RIT Department Head, Chairs, and Director’s Meeting: February 6th, 2015

Title: Leveraging Difference to AdvanceRIT

DEBRIEF

As part of an ongoing series of ‘unconscious bias’ education and professional development to expand the capacity of RIT to meet the goals of the 2014 Strategic Plan, the AdvanceRIT team hosted a workshop for the RIT Department Heads, Chairs and Directors’ Meeting on February 6, 2015.

The strategic plan presents inclusion at RIT as an economic imperative. The goal is an inclusive campus to insure that students and faculty alike can contribute to and benefit from being with Rochester Institute of Technology. We want to (in economics lingo) maximize the objective, subject to constraints, under uncertainty. In other words, get as close to the goal as possible, using the resources available to us and minimizing costs and other barriers, including uncertainty.

This goal was defined in terms of the strategic plan, and resources were presented as: department and individual strengths, best practices, commitment and tacit knowledge.

The purpose and objectives of the February 6 workshop were to

• Build awareness of RIT strategic objectives around inclusion (i.e., leveraging difference) and frame them into the business case of maximizing benefit and minimizing costs (monetary and non-monetary) for the university and its members.
• Identify the resources (i.e., strengths and best practices) to build upon to foster inclusion in efforts to attract, retain and graduate students, recognize how far we’ve come, and where to go from here.
• Build awareness of and appreciation for RIT objectives to attract, retain and graduate a more diverse population of students, and become a model for inclusion for faculty and staff, and review departmental progress on institutional objectives around hiring and promotion of women faculty.
• Reflect on departmental progress and the circumstances that influence their ability to progress.
• Identify immediate-term, short-term, medium-term or long-term actions at the department level that can move inclusion forward at RIT, and understand the influence that we have to affect biases and outcomes.
• Identify data and research needed by departments to move inclusion forward in collaboration with the AdvanceRIT team, and next steps.

Six workshop activities were designed to build participants’ awareness around these objectives and their role and influence in achieving them. This workshop did not deal with barriers (e.g., costs) that can be specific to a department or individual. Rather, the focus was on the strengths that exist and how individuals can build on those strengths to achieve RIT objectives to serve their own goals.

With this debrief, we share more about the learning objectives, and the results of the learning activities. We do not identify departments or participants, as the purpose is to provide a broad summary that highlights the workshop’s activities and the outcomes.

Session registrants numbered at 41 and included department heads, department chairs, and directors. The workshop was 3-hours long (9:00 am - noon), and many participants had to leave by the time we started the final activity. And yet, the number of responses reflects strong engagement in the dialogue we had started. It is recommended that these conversations continue.
Activity 1:  RIT Strategic Plan: Greatness Through Difference

To frame the workshop around something that is relevant to all participants, the newly adopted RIT strategic plan (November 2014) and several relevant difference maker and objectives were presented. The objectives all fell under one of the five pillars of the strategic plan, pillar #3 “Leveraging Difference”. This signals recognition of the value of the many things that make RIT unique, and a focus to build on that strength. Specifically, the workshop addressed objectives in Difference Makers III.5, III.7 and III.8.

Why is this important to me and my department?

What is good for RIT may not resonate with personal, professional and departmental goals and objectives. So the first activity addressed this question. Participants were given one minute to write down why Difference Maker III.5 and a corresponding objective were important to them and their department.

Difference Maker III.5: “RIT will be the largest producer of female, minority male, and deaf or hard-of-hearing STEM graduates among all private colleges in the U.S.”

The objective we focused on was “Develop 10-year plans for increasing the number and percentage of females, minority males, and deaf or hard-of-hearing students in STEM majors.”

As participants wrote their answers on post-it notes, assistant facilitators from the AdvanceRIT team collected them and placed them all on one of three sheets on the wall. The session’s facilitator, Linda Manning, revealed what the placement meant by explaining three general motivators for inclusion: Social Justice (doing the right thing); Compliance (satisfying requirements and regulations); and Self-Interest (what’s in it for me). The majority of the answers related to self-interest. Linda went on to explain in order to motivate long term and systemic change, all three motivators must be addressed—none can be overlooked. However, we often stop after the first two and forget the last one—which is the only one that ultimately will result in real change.

