

RIT CLIMATE STUDY

PERCEPTIONS OF FACULTY, STUDENTS, AND STAFF

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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April, 2003
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SUMMARY

This report summarizes findings from extensive baseline surveys of the current climate on the RIT campus, particularly as it relates to issues related to cultural diversity and inclusion on campus. The report documents the findings from surveys of students, faculty and staff. Survey findings are summarized by several themes used to organize the survey questions and results.

- General Diversity** ❖ Strong support was expressed for diversity at RIT, and for actively promoting it, by all segments of the University population. This was true across all racial/ethnic groups, across both males and females, and across all colleges and divisions.
- ❖ Two-thirds to three-quarters of those in each survey say most people they know “genuinely support racial/ethnic diversity.”
- RIT Support for Diversity Initiatives** ❖ Despite clear support for the concept of diversity, there is more ambiguity about whether RIT places too much emphasis on racial/ethnic diversity. In each survey, there was a virtual dead heat between those agreeing and disagreeing with the amount of emphasis. Almost 40% of students were neutral. White students, faculty and staff were all much more likely than AALANA respondents to believe that too much emphasis is placed on diversity. Faculty members differed substantially across colleges.
- ❖ There is considerable lack of understanding across half or more of nearly all surveyed groups of how consistent student admission practices are with the goal of increasing racial/ethnic minority students.
 - ❖ Half of staff and faculty said RIT pushes minority hiring policies too forcefully. At least 40% of faculty in all colleges agreed, including more than two-thirds in two colleges. Male faculty, and female staff were most likely to agree. Most AALANA faculty and staff disagreed.

Comfort with Others/Social Interactions

- ❖ Large majorities of staff and faculty, and more than half of all students, reported that RIT has done a good job providing initiatives that promote diversity, though AALANA respondents were somewhat less certain.
- ❖ Students reported being comfortable going to see faculty members (AALANA students slightly less so, but still 2/3 agreed), and even more comfortable seeing faculty from different racial backgrounds than their own.
- ❖ All surveyed groups reported high levels of comfort with students from different racial/ethnic groups, and 2/3 or more of all students, faculty and staff said they are comfortable at RIT being in situations where they are the only person of their racial/ethnic group. More than 3/4 of all students agreed that majority and racial/ethnic minority students get along well (slightly lower, but still high, proportions of AALANA and International students agreed).
- ❖ Still, about half of all respondents perceived that most people's social interactions on campus are largely limited to those of their own race. White faculty and students were more likely than others to say their own social interactions are largely limited to persons of their own race/ethnicity.

Faculty Expectations/Interactions

- ❖ Faculty overwhelmingly reported that most faculty they know treat all students fairly regardless of racial/ethnic background. AALANA faculty were less likely to agree (62% versus 85% of all faculty). At least three-quarters of the faculty in all colleges said most faculty are fair to all students.
- ❖ Faculty and students agreed (about 85% each) that faculty have high expectations for all students. But more than 40% of AALANA faculty (almost twice the proportion for other faculty) believe some faculty have lower academic expectations for racial/ethnic minority students.
- ❖ Consistent with faculty's self-reporting of fairness, more than three-quarters of all students (including at least two-thirds of the students in all racial/ethnic groups) reported that they have been treated fairly by RIT faculty members.

Compatibility of Diversity Goal

- ❖ Three-quarters or more of students, faculty, and staff say that striving for diversity doesn't mean having to compromise RIT's

goal of excellence. This statement received strong support across all racial, gender, and college and division groups.

