What's New(s) at RIC

Rhode Island College

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What are the possibilities available to Rhode Island College in the 1980s? Which of these possibilities can and should we pursue as an academic community? What resources will we require to attain the desired possibilities? What factors -- internal and external -- will shape both the possibilities and the prospect of our attaining them?

These are questions RIC faces as it ends one era and begins another. In 1979-80 we end a 30-year era in which each year there were more high school graduates than the previous year. In 1979-80 we enter an era in which there will be fewer high school graduates each year than in the previous years.

These thought-provoking paragraphs are the opening section in a 41-page, four-part paper by president David E. Sweet entitled "Rhode Island College in the 1980s: A Presidential Perspective." The paper has been prepared over the summer months to provide a departure point for planning at RIC as the college looks to the era of the 80s and beyond.

In outlining the purpose of the paper in its opening section, the president said, in part,

"My general purpose in preparing this paper is to assist RIC in taking another step in the dialectical process of developing and implementing the plans and operations required to meet the challenges and opportunities of the 1980s. Thus the paper will supply interested members of the College community, as well as interested persons outside that community, with information about my thinking and planning. Using this information, they can both be influenced by what I have said and influence and reshape my ideas as we carry out our various tasks and responsibilities.....

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President’s Column

The college’s main commitment is to excellence in teaching. Our primary mission is to students. They require good teaching. Moreover, such teaching is demanding, time-intensive work. While we can and should provide reduced teaching loads for those intensively engaged in particular research, publication, and service activities, such reductions must be the exception and not the rule. We must systematically identify and reward outstanding teaching. In general, excellence in teaching should be the first consideration in retaining and advancing faculty members at RIC.

Vice-president McMahon, the deans, and the faculty should jointly proceed with efforts systematically to identify and reward good teaching, and, for new faculty occupying full-time positions, one evidence of that should embrace a commitment to excelling in at least some aspects of teaching and to achieving and maintaining a satisfactory level of performance in all aspects.

In addition to its focus on excellence in teaching, however, RIC in the 1980s will also have important obligations and responsibilities. It is important that every permanent faculty member at the college have the demonstrated capacity to undertake research and publication in his or her discipline. (Those in studio and performing arts meet comparable standards in their productions and performances.) For new faculty occupying tenure-line positions, one evidence of that capacity should be possession of an appropriate terminal degree. In addition, every faculty member should should engage in college and community service which is directly related to the individual’s academic experience, education and responsibilities. The standards of the college for appointment, retention, tenure, promotion, and performance-based salary increases will be as set forth in its collective bargaining agreement, with the faculty should continue to require that every faculty member continue to engage successfully in research, publication and service throughout her or his affiliation with RIC. There are many reasons why research, publication and service are important qualifications for membership on the faculty. Among them: (1) Faculty members who do not engage in research, publication and service quickly lose sight of current developments in their disciplines. They cannot be the good teachers we expect them to be if they do not remain current. (2) Research, publication, and service activities provide an extramural evaluation of a faculty member’s knowledge and insights used in her or her teaching. Given the difficulty of reviewing the content and process of a faculty member’s teaching directly, it is often possible to review the quality of the faculty member’s knowledge and insights through his or her research, publication and academic-related service activities. Furthermore, such public exposure of a faculty member’s work is a protection against the possibility of too parochial a review when that review is conducted only at the hands of one’s immediate peers and colleagues. (3) Successful research, publication, and community service efforts on the part of a faculty member enhance the reputation of the institution as a whole.

That reputation is important to our students, who plan to enter graduate and professional schools or who seek employment in direct competition with graduates of institutions the reputations of which are significantly enhanced by the quality of the research, publication and community service done by their faculty. (4) Those faculty members whose primary contribution is their teaching also must constantly update their knowledge and teaching as they meet each new generation. This should involve important research on the current content of, and on learning and teaching in, the discipline. RIC can and should provide leadership locally, regionally, and even nationally in this type of research. It will enhance the reputation of the college, will assist in the validation of the teaching improvement efforts undertaken here, and will assist us in avoiding parochialism. (5) There is a significant place on the RIC faculty for some individuals whose primary contribution is in research and publication. It is quite clear that we cannot maintain significant graduate programs in any field in which we do not provide research, publication, and service leadership. Furthermore, in departments which offer only undergraduate programs, there are also scholars doing significant work. Such individuals provide one important kind of leadership necessary in any academic community. (6) The central public or community service which the RIC faculty performs is the education it provides to the students of all kinds who enroll. On the other hand, the knowledge and skills of our faculty and student body are also an important community resource. It is important to the community that this resource be available to assist the community in defining and solving its problems and in meeting its needs for educational, aesthetic, political, economic, health-related, and recreational services. When the college recognizes a faculty member for her or his service to the community or the college for purposes related to promotion, tenure, and performance-based salary increases, it should, however, distinguish between those services which a faculty member performs as a citizen on par with other citizens and those she or she performs as a specialist in a discipline. Only the latter should be considered in conjunction with the annual evaluation of the faculty member in question. In exceptional cases, however, would be an activity undertaken by an individual at the request of the college for community-college relations purposes.)

In order to enhance the status of research, publication, and service at the college, I recommend the establishment of a faculty-administration committee which should develop policies relative to the place of research, publication, and service at the college and identify obstacles to our achieving and maintaining that place for research, publication, and service.

