Service Management program.

The hotel is appraised at \$29 million and may well become the preferred housing option for many of our students (it has indoor and outdoor swimming pools, exercise facilities, and other amenities). The gift value to RIT is calculated at \$14 million. We have renamed the hotel the RIT Inn and Conference Center.

I want to take this opportunity to thank Vice President for Finance and Administration Jim Watters and his staff for their tenacious, masterful, and creative work in expeditiously negotiating the final complex legal and financial aspects of this deal.

It appears that we are on a very nice \$14 million roll – three \$14 million commitments, with the first supporting primarily the Golisano College of Computing and Information Sciences, the second the Kate Gleason College of Engineering, College of Science, and Golisano College of Computing and Information Sciences, and the third the College of Applied Science and Technology.

As we speak, another announcement is in the works, again representing a landmark *First in Class*-related contribution to RIT. This contribution will not reach \$14 million, but it will come close. It will support a leading program in another RIT college not yet mentioned. Because the donor is making the announcement, I cannot be more specific right now, except to say there will be a press release today and a formal presentation in Chicago within a week.

## **Enrollment**

RIT continues to be in the favorable position of being able to establish higher student enrollment targets, while at the same time increasing quality and diversity of programs and student body. Recognizing that increased efforts to improve retention and that record setting entering classes over the past several years would by themselves increase enrollment, this year we decided to hold the new freshman class steady.

As a consequence of this strategy:

- Full-time undergraduate and graduate populations will be the largest in RIT's history.
- Student headcount will increase 2% to approximately 15,000 and student FTE will increase 3% to approximately 11,750.
- Applications for freshman admissions increased by 3% over the prior record established last year. Transfer applications increased by 2%.
- Graduate enrollment continues to grow, especially full-time graduate enrollment. Graduate applications increased 25% over the prior record established last year.
- Student selectivity continues to increase, so that this year's entering class is the best-ever academically:
  - 2,300 freshmen will enter this year, selected from the more than 8,800 who applied for admission.
  - The SAT mean for the entering class will exceed 1210, with the middle 50% of scores ranging between 1130 and 1300.
  - 50% of the freshman class come from outside of New York State.
  - The freshman class contains 28 students who are National Merit, National Achievement, or National Hispanic scholars, the largest number in RIT's history.
- International enrollment will reach an all-time high, exceeding 1200 students. This fall RIT will see 20 new Fulbright scholars; together with the 15 Fulbright scholars already here, this establishes the largest total in RIT's history. The Fulbright scholars are distributed across all of RIT's colleges.

## **Diversity**

In 1998, the Diversity Task Force, chaired by Kit Mayberry, submitted its long-term Diversity Plan for campus-wide discussion and, then, administrative approval. The effort of this task force was the top priority for that year. The Plan was approved and implemented.

You will recall that, among other things, this Plan called for the creation of an office and position for the Assistant Provost for Diversity. Keith Jenkins is the first occupant of that position and has proceeded in exemplary fashion. This year, we are re-doubling the force with which we carry forward the commitments made in the 1998 Diversity Plan.

Specifically, after a year of study and external college visits, we shall establish this year the Center for Academic Success and Cultural Affairs. This Center will be a single facility, located in the Student Alumni Union, that will foster a comprehensive system of support for students of color. It will address and coordinate existing and proposed institutional efforts to increase the achievement, success and retention of underrepresented students of color. The Center is the result of a collaborative partnership among the divisions of Academic Affairs, Student Affairs, and Enrollment Management and Career Services, and the Commission for Promoting Pluralism.

On a related front, I alert you to a report which will be forthcoming this Fall quarter dealing with the recruitment and retention of underrepresented faculty and staff. The committee is co-chaired by the Chair of the Commission for Promoting Pluralism (Alfreda Brown), the Director of Human Resources (Patty Spinelli), and the Assistant Provost for Diversity (Keith Jenkins).

