

RIT | Staff Council

Thursday, April 18, 2024 | 2:00 – 4:00 p.m.

PRESENT Connolly, Ehrlich-Scheffer, Giasi, Harrington, Hisert, Inclema, Kamish, Kolash, Lang, Lezette, Lupinetti, Milliken, Montan, Oware, Peterson, Ponder, Redman, Schuler, St. Jean, Strowe, Vogler, and Zehr

EXCUSED Heyman, Navas, Redman, and Smith

ABSENT Cornwell, and O'Toole

INTERPRETERS Kirsten Borkowski and Emilio Hernandez

MEETING called to order 2:00pm

MINUTES of 4/4/2024 approved

Chair's Report

- RIT's Middle States reaccreditation process underway
 - Please visit the new [RIT accreditation website](#) to learn more about the Steering Committee members, Working Group members, timelines, and more news and information.
 - Join Dr. Sean McKittrick, Vice President for Institutional Field Relations of Middle States Commission on Higher Education, for a Community Forum on the process tomorrow afternoon:
 - Friday, April 19 @ 1–2pm in Ingle Auditorium.
 - Folks can also [register to attend virtually](#).
 - Feel free to send questions ahead of the meeting to Karel Shapiro: kdsdfp@rit.edu
- Thanks to Government and Community Relations for working to distribute eclipse glasses to all members of the RIT community
 - If you do not wish to keep them for a future annular or partial eclipse, please consider recycling them (after removing the solar filter lens) or donating them to Astronomers without Borders. There are several locations in the community that have established collection points:
 - [Marilla's Mindful Supplies](#) has collections at both storefront locations, one in Rochester and one in Geneva.
 - [Town of Brighton](#) has a collection at the Town Hall through April 19.
 - [Rochester Museum & Science Center](#)
 - On campus, [Goodbye, Goodbuy!](#) will accept glasses during move out collection.
- Registration is open to join the United Way Day of Caring
 - On May 23
 - This year, RIT is partnering with Mount Hope Cemetery to bring together volunteers from the community who share a commitment to maintaining the cemetery's historic significance and natural beauty.
 - You can sign up with your department or division for a specific project or as an individual. Check out [the Event Page](#) for more information.
- Registration to Volunteer at Imagine RIT and Commencement are open

- Imagine RIT:
 - April 27th
 - [Sign up here](#)
 - All volunteers receive a free t-shirt and meal card
- Commencement:
 - Help make this special weekend possible for our graduates and their families
 - May 10–11
 - Sign up through the [RIT Commencement website](#)
 - All volunteers will have access to meals in the hospitality room throughout the weekend.
- Reminder that all non-exempt employees are paid for voluntary participation in RIT sponsored events, with supervisor approval to participate
 - A reminder for supervisors and department heads that if the wages paid for volunteering cause a department to exceed its budget, the Budget Office will provide funding at the fiscal-year-end if necessary
 - Full details can be found [on the policy webpage](#)
- Employee Appreciation Day @ a Red Wings Baseball Game
 - Thanks to the Office of the President, we will all receive up to 4 free tickets to attend one of two Rochester Red Wings baseball games this summer.
 - Dates to choose from are
 - July 24th @ 6:05pm
 - July 31st @ 1:05pm
 - Tickets include a free, catered meal in the private picnic area for RIT employees and guests and free parking.
 - Game day, whichever date an employee chooses, will be considered a paid day off (approved with pay) for staff.

Staff Council Updates:

- Elections Update
 - Voting for new reps in Blocks 2, 4, and 6 opens this Monday April 22
 - Voting is open through May 10th. Be on the lookout for an email with details.
- Staff Appreciation Day & Community Picnic
 - Tuesday May 14 @ 11:30am–2pm at the Gene Polisseni Center
 - Build your own taco bar and desserts (with gluten-free, vegetarian, and dairy-free options)
 - Therapy Dogs, yard games, chair massages, and of course the Bob Howie Memorial Car Display
 - The RIT Campus Store will be offering staff a special 20% off Clothing and Gift merchandise the day of the picnic.
 - Most importantly, Staff Council is partnering with the RIT FoodShare to enhance the amount of high need items that are distributed to those in need. If you can, please consider bringing at least one non-perishable food item to the Staff Appreciation Picnic and help fill our collection boxes.
- Upcoming Presentations
 - 2 of May
 - Operation: Tiger Cloud ERP Project Update 2
 - Volunteering at Commencement
 - Parent & Caregiver Employee Resource Group
 - 23 of May
 - Advancement Overview
 - End of Year Reports

