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Baseball splits weekend

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Season 2 of podcast thrills weekly

EDITORIAL Page 10

Maria Kozdroy

Tips for accepted students and why I chose to go to RPI

Staff Editorial

The Poly thanks those students who came out to EMPAC protest

STUDENT ACTIVISM

Student protest goes undeterred

Hundreds of students rally outside EMPAC meeting over Union situation

Jack Wellhofer
Maria Kozdroy
Elisabeth Ryan
Maria Jue
Senior Reporters

“FREEDOM REQUIRES NO PRIOR APPROVAL!” declared Professor Bill Puka to nearly 1,000 students, faculty, and alumni who gathered to express their discontent with Rensselaer’s administration in a peaceful protest.

Following a *Washington Post* report on the Institute’s finances and disgruntlement over proposed Student Life changes, among other grievances, students at RPI spent the previous week organizing an event in front of the Experimental Media and Performing Arts Center.

Posters and social media posts flooded the campus in an effort to get the word out. “2 pm, EMPAC” and “Save our Union” were common themes among announcements. Puka invited students to join his Ethics and Democracy class for their annual Spring Serenade, this year held in front of EMPAC from 2–5 pm on the day of the Spring Town Meeting.

“I was a bit worried in the beginning,” said Jeremy Feldman ’16, “but then I started seeing a trickle of students down the hill. I was re-



Sidney Kochman/The Polytechnic

MEMBERS OF THE RENSSELAER COMMUNITY HOLD signs on the path leading to EMPAC to protest a perceived lack of communication from Institute administrators regarding pressing issues.

ally proud to see students get off the internet and head down to EMPAC.

Students raised signs, including “Resilience ≠ Silence” and “Why Not Change the President?” playing on this

year’s theme of “Resilience” and the school’s motto, “Why Not Change the World?”

“For too long, RPI students were afraid to say anything,” trumpeted Emi Phillips ’17.

“When this event was being planned, too many people were afraid that they would lose financial aid, they would be fired from

See PROTEST, Page 4

SPRING TOWN MEETING

President addresses concerns

Members of the Editorial Board

ON MARCH 30, 2016, THE ANNUAL SPRING TOWN Meeting was held in the Experimental Media and Performing Arts Center Theater. President Shirley Ann Jackson diverged from her prepared speech to speak directly on the topic of the Rensselaer Union and the state of the Institute’s finances. She opened the meeting with an affirmation of her “great respect for the history and functions of the Rensselaer Union.”

She went on to say, “the Board of Trustees does have the ultimate authority for the Union, as it does for the university as a whole. And, therefore, it is appropriate for the trustees to, in fact, look at the *Union Constitution* and to decide what ‘independence’ and ‘autonomy’ mean.”

While the Board of Trustees is discussing the *Union Constitution* and considering any necessary amendments, the search for an individual to fill the position of Executive Director of Student Activities and the Director of the Union was suspended. Subsequently, the meeting was opened up for questions from the audience.

The first question posed of the afternoon: “You mentioned that you think that the Union was an important part of our history. But you specifically didn’t say the future. Where do you think the Union lies in our future as an Institution?”

Jackson gave her stance by stating that she has “no intention of having the Union go away,” and that the

idea of which has been exaggerated. She went on to declare that the Union plays a role on campus; however, the question of autonomy is what really needed to be addressed. She reiterated the need for autonomy to be defined and clarified by the Board of Trustees. Finishing off her answer, she declared the the Union is “very important” and that she “respect[s] the tradition and what we need to keep doing as an Institute.”

The next individual to pose a question expressed less concern over the creation of the position of Executive Director of Student Activities. Rather that “it seems as though the Institute looked at what did the students need[ed] and it was more on the side of our activities.” The questioner went on to clarify that in fact the majority of students were more interested in the revamping of facilities and reevaluation of dining meal plans.

Jackson cited instances in the past when student concerns were brought forward and fixed, one such example was the increased space in Russell Sage Dining Hall. For, as she states, “I cannot fix what I do not know of,” alluding to the broken communication between administration and students.

Jackson continued to explain, “fairly early in my tenure here, I used to walk the campus. I used to walk it from Burdett Avenue to 8th Street at night. And that was long before the Student Union and so on started walking the campus. And I would take the Vice President for Administration

See JACKSON, Page 4

STUDENT SENATE

Campaign for GM, PU launches

Elisabeth Ryan
Senior Reporter

THE STUDENT SENATE MEETING opened Wednesday, March 30, with a presentation by the Rules & Elections committee. With Grand Marshal Week nearly here, campaigning is in full swing. One form of campaigning that candidates have taken is using Facebook profile photo filters. Members of R&E were in speculation over whether or not this is an active form of campaigning; the committee has ruled that it is not.

The Academic Affairs Committee is working on their end of the year presentation and are enjoying continued support from the School of Engineering. They have expressed concern over the new Summer Arch program and are interested in collecting

See STUGOV, Page 2

Serving the Rensselaer community since 1885

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StuGov: Senate discusses GM Week referenda

From **Page 1**

students interested in getting involved on the subject. For those interested, contact scotts@rpi.edu.

The Hospitality Services Advisory Committee brought up a popular complaint amongst students: the lack of self-service in Commons Dining Hall. A poll was made last year of students' opinion of the food at Commons, and thoughts for creating a similar poll for this year were mentioned.

The Student Life committee reached out to the Auxiliary, Parking and Transportation Services over the topic of shuttles to Crossgates Mall. They reported there was enough funding to run three trips a semester and the on-campus white busses would be used. A digital sign-up form will be created. If proven successful, there is potential for trips to be made to other destinations, such as the airport, train station, and bus station.

SLC is still making reviews of the clustered access proposal, which would garner RPI students universal access to the on-campus residence halls. A survey was sent out by the Resident Student Association. The survey rated the different conditions of the residence halls, outlining what should be changed or added.

The Web Technologies Group again announced their website for the upcoming GM Week elections and it can be found at <http://elections.union.rpi.edu/>. Beyond repairs to the student government web-based document archive Flagship Docs, they are working on creating a new service. The app would follow a student from their freshman year through to graduation, filled with information pertinent to that student, such as major-specific coursework, learning management system, health and wellness, and other extensions. They are currently open to ideas.

The Graduate Council announced a stipend increase for graduate students of \$3,000. Beyond this update, graduate research continues, and graduate student events persist.