Results

The question asked was why is Difference Maker III.5 important to you and/or your department?

Social Justice is an important part of being human and being part of communities and social groups. We all want to do the right thing. But doing the right thing is often perceived to be too costly and loses to objectives that are seen to be more important at that moment. Also, the beneficiaries of social justice-related gestures run the risk of never being able to gain respect, even from those whose generosity helped them. So social justice as a motivator by itself tends not to get us very far. Some of the items that you reported on the post-it notes related to Social Justice were:

- To keep diversity in the workplace
- Increase diversity
- Great social objective
- Increase sensitivity to people with cultural diversity
- To make field less intimidating for female, minority, etc.
- There is an alarming low percentage (~10%) of women in computing industry, around the world and U.S.

Compliance is another strong motivator for change. It does not generally, by itself, serve as a long term motivator, nor does it provide incentive to do more. In fact, it can serve to trigger resistance. The example given in the workshop was a professor who assigns students to a minimum standard, e.g., their report must be at least 10 pages; they must complete at least 3 of the 6 assignments, etc. Human behavior responds to incentives—and most of the students will meet that minimum requirement but do no more (unless of course there is some other benefit they perceive—but more on that in a minute). The problem
with relying on compliance as the sole motivator is that it motivates the minimum. One post-it note fit in the **Compliance** motive which stated:

- My boss says it is.

**Self-Interest**, also essential, is the one that will drive change needed to achieve the RIT strategic goals. This is really the answer to the question, *what’s in it for me?* The Self-Interest sheet was the most interesting and heavily populated. Answers fell into 3 general types as shown below. The information in this table is an important step in understanding the needs of RIT Department Heads that might align with efforts for greater inclusion. A continued conversation around this topic is recommended.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Personal</th>
<th>Improve work satisfaction and performance</th>
<th>Enhance Department Strength and Brand</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I love being different. Personal core value</td>
<td>More interesting students</td>
<td>Diversity adds to new knowledge and new approaches to doing things. It will enhance our breadth.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Better effect student backgrounds</td>
<td>Ensure students are well-rounded and have liberal arts education.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pluralism and diversity in the classroom improves the dialectic</td>
<td>To ensure life science continues to be an attractive career for female and under-represented groups.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Increased enrollment</td>
<td>It will generate a stream of contributors with an array of perspectives to our classrooms and research projects that that we may otherwise not reach in the population.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Adds to different views in creative problem solving and prepares our students for new world workplace.</td>
<td>It’s important because prospective students and employers hiring our students care about this, we need to do this to stay competitive.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Better student experience</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Diverse approach to learning</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Enhances multi-inter-disciplinarily of program</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>[Increased] number of solution approaches</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- **Relevant workshop objective**: Build awareness of RIT strategic objectives around inclusion (i.e., leveraging difference) and frame them into the business case (motivations) of maximizing benefit and minimizing costs (monetary and non-monetary) for the university and its members.

**Activity 2: Student Recruitment & Retention**

Margaret Bailey and Betsy Dell gave a brief report on data exploring the question Student Recruitment & Retention: Does gender matter? We discussed women undergraduate representation trends at RIT for the past two decades and reported a high in 1997 of 33.9% and a low in 2004 of 28.7%. We also examined student graduation rate trends at RIT by gender. Data shared tracked freshmen at RIT from 2002 – 2006 and their graduation rates within 7.5 years of enrollment as first-year students. An example finding was:

For students who were freshmen in 2002, 63% of male and 75% of female students graduated within 7.5 years of enrollment as first-year students. Over the five years of data shown, women consistently displayed higher graduation rates as compared to the men (rate differences varied from 9% to 16% in favor of women graduation).
Departmental Strengths and Best Practices for Creating a Positive Departmental Climate for Students

Because the focus of this workshop is building on strengths and the data presented provided evidence of successes with regard to women student retention and completion, the next activity sought to reveal, from the perspective of the department heads, strengths and best practices to share with other department heads. Each table worked to compile the answers to the question: What are your departmental strengths and best practices for creating a positive departmental climate for students? Once completed, each table presented these to the group. Following is a sample of responses.

