

# **CONTINUING ACHIEVEMENT AND CHALLENGING OPPORTUNITY**

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**Community Address**

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## **WELCOME**

Good Morning and welcome to the academic year 2003-2004. This year, approximately 2800 faculty and staff will carry our university forward. New faculty and staff number approximately 100. Will all the new faculty and staff please rise so we can give you an RIT round of applause? Thank you for joining us and may your first year at RIT be satisfying and productive.

In what follows, I shall first provide a few snapshots of the past year. I shall then present some of the major challenges and opportunities that await us.

## **SOME SNAPSHOTS**

### **Ritz Sports Zone Café and ESPN Activity Center**

Under the leadership of Vice President Jim Watters, RIT introduced the first university ESPN sports zone. Every Saturday morning, thirty minutes of RIT sports are presented on the Time Warner/ESPN2 channel, under the production, direction, and reporting of RIT students. Local and national celebrities are interviewed on a regular basis. Please observe the following video.

### **Enrollment**

RIT continues to be in the favorable position of increasing quality and diversity of programs and student body while continuing to grow. Recognizing that increased efforts to improve retention and that record setting classes from prior years set the stage for continued growth, we as an institution are well positioned overall for achieving future enrollment targets.

Since RIT completed its Strategic Plan in 1994, we have grown dramatically. By this Fall, headcount enrollment will have increased by 25% and full-time equivalency enrollment by 40%. Looking ahead to the year 2010, our Optimal Size Plan calls for additional 12% growth to 17,000 headcount and 13,750 full-time equivalent students.

Today, RIT is a major player in higher education in the United States. Among private universities, we rank 20<sup>th</sup> in total enrollment; we rank 8<sup>th</sup> in full-time undergraduate enrollment; and we rank 4<sup>th</sup> in student participation and placements in co-op positions per year.

While our enrollment will continue to grow this fall, our rate of growth is less than has been true in the recent past. Part of this is planned. Some of this, however, is influenced by factors outside of our control, including world political and economic forces, competitive factors among institutions vying for our increasingly well-qualified admitted students, and changing student career interests based largely on current workforce opportunities and changing government policies, especially those related to foreign students seeking opportunities to study in the U.S.

Given our overall size strategy, let me report several important enrollment metrics:

- RIT's total enrollment will increase to approximately 15,450, up from 15,312 last fall. We expect RIT's FTE to reach an all-time high exceeding 12,420.
- Applications for freshman admission totaled approximately 8,500 with the quality of applicants, admittees, and incoming students the highest ever. Transfer applicants exceeded 2,800.
- While RIT's Freshman Class will number approximately 2,025, slightly less than projected, the transfer class will exceed 880, slightly more than projected.
- This year's freshman class is the best qualified in RIT's history, with SAT's rising from 1210 to 1221, with a mean GPA of 89.2, and with the middle 50% of SAT scores ranging from 1140 to 1310. Like the past two years, approximately 50% of freshmen come from outside of New York State.
- The Freshman Class contains 29 students who are National Merit, National Achievement, or National Hispanic Scholars, up from 25 last year.
- The Honors Program will welcome 84 new freshmen to the RIT honors community.
- RIT's overall AALANA population will continue to grow. 8% of the freshman, 10% of the transfers, and 9% of the entering graduate students are AALANA. Like the Freshman Class overall, this year's AALANA population is the best-qualified AALANA cohort in RIT's history.
- While we cannot confirm international enrollments at this date, due to the uncertainties about visa approval rates for admitted undergraduate and graduate students, I can say with pride that interest from international students seeking to enter RIT continues to grow. We do expect the total international population to remain similar to last year's number of 1,351 despite increasing uncertainties created by the world political situation and the increasingly rigid visa approval process.
- In May 2003, 235 hospitality management students graduated from the American College of Management and Technology (ACMT), RIT's branch campus in Croatia. The following video describes this event in ways that words alone can never do.

Looking to the future, we need to collectively and individually ensure that we continue to strive to maximize the desirability of RIT for student markets. Doing this will ensure enrollment targets can be met, quality will be improved, and diversity will thrive.