The "Preserve the Student Union" petition on the RPI petitions website garnered the largest number of student signatures in the shortest amount of time ever. In seven hours, 442 students signed and committed themselves to the cause of the petition. The author of the petition, Greg Bartell '17, presented before the Senate with a suggested motion stating: "The Rensselaer Union 46th Student Senate hereby resolves: 1. To recommend to the President of the Institute and Board of Trustees the institution of a system where recent alumni are appointed as members of the Rensselaer Board of Trustees, to be voted on by each graduating class and serve a two-year term exempt from fundraising requirements. 2. To recommend to the President of the Institute and Board of Trustees the restoration and creation of proper channels for communication between students and the President, the Chairman of the Board of Trustees, and relevant trustee committees. 3. To recommend to the President of the Institute and Board of Trustees the recognition of the Rensselaer Union as a true auxiliary service of the Division of Student Life."

The Senate was torn on whether or not to pass this motion before creating referenda to gather student opinion. Bartell responded with the point that students were in support of the peti-

tion based upon the sheer speed at which they agreed. Members of the Senate responded with their worry over appealing to the Board of Trustees without the necessary data and have composed and issued referenda to the student body.

An idea to split the motion into three separate motions, with separate committees to target their individual purposes, was made and voted upon. The vote failed, and the motion remained intact. After much debate and discussion, an amend-

ment was made to the end of the motion. The amendment charged these resolutions to an ad hoc committee. The motion was tabled until the next week's meeting.

The referenda created in response to this petition are listed below.

Should the position Executive Director of

Should only student government—in conjunction with the Director of the Union—govern the future of the Rensselaer Union?

– GM Week 2016 Referendum 5

Student Activities have administrative jurisdiction over the Rensselaer Union?

Do you support the addition of student elected recent alumni to the Board of Trustees?

Do you support student access to Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute's bylaws?

Do you support restarting the practice of Student Senate discussion and endorsement of any changes made to the Student Handbook of Rights and Responsibilities?

Should only student government—in conjunction with the Director of the Union—govern the future of the Rensselaer Union? ♦

EXECUTIVE BOARD

Club volleyball to continue varsity status bid

Jack Wellhofer
Senior Reporter

AFTER A WEEK OF INTENSE DISCUSSION OF the Rensselaer Union, the Executive Board's meeting on Thursday, March 31, turned its focus back to the clubs.

Members of club volleyball came before the E-Board to seek approval to begin the process of reaching varsity status for women's volleyball. Currently, there are only three teams in the Liberty League that do not have a varsity women's team, and one of the three is in the process of gaining varsity status.

The members present, Anna Thonis '17, Mara Giga '19, and Rachel Haskell '16 cited that the worldwide growth of the sport, especially among women, is an important fact to consider. They

said that the sport is fast-paced and exciting to watch, so high turnout for their games should be expected.

Graduate student Jen Church asked what power the E-Board had, because athletics was removed from their budgeting process in February. Director of the Mueller Center Steve Allard said that the E-Board would need to approve them to seek varsity status and that they would leave the Union's budgeting process if they were granted it.

Jeremy Feldman '16 asked how an upgrade to varsity status would change the budget for Fiscal Year 2017. Allard was again able to respond, saying that it was unlikely the process would move that fast as to affect FY17, but that the Union would hopefully know by the time budgeting for FY18 occurs.

Club volleyball was approved to seek varsity status in a 10-0-1 vote.

Devin Glenn '16 came to the E-Board to seek approval to charge an entrance fee for the Evening of Jazz. The event is usually held in the Chapel + Cultural Center, but Glenn proposed moving it to the upper floor of Russell Sage Dining Hall.

Sodexo has said that the price for dinner would be just under \$12, so the Jazz Ensemble would charge \$15 dollars for non-students and \$10 for students. Ines Roman '16 asked if they had enough money to cover the situation where a disproportionate number of students attend the event. Glenn told the E-Board that if that were the case, money would come from their budget. The motion to approve Jazz Ensemble to charge admission to their event was approved 12-0-0.

Glenn was also there to request that the Rensselaer Music Association donate older, less used material to the Folsom Library to free space in RMA's storage. The library has been notified of the proposal and is prepared to take in the material.

Joshua Rosenfeld '16 wanted to know if the music was originally part of the RMA and if the rights could be sold by the Union. Glenn said that most of the music was purchased by the Institute when RMA was part of the arts department and that selling the music was not feasible. RMA was approved to move material from their music library in a 12-0-0 vote.

Flying Club was seeking approval to, as Alex Benzell '16 put it, "buzz the tower." Members of the club are looking to restart an annual aerial tour event. At this time, the

Flying Club is not seeking subsidies for flight time, just approval for them to start the program again.

The proposed cost is \$15 per person, slightly less than what it would cost four people to split the cost of flying the four-seater Cessna 172s that the club flies. This is because if a pilot's flight time is paid for, the FAA considers them a commercial pilot. The proposal was approved 12-0-0.

The last club on the agenda was Ski and Snowboard Club. Rosenfeld was in attendance to seek funding to cover the cost of their spring general body meeting. Last fall, the club spent their entire food budget because of an unexpectedly high attendance. They are expecting an equally high attendance and want to be prepared to provide pizza for all members.

The E-Board wanted to know if it was possible to refund members for the abysmal season this year. However, Rosenfeld said that most of the cost did not go through the club, only the \$25 membership fee, and that, if they were to refund everyone, it would have to be individually appealed and voted on according to their bylaws.

During the Director's Report, Business Administrator Martha McElligott and Allard told the E-Board that they were looking to hire a Facilities Assistant. This role would be to assist the current Facilities Manager with ongoing tasks. The E-Board approved the position 12-0-0.

McElligott and Allard also spent time collecting old copies of the *Union Constitution* to create a timeline of the changes that have occurred in the Union over the past decade. President of the Union Nick Dvorak '16 with the help of Grand Marshal Marcus Flowers '16 and other members of the community spent Friday, April 1 organizing a timeline to bring to their Saturday meeting with the Board of Trustees the following day. With that, the meeting concluded. ♦



Jack Wellhofer/The Polytechnic

STUDENTS FROM THE RPI FLYING CLUB COME before the E-Board in order to get approval to restart an aerial campus tour program.

WORLD NEWS

Panama Papers expose huge web of corruption



Courtesy of Bertil Enevag Ericson/AP

FORMER PRIME MINISTER OF ICELAND SIGMUNDUR DAVID GUNNLAUGSSON RESIGNED on April 5th after evidence of his illegal money laundering came to light.

Nathan Dorer
Senior Reporter

AT THE BEGINNING OF THIS MONTH, Panamanian law firm Mossack Fonseca made international headlines following the leak of 11.5 million documents detailing their clients and business practices. Since its founding in 1977, Mossack Fonseca has specialized in the creation of offshore tax accounts, which are often used in an effort to avoid taxes or launder money. While the use of these accounts is not explicitly illegal, the release of these documents demonstrates the amount of wealth that is effectively being hidden from governments by implicated parties around the world. Consisting of 2.6 terabytes of data, the newly dubbed Panama Papers are believed to be the largest data leak to have ever occurred.