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In preparing this paper I have kept constantly in mind that while I have neither a right nor a desire unilaterally to determine the Future of Rhode Island College, I do have a responsibility to lead the institution both in the development of plans for the future and in the realization of those plans."

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In addressing that responsibility the document reflects on the "underlying assumptions about the nature and purpose of education and about Rhode Island College." It focuses on the context within which the college will operate in the 1980s including the demographic factors affecting enrollment, restraints related to duplication of offerings among the sister state institutions, restraints related to workload issues, the restraints derived from the state's fiscal situation and policies, and those elements supportive of improvement and expansion. It also offers extensive thoughts on planning for the 80s, reviewing the various constituencies which the college serves, and the needs and desires of those constituencies. It includes a candid appraisal of failures and problems in the 1977-79 period, a "sampler" of accomplishments in the 1977-79 period and a review of planning activity for the past two years.

A fifth section of the paper, five pages setting out administrative goals and tasks for the 80s, has been circulated to participants in a day-long administrative conference held at the Faculty Center August 27. The conference group which included department chairs, deans, directors, and other administrators as well as members of the EOG was given the charge of reacting to and "refocusing" the 24 goals and tasks and submitting additional suggestions to the president.

In creating the original paper, president Sweet shared drafts with the vice presidents of the college, other officers and some members of the college community and sought their views. He also drew upon the opinions and information shared with him by various college units, committees and individuals.

Copies of the paper are available upon request at the president's office.

Focus on the Faculty

PAMELA IRVING JACKSON, assistant professor of Sociology/Social Welfare was one of 20 people selected to participate in a seminar on Quantitative Analysis of Crime and Criminal Justice Problems held at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor during the summer of 1979. Her expenses were covered by a grant from the Law Enforcement Assistance Administration.

Dr. Jackson also presented a paper describing some of her research in this area at the March 1979 meetings of the Eastern Sociological Society held in New York City. The paper, "On the Behavior of Law: Determinants of the Size of Municipal Police Forces," is co-authored with Professor Leo Carroll of the University of Rhode Island.

Newsletter Dates Announced

Eight issues of What's New(s) at RIC have been planned for the 1979 fall semester. A list of the publication dates and deadlines for each issue have been sent to the college's executive officers, deans, directors and all department chairs. Due to a typographical error, the publication date of the last issue of the semester was incorrectly listed as December 12. That issue of the newsletter will be published on Friday, December 14.

The continued support of the entire college community is essential to the successful dissemination of information on campus. All news items for the newsletter should be submitted in writing to the News Bureau, Roberts 111, by noon, Friday, one week prior to the publication date. Due to space restrictions the Office of News and Information Services reserves the right to edit information it receives for publication in What's New(s).
What's Happening - Music

A free public concert by the American Band will take place on Sunday, September 9 at 2 p.m. on the lawn of the Rhode Island Historical Society's John Brown House at 52 Power Street, Providence. The concert will mark the opening of an exhibition by the historical society on the band's long, rich history and the cultural context which produced it.

One of the nation's oldest continuing bands, the American Band's original charter dates back to 1837. The organization became internationally known under the direction of David Wallis Reeves, its leader from 1866 until his death in 1900.

Seeking to revitalize the band, Dr. Francis Marciniak, associate professor of music and director of bands at RIC, received the band's original charter in January 1979. A complement of about 45 musicians was recruited, many from area bands and RIC alumni. Working through RIC and the Rhode Island Historical Society, a concert series and the accompanying exhibit were developed. Additional grants and support were contributed by the Rhode Island Committee for the Humanities, the Rhode Island Council on the Arts, the Providence Public Library, the Rhode Island Heritage Commission and the Mary Dexter Chaffee Fund.

In addition to the September 9 concert, the band's director Dr. Marciniak will give a public lecture at the Museum of Rhode Island History on September 23 at 3:30 p.m. A second free concert will be presented at the Providence Public Library at 7 p.m. on November 8.

A blend of historic and current music will be offered at these concerts. More than half of the band's repertoire will be devoted to original compositions by D.W. Reeves. The remainder of the program will feature a selection of interesting, vital music being done today.

Performing Arts Series

A variety of programs have been scheduled for the 1979-80 RIC Performing Arts Series. Launching the season on Wednesday, September 19 will be a theatrical event, Miss Magarida's Way, starring Estelle Parsons. On October 23, the Ohio Ballet Company will perform, followed by a return of the celebrated Swiss mimes, Mummenschanz, on November 26.

To kick off the new year and the 1980 spring semester, a jazz program featuring the Gary Burton Quartet is planned for January 25. Inside Out, a presentation of dramatic readings with a history of Black Art and culture, is scheduled for February 22. For the last program of the season, the Bill Evans Dance Company will take the stage as part of a three-week residency in conjunction with the National Endowment for the Arts, the Rhode Island State Council on the Arts and Project Dance Rhode Island.

All events will be held in Roberts Hall Auditorium beginning at 8 p.m. Tickets go on sale approximately one week prior to the event at the Roberts Hall Box Office. Admission is $4.50 for RIC faculty/staff and $2.50 for RIC undergraduates.

President's Column

Continued

The Thorp Professorships and similar awards have recently been established to encourage research, publication, and service.

It is my hope that the college will continue to recognize excellent contributions in all three areas of the mission, teaching, research and service.