## **Diversity**

The momentum established two years ago continued over the past year:

- For the second year in a row, new AALANA faculty exceeded 30% of all new faculty hires, drawing from a national pool of only 6%.
- The national magazine *Hispanic Outlook in Higher Education* featured the RIT campus on the cover of its April issue. Its lead article was “RIT: Determined Pursuit of Diversity”.
- RIT signed a sister university agreement with Fisk University, one of the leading Historically Black Universities. Professor and Special Assistant to the Provost Bob Manning will be spending the first quarter of this year at Fisk teaching and conducting research. Faculty and student collaborative projects in areas of comparative strength will begin this year.
- Last year’s Minett Professor, Clay Osbourne (Vice President of Bausch and Lomb), established an “Alumni” group of previous Minett Professors who will continue to support RIT in areas of diversity.
- Under the leadership of Eulas Boyd, Assistant Provost for Diversity, three faculty and staff task forces completed their work on faculty recruiting, retention, and environment, respectively. Some of their recommendations are being carried out now and others will be under the further study of an implementation task force that I will appoint and chair this year.
- Under the leadership of Alfreda Brown, Chairperson of the Commission for Promoting Pluralism, a comprehensive survey, employing statistical and focus group techniques, of the campus climate for diversity was conducted by the Center for Governmental Research. Some of the results will be the basis of much of the work of the implementation task force just described. A major issue for me with the overall results is the degree to which the campus should feel satisfied with the current state as depicted by the survey. A case can be made that matters are fairly well in hand, given the complexity of the issues involved. A case also can be made that a lot of work needs to be done on a number of critical dimensions. I tend to be in the second camp, but will need to rely heavily on the implementation task force as we attempt to better understand the RIT campus climate for diversity, and follow-up with appropriate action.

## **Academic Programs**

Academic program development this past year includes:

- The new Ph.D. program in Microsystems. Thirteen students entered the program in Fall 2002, and twelve new students are expected this Fall.

- A Master of Science degree program in Telecommunications Engineering Technology.
- Bachelor's degree programs in Applied Networking and Systems Administration and in Visual Media.
- Bachelor's and Master's degree programs in Bioinformatics, Chemistry/Material Science, and Microelectronic Engineering/Materials Science.
- Associate degree programs (NTID) in Business and in Applied Computer Technology.

Our students continue to win national recognition. For example, freshman Kimberly Minor of our School of Film and Animation won the gold medal in the animation category of the Student Academy Awards in Los Angeles for her film, "Perpetual Motion". I know you will enjoy and appreciate the following video.

### **Research, Grants, and Contracts**

The past year saw a 20% increase in the number of proposals written, 46% more proposals submitted, 6% increase in the total value of grants and contracts, and 33% increase in the number of proposals funded. One hundred eighty-five faculty and staff wrote 1004 proposals, a record. More than \$31 million was awarded, 51% for research projects, 14% for training, 10% for outreach, 10% for equipment and facilities, 6% for student support, 6% for service, and 2% for curriculum development. RIT's six ***First in Class*** program areas accounted for 62% of the totals dollars awarded.

To give a flavor of some of the exciting externally funded activities going on across a broad range of the campus, I have selected a few projects:

- Susan Foster (Educational and Career Research, NTID) is developing, testing, and disseminating materials that will enable postsecondary faculty to modify their teaching behavior in order to remove barriers to access for deaf and hard-of-hearing students (U.S. Department of Education).
- Diane Hope (Communication Department, William A. Kern Professor in Communication, College of Liberal Arts), Paul Petersen (Electrical Engineering, Gleason College of Engineering), and Wade Robison (Philosophy, College of Liberal Arts) are developing an ethics curriculum as part of the National Science Foundation's Nanotechnology Undergraduate Education program.
- Satish Kandlikar (Mechanical Engineering, Gleason College of Engineering) continues his work on micro channel research (Sematech) and was designated an IBM Fellow.

- Santosh Kurinec (Chair, Microelectronics, Gleason College of Engineering) is supervising undergraduate students this summer who are working on research projects that include developing a new process for silicon-based tunnel diodes and fabricating computer chips (National Science Foundation).
- Elizabeth Lawley and Tona Henderson ( Information Technology, Golisano College of Computing and Information Sciences) are studying attrition and factors that contribute to women students persisting in their study of information technology (National Science Foundation).
- Jeff Pelz (Center for Imaging Science, College of Science) is studying how people search cluttered scenes for specific items or targets (U.S. Department of Defense) and eye-target search patterns (U.S. Naval Research Laboratory).
- S. Manian Ramkumar (Russell P. McCarthy Endowed Professorship, Center for Integrated Electronics Manufacturing, College of Applied Science & Technology) is studying competency gaps in the optoelectronics industry (Society of Manufacturing Engineers Education Foundation for the Consortium for Optoelectronics Packaging Education).
- Bruce Smith (Microelectronics, Associate Dean, Gleason College of Engineering) received several awards to support his research in microlithography (Sematech and the Semiconductor Research Corporation).
- James Winebrake (Chair, Public Policy, College of Liberal Arts) is partnering RIT students and faculty with national parks to assist in energy efficiency, renewable energy, and resource conservation (National Parks Service).
- Associate Provost and CIMS Director Nabil Nasr continues his path-breaking work in remanufacturing and resource recovery, and Professor John Schott and his colleagues in the Center for Imaging Science continue their outstanding research in remote sensing.