Results

Strengths

| Where we recruit | Targeted financial aid | Supportive student organizations |
| Curricular diversity | Small class sizes | Senior students interact w/freshmen |
| Advising system | Accessible/approachable faculty | Women in Technology (WIT) |
| Reputation | Teach diversity in classes | Ability to communicate In different ways |
| Co-ops/internships | Faculty role models for diversity | WE@RIT (women in engineering) |
| Alumni network | Faculty are student-focused | Large percentage of women faculty as role models |
| SWE, robotics | Students have direct line to chair |
| Tutoring practices | WISE Women in Science |

Best Practices

There were many best practices listed, and the table presentations were rich with information and detail. A continuation of this discussion and a method for sharing best practices is recommended. Again this list provides a general summary.

| Student support | Encourage collaborative work |
| Student participation in policy/governance | Student-faculty interaction outside classroom |
| K-12 outreach activities | Increasing number of women and minority faculty |
| Interdisciplinary opportunities | Programs and activities organized by women faculty |
| Peer tutoring | Use women/minority students for recruitment activities |
| Undergraduate research | Actively guide associate professors to become or stay integrated in research networks off campus |

Relevant workshop objective: Identify the resources (i.e., strengths and best practices) to build upon to foster inclusion in efforts to attract, retain and graduate students, recognize how far we’ve come, and where to go from here.

Activity 3: Difference Maker III.7

We shifted the focus of the workshop to Difference Maker III.7:

RIT will become a model of inclusive excellence for all faculty and staff in the areas of professional development and promotion.

Margaret Bailey and Betsy Dell presented recent data on faculty hiring, representation by rank and advancement (focusing on length in rank) by gender. A discussion with the group followed as participants posed questions. A 15-minute break followed. Participants were asked to think about the following.
question during the break: Were there any surprises in the data on women at RIT? During the break, the organizers distributed department-specific data on faculty length in rank trends by gender and faculty hiring activity by gender.

Relevant workshop objective: Build awareness of and appreciation for RIT objectives to attract, retain and graduate a more diverse population of students, and become a model for inclusion for faculty and staff, and review departmental progress on institutional objectives around hiring and promotion of women faculty.

Activity 4: Deepening the Dialogue – Department Level Faculty Data

After the break, participants were asked to review the department data sheets. Three questions were posed for their consideration:

- What statement can your table agree on to describe how you interpret the numbers?
- What surprises are there in the data for your department and college?
- Are there circumstances for your department, or factors outside your control (e.g. College, University, Economy) that influence your numbers?

Results

These responses may be too revealing to share in this report. Individual department heads are welcome to request the responses for their review. There were, however a few responses that several mentioned.

- Changes in requirements for promotion
- Perception of bias against certain types of research
- What would data look like with those who have no interest in promotion removed?

Relevant workshop objective: Reflect on departmental progress and the circumstances that influence their ability to progress.

Activity 5: Actions that Department Can/Should Make to Move Inclusion Forward at RIT

Participants were then asked to work at their tables, and based on what they had seen and heard in this workshop, to identify immediate-term, short-term, medium-term or long-term actions that your department can/should make to move inclusion forward at RIT. They were told to imagine that any resources they needed would be available so as to stretch their imagination. While not everyone labeled the actions they suggested, we have taken the liberty to categorize them and remove department labels.