The papers first found their way to the hands of the press in late 2014, according to Director of the International Consortium for Investigative Journalism Gerard Ryle. In an anonymous email, the source contacted the Munich-based newspaper *Süddeutsche Zeitung* with the intention of releasing “more [data] than you have ever seen.” After acknowledging that the data leak was too large for a single newspaper to handle, *Süddeutsche Zeitung* contacted the ICIJ to assist in the collections of the files. Much of the information about the data leak was composed over Pretty Good Privacy-encrypted email chats, and the data was gradually released from the source in the form of encrypted hard drives until the entire database of 11.5 million files could be compiled.

The entirety of the data has yet to be released to the public, largely in concern for the repercussions the documents could have if they were released without review. The documents hold the details of over 214,000 offshore accounts, in addition to detailed descriptions on how the assets were hidden from home countries. In light of the data leaks, Mossack Fonseca has released a statement acknowledging that they have encountered a breach in their servers, and stated that “our company does not foster or promote unlawful acts.” The full statement is available at <http://poly.news/s/myn2l/>.

The analysis of the leak have suggested otherwise. The British Broadcasting Corporation has reviewed the documents from the leak, and has suggested that US life coach and millionaire Marianna Olszewski has been offered fake ownership records in an attempt to hide her assets from the US government. Additionally, the Panama Papers have revealed a suspected money-laundering scheme connected to close associates of Vladimir Putin believed to be on the scale of \$1 billion. On April 5, 2016, the Prime Minister of Iceland Sigmundur David Gunnlaugsson resigned from public office amid public protests over his links to an offshore company as revealed in the papers released. The documents released have indicated more than 400 clients in the US and operations all around the world.

While none of the allegations asserted by the papers have been confirmed, the data leak serves to indicate foreign accounts held by 12 current or former heads of state, in addition to nearly 60 other people

who are directly connected to current or former world leaders. These documents serve to show nearly every operation that has occurred within

the law firm for the past 39 years, and demonstrate the extent to which governments have lost revenue. “I think the leak will prove to be prob-

ably the biggest blow the offshore world has ever taken because of the extent of the documents,” Ryle said in a statement. ♦

A Vollmer Fries Lecture

The McKinney Writing Contest

READING

Novelist and Short Story Writer

STEVEN MILLHAUSER

Reads from his work and responds to questions

WHEN: Wednesday, April 13th, 8:00 PM

WHERE: Biotech

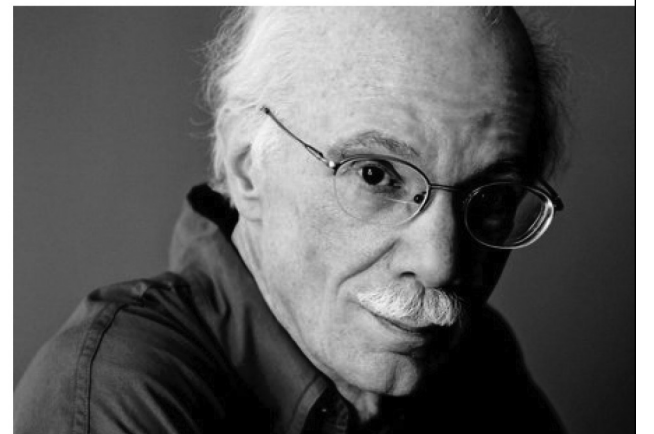
Auditorium

Biotechnology &

Interdisciplinary Studies

Bldg., Rensselaer (RPI),

Troy



Winner of the 1997 Pulitzer Prize for his novel, *Martin Dressler: The Tale of an American Dreamer*, and winner of the 1994 Lannan Literary Award for Fiction and the 1987 American Academy Institute of Arts and Letters Award for Literature

FREE AND OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

Protest: Students gather with signs, outcry

From **Page 1**

jobs, they would be kicked out. The fact that people are afraid to say that something is wrong means that something is fundamentally wrong.”

“The discontent of students is palpable,” Grand Marshal Marcus Flowers '16 told *The Poly*. “But it’s not our job as student leaders to get angry; it’s our job to take these concerns to the discussion table. And if we get kicked away from the discussion table, it’s our job to come back again, and again, and again until the students get what they need.”

Other attendees observed the crowd from afar. Jane Edgington '18 said, “I’m really impressed with the policy efficacy of RPI students and it’s something obviously that a lot of people care about ... I think it’s time students had a voice in something.”

A member of the Class of 2016 told *The Poly* that “it’s good to see students taking a stand.” A student from the Class of 2017 said that she was “really happy to see this turnout,” and was expecting closer to 100—not nearly 1,000—students to attend.

As students were let into the EMPAC Theater, those in the back of the line found themselves sitting in the lobby listening to and watching the live stream of the meeting taking place in the closed auditorium. Protesters referred to the theater as an omniscient “within,” and many voiced their confusion over why the smaller auditorium was being utilized when a large number of people were interested in getting inside.

The protest continued through the afternoon, with students, faculty, and alumni taking turns on the megaphone to express their discontent. Some shared stories, others took time to commend those officials present, such as Public Safety and RPI Ambulance. Along that strain, students praised their professors who “laid their



Kay Sun/*The Polytechnic*

PRESIDENT SHIRLEY ANN JACKSON SHAKES hands with a student outside of EMPAC after her Spring Town Meeting. Dr. Jackson left her personal car outside of the building, instead opting to walk to meet protestors as well as singing the *alma mater*.

job on the line” in the face of this administrative disgruntlement.

When energy seemed to wane, the crowd would rally in a robust round of singing the *alma mater*. Dr. Jackson was greeted to this upon her exit of EMPAC and joined in. Many students later remarked that they found it both a sound political move on her part, while others considered it lacking sincerity. Capping off her presence at the

protest, Jackson shook the hands of a few students, and walked off the scene back to her office in the Troy Building.

A small group of students attempted to swarm Dr. Jackson and her staff, but the great majority persisted in maintaining the peaceful quality of the protest and stopped the insurgent few.

The Poly has placed an open call for an Advertising Director. If you would like more information, send an email to ads@poly.rpi.edu.

Jackson: Meeting brings campus worries to light

From **Page 1**

and Public Safety and even students to walk the routes that students would walk and look at where it seemed dark, where people would get nervous, and because of that we changed the whole lighting scheme, on the

campus, you know, you could argue about whether we need more or whatever, as well as putting more emergency call boxes.”