## **Student Life**

I am happy to report that, under the charismatic leadership of Vice President Mary-Beth Cooper, student life at RIT is very much alive. The most recent evidence of this was revealed one week ago at the Liberty Hill picnic (softball, soccer, and frisbees) for 250 Orientation Assistants and Resident Hall Advisors. It took the form of Mary-Beth and me joining more than 50 students, at the insistence of the students, in the Liberty Hill pool by way of unexpectedly jumping off the diving board while fully clothed.

Returning to a more serious note, the Bader Grant is making a difference:

- Alcohol incidents among freshmen dropped 2% from the previous year. Incidents among freshmen have dropped 10% since the launch of grant activity in May 2000.

- Alcohol incidents among all students dropped 4% from the previous year. Incidents have dropped 8% since 2000.
- Alcohol incidents involving deaf/hard-of-hearing students dropped 3.5% from the previous year. Incidents have dropped 31% since 2000.

Under the leadership of Vice President Cooper and Provost Stan McKenzie, faculty, staff, and students designed and implemented a week-long new student orientation program. The program provides increased opportunities for class and college identity, student-to-faculty interaction, community building, and enriched social and educational programs.

### **The Sentinel**

Professor Albert Paley's greatest work to date, the 70 foot, 110 ton Sentinel, was completed this summer and will be dedicated on October 2, with the full Rochester Philharmonic Orchestra performing a dedication concert. The sculpture reflects RIT's essence: the blending of art and technology in a form reflecting grace and strength, as well as structure and imagination. We expect this work to become a symbol of the tradition and spirit that define RIT for alumni and future generations of students.

### **Facilities and Campus Environment**

We continue to enhance outdoor space on campus with benches, gardens, sculptures, reflecting pools, and attractive walking surfaces. The Infinity Plaza outside the Engineering and Science buildings was finalized this year and the Kodak Plaza enclosed by the Liberal Arts, Imaging Arts and Sciences, and Eastman buildings will be completed this fall, along with the Sentinel Plaza. You will find these latter two plazas particularly welcoming, attractive, and unique.

In this coming year, you will see \$6.8 million of the previous NYSTAR grant and a major portion of the \$6 million Gleason Foundation grant applied to facilities expansion of the Engineering building, ground breaking for the approximately \$12 million Center for Biomedical Education and Training (\$8 million coming from the State), and the completion of the Gordon Field House and an artificial turf athletics field. Work will also begin in the spring for the Senior Living Community being constructed on the site of the former Racquet Club Apartments. Within the next several weeks, a developer will be selected for College Town. Next summer, we expect Jefferson Road in front of the RIT entrance to be expanded and improved. This will mean that, again next summer, construction for a new grand center entrance to the campus will be initiated. The current entrance and exit from and to Jefferson Road will be grassed over.

It is important to note that much of the funding for these construction projects comes from external sources such as the Federal and State governments, private individuals, business corporations, foundations, and third party developers (we lease the land and the third party invests in the development – e.g., Christa Construction is the developer for the Senior Living Housing). When we use RIT funding in whole or in part, it is one-time (not on-going) funding



which has already been put aside for that purpose or for which we issue bonds (i.e., borrow). This funding (our capital budget) is separate from our \$462 million annual operating budget. The operating budget does include funding to maintain and operate these projects and (when necessary) service the debt.

A campus-wide committee of faculty, staff, and students consults with the Office of the Vice President of Finance and Administration on these projects and the campus development as a whole, particularly with respect to architecture, location, and function.

## **Human Resources**

To clarify the role of the Student Ombudsperson, the name of the office has been changed from “Office of the Student Ombudsperson” to “Student Office for Problem Resolution”. Professor Lee Twyman, formerly the Chairperson of NTID Counseling Services, has been appointed our next Ombudsperson. Lee brings a breadth of relevant experience, knowledge of the campus, and dedicated focus to this position. I know she will do well. I want to thank, once again, Professor Laura Tubbs for her conscientious commitment to the Office over the past six years.

Vice President for NTID Bob Davila will be retiring this year. Vice President Jim Miller has been chairing a hard-working search committee over the past year to find Bob’s replacement. Four outstanding finalists will be meeting the campus as a whole early this fall, with a decision to follow soon after.

