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# polytechnic

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Serving The Members Of The RPI Community Since 1885

## RPI employee discovers body in CII stairs

*Victim identified as Anson J. Tripp '00; medical examiner declares death a suicide*

MARCUS GRIEP  
Senior Reporter

Yesterday at around 10 am, a man was found dead in the south-east stairwell of the Low Center for Industrial Innovation.

The man was later identified as Anson Tripp '00, 29, of Amherst, Mass., according to Detective Sergeant John Cooney. At 5:40 pm, the results of an autopsy performed at Albany Medical Center were released, and the cause of death was ruled a suicide. Tripp, a brother of Alpha Phi Omega, had apparently reached his 29th birthday only a day prior to his death.

Tripp received his bachelor's degree in Computer Science and Mathematics while at RPI before attending the University of Massachusetts Amherst to pursue his master's. Family members told investigators that Tripp was in a state of mental duress leading up to his suicide and that they were concerned about his mental health. Cooney indicated that "RPI was a significant part of [Tripp's] life and, if anything, a positive part of his life." The circumstances leading up to Tripp taking his own life are still being investigated; however, Cooney offered a possible explanation for Tripp's choice to return to RPI yesterday, saying, "As we often see, a victim may seek comfort in going to someplace where he feels that it would be the safest to commit such a tragic act." Tripp traveled from Massachusetts to RPI early the morning of his death.

The death occurred when Tripp climbed over the railing of the ninth floor stairwell and then fell approximately five floors suffering multiple broken bones and severe head trauma, Cooney said. Prior speculation that the death was caused by a gunshot wound was determined to be false. The body was discovered by janitorial staff, and a member of the staff in the CII reported it to Public Safety. The Troy Police Department was dispatched to the scene, and emergency services personnel confirmed the death. According to Director of Public Safety and Emergency Management Jerry Matthews, interviews revealed that the last time someone saw Tripp alive was between 9:30 and 9:45 am in the CII.

Cooney deemed the incident "a very tragic incident that revolved around the life and times of the victim." He further stated that there was no reason to believe anyone was criminally involved.

The fatality caused ripples across campus. TPD initially deemed it to be a "suspicious" death even though there was no indication to believe that there was any public safety issue. Cooney stated that due to the nature of Tripp's death, however, the investigation was treated as a criminal investigation until shown otherwise. He also noted there was no reason to believe that there was any assailant or weapon used in the death. TPD quickly secured a perimeter and a lockdown of the CII was initiated



Blake Huovie/The Polytechnic

**TACTICAL UNITS GUARD** the entrance near where the body was found while the medical examiner surveys the scene inside. The body was transported to Albany Medical Center for the autopsy process.

by 11 am. Students, faculty, and staff in the building were asked to remain in their rooms until notified. By noon, GM Week elections at all polling locations were suspended.

According to Matthews, Troy SWAT received aid from the Colonie Police Department's SWAT unit to begin room-by-room evacuations of the CII. The escorted evacuations began at approximately 1:15 pm, he stated.

Due to the apparent nature of the incident, RPI administration and TPD determined that there was no imminent threat to campus. Still, the Institute initiated rehearsed action plans leading President Jackson to close the campus in a release sent out at 12:30 pm.

"In order to assure the safety of the Rensselaer campus, we have chosen to close the campus for the rest of the day," said Vice President for Administration Claude Rounds. All buildings on campus were locked down, and students were asked to return to their residences. Only essential staff was allowed on campus in restricted areas. Rounds deemed the Institute's decision to close campus a "conservative approach" to protect students and staff. "We consider any fatality to be a significant issue," he said. All student activities, including GM Week activities and sporting events, were cancelled.

The medical examiner was allowed to enter the building at about 2 pm. After performing an investigation at the scene, the body was removed to Albany Med for a full autopsy. Evacuations of the CII were completed at about 3:30 pm, and students were allowed back into the building with escorts to retrieve their belongings about an hour later.