- ❖ Almost 2/3 of the faculty supported admitting underrepresented racial/ethnic students based on different criteria, as long as there were the same expectations of success, but less than half of all students agreed. Only about 40% of the white students agreed, but 2/3 of the white faculty agreed with this approach.
- ❖ Yet a third or more of all students, faculty, and staff indicated that promoting diversity leads to the admission of greater numbers of less qualified students, and to the hiring of less qualified faculty and staff. Male students and faculty were much more likely than females to agree. About half or more of the faculty in three colleges agreed that promoting diversity could lead to less qualified students and faculty.
- ❖ Almost 2/3 of the staff and more than half of the faculty said that they would recommend hiring a qualified underrepresented minority candidate only if the person were also the most qualified candidate. Male faculty were especially resistant to hiring anyone other than the most qualified person. Significant differences existed across colleges and divisions.
- ❖ Less than half of all faculty (45%) believe that most underrepresented racial/ethnic students are well-prepared for college studies. White faculty are considerably less likely than Asian or AALANA faculty to say that underrepresented racial/ethnic students are well-prepared.
- ❖ There was little support from students for increasing the number of underrepresented racial/ethnic minority students on campus, or for increasing the number of minority faculty. Less than a third of the students (and only about 20% of the white students) were supportive. On the other hand, more than 60% of faculty (including the majority of all racial/ethnic groups) are supportive of both initiatives. Female students and faculty were more supportive than males. Differences existed across colleges, among both students and faculty.
- ❖ There was more support for increasing the number of female faculty on campus. Among students, 47% supported this increase, compared to only 29% who supported expanding racial/ethnic faculty numbers. White students were twice as supportive of this

Desire for Increased Diversity

proposal as they were of expanding minority students or faculty. More than 60% of faculty favor hiring more female faculty members.

- ❖ About 2/3 of AALANA faculty, staff, and students support expanding their own numbers, to create more critical mass on campus.
- ❖ There is little student support for more classes emphasizing multicultural diversity and understanding, especially among white students, but even among minority students there was no groundswell of support. Less than 40% of all students thought increased racial diversity would strengthen RIT academic programs. White and AALANA faculty and staff were supportive, but less than a third of white students were. Significant differences occurred across a few of the colleges, both among students and staff.
- ❖ More than half the faculty supported efforts to attract more local minority students to attend RIT.
- ❖ Most faculty, staff, and students say they have seen no evidence of people being excluded socially on campus because of their race/ethnicity, but one in five did report seeing such exclusions occur. Women faculty were more likely than men to report exclusions. About 40% or more of AALANA faculty, students, and staff agreed they had seen such exclusions, compared with less than 20% of whites.
- ❖ About ¼ of those respondents in each group knew of people treated unfairly at RIT because of their race/ethnicity, a third because they were deaf or hard-of-hearing, and more than a third because of their gender. Women and AALANA survey respondents were especially likely to have reported being aware of unfair treatment. There were significant differences across colleges in the frequency with which their faculty reported being aware of unfair treatment (not necessarily within the college).
- ❖ About 40% of respondents reported that they had read, heard, or seen insensitive or negative comments at RIT about racial/ethnic minorities. Again, women faculty (but male staff) and AALANA students, staff and faculty were most likely to have reported such comments. Significant differences existed across colleges and divisions.

Perceived Exclusion

Support Services on Campus

- ❖ Most students reported no racial tensions in RIT residence halls, though one-quarter of all students had perceived such tensions, including almost half of all AALANA students.
- ❖ About a third of AALANA faculty and students reported racial/ethnic tensions in the classroom at RIT, compared with less than 20% among Asian and white students and faculty. Faculty differences existed across several colleges.
- ❖ About half of all students and staff (and just over 40% of faculty) agreed that support services for racial/ethnic minority students are sufficient, but students were less likely than staff and faculty to view them as even being appropriate. In particular, only 41% of white students viewed these services as appropriate. There is strong support for the services across all racial/ethnic faculty, staff, and student groups except white students. Differences existed across colleges and divisions for students, faculty, and staff.
- ❖ Well over half of the staff and faculty said they understood the roles of the Commission for Promoting Pluralism and the Assistant Provost for Diversity, and believe the offices involved in addressing diversity are having an impact. In general, all racial/ethnic groups indicated that they understand the institutional roles and believe they are having an impact.
- ❖ Faculty and staff overwhelmingly supported giving more welcoming attention, orientation, and support for all new hires, but only 30% to 40% suggested that special attention should be given to new racial/ethnic minority hires. AALANA faculty and staff were much more likely to also advocate for special attention for underrepresented minority hires. Significant differences in faculty responses existed across colleges.
- ❖ More than 60% of all students thought that student groups and services targeted primarily to racial/ethnic groups provide valuable support. All racial groups, including whites, believe they are valuable.