Grand Marshal Marcus Flowers '16 posed a question about two-way communication to Jackson, asking if Jackson would “be interested

in quarterly meetings with the student leaders so that way [they] can hopefully bridge these gaps in communication and move forward together.” She replied, “Don’t vilify me at the press and then say you want to come and talk to me. Ok, don’t sign on to, you know,

nasty emails and say you want to come talk to me. Don’t start the whole protest with misleading information about where I stand on the Student Union and then say you want the communication. I’m happy to talk to you Marcus, anytime. But I will talk with people when they bring suggestions and when they’re respectful.”

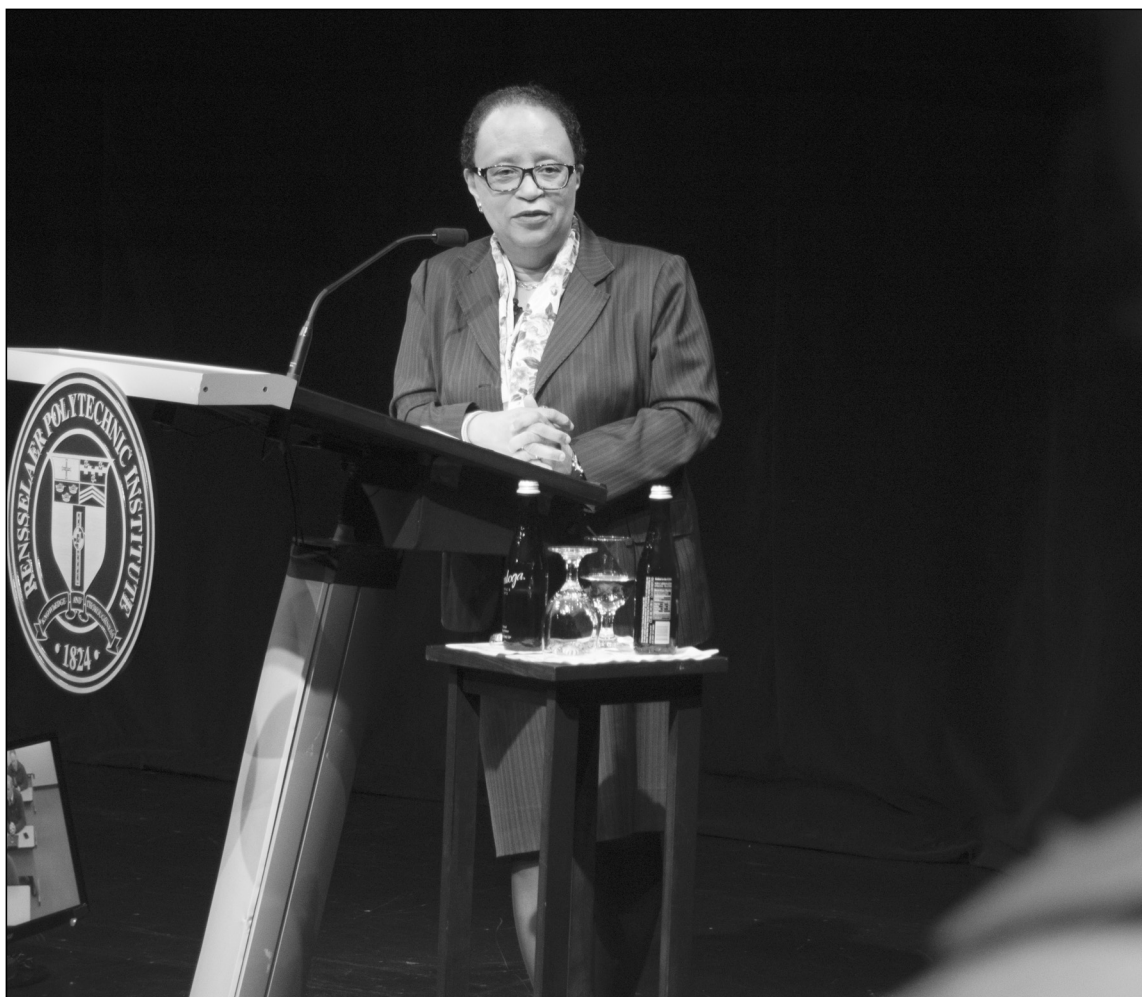
Another question touched on the claims that Rensselaer is subject to a culture of fear. She said in response to the questions on a culture of fear, “Now, you know, if there are people who’ve left Rensselaer, who’ve lost their jobs, or left for whatever reason—they have an advantage, which is that we’re not going to talk about personnel matters. And we don’t talk about student matters. So people can say and tell things the way they wish.”

With contributions from Vice President for Administration Claude Rounds, Jackson concluded with a detailed analysis of

the Institute’s financial standing and current debt situation. “The basic point is that Rensselaer’s finances are fundamentally sound. Do we have the \$754 million in debt? Yes. The defined benefit pension plan was here when I got here. And so, we’re working to keep it funded, where it needs to be funded. So we put \$134 million of borrowed money into that plan, but that meant that we’ve spent over \$70 million otherwise, most of it coming through cash flow through the university to put the money into that plan.”

After the meeting concluded, Jackson went outside to interact with the students partaking in the special class session held by Professor Bill Puka. A video of the entire meeting can be found on RPI TV at <http://poly.news/s/jtlyl/>.

Want to write sports? E-mail sports@poly.rpi.edu



Sidney Kochman/*The Polytechnic*

PRESIDENT SHIRLEY ANN JACKSON RESPONDS to a student during her biannual Town Meeting in the EMPAC Theater on Wednesday March 30, 2016.

House for rent. 15th ST. 4 students, 4 BR, Kitchen, DR, LR, 1 1/2 bath. Finished basement. W&D. New furnace, off street parking for 3 cars and one in garage. No utilities. \$1900.00. Contact Gail 518-469-0925

Events

Wednesday, April 6, 2016

WEDNESDAY

April 6

The Office of Graduate Admissions holds an informational session from 3:30–5 pm in the Rensselaer Union for students interested in applying to graduate school. Registration is required.

The Clubhouse Pub hosts Mug Night. Come to the Pub and purchase a limited edition 25 Years Mug. Specials on drinks will also be available.

The Department of Mechanical Aerospace and Nuclear Engineering holds a lecture entitled “From Muscle to Plant Cells—Nature-Inspired Adaptive Metastructures for Structural Dynamics Enhancement.” It will be presented by Michael A. Sadowsky of Applied Mechanics Lecture and Dr. Kon-Well Wang of the University of Michigan. It takes place from 10:30–11:30 am.

A retirement reception will be held for Betty Hug on the fifth floor of the Troy Building from 2:30–4:30 pm. She is retiring after 20 years at Rensselaer, so come wish her well.