Bob Davila has provided outstanding leadership of NTID over his seven years at the helm. NTID has grown and developed in every dimension as a result of his energy, creativity, and tireless effort. He has been a true friend and colleague and I will miss our regular interaction and collaboration. In my view, there is only “one” Bob Davila. His life story – another outstanding example of the “American Dream” – needs to be told. Accordingly, I have commissioned a writing and publication of his biography. The authors are Jim DeCaro, Director, PEN International, NTID; Professor Harry Lang, Senior Research Associate, NTID; Dr. Oscar Cohen, Executive Director of the Ralph Lauren Foundation in NYC, Past Superintendent of the Lexington School for the Deaf in NYC (recently retired); and Dr. Joseph Fischgrund, Superintendent, Pennsylvania School for the Deaf in Philadelphia.

Escalating costs of health care benefits and the associated FASB 106 set aside for current and future retirees are eroding the ability of the endowment to contribute to the operating budget. The financial, humane, competitive, and legal aspects of our current policy are being intensively reviewed by a committee representing staff, faculty, and retirees working in collaboration with our Human Resources leadership. We shall have a set of recommendations this fall, which will ensure both (1) the delivery of sound health care services for RIT employees and retirees and (2) a long term, fiscally prudent plan.

## **Capital Campaign**

RIT's Capital Campaign is in full swing. Under Vice President Laurel Price Jones' leadership, 1,200 face-to-face visits and more than 400 solicitations have been made by the fundraising staff. Campaign kick-off events occurred in seven cities, and 310 events were planned and executed. Nine Liberty Hill cultivation dinners were held. Fifteen Campaign committees staffed by more than 250 volunteers (including 45 trustees) are actively engaged. Approximately 10,000 alumni, parents, faculty, staff, guests, and students have attended development programs. The key gift this year was a \$6 million grant by the Gleason Foundation to the Kate Gleason College of Engineering to support, in large part, the College's interdisciplinary curriculum development and research at the bachelor's, master's, and doctoral levels.

To date, \$178,100,000 has been raised towards our campaign goal of \$300 million. A successful Capital Campaign will provide the difference at the margin for the success of RIT's future. I ask each of you here today to support the Campaign in whatever way you can, and to engage your colleagues and friends on its behalf whenever possible.

## **Four Presidents' Award**

Through the generosity of an endowed gift from Vice President Emeritus Al Davis, the Four Presidents' Award was established. Since each of the past (and current) four presidents (Mark Ellingson, Paul Miller, Richard Rose, and Al Simone) have all contributed significant service to the community, and since Al Davis has worked closely with all four, the award is made in his honor. It will go to the RIT faculty or staff member who is judged, each year, to have made the greatest contribution to the community-at-large. The awardee designates a cash award to the community organization(s) of his/her choice. This first year's recipient is Fred Smith, Secretary to the Institute and Assistant to the President. Al Davis, Paul Miller, Rich Rose, and I participated in the ceremony.

## **Government and Community Relations**

RIT submitted a proposal to hold one of the 2004 Presidential Debates in the Gordon Field House. Between two and four debates will be held. We made the first cut and have had a site visit. Although we did not have a facility to show, our virtual reality video presentation of the upcoming field house was very well received. A decision will be made in Fall 2003 (fourteen sites are being considered). Debbie Stendardi is creatively and vigorously spearheading our effort.

Professor Ann Howard is leading a remarkable conference on October 2-5, 2003 at the RIT Inn and Conference Center. The conference, "When the Grass Takes Root: Building Partnerships Between Urban America and Higher Education", will explore issues of power, the will to change, and the dynamics of university-community partnerships. Vehicles for this

exploration will include an interactive theater production, community video-tours, and interactive workshops.

The conference is a partnership between RIT and the North East Neighborhood Alliance (NENA), a resident-driven organization dedicated to the revitalization of three neighborhoods in northeast Rochester. RIT and NENA are in the third year of a three-year, several hundred thousand dollar project, “Students Working with Neighbors Building Neighborhoods”, which is funded by the Corporation for National and Community Service under their Learn and Serve America program.

The Liberty Hill Breakfast Series, under the leadership of Executive Assistant to the President Barry Culhane, broke the 200 barrier this year. Since 1992, 215 breakfasts involving almost 8,000 guests have been hosted at Liberty Hill.

Turning to federal partnerships, Congressman Jim Walsh and Amo Houghton have been successful in placing \$1.5 million in the House Budget Bill to support our program in Integrated Sensing Systems. Senator Hillary Clinton hosted at RIT a Roundtable on Fuel Cells, discussing strategies to promote economic development in this region utilizing this technology. RIT is collaborating – through our ***First in Class*** initiative, CIMS, and the Colleges of Science and Engineering – with the Greater Rochester Enterprise, industry, government, and other universities to provide the research and educational infrastructure to support what Senator Clinton coined “The Rochester Project” (akin to the “Manhattan Project” of World War II).