Efforts to Break Down Barriers

- ❖ Two-thirds of faculty and 30% of staff perceived increases in efforts to break down barriers between racial/ethnic groups on campus, but less than 40% of all students agreed. Among faculty and staff, the perceived impact cut across racial/ethnic groups. AALANA students were more likely than other student groups to perceive

that progress has been made, but that only represented slightly less than half of all AALANA students.

- ❖ A majority of staff agreed that they should be strongly encouraged to attend cross-cultural workshops/events on campus, but fewer than 45% of faculty and students agreed. At least half of all females in each of the three survey groups were supportive, and at least 10% more females than males agreed in each group. White faculty and staff were generally less interested. Differences existed across colleges and divisions, for faculty, students, and staff.
- ❖ Similarly, staff were more interested than faculty in training/orientation around issues of cultural diversity/ sensitivity and communications. Similar racial/ethnic, college and gender differences existed as for the workshop question, except that more than half of male staff were supportive of training, though not of workshops and events.
- ❖ 60% of staff agreed that training should be required for mid-management staff regarding diversity, leadership and communications skills, but less than half of all faculty members agreed that similar training should be mandated for Deans and Department Chairs. Women faculty and staff were much more supportive than men. Support cut across all racial/ethnic groups among staff, but not among faculty, where less than half of the white and Asian faculty were in support, compared with strong AALANA support. Differences existed across colleges.
- ❖ Just over 2/3 of all students said there should be more efforts to bring racial/ethnic groups together, including strong support from all racial/ethnic groups, despite lack of student support for diversity workshops or increased classroom diversity.
- ❖ Overwhelming support (well over 80%) exists in all three surveys for the value of improving physical surroundings to create increased interaction opportunities.
- ❖ Reviews to date on the First Year Enrichment orientation are mixed. More than half the students thought FYE should do more to mix students across colleges and academic disciplines, but fewer than half thought it should do more to mix across racial/ethnic groups. More than 2/3 of AALANA students supported both approaches. White students were least supportive of both. While about 40% of all students were neutral as to whether FYE

Representation and a Voice in Decision-Making

provides enough emphasis on multicultural diversity, almost half of all white students said that there was enough emphasis already.

- ❖ Most faculty and staff—especially female faculty members and AALANA staff and faculty—agreed that there is not enough minority racial/ethnic group representation on important RIT committees.
- ❖ There was a higher level of agreement that female staff and faculty are adequately represented on important committees, as there is a more critical mass of women faculty and staff. However, women were much less likely than men to agree, among both faculty and staff. Some differences existed across colleges and divisions.
- ❖ Less than half of faculty, staff, and students think RIT does a good job seeking opinions from each group concerning improving the campus.
- ❖ Views were more mixed concerning how actively RIT is perceived as seeking and acting on student, faculty, and staff views related to diversity issues. Staff were the most likely, and faculty the least, of the three groups to feel their views were sought out.
- ❖ Just over a third of the faculty agreed that Academic Senate is a strong voice for strengthening the college; half of staff agreed that Staff Council is a strong voice.
- ❖ Most faculty and staff, across gender and racial/ethnic groups, agree that their opinions matter in discussions within their departments and divisions.
- ❖ Just over a third of all students agreed that Student Government is helpful in bringing students together and in helping create a sense of community.

Performance Appraisals/Tenure

- ❖ There were wide differences of opinion concerning whether Managers and Deans (and Department Heads) should be held responsible for meeting diversity hiring and retention goals. For both staff and faculty, there was more disagreement than agreement. AALANA faculty and staff were much more likely than others to agree. There were significant differences across several colleges.
- ❖ More than 2/3 of the staff and 3/4 of faculty believe they are treated fairly in the annual performance appraisal process, but only 53% of AALANA faculty agreed.