Cooney praised the Institute for its work in responding to the incident. "The cooperative effort between RPI and [TPD] has been eye-opening for us," said Cooney. "It's an effort that never stopped as far as ensuring the safety of not only the RPI community, but the surrounding neighborhoods. RPI

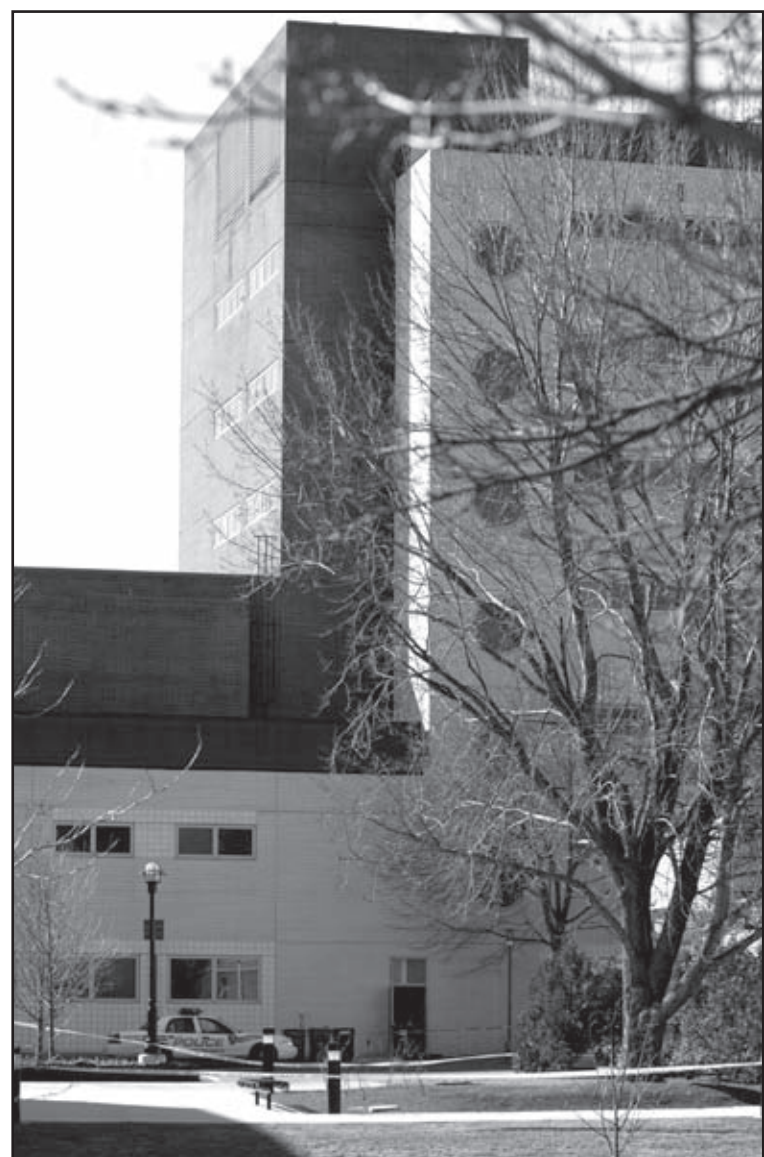
successfully partnered with us today in a way that was above and beyond anything that we would expect."

Counseling services and support will be made available to employees and first responders as well as to anyone else who may be affected by the event.



Courtesy of Mat Maessen

**ANSON J. TRIPP '00 ENJOYS** some nice weather with friends during a summer cookout.



Mike Ignacio/The Polytechnic

**POLICE TAPED OFF** the George M. Low Center for Industrial Innovation building yesterday after a body was found in a fire escape stairwell. The surrounding buildings were also behind police lines.

# LOCKDOWN at RENSSELAER timeline of events

**9:45 am**

Last time victim reportedly seen alive

**about 9:50 am**

Approximate time of death

**about 10:00 am**

Body discovered by E&SS

**10:00 am**

Troy Police Department notified of incident

**11:00 am**

Lockdown of CII initiated

**12:00 pm**

RNE suspends elections until further notice

**12:28 pm**

E-mail from President Jackson sent; Institute closes for rest of day

**1:15 pm**

Two SWAT teams (Troy and Colonie) arrived on scene, first press conference was held in Biotech Center

**2:00 pm**

Medical examiner enters CII to conduct investigation

**3:30 pm**

Evacuation of CII completed; body moved to Albany Medical Center for autopsy by ME

**4:30 pm**

Students allowed to retrieve belongings from CII with escort

**5:00 pm**

Name released after family was notified

**5:30 pm**

Second press conference held in Biotech Center, name and cause of death were confirmed

**5:40 pm**

Cause of death determined to be suicide



Timeline by Christopher Aiello/The Polytechnic  
Photos by Blake Huovie and Zach Baum/The Polytechnic

# RPI takes conservative actions

CARA RIVERSO  
Senior Reporter

At around 10 am Thursday morning, a Rensselaer employee discovered the body of Anson J. Tripp '00 in the stairwell of the Low Center for Industrial Innovation, who was—after later investigation—found to have jumped from the ninth floor.