## **Celebrations**

This year our celebrations included:

- Dedication of the Golisano College of Computing and Information Sciences
- Dedication of the Heidelberg Sunday Webb Press facility
- Groundbreaking for the Gordon Field House and Activities Center
- The celebration of the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the School of Photography (Kodak CEO Dan Carp was the keynoter)
- Convocation with Senator Chuck Schumer as the speaker and a special video welcome from the “dean” of broadcasting anchors, Dan Rather
- The celebration of the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the RIT Institute of Fellows.

Planning is well underway, under the leadership of Debbie Stendardi and Fred Smith, to celebrate RIT’s 175<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2004.

## **Communications**

This past year saw:

- The development of a DVD featuring RIT people and programs, in order to facilitate communication with external constituents.
- The development of a computer portal featuring questions and answers with the RIT President to facilitate communication with internal constituents, especially students.
- The winning of awards for the RIT *University Magazine* and *News and Events* from the Public Relations Society of America (Rochester Chapter) and the Council for Advancement and Support of Education (CASE). In particular, I recommend the just completed (Fall 2003) issue of *University Magazine* to you; review, especially, the middle section which presents a campus portrait.
- In a partnership among Student Affairs, Information and Technology Services, Government and Community Relations, and the Chief Communications Officer, a comprehensive and customizable electronic calendar system has been designed to increase awareness of campus events and activities enhancing internal and external communications.

## **Electronic Community**

Under the leadership of CIO Diane Barbour, RIT is building a state-of-the-art electronic network (wired and wireless). Faculty and students easily communicate and collaborate online. A significant amount of teaching is done online both on campus and around the world. Payments to student accounts are made without leaving home. Faculty advise students and students receive grades electronically. A central data repository (data warehouse) of RIT information enhances administrative analysis and decision-making.

## **CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES**

RIT had another strong year. It has come a long way. Nonetheless, there is much more we can do. There are significant challenges, but each challenge is an opportunity. We shall discuss some of these challenges and opportunities now.

### **Relationships Among Teaching, Research, and *First in Class***

In last year's Opening Day Address and in my paper "Teaching, Scholarship, and Service at RIT: Expectations and Enablers" (April 15, 2002), I discussed teaching and scholarship at RIT. I shall not repeat those discussions now. Suffice it to say that RIT is, always has been, and will continue to be a teaching university.

This means that as we move ahead and innovate, we will remain a teaching university, albeit one which constantly changes its shape, form, and substance. Accordingly, no one is more important than our students, nothing we do is more important than solid teaching, and no one is more acknowledged or recognized than the outstanding teacher. The research, scholarship, community and professional service and partnerships, and career focus in which we engage must all complement and enrich the teaching/learning function in order to be justified.

In particular, faculty members who expend a lot of their energy as researchers and government/industry partners are expected to fully meet this teaching goal. In like fashion, faculty members who pride themselves on their teaching must bring scholarship and the other attributes just listed to their curriculum development and teaching.

The above is really by way of review and emphasis. You have heard me on this before. I would like, next, to clarify the relationship between research and *First in Class*.

We have provided significant up-front funding to support our *First in Class* (FIC) initiative under the leadership of Associate Provost for Outreach Programs Don Boyd. Through FIC, we have invested in six academic areas.

The FIC strategy is to provide seed money funding in those areas in which RIT has or can build applied research competence capable of attracting significant external funding from the Federal and State governments, from industry, and from foundations. FIC is a partnership between RIT and industry/government in which RIT helps these organizations solve their problems and meet their goals, while RIT benefits from faculty, student, scholarship, equipment, and facilities support for faculty research and curriculum development.

FIC will invest only in those areas in which a solid plan can be developed which demonstrates a payback of the seed funding within three years as a result of external funding of the program. With the payback, RIT can continue to invest, on a revolving fund basis, in other FIC areas as they emerge.

It is important for the campus to note that RIT can invest in subsidized research (hard dollars and teaching load reductions) on a very limited basis. As noted above, our mantra is that of a “teaching university” and not a “research university”. We will not compromise our teaching in favor of research or our undergraduate program in favor of the graduate program. Our undergraduates will continue to be taught primarily by full-time faculty and not teaching assistants, and our undergraduate classes will remain small in general. FIC is our strategy for maintaining our commitment to undergraduate teaching while simultaneously enriching that teaching through the applied research support that ensues from our externally funded partnerships.

I would also like to note that FIC provides an extremely valuable vehicle for publication in professional and scholarly journals. FIC projects identify critical research topics, bring into play significant external collaborators, and provide a knowledge base and laboratory and student support that significantly facilitate the faculty member’s advancement of knowledge and scholarly publication.