Finally, this will be the last year of Keith's term as Assistant Provost for Diversity. He will be transitioning back to his faculty position in the College of Liberal Arts this year. I want to take this moment to publicly thank Keith for his path-breaking contributions as the first person to hold this position. And while I am at it, I would like to congratulate him on his coming introduction to matrimony on October 6<sup>th</sup>.

## **Student Retention**

All divisions on campus addressed in a serious way the extra efforts they could undertake to improve student retention. Our goal is a 75% retention rate, with year-by-year improvements as we move toward that target. In particular, each college has a Provost-approved plan underway to take us toward this goal as quickly as possible.

I would be remiss – although probably humane – if I did not briefly mention the calendar decision. After intensive campus discussion, the decision was made to maintain the current calendar, issues of retention notwithstanding. While the faculty and staff were evenly divided (but most vehement on one side or the other), the voice of the students, with more than 80% preferring the current calendar, was pivotal in the decision.

This year, we shall attempt to gather, in a comprehensive fashion, more detailed information than we have had before on why students leave RIT. In this way, specific strategies can be developed to remove obstacles to retention. Executive Assistant to the President Barry Culhane will lead a three-part survey of the 1300 students who left RIT during the academic year 2000. His approach, based on the latest research in the field, will combine a postcard system of questions, telephone interviews involving a larger set of questions, and, finally, a still larger web-based targeted set of questions. An attempt will be made to contact all 1300 students.

Retention is a measurement concept. The key strategy to improve retention will be Support for Student Success (S<sup>3</sup>).

## **Honors Program**

We completed the first year of a pilot honors program for undergraduate students. Based on what we learned, this year marks the second year for the pilot program. Again, what we learn this year will shape the program for next year.

This year's pilot honors program is being implemented in three colleges: College of Science, Kate Gleason College of Engineering, and the B. Thomas Golisano College of

Computing and Information Sciences. Sixty-three freshmen will participate. Their average grade point average is 95 and their average SAT score is 1412.

I believe that the entire RIT student experience for all students is an “honors program”. However, the very best of this group – academic, leadership, and service attributes fully considered – deserve the opportunity for a “super honors program” if they so desire. Such a program will make certain that our very best students achieve their full potential while they are here. Our formally designated honor students will have special opportunities for international experience, undergraduate research, community service, co-op experience, select courses and programs, faculty mentoring, preferred housing, and a unique team-building experience.

A successful honors program will attract students who might not otherwise attend RIT, help retain some of the best students who might otherwise leave, raise the expectations and opportunities for all of our students, and challenge the faculty and staff to be even better than they already are.

I could not be more pleased with the challenge and opportunity such a program presents to RIT’s *First in Class* initiative, Strategic Plan, and growth and development in general.

### **Academic Affairs**

Much of what we have discussed so far falls under the Division of Academic Affairs, and represents a major portion of the Division’s efforts and accomplishments. The following achievements are also noteworthy:

- Initiation of a formal study abroad program available to all RIT students.
- Approval by the trustees of a set of criteria for initiating new doctoral programs.
- Development, for implementation this year, of new pedagogy for teaching calculus and university physics, along with early intervention strategies for all freshmen in math courses.
- Near finalization of proposals for a Ph.D. program in Microsystems Engineering and a Doctorate of Professional Studies.
- Working arrangements through our Center for Integrated Manufacturing Studies with more than 760 companies, performing nearly 420 projects, and conducting more than 270 training courses for over 4,700 industry participants.
- Graduating 170 Associate degree and 45 Bachelor of Science degree students in Hospitality & Service Management, and 13 Master of Science degree students in Packaging Science from our branch campus in Croatia.
- Establishing the Center for Electronics Manufacturing and Assembly and the National Technology Training Center under the auspices of the College of Applied Science and Technology.
- Submittal of \$9 million of externally funded proposals by the Kate Gleason College of Engineering.

- Development of a Bachelor of Science degree program in ASL and English Interpretation.
- Receipt of a very competitive three-year \$420,000 grant from the Corporation for National Service, Learn and Serve American program by the College of Liberal Arts with support from Student Affairs. Under this grant, RIT students will work for academic credit in a variety of courses across several colleges to support the community development efforts of Sector 10 in the City of Rochester.

