

## Graduating into national prominence

Greetings from Southern California. With another academic year at RIT in the rear-view mirror, there is no better time for me to get away. And even though I'm officially on vacation, I didn't want to completely pull the plug without sharing some thoughts on this year's amazing commencement celebration.

I scratched out these thoughts Saturday during the flight out to San Diego (exit row seating—lovin' the leg room!). I was flying high, but being airborne was merely a contributing factor to my upbeat status. At that point, I still hadn't come down from the golden opportunity that dropped in our laps Friday at University News—an opportunity to put RIT in the national spotlight.

You may be aware that our commencement speaker, Ursula Burns, was appointed CEO at Xerox Corp. just one day prior to our ceremony. New leadership for one of Rochester's leading employers is always big news locally, but the fact that Ms. Burns becomes the first African American female to head a Fortune 500 company added to the story's national prominence.

RIT's commencement served as Ms. Burns' first public appearance since the company's announcement, and ABC News saw it as an opportunity to profile her achievement. Network producers contacted our office, and working with the assistance of the local affiliate, 13WHAM-TV, we were able to supply the network with a link to a live, in-house video feed of the ceremony to be transmitted via satellite to ABC in New York. With a very short turn around, the network was prepared to produce its feature for broadcast that evening on ABC World News with Charles Gibson.

Watching as the story aired that evening, my colleagues and I were practically in shock. The prominence that RIT received in the story went beyond our wildest expectations. But I want to let you in on a little secret that contributed to this.

Having spent many years working in the TV news business, I'm pretty comfortable in identifying 'sound bites,' those short quotes used by TV reporters and producers because they offer the most compelling insights. I had an advance look at Ms. Burns' script, which gave me a good sense of her best sound bites. I pointed them out to our video production director, Mark Fragale, and asked him to keep the podium in frame during those portions of her speech. Why? I was hoping to make sure that the RIT seal appeared prominently when the network aired her remarks. How did we do? Check it out on the University News YouTube page. Notice in the story's first sound bite



how nicely the 'lower third graphic' that identifies Ms. Burns on screen fits neatly under the RIT logo.

The point I want to make is the unusual nature of a public relations outfit enjoying this much control in the relationship with media. If the network had used its own camera crew, chances are Ms. Burns would have been framed tighter, possibly eliminating the RIT seal from view. Our exposure would be minimized.

Many thanks to the folks at University News, RIT's Educational Technology Center, and University Publications who helped exploit this amazing opportunity to help showcase RIT. Chances like this don't happen often, but we sure make the most of it.