## Student Retention

Think of a student's career at RIT as a trip on the thruway. Too often, that trip is too long, too bumpy, and occasionally too lonely:

- Long: many of our academic programs at RIT are unusually long because of the combination of many required courses, credit hours far in excess of state regulations, and heavy co-op requirements. Some of our programs require more than 17 quarters for graduation – and that's for students who don't miss a step because of course unavailability, financial exigencies, family emergencies, or a grade of F or W. According to our most recent data, not one of our five-year, mandatory co-op undergraduate programs graduated from their program more than 38% of their freshmen at the end of five years.

No wonder that so many students encountering impediments or road blocks in their trip through RIT give up and take another route – whether those roadblocks come in the form of unavailable classes, faulty placement in classes, or poor performance.

This year, I am asking the Provost and the Deans to initiate a review of all program curricula, with an eye to making them more streamlined, flexible, and accessible to students. Our peer institutions are well ahead of us in this regard, with curricula that allow students to pursue minors, co-ops, and even double majors and still graduate within four years.

- Bumpy: for years, we've been aware that RIT students encounter unnecessary frustrations in managing their college careers: mediocre housing conditions (now improved), sometimes unfriendly service, and logistical red tape. We have made considerable progress ameliorating these weaknesses; I believe more and more students are receiving constructive, friendly service and support. But the letters I receive from students and parents tell me there is still room for improvement.
- Lonely: we know students succeed at RIT if they connect to the community, including enjoying positive relationships with faculty outside of the classroom. We have made some progress with faculty advising – a key way to initiate such relationships – and will continue emphasizing its role as a supplemental teaching activity.

In summary, we must continue to work on connecting with students and smoothing their road as we now apply ourselves to ensuring their route is direct and expeditious. This means, among other approaches, that we must thoroughly study, **change**, and **improve**:

- Time-to-completion of a degree
- Academic advising (it is too uneven across the campus)
- Curriculum flexibility

We must also fully implement demand-based scheduling.

Why have I brought this topic up over the past several years and why do I emphasize it now? Because, on average, only 60% of RIT students graduate over a seven-year period. We are failing our students, their parents and supporters, and ourselves with such a low graduation rate. The answer is not the caliber of our study body – it compares favorably with peer universities, which have significantly higher graduation rates. We need to look at our policies, curriculum requirements, organizational structure, individual and departmental/divisional roles and responsibilities, and our attitude towards and commitment to students.

Last year's climate survey reported that 20% of our students believe the campus is not friendly, 24% were neutral, and only 56% thought the campus was friendly. The same survey reported that 42% of the students felt little or no sense of community. Only 21% indicated a great sense of community. We must listen to our students and we must change in appropriate ways.

Vice President Cooper is going to allocate up to \$20,000 from the Tiger Spirit Fund this year on interactive grants which promote out-of-class learning and community building activities among faculty, staff, and students. Please take up Dr. Cooper on this invitation to more fully engage our students.

To provide impetus to effective retention efforts, this past year I appointed a high-level team to address this issue. The retention team is composed of:

- Barry Culhane, Executive Assistant to the President, Co-Chair
- Kit Mayberry, Associate Provost for Academic Affairs, Co-Chair
- Eulas Boyd, Assistant Provost for Diversity
- Mary-Beth Cooper, Vice President for Student Affairs
- Ian Gatley, Dean, College of Science
- Jim Miller, Vice President for Enrollment Management and Career Services
- Jim Watters, Vice President for Finance and Administration

The team has been working hard and meeting regularly. It has ideas and recommendations for the campus to consider. Once its report is finalized, it will meet with the deans, faculty, students, and staff to develop appropriate action steps. These actions will undoubtedly involve major changes in what we do and how we do it, and will range from curriculum requirements to administrative procedures. I will not be surprised to encounter angst from various sectors of the campus as we go through this process. I am counting on the retention team listed above to drive the process.

We have been talking about student retention for a number of years. We appointed a constituency-based task force a few years ago which worked for a year and made a set of recommendations. We implemented some of those recommendations. We still have the problem.

We can never become a great university with our current retention rate. For example, in the last *U.S. News and World Report* of college ranking, RIT was rated second in academic

reputation but seventh overall, in significant measure because of our low graduation rate. Retention needs to be increased so that:

- We can meet our commitment to students and parents that if the students work hard, they will graduate.
- In the uncertain years ahead, our enrollment of talented students will be large enough for RIT to be financially viable.
- The world can benefit from the skills, knowledge, ideas, and work ethic of as many RIT graduates as possible.

## **Diversity**

RIT has made significant progress in achieving a more diverse campus over the past two years. Last year's accomplishments and activities already have been cited. Getting to where we want and need to be, however, is not an episodic or short-term proposition. As Eulas Boyd is wont to say, it is a journey – a long and arduous one.

