

Strategic Bridge Plan

2024 – 2025

The Rochester Institute of Technology College of Liberal Arts has embarked on a community-engaged process to explore and develop a bridge plan to move the college strategically through the current transitional period. This bridge plan has been developed in alignment with the mission. Each tactic within was evaluated against these directives that are central to the identity and delivery of education within this college.

Mission:

- The College of Liberal Arts (COLA) encourages the creation, development, dissemination, and application of human knowledge in the arts, humanities, and social sciences by promoting innovative teaching, scholarship, and research, thus providing a comprehensive education for all RIT students.
- We strive to prepare students for a lifetime of personal growth and responsible citizenship in an increasingly technological and rapidly changing society by maintaining and promoting the intellectual climate on campus, contributing to students' awareness and understanding of diversity, and enhancing students' abilities to reason critically and communicate effectively.
- We value a rigorous liberal arts education that encourages innovative experiential learning and active scholarship, the highest ethical standards, the educational and social benefits of diversity and global awareness, an interdisciplinary and collaborative environment of openness and academic freedom, a working environment in which all staff and faculty enjoy respect and recognition, and the active and meaningful participation of all members of the College community.

The purpose of the strategic bridge process is to explore and develop innovative opportunities for revitalization and envisioning a new, nimble, and creative path forward for the RIT College of Liberal Arts as we move towards a leadership transition.

Table of Contents

[A Message from Interim Dean Kelly Norris Martin](#)

[Bridge Plan Focus Areas](#)

[Tactics to Meet our Strategic Priorities](#)

[Bridge Plan Steering Committee](#)

[Strategic Planning Process](#)

[COLA Objectives for Strategic Bridge Planning](#)

[Closing Thoughts](#)

A Message from Interim Dean Kelly Norris Martin

During recent months, our College of Liberal Arts faculty and staff have collaborated on the creation of a bridge plan—a shorter-term strategic plan that will guide us through the next one to two years and provide both flexibility and focus for progress.

Faculty and staff openly shared ideas, identified priorities, and shaped a shared vision throughout the plan creation process. They contributed at every step and were kept updated as progress was made. Additionally, RIT Provost and Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs Prabu David reviewed and endorsed the plan.

This approach and the resulting plan in and of itself represents an exciting accomplishment and also sets the tone and expectation for how the college and its partners will work together in the future. I extend my profound thanks to everyone for their whole-hearted engagement and continued commitment to this effort.

As you will see, key goals of the plan are aimed at gaining balance, strengthening connections, and beginning to build a clearer path forward. We are already well on our way! This coming year is our chance to give form to this collective fresh thinking and further advance the RIT College of Liberal Arts.

Strategic Bridge Plan Focus Areas

With the strategic purpose and college mission in mind, COLA has committed to focusing on three key areas over the next 18 months. The focus areas developed within this plan include:

- **Working intentionally to improve faculty and staff morale.**

The College of Liberal Arts at RIT has gone through a lengthy period of leadership transition. This has created discontent, chaos and uncertainty. Stakeholders across the college highlight the lack of morale as a key challenge that should be looked at deliberately to improve the overall functioning of the unit and its ability to deliver on the mission.

- **Building a foundation for long-term financial sustainability.**

Over time, changing leadership in COLA has expressed concern over the ability for COLA to be financially stable into the future. The desire to change or improve the financial position, has often been led without clarity or transparency. However, the COLA community feels a downward pressure with tangible financial impacts. COLA seeks to better understand the financial position, develop key targets, and identify best practices to empower the college for success and a stable financial future allows for continued investment in student success, talent and infrastructure.

- **Facilitating continued delivery of high-quality, innovative curriculum.**

The COLA community is confident that high-quality curriculum is a strong suit and a core competency of the college. Whatever strategic work is embarked upon, should continue to bolster and support its delivery. The key stakeholders seek to find new avenues to facilitate innovation in this space to to attract students, grow programs, and celebrate and nurture scholarly and creative contributions.