Deaf/Hard-of-Hearing Issues

- ❖ Just under half of the faculty (46%) perceived the tenure process as fair for all, and the proportions declined to 35% of women and a third of AALANA faculty. Significant variations existed across several colleges.
- ❖ One quarter of the faculty think underrepresented minorities receive preferential treatment in the tenure process, versus 45% who disagreed; on the other hand, 7% think that minorities are discriminated against in the process, while 62% disagreed.
- ❖ Slightly over half of all staff, and more than 2/3 of the faculty indicated that expressing controversial views can have negative consequences for staff and faculty, especially if faculty are not tenured. Strong proportions of all faculty racial/ethnic groups agreed, and about half of both white (54%) and AALANA (50%) staff groups agreed.
- ❖ The surveys provided a mixed assessment of the effectiveness of communication among deaf, hard-of-hearing and hearing communities at RIT. Between 40% and 45% of students and faculty, and just over half of all staff, believe effective communication exists, but large proportions also disagreed.
- ❖ Almost two-thirds of all students, but only a third of faculty and 43% of staff, agreed that sufficient numbers of interpreters exist for the deaf and hard-of-hearing. Significant differences in perspective existed across colleges and divisions among staff and faculty.
- ❖ Large proportions of staff and students, but just under half of faculty, said those campus groups should all learn at least basic ASL. Wide variations existed across colleges.
- ❖ Most students believe that faculty make a sufficient effort to assist students who are deaf or hard-of-hearing. Faculty agreed, but at a lower level than the student level of agreement. NTID faculty were less likely than those in other colleges to agree.
- ❖ Three-quarters of students and staff, and almost two-thirds of faculty, agreed that racial/ethnic minorities they know feel comfortable at RIT. Large majorities of all racial/ethnic groups agreed in each survey, although higher proportions of whites said other minorities were comfortable than the minority respondents said speaking for themselves.

Feeling Comfortable at RIT

Mentoring

- ❖ Similar patterns existed for perceptions of women feeling comfortable, with high levels of perceived comfort.
- ❖ Three-quarters of all three survey groups agreed that deaf and hard-of-hearing persons they know feel comfortable at RIT.
- ❖ About 60% of students and faculty, and 2/3 of staff, feel they have received adequate guidance/mentoring from other faculty or staff on campus. About one-fifth of each group disagreed with that assessment.
- ❖ More than 2/3 of staff, and 75% of faculty, agreed that there is value in a more formal mentoring system for new staff and faculty.
- ❖ Three-quarters of all faculty said they should be expected to serve as mentors for new faculty hires. All gender, racial/ethnic and college subgroups agreed.
- ❖ More than half of all faculty and staff said they were willing to participate in a formal mentoring program without formal recognition or incentive. On the other hand, almost a third of staff and 44% of faculty were willing to participate only if the time is credited to their formal performance appraisal. Women and AALANA faculty were more likely than their colleagues to place such conditions on their involvement.

RIT Pride/Feeling Valued

- ❖ The majority of students, faculty, and staff reported that they feel valued by their peers and various constituent groups on campus. Value was generally perceived across gender and racial/ethnic groups.
- ❖ Two-thirds of students, and more than 80% of faculty and staff, said they would recommend RIT to other prospects. Similar proportions of faculty and staff said they would also encourage an underrepresented racial/ethnic minority candidate to come to RIT. Most AALANA and Asian faculty and staff would encourage other minorities to come, though they would be somewhat less likely than white colleagues to do so.
- ❖ There is a high sense of pride about RIT among more than three-quarters of all staff and faculty; among students, the proportion expressing pride dropped to 58%. Levels of pride were fairly consistent across gender, racial/ethnic and college/division groups.

Summary Climate Scale Questions

- ❖ More than two-thirds of all students, faculty, and staff indicated their belief that the RIT climate is non-racist. Fewer than 10% of each group suggested that the campus tends to be somewhat racist. However, only about half of all AALANA respondents were likely to view the campus as being non-racist.
- ❖ Similar proportions of students, faculty and staff indicated that the climate is supportive of different cultural backgrounds. More than half of all racial/ethnic groups agreed.
- ❖ Between 55% and 60% of all students, faculty and staff indicated that the RIT climate is non-sexist, but between 15% and 20% of each group suggested the campus tends toward being sexist. Overall, RIT was portrayed by all groups as somewhat more sexist than racist, particularly by women faculty.
- ❖ Just over half of the staff, about half of the faculty, and just under half of the students suggested that the campus is non-homophobic. About a third of each group selected a neutral score of 3, and about one-fifth suggested the campus tends to be homophobic.
- ❖ Three-quarters or more of all students, faculty and staff indicated that the campus is supportive of persons who are deaf or hard-of-hearing.
- ❖ More than two-thirds of staff, 62% of faculty, and 56% of the students characterized the campus as friendly, though about one-fifth of the students said it is not friendly. AALANA faculty were least likely to view the campus as friendly (just over half).
- ❖ Well under half of all surveyed groups indicated that the campus provides a great sense of community (including only a quarter of all students and a third of the faculty). In no case did a majority of any racial/ethnic group say a great sense of community exists on campus. In each case, whites reported the least sense of community.

