

Subject **The Rensselaer Union**  
From Arthur F. Golden '66, J.D., Chair of the Board of Trustees  
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**Rensselaer**

September 27, 2017

To: The Rensselaer Community  
From: Arthur F. Golden '66, J.D., Chair of the Board of Trustees  
Re: The Rensselaer Union

As Chairman of the Board of Trustees I write in part to respond to the Poly op-ed piece about the Union and to eliminate any confusion about its governance, and more broadly, to describe in simple terms my, the Board's, and Dr. Jackson's vision for the RPI Union and for the entire university.

The Union, if not entirely unique, is certainly very special. I view it as an ongoing exercise in providing the opportunity for students to play a major role in planning, managing, and running what is now a large and diverse business. The goal is enhancing the educational development and business experience of the students - a kind of "lab course" in acquiring and applying business skills that I believe is offered nowhere else. Dr. Jackson and I expect that to continue and we spend many hours discussing ideas (mainly her ideas) for continuing the broadening and improvement of the student experience.

But today's Union is a much different entity than it was 50 years ago, when I and others of my generation were students. Its annual budget is now in the millions of dollars, and the activities encompassed within or affiliated with the Union (such as the Archer Center leadership program and the relationship the Union will have with the implementation of the new Arch program) are vastly broader and more intertwined with RPI's educational programs than anything one could have imagined 50 years ago. And there is also a need and responsibility to be sure that the Union's employee relations, activities, and programs - like all behavior, activities, and

programs that have any connection to the university - comply with all applicable laws and are implemented and operated in a completely inclusive and welcoming and non-discriminatory fashion.

So, how to blend these present-day needs with our vision and goals for the Union and for the entire university? Our objective is always to improve further the students' experience in all areas - everything we accomplish now is simply a new base for further development and broader and greater goals. We are not simply trying to preserve the past or maintain the status quo - RPI is about innovation and we are constantly trying to anticipate and be an increasingly important part of the future.

With respect to the Union, that means letting the students have as much responsibility for planning and execution as possible - but supervising this large and expanding enterprise as appropriate. With respect to the hiring (or firing) of the director of the Union - as is true for any important position at RPI - that is the ultimate responsibility of RPI's President, and I and the Board want and expect Dr. Jackson to make that decision. She and I have also discussed our shared desire for involvement of student leaders in that process to make sure their voice is heard. In that regard, Curtis Powell (our VP for Human Resources) has been key to this effort and proposed the innovative idea of involving student leaders in the interview process but first providing training to them in how to conduct such interviews - creating an educational event that will help them in their future careers. For that, and for the many other similar things he suggests, Curtis deserves our praise and thanks.

Because questions have been raised by some about where the ultimate authority for the Union resides, the Executive Committee of the Board has adopted a resolution (see below) confirming the authority the President has, and has always had. That resolution also expresses our (and Dr. Jackson's) expectation that the Union "will continue to run and thrive as it has for many decades." We fully expect and want the "lab course" to continue.

Speaking more broadly, I see and expect the evolutionary path and upward trajectory of RPI to continue. In the almost 20 years since Shirley Ann Jackson arrived on campus, we have seen many new programs and strong additions to our faculty and great improvements to the campus. The result has been approximately four times as many applications to attend RPI and the concomitant increase in selectivity that makes more students want to come here, and grad schools and employers more desirous of admitting or hiring our students. We provide approximately 90% of our students with financial aid - but in many cases we cannot provide enough for their needs or to compete with the other universities trying to recruit them.

Dr. Jackson, aside from being one of the most distinguished university presidents in

the country, has been and continues to be a true innovator and visionary for RPI - completely dedicated to it and to its students. She has my and the Board's admiration for her accomplishments to date and for her concern for our students. She has our complete support as she endeavors to raise the bar ever higher to further increase the total quality, desirability, and value of an RPI education.

## RESOLUTION OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES OF RENSSELAER POLYTECHNIC INSTITUTE

**WHEREAS**, the Board of Trustees of Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute ("Board") recognizes that a misunderstanding has developed regarding the hiring of a Director of the Rensselaer Union, which is a result, at least in part, from provisions in the Rensselaer Union Constitution;

**WHEREAS**, Article XIII, Section 10 of the Bylaws of Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute authorizes the Executive Committee of the Board to act for the Board of Trustees in all matters requiring action between meetings of the full Board, subject to certain exceptions not applicable to this Resolution;

**WHEREAS**, the Rensselaer Union is not a separate legal entity, but is an organization that is encompassed within Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute ("Institute"), and the Director of the Union is, formally and legally, an employee of the Institute;

**WHEREAS**, the Board, as the paramount governing authority of the Institute with responsibility to exercise all powers prescribed by the Act of Incorporation of the Institute and other applicable law, has adopted Bylaws that constitute the overarching governing document for the Institute;

**WHEREAS**, Article VIII of the Bylaws mandates that the "President shall, as educational and administrative head of the Institute, exercise a general superintendence over all the affairs of the institution, and bring such matters to the attention of the Board as are appropriate to keep the Board fully informed in meeting its responsibilities";

**WHEREAS**, a critical aspect of the general superintendence authority of the President is to make employment decisions on behalf of the Institute and to otherwise comply with all laws and regulations necessary to govern and operate the Institute;

**NOW, THEREFORE**, the Executive Committee of the Rensselaer Board of Trustees makes the following confirmatory declarations:

1. Any provision in the bylaws, constitution, charter, or other such rules, regulations, or governing documents of any Rensselaer-affiliated group that conflict with the Bylaws of the Institute are deemed unapproved by the Board and are superseded by the Bylaws to the extent they so conflict;
2. In accordance with the general superintendence authority over all affairs of the Institute delegated by the Board to the President of the Institute, any decisions on the hiring, formal reporting line, removal, and other terms and conditions of employment of the Director of the Union are to be made by the Institute under the authority of the President;
3. To avoid continued misunderstanding, the governing body of the Rensselaer Union is hereby requested to take appropriate action to ensure the Rensselaer Union Constitution, and any other documents governing the affairs of the Rensselaer Union, are brought into conformance with the declarations of this Resolution;
4. It is the Board's expectation that the Rensselaer Union will continue to run and thrive as it has for many decades: through the leadership and ingenuity of the students with advice and support of the Director of the Union and other members of Institute management team.