## **Student Affairs**

The first-year effort under a three-year \$200,000 grant from the Bader Foundation directed at reducing alcohol and drug abuse was productive. Overall, alcohol and drug-related incidents declined. The greatest decreases were within two of our targeted groups: alcohol incidents involving freshmen declined 3% and incidents involving deaf/hard-of-hearing students declined 23%. With the support of the Bader grant, 100 students from the RIT Greek community received Training for Intervention Procedures, and 2000 first-year students participated in the social norming survey.

We learned a lot from the first year of our First Year Enrichment program. This year's program has been modified based on evaluations by last year's participants and will be stronger this year. The course is offered to all traditional-aged freshmen and addresses college transitional and adjustment issues, wellness, and high-risk behaviors, and sets goals for academic and personal success. Each student is assigned a performance coach who meets regularly with the student over the year. The Division of Student Affairs assumes responsibility for the success of this program and in this regard, coordinates closely with the colleges and other campus units. The success of the program depends not only on the Division of Student Affairs, but on the full commitment of the deans and faculty in each college.

In conjunction with the New IDEAS Project funded (\$400,000) by the Department of Justice, the Women's Center and the College of Liberal Arts completed a formative research study to measure attitudes and victimization by sexual assault, sexual harassment, relationship violence, and stalking. Students used data from this research to design a media campaign addressing violence against women.

## **Physical Facilities**

This past year continued the significant renovation and construction activity of the past several years. In particular, we saw the:

- Construction of six new (first-time ever) Greek Residences for 96 resident students and their non-resident Greek brothers and sisters (\$3.7 million).
- Construction of six new University Common Apartments for 192 students (\$5.4 million).
- Reconstruction of campus roads (\$4.7 million).



- Completed renovations of all dormitories (\$65 million).
- Opening of Crossroads Market and Copy Center as well as Alumni Relations Offices (\$3.8 million). The Crossroads operation currently serves 8,200 people per week.
- Construction of the Joseph F. and Helen C. Dyer Arts Center at NTID (\$2.5 million).

## **Development, Government, and Community Relations**

External fundraising and community-building activities continued at an ever accelerating rate:

- In the past 12 months, RIT received more than \$65 million in gifts and pledges. This rate of giving is more than twice the average rate of the previous three years and more than four times the average rate of the past six years.
- Federal funding of \$5.5 million was received to support research programs in remanufacturing and imaging/remote sensing.
- State funding of \$3.2 million was received to support research, instructional, and training programs in information technology, remanufacturing, publishing/printing, photonics, manufacturing outreach, and interpreter training.
- Grants and Contracts (some of which are listed above) increased by 79%. More than \$26 million was received in new awards from corporations and federal, state, and local government agencies.
- 46 technologies capable of licensing are now in the RIT portfolio, and two of these were licensed last year.
- The second Board of Trustees meeting to be held in Washington, D.C. was a huge success. More than 20 speakers from the U.S. Congress, U.S. Senate, and leaders of key government agencies participated, along with 31 trustees and members of the RIT administrative and governance groups.
- The newly formed President's Roundtable had its first meeting. Approximately 20 prominent friends and alumni of RIT will meet with me for a full day once a year to provide advice on issues of strategic importance to RIT. This year's topic was "How Should RIT Grow?"
- This fall, we shall hold the first of many comprehensive alumni reunions. Alumni from the 1940's through 1995 will converge on the campus this October during the Brick City Festival.
- Visits by key government officials included the three candidates for U.S. Senate (Mayor Giuliani, Representative Lazio, and then First Lady Clinton), Governor Pataki, Congresswoman Slaughter (for whom we named our CIMS building during a major campus celebration), Head of the State Senate Bruno, and Speaker of the House Silver.

- RIT hosted 32 campus events, which drew 12,200 visitors. These events included the Special Olympics, ACE Computer Camp, Physics Teachers Conference, and Catholic Leadership Days.
- The RIT United Way campaign received the award of excellence for the sixth year in a row.
- Approximately 10,000 national and local print, TV, and radio placements featuring RIT occurred.

