

Dear RPI Faculty member:

As you are undoubtedly aware, students and alumni have been faced with actions that will bring about the Rensselaer Union's loss of its long-term, student-run status. In the face of massive backlash by many students, alumni, and faculty after the revelation of the administration's plans, the administration has been forced to respond and dissemble. But a careful reading of administration and Trustee responses reveals that they have no intention of changing course in the long-term, and have not learned to respect their fellow stakeholders in the stewardship of our institution.

The gravity of our present situation is extraordinary. Just as we students are fearful to risk putting our names to a letter such as this, many of you feel intimidated to speak up as individuals and as faculty. The loss of these voices is to the detriment of the educational experience and the long-term viability of the institute. Today the Institute stands at a crossroads that harkens back to the unilateral suspension of faculty governance by the Board of Trustees nearly a decade ago. But just as these are worrying times, they are also times for action. If the Institute's course is not reversed, there will be no hope for even limited forms of shared governance on campus.

RPI is, before all else, an academic community founded on principles of collegiality, open discussion, and shared governance — though our leaders may sometimes turn away from those values. Throughout our history, campus governance bodies from the Board of Trustees to the Faculty and Student Senates have enacted worthwhile policies to preserve these values: guarantee of open discussion, free assembly, free press, and others. We can no longer stand by while an opportunist administration discards, at its whim, our Institution's framework of open and honest dealings in the campus community.

For a university to remain a forum of learning, discussion, and collegial debate, the actions of all must work toward furthering those values. Our faculty do not accept falsified lab results from their students or colleagues, our students do not accept teachings without factual basis, and our staff do not accept defective work that endangers us. In the same way, the community cannot accept unconscionable policy from administrators that violates our own Trustees' enactments. Nor can we accept efforts to compel our Board to bless those policies post-facto through ever more extreme fiats. We risk destroying students' faith in RPI, alienating our young alumni, and undermining the Trustees' legal and ethical authority to make commitments the community may rely on. If rules, laws, honest dealing, duties, and facts mean nothing in pursuit of "visions" to those who lead us, we have no university.

While the events of many years have revealed an Administration eager to collect and consolidate power within the University, the heart of RPI is its faculty. No other group is more essential to the mission that the Institute has carried forth for the past 192 years than its faculty. Your support both inside and outside of the classroom has not gone unnoticed.

While the situation may seem hopeless, we believe that hope for the future of this great school lies in individuals acting according to their reason and conscience, and refusing to capitulate the threats of the administration.