The Embedded Hardware Club hosts an introductory workshop on assembly programming for the Texas Instruments MSP430. No previous experience is necessary.

THURSDAY

April 7

Office of Graduate Education holds a Co-Terminal information session from 12–1 pm in the Union Room 3202. Registration is recommended.

The Lally School of Business presents the seminar “Wine Analytics: Fine Wine Pricing and Selection Under Weather and Market Uncertainty.” It will take place from 2–3:30 pm in Pitts 4204 and hosted by M. Hakan Hekimoglu of Syracuse University.

The Graduate Experience and the Rensselaer Union welcome all to the Clubhouse Pub for the “Make your own Tee Event.” It is held in conjunction with Magic Hat and Troy Shirt Company. It will take place in the Rensselaer Union Games Room from 7–9 pm. Ticket and registration is required for entry. There is free pizza offered by the Office of the Graduate Experience and the Clubhouse Pub. It is for students 21 years and over.

Chi Epsilon & the Civil Engineering Department hold a Fundamentals of Engineers review session. Professor Bennett will review from 4–6pm in Darrin Communications Center 337.

Experimental Media and Performing Arts Center Concert Hall plays “Bearthoven and Battle Trance.” The performances converge the “new music” and indie scenes. They offer variations on jazz, classical, and avant-garde music. Admission is \$6 for students.

FRIDAY

April 8

Grand Marshal Week begins today and will conclude the following Friday. Elections will take place during this time, and it is highly encouraged that every student participates.

Will Fahey provides an Environmental Health and Safety session designed to convey Rensselaer policy and program information. It will be in the Human Resources-Gurley Building from 9–10 am.

RPI-Sage Hillel hosts Shabbat Dinner. They will be serving salmon as well as multiple side dishes for dinner. Services will begin at 5:45 pm in Union Room 3514 and dinner will begin at 6:30 pm in Union Room 3606. It will conclude at 8:45 pm. Attending services is not required to attend dinner but it is encouraged.

The Rensselyrics 2016 Spring Invitational takes place from 8–10 pm in the Chapel and Cultural Center. Tickets are \$4 pre-sale and \$5 at the door. Tickets can be purchased in the week leading up to the event in the Union (11 am–3 pm) and the DCC (10 am–2 pm).

SATURDAY

April 9

Accepted Students Celebration takes place campus-wide. For accepted students, learn your way around campus, discover the many clubs and activities you can choose from, hear from representatives from each school, explore academic programs, meet soon-to-be classmates, and more.

UPAC Cinema premieres the feature film *Carol*. Screenings will be in DCC 308 at 7 pm, 9:30 pm, and midnight. Entry is \$2.50.

MONDAY

April 11

Moe's Monday holds its weekly deal of burrito, drink, chips, and salsa for \$6, plus tax.

Calvin Chen hosts a biological sciences seminar entitled, “Molecular determinant of volumetric changes upon protein unfolding: Resolving the Protein Volume Paradox.” Refreshments will be served at 11:45 am, with the seminar taking place from noon–1 pm in the Bruggeman Conference Center for Biotechnology and Interdisciplinary Studies.

The Clubhouse Pub will serve Guinness and 50 cent wings from 4 pm–midnight.

A Computer Science Colloquium will be held in DCC 324 from 4 pm–5 pm. The talk will be hosted by George M. Slota of Pennsylvania State University. The title of his talk is, “Design, Implementation, and Optimization of Irregular Graph Algorithms on HPC Platforms.” Refreshments will be served at 3:45 pm.

Dionyssi Mantzavinos hosts a mathematical sciences colloquium. The seminar will be held in Amos Eaton 214 from 4–5 pm. It is entitled “Initial Value Problems and Initial-Boundary Value Problems for Nonlinear Evolution Equations.”

TUESDAY

April 12

Graduate Christian Fellowship continues the discussions from the event “Proof?”. It takes place in the Library Conference Room from 5–6 pm. They will be hosting weekly discussions for six weeks using the video series “The Reason for God: Belief in an Age of Skepticism” by Timothy Keller to frame the discussions. While this is a follow-up to “Proof?”, attending “Proof?” is not necessary. Dinner will be provided.

The Lally School of Business hosts Global Foundry. It takes place in Sage 2211 from 5–6:30 pm. Student entrepreneurs can obtain feedback from their peers and learn the practices of entrepreneurship and management. Test your business model while receiving input and support from your classmates and gain tactical and leadership skill-building. Entrepreneurs, those just starting out with an idea, those looking to join a startup, alumni, and the business community who can add to the community atmosphere should look to attend this event.

DILBERT

PANEL 1: DILBERT: CAN YOU GET ME MORE DETAILS ON THE FINANCIAL PROJECTIONS?
WALLY: SURE. I WROTE AN APP THAT GENERATES RANDOM NUMBERS, JUST IN CASE YOU ASKED FOR THEM.

PANEL 2: WALLY: 17, 4, 962 ... YES, THIS LOOKS ABOUT RIGHT.

PANEL 3: DILBERT: OOH. BAD NEWS ON YOUR HOROSCOPE TODAY.
WALLY: YOUR MOON IS INTERSECTING WITH THE FENG SHUI OF YOUR AURA.
DILBERT: HOW LONG DO I HAVE?

PANEL 4: WALLY: YOU'LL BE DEAD BY NOON.
DILBERT: I MEANT UNTIL MY NEXT MEETING.

PANEL 5: DILBERT: CAN YOU SEND ME THE FILE?
WALLY: DO YOU WANT IT BY EMAIL, DROPBOX, GOOGLE DRIVE, I CLOUD DRIVE, AIRDROP, OR CREATIVE CLOUD?

PANEL 6: WALLY: SURPRISE ME.
DILBERT: THE SURPRISE WILL BE IF YOU FIND IT.

PANEL 7: DILBERT: I NEVER GOT THE FILE YOU SAID YOU WOULD SEND.
WALLY: I DON'T KNOW WHAT FILE TYPE YOU WANT.

PANEL 8: WALLY: WHY DIDN'T YOU ASK?
DILBERT: WHY DIDN'T YOU CHECK YOUR EMAIL AND SEE THAT I DID?

PANEL 9: DILBERT: WHY DIDN'T YOU TEXT ME TO SAY YOU EMAILED ME?
WALLY: WHY DON'T YOU DRIVE INTO A RAVINE?

PANEL 10: CATBERT: EVIL DIRECTOR OF HUMAN RESOURCES
DILBERT: DILBERT SAID HE WANTS ME TO DRIVE INTO A RAVINE.

PANEL 11: DILBERT: I WANT THAT TOO. I DIDN'T REALIZE IT WAS AN OPTION.
CATBERT: PERHAPS I HAVE COME TO THE WRONG PLACE.