Last year, I distributed to the campus community three papers:

- “Is Affirmative Action in University Admissions Legal, Effective, and Just?”
- “An Inclusive America” (Commencement Address)
- “Racial and Ethnic Diversity Enriches Campus Experience” (*Democrat and Chronicle* Speaking Out Piece)

These papers, together with my remarks made in my previous Opening Day Addresses, tell you where I stand on this vital topic. We shall continue our concerted effort in this arena this year, especially through the implementation task force referred to earlier.

## **Alumni Development**

Current students are “alumni in training”. It follows that our alumni are students who have already graduated. As far as I am concerned, a freshman who stays the course and graduates is an integral part of the RIT family for life. How have we treated RIT's “family members”? Not very well, I am afraid. In return, the pride, sense of tradition, and loyalty that many alumni have for RIT is significantly less than it is for alumni of our peer universities.

This is not to say that we do not have tremendously loyal, active, appreciative, and supportive alumni. Clearly we do. Last year alone, the alumni relations and development team supported hundreds of alumni events – on campus and across the country. More than 12,000 alumni attended these events.

However, when we look at alums who participate by giving to the RIT annual fund, we lag significantly behind our peers. The national average for private higher education is 21.5%. The very best universities, in terms of alumni giving, have rates of approximately 50%; this



includes schools like Princeton. In our comparison group, the leaders are Cornell at 27% and MIT at 25%. RIT's alumni gave last year at the rate of 11.3%.

The good news is that while the national average has declined an average of two percentage points in recent years, RIT's participation rate has grown from 7.8% to 11.3% - an increase of 3.5 percentage points. This is a trend we must maintain.

Why have we fared so poorly? It is not hard to understand. Eleven years ago, our alumni development program was non-existent. I recognized this immediately. However, because of other on-campus priorities, little attention and funding (more than before but less than needed) were devoted to alumni development for the first few years of my tenure at RIT. Several years ago, support for alumni development was enhanced. Under the aggressive leadership of Executive Director of Alumni Relations Kelly Redder, alumni development has progressed significantly. For example, we now have:

- An increasingly active and visible Alumni Network Board of Directors
- 20 alumni chapters from coast-to-coast
- 270 alumni events held across the country last year

Despite the recent progress, we are far from where we need to be. We cannot be a "great" university with our current level of alumni participation, for the following reasons:

- We need to fulfill our obligation to students who graduate from RIT to stay in contact with and support them over their lives and careers.
- Alumni are a rich resource for advice on curriculum development, job and co-op placements, research support, networking and creation of business and foundation entrées, and corporate and individual financial support.
- Higher education "rating" organizations are highly influenced by alumni participation.
- If the caliber of our educational efforts on behalf of our students is what we think it is and what it should be, this should be reflected in alumni participation. We need to provide the opportunity for this to happen.

Our incremental approach over the last several years is producing improved but not the desired results. Accordingly, I am prepared to increase support for alumni development. I shall appoint a campus-wide task force, to be chaired by Vice President for Development and Alumni Relations Laurel Price Jones, to develop a proposal to achieve the goal of alumni participation comparable to the best universities. The task force will review and assess our current alumni organization and budget allocation for efficiency and effectiveness, and move on from there to where we need to be organizationally and in terms of budget. Since there is not the budget flexibility we have enjoyed in recent years, recommendations for increased budget will be scrutinized very carefully.

## **Budget Pressure**

Our operating budget will have less flexibility and more pressure this year than in recent years. Several factors account for this, including:

- Less-than-anticipated tuition revenue. While FTE enrollment is at an all-time high, it appears at this time that it will be approximately 120 less than we anticipated and budgeted for in Spring 2003.
- Reduced endowment income. Three consecutive years of modest to negative investment returns, coupled with the earmarking of a significant portion of the endowment to finance the future liability of health care for current employees and current and future retirees, will result in less endowment income.

While we will continue our record of balanced annual operating budgets and while we will be able to continue to fund most programs and even initiate a modest number of strategically important new programs, I want to:

- Alert the campus to this year's significant budget challenge
- Recognize that our rapid growth of recent years will be dampened
- Ask everyone to be prepared to tighten their budget belts and be particularly resourceful and careful in expending their budget allocations.

## **Strategic Plan**

Our current Strategic Plan, "Learning and Careers 2004", has served us well. Its primary focus was to maintain, sustain, and incrementally enhance RIT's presence as a leading institution of higher education. The next strategic plan will be more than a strategic plan. It will offer a "dream" which will shape RIT's "destiny". The vision, structure, and essence of the next strategic plan will incorporate and reflect the dream and destiny.