Upon finding Tripp, RPI administrators responded very quickly by notifying the Troy Police Department. The two institutions worked closely throughout the day in an effort to determine exactly what had happened. Rensselaer County District Attorney Patricia DeAngelis was also on the scene.

An autopsy was conducted at Albany Medical Center Hospital, where the medical examiner determined that the cause of death was suicide. Due to the nature of the trauma to his head and body, however, the wounds were originally believed to be a result of a weapon, which evoked a quick reaction from the RPI administration.

Since the incident was originally deemed a "suspicious death," RPI responded by imposing a self-initiated closure of the campus, canceling all classes and locking down the CII building. All operations on campus—such as business, administration, and sports—were suspended as well.

Over two dozen armed, specially-trained police officers from both Troy and Colonie worked jointly to sweep through the CII following the lockdown in a lengthy evacuation procedure to secure the building, which took a few hours. Other officers followed with shields, dressed in camouflage.

Students in the CII received a shock when police officers interrupted their classes around 11 am and informed them that the CII building was on lockdown. "They couldn't tell us anything about what happened, but a TA went online and



Blake Huovie/The Polytechnic

**STUDENTS WERE RELEASED from the building after several hours of thorough investigation during the lockdown.**

looked at the press releases about it," said Zack Bross '10.

Those students in CAD sections were not overly concerned until several SWAT team members came into the room, according to David Archibald '10. "They came in full camo and told us to put our hands above our heads. Then, they sent us out of the room one by one and patted us down. As we were leaving, an investigator asked us if we had seen anything unusual during the day."

"In the end, all we really had to put up with was a 3-hour CAD session," said Bross, "but the administration handled things really well and efficiently."

Due to the fact that the Rules and Elections Committee office was also located on the eighth floor of the CII, the elections were suspended until today. All ballots cast Thursday, however, are still valid, and under lock and key at the poll sites. Students who voted on Thursday should not vote again or they will invalidate their votes, said Chris Kearns, chair of RNE.

Students were allowed to return into the building to retrieve their belongings a few hours later in the day. Tripp's car was also found on campus and a state police dog team was brought in to investigate it to make sure it was safe to open. Once cleared by police, it was towed.

Vice President for Administration Claude Rounds said during an RPI press briefing that the campus was taking a "very conservative approach" to handling the incident, and taking all possible precautions.

"There were some extraordinary measures taken today for some very legitimate and very proper reasons," said Detective Sergeant John Cooney of the Troy Police Department.

The administration is currently doing what it can to help students who are upset about the incident. Counseling is available to all students and faculty who have been affected.

RPI will resume all classes and campus operations today, and will be operating on a normal Friday schedule.

## Change of plans...

### Elections Continue Today

DCC Great Hall - 10:00 am-4:00 pm  
Union West Lobby - 10:00 am-7:00 pm  
Commons Lobby - 10:00 am-7:00 pm  
Houston Field House - 6:00-8:00 pm

GM Week Mugs will be available at the above poll sites.

If you voted in the final elections yesterday, do not vote again today.  
Your vote has already been counted.

### Counseling Center

Student Health Center  
518-276-6479

The following individuals contributed to this report:

- Robyn Marquis
- Ben Levinn
- Christopher Aiello
- Marcus Griep
- Cara Riverso
- Blake Huovie
- Zach Baum
- Mike Ignacio
- Sovan Gusack
- Lyle Newman

On behalf of the entire Polytechnic staff, I would like to send my deepest sympathy to the friends and family of Anson Tripp, and to those affected across campus. Please look for a memorial piece in our next issue on Wednesday, April 4.

Robyn Marquis  
Editor in Chief