Summary of Focus Group and Survey Comments

Additional findings were derived from 35 focus group discussions and “open-ended” comments at the end of the surveys. Highlights of those findings included:

- ❖ Considerable emphasis was placed on the need for RIT to think of an expanded focus on diversity and inclusion—beyond just racial-

ethnic, to also include gender, hearing/non-hearing, and sexual orientation.

- ❖ Many comments noted the perceived poor sense of community on campus, with a heavy academic and career focus, and less emphasis on social aspects. This often leads to a sense of isolation. This lack of community and basic friendliness is often perceived as contributing more to isolation and exclusion than racial isolation/exclusion per se. Comments indicated the need to break down barriers across colleges and academic/professional disciplines, across faculty/students, separate student clubs and support groups, etc.
- ❖ A number of comments and focus group discussions cautioned the administration to be careful not to create unrealistic expectations for hiring in areas where there is a very small pool of minority and/or women candidates. At the same time, many noted the need to consider alternative paths to success, including non-traditional criteria and experiences, as long as they add up to likely success.
- ❖ Considerable staff support, with less support among faculty, was expressed for expanded supervisory training around diversity and related issues (communications, cross-cultural understanding, management skills, conflict resolution, team building, sensitivity training, etc.).
- ❖ A number of faculty members expressed concerns that they are asked to do too much, thereby detracting from teaching and student contacts, without having enough substantive input into the changes that are needed. This is perceived as especially problematic at a time when more supports are needed for a growing and more diverse student body.
- ❖ Many expressed a need for more diverse leadership at all levels of the University, from the top with Trustees and administration, through mid-level management, governance groups, and key campus committees.
- ❖ Strong overall support was expressed by faculty, staff and students for the concept of diversity on campus, its value to RIT, and the value of actively promoting the concept. All surveyed groups reported high levels of comfort interacting with people on campus from racial/ethnic groups different from their own, and more than

Overall Observations and Conclusions

three-quarters of all students agreed that majority and racial/ethnic minority students get along well.

- ❖ Yet, about half of all students, faculty and staff perceived that most people's social interactions on campus are largely limited to those of their own racial/ethnic group. And, about half of both staff and faculty indicated that, despite strong overall support for the concept of diversity, they believe the RIT administration pushes its minority hiring policies too forcefully.
- ❖ Similarly, although three-quarters or more of students, faculty and staff say that striving for diversity is compatible with and does not compromise RIT's goal of excellence, less than half of all students (and only about 40% of the white students) supported admitting any underrepresented racial/ethnic based on different criteria, even if expectations of ultimate success were the same as for all students (although almost two-thirds of faculty supported such approaches). A third or more of all students, staff and faculty indicated that promoting diversity leads to the admission of greater numbers of less qualified students, and to the hiring of greater numbers of less qualified faculty and staff. Moreover, almost two-thirds of staff and more than half of the faculty indicated that they were not willing to recommend hiring a qualified racial/ethnic minority candidate unless the person were also the most qualified candidate. Thus, philosophically there is strong support for the compatibility of the twin goals of diversity and excellence on campus, but significant proportions of various key campus constituency groups indicate their belief that in practice, some compromising has occurred, and many are not happy with specific approaches which may be used to increase diversity.
- ❖ Although more than 60% of all faculty are supportive of having more students and faculty from underrepresented racial/ethnic backgrounds in classrooms at RIT, less than a third of all students (and only about a fifth of white students) support such increases. Students are more supportive of increasing the number of women faculty on campus, but even there, only 47% of all students agreed, compared with more than 60% of faculty.
- ❖ In general, students (and in particular, white students) appear to be less supportive than faculty or staff of the desire for RIT to become more diverse, or of the need for active intervention on the

part of RIT in effecting change in the climate of diversity and inclusion on campus.