Policy C22.0 Records Management Policy Revision Vote

- Vote for Policy D14.0 revisions
- Passed: Yes-20 No-0 Abstaining-3

Disability Services Office Overview

- Dr. Kelly Kamish, Associate Director Disability Services Office, gave an overview for the mission and process of accommodating students with disabilities. The presentation is available [here](#).
- Their Mission: The DSO is dedicated to facilitating equitable access to the full RIT experience for students with disabilities. We value disability as diversity and work in collaboration with campus partners to foster a welcoming, diverse, and inclusive campus community. All enrolled RIT students with disabilities may register with the DSO and request accommodations.
- Team Members:
 - Dr. Catherine Lewis, Director
 - Dr. Kelly Kamish, Associate Director
 - Emily Mattison, Access Coordinator
 - Jordana Qi, Access Coordinator
 - Ellie Sylvan, Access Coordinator
 - Morgan Conover, Test Center Coordinator
 - Susan Hurwitz, Senior Staff Assistant
- Who does the DSO support?
 1. Any enrolled RIT or NTID student who identifies as having a permanent or temporary disability is welcome to register with the DSO and request accommodations. This includes, but is not limited to:
 - Lifelong or acquired disabilities
 - Hidden disabilities (e.g. learning disabilities or mental health disabilities)
 - Chronic illness
 - Veterans with service-related disabilities
 - Pregnancy and related disabilities
 - Students of size
 - Students with temporary disabilities (e.g. students with injuries or recovering from surgery)
 - D/deaf and hard-of-hearing students (in partnership with NTID Access Services)
 - Students facing new or changed access needs in light of Long COVID or other pandemic-related factors
- How do students request accommodations?
 1. Register with the Disability Services Office by completing our application form
 2. Submit documentation of your disability
 3. Meet with the DSO (We will reach out to schedule this once steps 1 and 2 are complete)
 4. Receive your eligibility letter
 5. Request academic accommodations via the MyDSO Portal (This is how accommodations are communicated to faculty)

- What is an Accommodation?
 - Modification or adjustment to remove an existing barrier in the academic or co-curricular environment for a student with a disability
 - Accommodations are a student's civil right per the ADA (as amended in 2008) and Section 504 and must be honored once approved
 - Can be approved at any time while a student enrolled at RIT and must be implemented once approved by the DSO and requested by the student (faculty are notified whenever students request accommodations in their course)
 - Involves partnership between faculty, student, and DSO when necessary (student conversations should be private)
- Accommodations are NOT intended to:
 - Reduce academic rigor
 - Be unreasonable
 - Otherwise qualified
 - Undue burden
 - Fundamental alteration
 - Direct threat to the safety of self or others
 - Be retroactive
 - Be "carte blanche"
 - Be offered as a contingency
 - Mitigate non-disability related barriers

Compliance and Ethics — Disability Accommodation Process for Staff

- Lori Sykes, Compliance and Ethics Manager, shared the process for Employee Medical and Disability Accommodations. Her presentation can be found [here](#).
- Applicable Regulations:
 - The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)
 - Statutes that require employers to provide reasonable accommodations to qualified individuals with disabilities.
- What Qualifies as a Disability? ADA defines disability as a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities.
- Medical Documentation Requirements
 - Diagnosis/nature of disability
 - Description of current level of functioning
 - Suggestions for accommodation(s)
 - Anticipated duration of the accommodation(s)
- Reasonable Accommodations: Employers are required to make reasonable modifications or adjustments that enable a disabled individual to have equal employment opportunities.
- RIT's Disability Accommodation Request Process. Form found [here](#).
- Interactive Accommodation Request Process
 1. Submit Medical/Disability Accommodation Request Form
 2. Consultation with Employee/Requester
 3. Consultation with Manager
 4. Discussion of Alternative Accommodation (If Necessary)
 5. Determination on Accommodations

Old/New Business

- Request for the walkway by the library be reopened now that construction is complete.
- Smoking on campus. A person has mentioned that they no longer see designated signs/areas for smoking, so they have been exposed to second hand smoke several times.
- Motorcycle parking in S lot. Some motorcycles have been parked so close to cars that the car owners cannot open their car door.
- Gene Vogler will represent Staff Council on the Staff Career Architecture Advisory Committee
- Brendon shared updates from the Parking and Transportation Advisory Group.
 - The main bus circle will be returning this summer back to Gleason Circle behind the library
 - There will be 45 spaces added to F-Lot as construction comes to an end.
 - They welcome feedback on the Park Mobile spots outside of Magic.