## **THIS YEAR'S FOCUS**

### **Optimum Size**

At the November 2001 Board of Trustees meeting, I intend to present, for the Board's approval, a recommendation for an overall enrollment target for RIT over the next ten years. The recommendation will include, within an overall enrollment framework, targets for various subpopulations, such as undergraduate students, graduate students, specific college enrollments, international students, and diversity of the overall student body.

This policy recommendation on the optimum size of RIT going forward will provide a framework from which numerous strategic decisions will flow. The recommendation will consider issues of physical infrastructure for student housing, faculty offices, classrooms, laboratories, roadways, parking and the environment. The effect of size on tuition, student quality and support, student retention, the learning environment, size and quality of faculty and staff, the academic program portfolio, academic culture, and financial capability will weigh heavily in the ultimate decision.

This issue has been under discussion at various levels within the university for more than a year. Comprehensive data, analysis, and discussion can be found in:

- A.J. Simone, "Strategic Sizing of RIT", RIT Board of Trustees meeting, April 5 & 6, 2001.
- J. Miller, "Size/Quality Update", RIT Board of Trustees meeting, July 13 & 14, 2000.
- A.J. Simone, "Positioning RIT for the Future: Vision, Mission, Finance, and Size", RIT Board of Trustees meeting, April 13 & 14, 2000.

I will not repeat the presentations here. They will serve as the basis for a substantive on-campus discussion that will occur before the November Board of Trustees meeting. However the principles that will be considered in arriving at the decision include:

- RIT should admit and enroll students from a broader geographic area to increase geographic diversity and reduce our reliance on the U.S. Northeast market. Currently, 50% of RIT's freshman students come from outside of New York State.
- RIT should become more selective in undergraduate admission to continue to improve the university's quality image, and to admit those most likely to succeed academically.

- RIT's overall enrollment should reflect the goals and capabilities of each of the university's colleges.
- RIT's program portfolio should remain diverse to minimize the threats associated with changing student interest patterns in the market.
- RIT should continue to develop new academic programs to meet future career needs and respond to student interests.
- RIT should admit and enroll more international students to extend the university's global reputation and to increase student diversity and quality.
- RIT should admit and enroll more students from underrepresented populations, including AALANA students and women in science and technology fields, to help establish RIT as a "university of choice" for employers seeking these graduates.
- Enrollment increases should build on existing strengths.
- Enrollment increases should increase the number of full-time students; especially graduate full-time students, while at the same time increasing distance learning credit-hours significantly for non-campus-based populations where there is a high demand for our particular programs.
- RIT should develop a larger employer base (currently, 2,000 companies hire students and 1,300 companies employ co-op students) that includes more start-up companies.
- RIT should continue to be a world model in co-op education and career services.
- Net tuition revenue (gross tuition minus financial aid) has to continue to be extremely well managed.
- RIT must continue to be responsive to the needs of business and industry.
- RIT must position itself for resilience in times of rapid and extreme change

Based on my assessment at the moment, my recommendation is leaning toward the following increases from Fall 2000 enrollments:

- At the undergraduate level, head count enrollment would increase by 2,000 (16%), FTE enrollment by 1,800 (18%), and full-time campus-based students by 1,700 (19%).
- At the graduate level, head count enrollment would increase by 700 (31%), FTE enrollment by 600 (45%), and full-time enrollment by 500 (60%).
- The total enrollment increase will occur over ten years, with most of the growth in the first five years.

## A Unique Institution

My thinking over the past year and a half about the optimum size question has brought to the fore the most important and relevant consideration of all:

What is RIT?

What should it be?

What can it be?

My conclusion is that RIT has been a nontraditional university since its inception. It has always been a little – sometimes a lot – different from most universities. As we follow the logical dictates of our Strategic Plan and transcend into our *First in Class* initiative, it becomes clearer to me that RIT at this time has the opportunity to stand alone among the family of universities and be something none of them can be – at least right now. I believe the uniqueness is highly desirable and that its achievement will secure the success of RIT far into the future.