- ❖ In general, AALANA faculty, staff and students are more likely, and whites less, to report having observed or experienced discrimination, and to support a variety of initiatives to enhance diversity and break down racial/ethnic/intercultural barriers on campus.
- ❖ In general, female students, faculty and staff are more likely than men to report having observed or experienced discrimination, and to support various new diversity and inclusion-related initiatives.
- ❖ At the risk of overgeneralizing, faculty and students in the more scientific and high-technology colleges were less likely than were those in other colleges to report being treated unfairly or to suggest evidence of discrimination, and less likely to be supportive of agendas in support of expanded diversity, inclusion and climate change.
- ❖ Diversity and inclusiveness were frequently defined in terms much broader than in just racial/ethnic/cultural terms
- ❖ There is a clear consensus among all surveyed groups that the campus does not provide a strong sense of community. Faculty and especially students were most likely to report the absence of a perceived sense of community. Overwhelming support exists from all groups on campus for the value of improving physical surroundings and comfortable spaces on campus to create increased interaction opportunities.
- ❖ The need for more mixing of students and faculty across colleges and across various support groups and student clubs was noted as a means of breaking down barriers between groups on campus.
- ❖ Faculty and staff both expressed strong support for paying more attention to ways of welcoming and providing support for all new hires, and for a more formal mentoring system for all new faculty and staff.
- ❖ Most students, faculty and staff question whether RIT does as good a job as it should in seeking out opinions and advice from various constituency groups concerning how to make improvements on campus.

- ❖ There is a great deal of pride about RIT among more than three-quarters of all staff and faculty; most students also feel pride in the institution, though the proportion drops to 58%. Two-thirds of the students, and more than 80% of faculty and staff, would recommend RIT to other prospects. Thus there is a reservoir of goodwill toward RIT among the vast majority of the University's constituency groups.
- ❖ Even though there are numerous "favorable" findings from the surveys, with majorities and even substantial majorities in support of various concepts and initiatives, sizable minorities of the respondents on most items expressed less positive perspectives. RIT will need to decide what levels of "favorable" and "less favorable" response rates it wishes to strive for in the future, in terms of improvement over the current baseline profiles. There are few norms, or national guidelines or comparable benchmarks, for RIT to use in comparing its performance. As a result, it will need to engage in a thoughtful process of defining what it considers to be the strategic directions it wishes to explore and the changes it wishes to implement, and then to set targets for improvement that seem realistic and acceptable in terms of the questions most likely to be affected by those strategic initiatives.

Opportunities and Suggestions for RIT Consideration

CGR was asked to provide some overall suggestions concerning opportunities which we believe RIT can take advantage of as it develops its responses to the Climate study findings. The policies, strategies, detailed approaches and next steps are of course up to the University and its various constituent groups to determine, but some broad concepts and opportunities may be helpful in building a foundation for the types of changes needed to make RIT a more diverse and inclusive campus in the future.

- ❖ ***Diversity and inclusiveness at RIT need to be addressed in the larger context of the overall campus climate and environment. That is, many of the issues related to becoming more diverse and inclusive will be addressed if the University is able to develop a greater sense of community, becoming more friendly and welcoming and supportive of all people on campus, regardless of their racial/ethnic, gender, academic discipline, or hearing/non-hearing identities. Issues of increasing diversity, inclusiveness and cross-cultural understanding cannot easily happen in isolation, without focusing on improving***

the overall campus-wide climate and creating a more welcoming and supportive environment overall.