PANEL 12: CATBERT: I HEAR GOOD THINGS ABOUT THE RAVINE.

TOP TEN LIST

Reasons it snowed

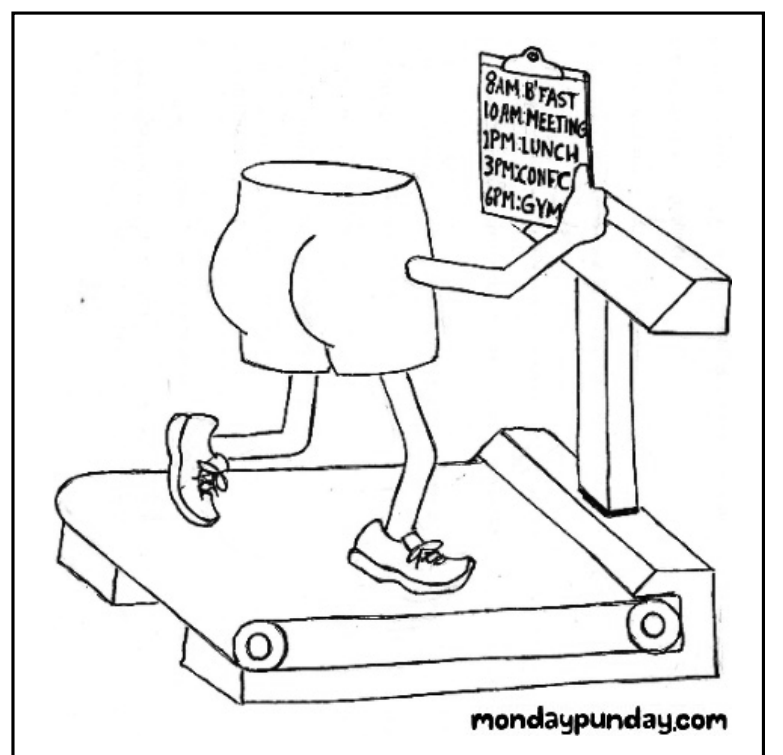
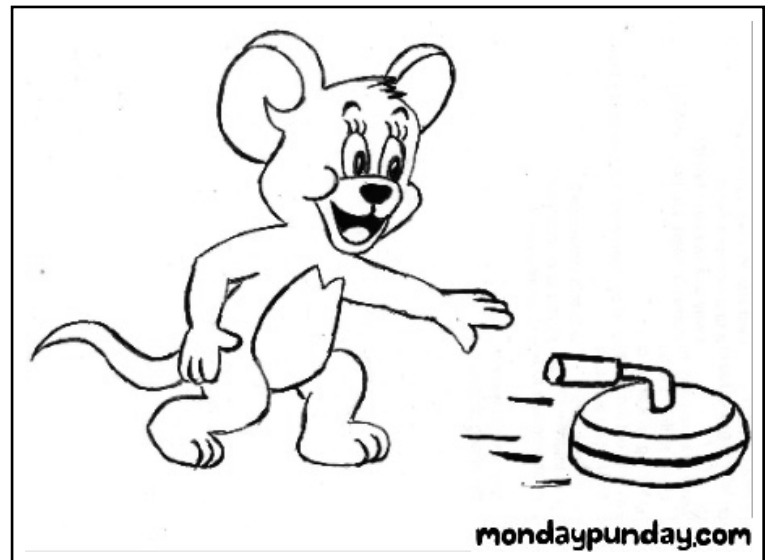
10. Because
9. Wrong settings
8. The end is near
7. The Starks are right
6. El Niño
5. Elaborate April Fools'
4. Global warming is fake
3. It's not actually April
2. Troy, N.Y.
1. Weather Machine

LAST WEEK'S CRYPTOQUOTE

"I can always guess how many jelly beans are in a jelly bean jar, even if I'm wrong."

—Brick Tamland
Anchorman 2: The Legend Continues

MONDAYPUNDAY by Matthew Broussard



XKCD

by Randall Munroe

PANEL 1: GIRL: AAAA! I'M SO BAD AT ESTIMATING HOW LONG PROJECTS WILL TAKE.

PANEL 2: BOY: DONT PANIC-THERE'S A SIMPLE TRICK FOR THAT: TAKE YOUR MOST REALISTIC ESTIMATE, THEN DOUBLE IT.

PANEL 3: GIRL: OKAY, BUT-

PANEL 4: BOY: NOW DOUBLE IT AGAIN. ADD FIVE MINUTES. DOUBLE IT A THIRD TIME.

PANEL 5: GIRL: OKAY...

PANEL 6: BOY: 30 SECONDS HAVE GONE BY AND YOU'VE DONE NOTHING BUT DOUBLE IMAGINARY NUMBERS! YOU'RE MAKING NO PROGRESS AND WILL NEVER FINISH!

PANEL 7: GIRL: PAAAAAIIIC! AAAAAA! AAAAAAA!

PANEL 8: BOY: ...WAIT. WHAT THE HECK IS GOING ON WITH THE HYDROLOGY AROUND HERE?

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AN OPEN LETTER FROM RENSSELAER ALUMNI

Members of the Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute Board of Trustees:

Since 1890, the student-run Rensselaer Union has been the heart of our campus community. The unique opportunities it provides have been invaluable to our development as students, professionals, and individuals. We write today as concerned alumni and former student leaders determined to ensure that these opportunities remain available to future generations.

We find no ambiguity in the Union Constitution's support of Rensselaer's rich tradition of independent student governance. Students are explicitly given the right and responsibility to fund and manage activities, facilities, and employees. They are granted the opportunity to be agents of change by collaborating with peers and professionals. Through their independence, students are empowered and inspired to take an active role in the Rensselaer community as stakeholders in our collective future.

An independent Union gives students the irreplaceable opportunity to learn by doing, growing as leaders through their achievements and mistakes. Each generation of student leaders builds on the foundation and the lessons of its predecessors and the institutional knowledge of student-hired administrative staff. This accumulation of wisdom, over many decades of annually-elected leadership allows the Union to grow stronger.

Every change to the Constitution has been passed by the Student Senate, ratified by a vote of the student body, and approved by the Board of Trustees. This democratic process is built on trust and cooperation across the entire Rensselaer community. Unilateral action by any party - students, administrators, or trustees - to amend or alter the Constitution without honoring this process would undermine the integrity of our institution and our community.

We are united in the belief that these traditions of student leadership are fundamental to the success of Rensselaer. We support the current Constitution and the established democratic process. We urge you to reaffirm your commitment to the Union's self-governance, and work with the students to rebuild the trust so essential to the success of our community and our school.