Results

Short-term

- Full participation in diversity events
- Make sure diverse people are involved in recruiting
- Celebrate success
- Recognize important strategies for success
- Outreach to diverse pool through personal/professional connections, engage women in this activity
- Invest in valid, wider search
- Consider family spousal ramifications
- Invite Alvin Boyd (diversity-special assistant to NTID president) to share knowledge
- Attend diversity-related professional conferences
- Become more comfortable and familiar with our culture
- Scholarship productivity guidelines
• Faculty mentoring model
• College infrastructure to support scholarship
• Individual meetings with associate professors to develop plans

Medium-term
• Build additional relationships with doctoral programs, so that the fine features of our program reach more job candidates.
• Actively mentor our undergraduates, so each feels included and understands their future options (and planning necessary to reach their goals).
• More women/minorities in leadership positions
• Identifying exclusionary behavior and suggest/alternatives.
• Be open to feedback on biased behavior
• As chair, reach out to expand applicant pool
• Having a diverse graduate student population and pool to make connections
• Ensure outreach activities are consistent
• Start searches earlier
• Streamline paperwork
• Increase diversity student
• RADSCC- hosting a banquet celebrating black and deaf community
• Support for a cohort to finish Ph.D.
• Funding to balance/normalize teaching loads
• Faculty development
• Appropriate start-up packages
• Salary increases
• Faculty-sharing-SRS support required
• Build plan for associate professor mentoring
• Targeted hires- Not trades for retirements

Long-term
• Artifacts that symbolize exclusion in regards to women can be found around campus
• Mentoring
• Faculty-oriented version of WIC that focuses on both internal comradery & recruitment
• Training “leaders”
• Faculty “cohorts” concepts
• Personal connections
• Build rapport with K-12 and undergraduate students
• Improve weather
• Increased and renovated facilities
• Grandparent promotion policy for associates at rank – 9 years
• Mentoring progress to maintain and increase promotion

Relevant workshop objective: Identify immediate-term, short-term, medium-term or long-term actions at the department level that can move inclusion forward at RIT, and understand the influence that we have to affect biases and outcomes.

Activity 6: Deepening the Dialogue - Next Steps

At this point in the workshop, it was time to think about moving forward. Participants had looked inward, they had considered the existing strengths and good practices in their departments, they had been presented with campus-wide data as well as department-specific data. With all of these tools, it was time
to think about what next. Margaret and Betsy made a short presentation on some of the exciting initiatives taking place at RIT as a result of the NSF AdvanceRIT grant.

What other data and research do you need?

Participants were asked to answer one final question. As we move forward, what other data and research do you need? The answers to this question follow.

Results

- What percentage of terminal degree graduates are women/minority, especially in field/low in each?
- Local, regional national stats to compare. What schools succeed at diversity and why?
- Research on number of associate and full professors in each department and the inference of attracting new faculty.
- Promotion/advancement opportunities for professional staff that have Ed.D. and PhD degree and teach research experiences.
- Deaf/Hard of Hearing in STEM (growth, opportunities)
- Deaf gender, race, ethnicity, engineers
- Student-faculty interaction
- What is the best practice in engineering/engineering tech education for the deaf?
- Where to find women for open positions?
- Data on micro inequities
- Research on micro inequities
- Research on voice
- Data from our peer universities
- Data on collaborations that have happened of an inclusive nature
- Specific examples and thoughts of faculty (women) who have come into this new environment-Post-AdvanceRIT
- Lecturers and Adjuncts (hiring, recruiting, data)
- Resources investment vs. Outcomes
  - Where are the critical investment strategies to achieve better women/minority inclusive environment (students and faculty)
- Recruitment and retention data on (female minority) students
- Research female/male faculty
- No idea what it’s like to be a woman or a minority
- Get some sense from exclusions due to being a white male, but limited distortion perception
- Michigan Player demoed some flags to watch for any other resources
- Experiences from candidates for hire or promotion where biased occurred, but maybe not perceivable to others
- Deeper data on female associate professors
  - Histogram of years at rank rather than averages
  - Intent to promotion: How many want promotion now or later?
- How to “sell” our degree programs to high school women
- How to tailor our message to be more inclusive

Relevant workshop objective: Identify data and research needed by departments to move inclusion forward in collaboration with the AdvanceRIT team, and next steps.