Year-End Review / Strategic Plan Input

- Dr. Munson offered a brief recap of the past year, extending appreciation to the staff for their dedicated efforts.
 - He thanks not only the Staff Council reps but all if RIT staff for enabling another very successful academic year.
 - He recapped many of the activities taking place on campus such as
 - Award ceremonies for faculty, staff, and students
 - Senior Day for the last home event for sports teams
 - Performing Arts program holding an unlabeled music festival.
 - Futurist Symposium
 - Imagine
 - Convocation and Commencement
 - He extended special thanks to those serving on the Staff Council, particularly Brendon and Renee. Throughout the academic year, they had facilitated extensive two-way communication and problem-solving. He expressed gratitude for their efforts, acknowledging that the Staff Council had provided input on several changes to university policies, despite it not always being the most enjoyable aspect of their roles. However, he emphasized the importance of such contributions to the full participation in university governance. Regarding recent events, he mentioned the groundbreaking ceremony for the new stadium held earlier that morning, around 10:30 AM. He noted the presence of many donors at the event.
 - He addressed the enrollment management activities, particularly during this critical period when efforts are focused on finalizing admissions for students entering the university in the fall. He noted significant challenges stemming from issues with the Federal financial aid system, commonly known as FAFSA, which has undergone a problematic redesign and rollout, causing delays and inaccuracies in student information. Despite these obstacles, he credited the enrollment management staff for developing an alternative financial aid form, allowing the university to issue financial aid offers. However, the university is facing a setback in admissions as many students await financial aid packages from other institutions for comparison before making decisions. Consequently, the deposit deadline will be extended, and admissions may be accepted later than usual to ensure a properly sized incoming class. He highlighted the university's distinctiveness, particularly in its emphasis on arts combined with technology, a result of efforts outlined in the previous strategic plan, which has helped the university stand out among competitors.

- In recent months, Dr. Munson and university administrators collaborated with the Board of Trustees to develop the strategic planning framework, now finalized. This plan spans from 2025 to 2035, acknowledging the need for flexibility to adapt to changing conditions. Oversight of the plan will be managed by a steering committee, co-chaired by Enid Cardinal, known for her role in strategic planning at the university, and Frank Sklarsky, a local trustee with a strong connection to the institution. The committee comprises administrators, trustees, and representatives from various governance groups.
- In terms of the timeline, he's seeking input before the semester's end, ideally before May, to begin drafting a preliminary outline for the strategic plan. This work will continue over the summer, with plans to reconvene in early September for more comprehensive discussions involving various stakeholders, including governance groups, the Board of Trustees, parents, and alumni. Following feedback on the outline, further refinement will occur during the fall to develop a more detailed plan. The Board of Trustees will review the plan at a retreat scheduled for February of the following year, allowing ample time for additional feedback and finalization. The expectation is for the trustees to vote on the final plan in October 2025, just before homecoming weekend.
- Jo Ellen Pinkham joined Dr. Munson in the discussion. Their initial query for the group was to share what they appreciate about the University. They sought to understand the aspects that individuals valued and hoped to retain, acknowledging that these elements were likely ones they wouldn't want to see altered. While they anticipated potential new initiatives and directions, they aimed to identify the existing strengths and attributes that resonated with the group. The contributions highlighted by staff regarding their appreciation for RIT encompassed several aspects: a strong sense of community, the opportunity for staff to make meaningful contributions in their roles, engagement with the broader Rochester community, the STEP program, and RIT's embrace of uniqueness and individuality.
- They invited suggestions for RIT to explore alternative strategies to attract future students and to effectively present RIT as a viable choice to prospective students. Suggestions that surfaced included innovation, improved academic advising, an expanded RIT replication of Shark Tank (Tiger Tank), arranging visits for prospective graduate students to meet faculty members, bolstering co-op programs and forging deeper connections with prominent employers, collaborating with Rochester Regional Health Systems, and creating a university environment that integrates living, working, learning, and leisure activities for students.

MEETING adjourned at 3:56pm

Staff members are encouraged to contact their [Staff Council representative](#) with comments or questions on these or any other topics.

The **voice of staff** in shared governance

Staff Council is an advisory body to the President (or his/her representative) on issues and decisions which impact RIT. Staff Council Members communicate to staff about university news, events and initiatives, and act as a conduit providing staff feedback and insights on university issues. Additionally, Staff Council initiates policy proposals and revisions, and raises issues for university consideration.

Share your suggestions!

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