Tactics to Meet our Strategic Priorities

Tactics	Champions
Leadership should continue to lobby and advocate, and communicate efforts taken for seeking faculty and staff compensation increases.	Dean’s Office, HR/Compensation Team
Seek to include all stakeholder input in strategic decision-making. Prioritize clear, consistent, inclusive, and direct communication about what is next for the college to improve trust and transparency.	Dean’s Office, Chairs Council, Events Manager, Marketing
Standardize the welcome and onboarding training for all COLA employees.	Dean’s Office, Marketing
Call for all departments to clarify processes/expectations for evaluation of lecturers, adjuncts, and VAPS.	Dean’s Office, Chairs Council

Tactics	Champions
Leadership should continue to lobby and advocate, and communicate efforts taken for seeking resources needed for COLA from upper administration.	Dean's Office, Chairs Council, Additional Key Stakeholders
Develop a stronger marketing/brand identity for COLA to attract/grow student population.	Dean’s Office, Marketing
Appoint a task-force to review COLA budget, teaching loads, compensation models and compare with those of aspirational institutions (with Liberal Arts Colleges in a Technical School), and make recommendations.	Dean’s Office
Dean’s Office, Chairs Council	Dean’s Office, Chairs Council
Continue to provide support efforts being made by smaller units and programs wishing to merge.	Dean’s Office, Chairs Council, Program Directors

Tactics	Champions
Identify new approaches to increase financial support for travel, conference attendance and professional development.	Dean's Office
Continue to advocate aggressively for new funding streams to address classroom technology, structure and support of new modalities.	Dean's Office, Chairs Council, Program Directors
Work towards creative solutions to address space challenges including meeting and lab spaces that are currently hindering progress.	Dean's Office, Chairs Council
Increase support for grant writing (both pre-post award).	Dean's Office
Seek to break down silos and remove barriers in order to promote interdisciplinary work.	Interdisciplinary School

Strategic Bridge Plan Steering Committee

- Joe Williams – Lecturer in Criminal Justice
- Robert Glick – Associate Professor in English
- Ali Fitch – Assistant Professor in Psychology
- Elizabeth White – COLA Scheduling Officer
- Kim Walters – Director of Marketing and Communication

Strategic Planning Process

The steering committee (or portions of it) met both online between January and April, 2024 a total of four times. The role of the committee included:

1. Agenda and timeline setting for planning process
2. Provide guidance on stakeholder involvement
3. Assembly of existing information/data
4. Logistics for planning - meeting rooms, food, supplies
5. Ensuring effective communication/transparency of the project
6. Advocacy and championing of the process

COLA Objectives for Strategic Bridge Planning

1. Prioritize a well-designed, community engaged process that builds trust, ownership, engagement, and buy-in.
2. Offer transparency and opportunity for input across as many stakeholder groups as possible.
3. Provide interim structure and direction for the next 18-24 months, allowing the college to avoid decision paralysis and reactive decision-making that is not grounded in strategy.
4. Set the stage for success for the search for a permanent Dean by articulating a clear vision for the College and also providing an on-ramp to begin listening/planning for the incoming Dean's strategic plan.

Closing Thoughts

The work to develop this plan was comprehensive and strived to engage many diverse and thoughtful voices from across the COLA — including students, staff, faculty, and other key stakeholders.

We are eager to continue to engage with this work and use this as a foundational tool to move us toward our vision for a strong future.

For questions about the strategic bridge plan, email Interim Dean Kelly Norris Martin, Ph.D., at knmgpt@rit.edu.

About Rochester Institute of Technology

Founded in 1829, Rochester Institute of Technology is a diverse and collaborative community of engaged, socially conscious, and intellectually curious minds. Through creativity and innovation, and an intentional blending of technology, the arts and design, we provide exceptional individuals with a wide range of academic opportunities, including a leading research program and an internationally recognized education for deaf and hard-of-hearing students. Beyond our main campus in Rochester, New York, RIT has international campuses in China, Croatia, Dubai, and Kosovo. And with more than 19,000 students and more than 135,000 graduates from all 50 states and over 100 nations, RIT is driving progress in industries and communities around the world. Find out more at rit.edu.

About the RIT College of Liberal Arts

The College of Liberal Arts at RIT delivers contemporary liberal arts studies for a complex digital age. Through a tech-focused curriculum relevant for today, students learn to think critically, adapt, and succeed. The multidisciplinary education of liberal arts plus STEM, supported by our highly ranked co-op and internship program, gives RIT liberal arts students an advantage in the workplace.

[Read more about our key distinguishers >](#)