A major focus of the campus this year will be to develop its next strategic plan (SP), one that will carry us for the next ten years. The SP Steering Committee is composed of the following individuals:

- Chair: Dr. Albert J. Simone, President
- Vice Chair: Dr. Stan McKenzie, Provost and VP, Academic Affairs
- Vice Chair: Dr. James Miller, VP, Enrollment Management and Career Services
- Dr. Mary-Beth Cooper, VP, Student Affairs
- Dr. Jorge Diaz-Herrera, Dean, Golisano College of Computing and Information Sciences
- Dave Edborg, President, Staff Council
- Dr. Ian Gatley, Dean, College of Science
- Joyce Hertzson, Chairperson, Foundations, College of Imaging Arts and Sciences; Immediate Past Chair, Academic Senate

- Steve Shapiro, President, Student Government
- Deborah Stendardi, Associate VP, Government and Community Relations
- Dr. James Watters, VP, Finance and Administration

In a few weeks, the Steering Committee will establish task forces, appoint an expeditor, identify consultants, and establish communication with the Board of Trustees Committee on SP, Administrative Council, Academic Council, Academic Senate, Staff Council, and Student Government. We will hold campus-wide town meetings. The July 2004 Board of Trustees meeting is the target date for campus endorsement and Board approval.

I distributed two papers last year to introduce the conceptual foundations of our next SP:

- “Shaping RIT’s Destiny”, May 2003
- “Very Good to Great”, July 2003

The Provosts and Deans are finalizing a paper “Great Programs, Great Jobs; Great Careers, Great Lives”, which will be circulated soon.

My two papers listed 16 attributes which will define RIT’s “greatness” – its dream and destiny. Given our discussion on alumni development, I would like to add a seventeenth. These 17 attributes are:

- |  |                         |                                |
|--|-------------------------|--------------------------------|
| • Career focus   | • Student success       | • Student centeredness         |
| • Primacy of teaching  | • Experiential learning | • Relevance                    |
| • Co-op  | • Applied research      | • Scholarship                  |
| • Technology base  | • Partnerships          | • <b><i>First in Class</i></b> |
| • Diversity  | • Service to society    | • Sense of community           |
| • Quality students, faculty, staff, programs, curricula and facilities |                         | • Alumni participation         |

A key task force in our SP effort this year will prioritize and weight these attributes to determine which ones (in combination) will be the “anchor” attributes for RIT’s emerging future. These anchors will establish and define RIT’s essence, enduring nature, distinctiveness, and reputation. They will emerge, in part, as a result of a comprehensive identity audit, which relies heavily on assessment by internal and external constituencies.

David Ward, currently President of the American Council on Education and formerly Chancellor of the University of Wisconsin, points out in the Winter 2003 issue of *The Presidency*, that “change and innovation must lie at the center of each institution if it is to remain on the cutting edge of new knowledge and good teaching practice”. He goes on to say that universities are “venerable” institutions but “will not remain venerable for very long if they remain static”.

RIT has been going through a culture change over the past decade. It must continue this momentum. The concepts discussed in my two papers – which include good to great, execution, branding/institutional identity (B/II), career-focus ladder, passion, a path-changing mind set, and step-wise identity change – will provide the conceptual foundation for our work. The form,

shape, and substance of our SP will take hold over this year as all of us, from every sector of the campus, work together.

Our dialogue, analysis, and examination will produce agreement and disagreement. We will learn about and understand each other and RIT better. Every one of us can contribute to the development of the SP and its implementation over the years. All of us will have to become engaged if RIT is to be everything it can be and everything we want it to be. I am counting on each of you. You can count on me to listen, learn, and, as appropriate, lead. But I expect us all to be leaders.

## **CONCLUSION**

In preparing the conclusion for today's address, I reviewed what I said last year. I find that I cannot improve upon it. I believe it just as strongly this year as I did last year, so let me say it again.

I want to express deep appreciation to my administrative team who knows what to do, who tells me what it is, and helps me keep out of their way so they can do great work. Their energy and creativity are outstanding.

Of course, I realize that they are as effective as they are because of the tremendous teams of outstanding people who work with them. So let me thank all of the staff who support all of the vice presidents in all that they do. You truly are making them all "look good".

We have an outstanding faculty, staff, and student body at RIT. I could not be more proud and appreciative of my opportunity to work with you all. Individually and collectively you teach me something everyday.

Finally, RIT is blessed with a tremendous Board of Trustees. They are outstanding individuals in terms of professional and personal accomplishments. They practice and live with the highest standards of integrity. They are totally and completely committed to RIT's success, growth, and continual drive toward excellence. I want to thank them as well.

Thanks for being here. Let us have another great year.