What is the “unique” RIT that I am talking about? Let me enumerate some of the attributes now. Hopefully, many of you here today will concur and help refine and add to them. These attributes include:

- A university which is large enough to have critical mass but small enough for faculty and staff to know one another and work together collaboratively across departmental lines.
- A *teaching* university that does significant *applied* research in targeted areas of strength and industry/government need. To fully comprehend RIT’s special niche, we need to describe “teaching” and “research” universities.
  - A teaching university does not have the graduate programs, faculty, and facilities to, and objective of, performing significant research. A research university says that teaching and research have equal priority but then, typically, reduces support to undergraduate education in favor of graduate education and sacrifices teaching to the altar of research. Evidence of this is their typically large size undergraduate classes, a predominance of undergraduate teachers who are Ph.D. candidates, and the inaccessibility of tenure track faculty – especially the best ones – to undergraduate students. At a research university, every (or almost every) academic department offers a Ph.D. program, and it is the financial requirements of this characteristic that brings about the negative consequences described above.
  - At RIT, every department and faculty member will demonstrate, on a continuing basis, scholarship. Scholarship is defined as each faculty member being absolutely up-to-date and on the cutting edge of developments in his/her field. Certain programs, in addition, will be expected to actually advance the frontier of knowledge in their fields through research. The emphasis will be on applied – for reasons noted later – as opposed to basic research. RIT’s applied research will set the standard and compete with the best research universities in these targeted areas. A small number of select Ph.D. programs will be established as necessary to support the targeted areas.

- At the same time, teaching and undergraduate programs will never be denigrated in favor of research and graduate programs. Every faculty member will be expected to teach and engage undergraduate students, and to be an above average teacher in both graduate and undergraduate courses. The reward system will reflect this commitment. Outstanding teaching and faculty/student interaction will be a hallmark of RIT.
- A university that is student-centered. Student success, especially undergraduate student success, will drive decisions in the academic, extracurricular, and student support areas.
- A university which has a curriculum which is rich, varied, innovative, and challenging; equipment and facilities – both academic and extracurricular – which are state-of-the-art; and a student/faculty ratio which remains low.
- A university in which active and productive partnerships with industry and government prevail, building upon our history, leadership role in cooperative education, and our *First in Class* initiative. Our curriculum development, scholarship, and applied research will be shaped in large part by these partnerships.
- A university that recognizes that strength comes from racial and gender diversity, and does something about it.
- A university that is national and international in scope and reach, but one that never forgets that its roots are in its local community. Just as RIT's success contributes to Rochester's success, a prosperous and attractive Rochester will contribute to RIT's success. RIT will always have a strong commitment to working in and with the local community. The "R" part of "RIT" means something.

Is there another university with all of these attributes? I think not. Is there another university, even with some of these attributes, which is capable of combining them with the level of synergy that is possible for RIT? I think not.

RIT today is different from most universities, as it always has been. Can it be unique in the way described above? Can it be unique within a relatively short time frame? The answers to these questions are up to us. . I believe that all of us working together can make the answers "yes".

## **CONCLUSION**

This year will see continued and significant progress in the development of our capital campaign; student retention efforts; diversity; honors program; next one or two doctoral programs; and mobile, wireless computing and devices, including E-Business applications.

Most importantly, *we will make the size decision and discuss our "uniqueness"*.

It is, as always, a hefty agenda.

I want to take this opportunity to express appreciation to:

- My administrative team (direct reports) who carry on their responsibilities with such energy and creativity. Each of them works independently (and collaboratively as required) with the highest standards of excellence toward agreed upon university goals. They “run the show”, and I could not be more pleased or proud.
- The faculty, staff, and student governance groups, which so often have kept me from going astray and have so frequently come up with solutions to “sticky” problems.
- The trustees, especially Chairman Bill Buckingham, who consistently push and challenge me, but always support what is in the best interests of RIT.

Thank you all. Let’s have another great year.