Funded by generations of proud Rensselaer alumni

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Editorial

Wednesday, April 6, 2016

EDITORIAL NOTEBOOK

How one high school senior ended up at RPI

“WHY DID YOU CHOOSE RPI?” I’ve never been asked this question directly in person, but I have shared it several times in conversation and notice the answer seems to always change. So, I ask myself, “Why did I choose RPI?”

I had my heart set on applying to Yale University and seeing if I would get in. I told my family that if I didn’t get in, I was framing the rejection letter and placing it in the living room. And there it still sits.

Two weeks later, walking around Mohegan Sun with my mom, I checked my email and there was the letter from RPI—accepted. Tears of joy came from mom and tears of excitement from me.

I also got into a few other schools: WPI, Stevens, and Fordham, to name a few. I was nervous about picking RPI because I was nervous leaving home, or more specifically, leaving the only way I knew of life: being with my family, having a scheduled school day, cleaning my dishes

after I eat, etc. I did not know what to expect of this experience called “college.”

Being 150 miles away from home was a tough decision that I made, and, for any accepted students reading this, distance should not dissuade you from attending any college. The opportunity to continue learning at RPI did not occur to me at first; all I knew before coming here is that it’s a school known for engineering and that interested me.

The decision to fully commit was not the easiest, set-forth decision. I’m not the best at making decisions, usually seen in the sandwich line at Sage when I tell them to make me a good sandwich, and I don’t care what’s on it!

But going back to the story, I took the big step for Maria-kind and put down the \$500 deposit two days before the deadline. I remember clearly clicking the different buttons that appeared on the screen until the final message came up stating “Congratulations, you’re part of the class of 2018

now” or something of that nature. Sending in the deposit that day actually happened but I did not really feel like I did it.

I continued senior year without really thinking about the next big step. Coming back from the senior trip to Disney World with two days of time-off until graduation, I had me time to think of what lay ahead of me in a little over two months.

Now I’m here. To this day, it still has not really hit me. It still feels surreal, but I’m happy I took on this endeavor. My college experience is one that I surely did not plan beforehand, or even imagine. For accepted students, don’t try to map out your next four years now. It will gradually just happen and fall into place. Don’t stress the decision of what school to pick; whether you pick RPI or not, you’ll have a great time at whatever school you decide to attend.

Sometimes I just think about how my life would be like if I went anywhere else—I wouldn’t have met the awesome people I met here. It’s a crazy phenomenon to engage in, but only possible when you take that big step and go to the school you decide. ♦



Maria Kozdroy
Contributing Editor

CABINET

Students and admins make waves in leadership

CONGRATULATIONS!

The Archer Center for Student Leadership Development has completed its selection process for Leadership Educators Advising Peers. The LEAP program is comprised of a group of committed Rensselaer students who are trained in leadership education and hold workshops each semester for students and organizations. In addition to the returning members, congratulations to Olivia Demkowicz ’19, Donna Grace Moleta ’18, Harrison Solis Eichler ’17, Christine Simon ’18, Andy Lao ’16, Justin Balvanz ’18, Daniel Lapidus ’17, Rachele Anne Putnick ’18, Joe Venusto ’17, Rasika Ekhal ’18, and Denver Overend ’18 on their selection for the LEAP program.

The RPI Dance Team was founded in 2006 as a way for students to show spirit at various campus and athletic events. Four years ago, the team decided that they wanted to compete against other colleges and universities, and this year that wish came true! RPI Dance Team competed at the Universal Dance Association New England Dance Championship, and earned second place in their division. Congratulations to Captains Averi Chan ’16 and Kenna Klass ’17 and the entire RPI Dance Team for their hard work and recognition! Members of the Rensselaer community have the ability to watch our award-winning dance team perform this semester on campus Saturday, May 7, at 2:00 pm in the Experimental Media and Performing Arts Center.

In addition, staff members from Student Life have been recognized recently for their work. Assistant Director of Student Activities Amy Corron received the Revis A. Cox Memorial Award from the Association of College Unions International. ACUI is a nonprofit educational organization for college union and student activities professionals from hundreds of schools

across the US and in seven countries. The award was established as a lasting tribute to Revis A. Cox, the late director of student activities at Virginia Commonwealth University, and recognizes ACUI members committed to multicultural education in college unions or student activities. Congratulations to Amy for receiving this award!

Director of the Archer Center for Student Leadership Development Linda Teitelman McCloskey received the Outstanding Contribution to Student Leadership Programs Award for National Association of Student Personnel Administrators Region 2. NASPA is the leading association for the advancement, health, and sustainability of the student affairs profession, and Region 2 consists of colleges and universities in New York, Pennsylvania, West Virginia, Delaware, New Jersey, Maryland, Washington, D.C., Germany, Greece, Italy, and Turkey. This award recognizes an individual’s work at the campus level in the area of student leadership programs. Congratulations to Linda on receiving this outstanding honor!

If you are interested in science fiction, I encourage you to check out a special lecture on Friday, May 6, at 7:30 pm in EMPAC Theater, where Professor Chuck Adler will present “Where is the science in all that fiction?” Adler is a physicist and lifelong science fiction enthusiast.

He received his degrees from Brown University, and is a full professor at St. Mary’s College of Maryland. He is interested in light scattering, and was the chair of the 10th International Light and Color in the Open Air Conference in 2010. Following his talk, Professor Adler will hold a book signing for his book: *Wizards, Aliens, and Starships: Physics and Math in Fantasy and Science Fiction*. ♦



Dr. Frank E. Ross
Vice President of Student Life

TOP HAT

Making an active effort to end the culture of fear

DEAR RENSSELAER COMMUNITY, I only wish I had discussed this sooner, that I had put more time into addressing this topic and not

Current students, we attend a university where the high level of academic rigor, in an almost masochistic fashion, is one of

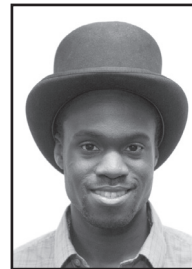
leaving it untouched as many others have. The topic I refer to is what has been titled the “culture of fear.” This past weekend, some student leaders (myself included) had the opportunity to meet with members of the Board of Trustees, and they asked us about this “culture of fear” they were now

hearing about. Like any good STEM student, I believe that we can learn more about this by breaking it down into smaller elements.

“Fear is the mind-killer. Fear is the little death that brings total obliteration.”

our points of pride. We legitimately brag about our inability to excel in the classroom at times, because at least the world acknowledges that we are held to that high standard. That being said, we impose upon ourselves the penchant for success, and carry the burden of a stressful academic setting. That stress is com-

pounded by the knowledge that this university is a large financial investment for students, putting a greater emphasis on the value of their education. The thought of failing this opportunity, for



Marcus Flowers
Grand Marshal

See TOP HAT, Page 11

the polytechnic

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Editorial and Business offices are located in Room 3418 of the Rensselaer Union, Troy, New York, 12180-3590. Subscription and advertising rates can be forwarded upon request. Subscriptions are sent via first class mail. Address correction requested.