- ❖ While it is important to focus on increasing the numbers of underrepresented racial/ethnic minority students and employees on campus, it is just as important, though perhaps harder, to ***create an environment in which sharing of diverse ideas, experiences and backgrounds is actively supported, encouraged and celebrated as a value. In the long run it is what will make it possible to sustain a truly diverse and inclusive campus, and to help assure that greater numbers of minority students, faculty and staff will be attracted initially to the campus, and will be motivated to stay.***
- ❖ The First Year Enrichment orientation initiative offers a key place to begin to create such an improved inclusive climate and sense of community. Since some colleges and departments are not very diverse racially/ethnically, or by gender, having a primary focus on bringing students together at the college or departmental level can have the unintended effect of not only isolating students by academic discipline, but also in many cases creating de facto a sense of racial/ethnic, and perhaps gender, isolation as well. ***Modifying the excellent foundation of the FYE initiative by supporting the conscious mixing from the first day on campus of people in groups across college/departmental, racial/ethnic, and faculty/staff/student lines can have significant implications for creating a greater sense of diversity and community across campus in the future.***
- ❖ ***Emphasis should also be placed on striving to increase the numbers of racial/ethnic minority students, faculty and staff throughout all aspects of campus life, so representation increases over time in classrooms, on committees, in campus leadership positions at all levels.***
- ❖ ***RIT should continue to focus on creating more comfortable physical spaces, both large and small, where people from various sectors of campus life and backgrounds can congregate and mix informally to help break down barriers between groups. Similarly, ways should be explored to consciously bring people together throughout the academic year in various settings and events across colleges, racial/ethnic groups, student/faculty/staff groups, and***

student support groups and social clubs to further reduce isolation and help create a sense of community across campus.

- ❖ *Ways should be explored to strengthen formal mentoring, FYE and other broad efforts to welcome and support all new faculty, staff and students on campus*—not just singling out racial/ethnic minority newcomers for attention.
- ❖ *More focus should be placed on training and orientation of all in leadership/supervisory positions among faculty, staff and administration* concerning understanding cross-cultural differences, improved communications, resolving differences in sensitive ways, etc.
- ❖ In order to minimize resistance to such orientation efforts, it would make sense to treat such sessions as opportunities, rather than threats or suggestions that the sessions are for “punitive reasons.” *By placing the focus on the changing environment and makeup of the student body, faculty and staff, emphasis can be placed on the opportunity for those going through the training/orientation to anticipate and understand the changes; consider how the changes will affect behavior, teaching and learning styles, and expectations; consider how to break down and understand stereotypes; and be prepared to address changes sensitively and thoughtfully.*
- ❖ *Consideration should be given to creating a formal ombudsperson office or some related office of support for minority staff and faculty to address complaints and issues related to discrimination, perceived lack of support, and various concerns not addressed adequately through the normal chain of command.* Such an office may prove to be an important support mechanism that may be of considerable value in helping to convince prospective hires that the institution is serious about meeting needs of minority staff and faculty, and in helping resolve issues in ways that help improve long-term retention rates.
- ❖ *Particular attention may need to be given to an increasing focus on basic training in American Sign Language among all campus groups, and the need to address issues of perceived communications problems involving students and faculty with English as a second language.*

- ❖ ***Particular efforts should be made to bring faculty and students across academic disciplines together in various settings to explore differences as well as common ground and opportunities between them.***
- ❖ ***There appears to be a need to strengthen the performance appraisal and staff development functions across campus.*** These should perhaps become expanded responsibilities of Human Resources. The tenure system needs to be strengthened and made more consistent across academic disciplines.
- ❖ ***Ways should be considered to have the Human Resources function become a stronger support mechanism in partnership with staff and faculty hiring processes—***through helping search committees explore new approaches, new sources for identifying potential candidates, new criteria, and alternative paths to success without compromising quality standards.
- ❖ ***Consideration should be given to establishing a cross-cultural understanding course for all RIT students, regardless of academic major.***
- ❖ ***While primary attention may strategically continue to be devoted to addressing AALANA-related diversity issues, RIT may also wish to consider ways it can simultaneously address other forms of diversity issues as well.*** It may be that the suggested quality-of-life focus on inclusion and sense of community will help address diversity in the broader context.
- ❖ ***RIT needs to engage in a thoughtful internal process, perhaps with expert facilitation, of expanding its diversity and inclusion initiatives, involving all constituency groups in a process to effect change in a deliberate way that encourages all perspectives to be listened to and considered without fear of being ridiculed or put down.*** Such a thoughtful process, while time-consuming, should ultimately ensure decisions that have widespread support and that result in a changed climate and sense of community that truly supports and encourages expanded diversity and inclusion throughout all segments of the RIT campus.

Staff Team

Sarah Boyce conducted primary data analyses and wrote much of the report. Ruth Scott analyzed focus group and additional survey comments, and helped develop suggestions for RIT consideration.