STAFF EDITORIAL

Looking for answers from the Spring Town Protest

RENSSELAER FOUND ITS VOICE BETWEEN GRITTED TEETH and posterboard signs, and there's something to be said for an act of solidarity that gives a group of people the ability to be heard.

For years, students have held silent discontent for the Rensselaer administration. On Wednesday, March 30, students exercised their ability to assemble. This is something to be proud of—it was a demonstration in forcing change on this campus, and we did it collectively with a sense of respect, dignity, and pride. There was no violence, and no threat to the safety of others, just representation of the students' opinion. This protest easily could have turned for the worse, yet our community—students, faculty, and alumni—remained peaceful in their demonstration. *The Poly* Editorial Board would like to extend a sincere thank you to everyone who found the time to make the protest as powerful as it was.

One cannot discount the fact that President Shirley Ann Jackson intentionally moved away from her intended speech at the beginning of the Spring Town Meeting to directly address student concerns. Opening up the meeting to nearly an hour of questions is the opportunity for dialogue that we want to have on a regular basis. However, we feel it would be a stretch to describe last Wednesday's events as fruitful. Despite making our questions and concerns as clear as possible during the meeting, the administration again answered us with rebuttals and challenges rather than answers. This time around, Dr. Jackson went as far as to say the communication between students and administration will never be the same as it once was, due, in part, to the fact that the students have condemned her for her alleged actions. As she stated during her address, "don't vilify me in the press and then come and ask to talk to me."

This defensive stance goes directly against the responsibilities of someone chosen to be the leader of our university. When prompted by Grand Marshal Marcus Flowers '16 to start regular meetings between Student Government officials and the president, Dr. Jackson responded cautiously: "I'm not going to promise that I'm going to go back to a specific periodicity that we had before." As the president, it is her duty to communicate with students in a way that allows her to represent the community's interests on a larger scale, regardless of perceived vilification or possible allegations. Quite simply, this is her job, and her refusal to acknowledge her function within the Institute represents just how far we have to go.

Frankly, it is disappointing that a meeting of such magnitude could be met again by the same attempts at conflict resolution.

Our president has rationalized her stance over the Executive Director of Student Activities position by stating quite simply that "it is appropriate for the Trustees to, in fact, look at the Rensselaer Union Constitution and decide what independence and autonomy mean." In effect, the Board of Trustees has been given "ultimate authority" over the runnings of the Union. It is this principle that has caused uproar. It needs to be understood that we, as a community, should not have been an afterthought in the creation of something that so fundamentally impacts us as students. Dr. Jackson has stated that she would prefer students not approach her with issues "after the fact," but there's a degree of hypocrisy in the fact that the administration routinely does not extend the same courtesy to the student body.

Dr. Jackson went as far as to deny the concerns voiced by faculty about the "culture of fear"—the idea that we might refrain from voicing their opinions for fear of facing repercussions from the administration. Despite nearly 1,000 students, faculty, and alumni plastering the grounds outside of the Experimental Media and Performing Arts Center with posters detailing concern with the administration's approach to freedom of speech, Dr. Jackson stated that she "[doesn't] see it." It is the outright dismissal of the student voice from all levels of authority at RPI that has caused administration-student relations to degrade to the point that they have reached today, and it's infuriating to think that all our concentrated efforts have done nothing to change the blindness of our administration.

To see a change, we must come to an understanding that stems from our mutual respect. It cannot be denied that over the course of Dr. Jackson's tenure at Rensselaer, the Institute has made it to the forefront of higher education, earning her respect as president. It cannot be denied that her personal achievements earn her the utmost respect as an individual. But respect, like communication, is a two-way street. For students to respect the president, the president must respect the students. Dr. Jackson, you have heard your students come in droves and cry out. We hope that you will hear our message and listen to us as you have before. And students, we implore you to see Dr. Jackson and the administration as humans, not as tyrants in ivory towers. ♦

Keep an eye out for our special GM Week issue on Monday, April 11.

DERBY

Making this movement better for our students

HELLO RPI,

I want to start this column by talking about what everyone seems to be talking about lately: the culture of fear. It exists, and it has permeated into many facets of life at RPI. Whether or not it is warranted, it is hard to deny as I know that I and many others have felt it since my freshman year. The fear that voicing dissent or discontent too openly will result in retaliation from the school's administration. The fear that staff will lose their jobs if they resist the direction of their higher ups. It is true that repetitive assertions do not change facts, but they do change perceptions, and perception rules in culture. I charge those of you reading this to follow the words of former President Franklin D. Roosevelt and realize that the only thing we have to fear is fear itself. You have a voice; use it and do not fear. You are smart, tenacious problem solvers. Do not let fear stifle your efforts, but step boldly, for now is a time when this campus needs it

most. The only way to fight a culture of fear is to eliminate fear from the realm of possibility and be brave.

I have recommended that the first step in this process is a reinvestment into good faith. A feeling of mutual trust must be rebuilt between invested stakeholders and the administration over time. In the current state of the Institute, that does not exist. Instead, students have been systematically shut out from avenues of communication they once had. Voices have become muddled, sanitized, and censored by levels of bureaucracy, and the game of telephone has run rampant through the chain of command. There is a need for all invested parties to return to the table and level as equals. The current environment is not sustainable, and has led to the underlying tensions growing for years to come to the forefront with recent events. The

sudden restructuring of student life and its effects on the Union were the nucleation point that opened the eyes of many to the disease to which this was a symptom: a lack of respect for and communication with all parties involved in change.

While the larger issue at hand is a major hurdle that must be overcome, it is essential that the event that sparked the movement is not forgotten. The grievances of students against the restructuring of Student Life are not with its intent, as it will address areas that are lacking and it will add value to the portfolio as a whole. The conflict lies in the execution and the implications. A good article

was written from the perspective of right of way which can be found at <http://poly.news/s/mfzek/>.

There was no student or staff input to a change that will directly affect

Top Hat: The culture of fear can be tangible

Students need to be involved in the decisions that are being made

From **Page 10**

ourselves, our families, and our friends, is a stress that contributes to the fear we may feel.

The environment of a student in the modern world requires a continual engagement, on behalf of their basic human needs, their academics, and their social hierarchy. Changes around the students are an inevitability, and an opportunity for young minds to learn how to adapt. Be that as it may, a large change to the central aspects of a student's life may leave him or her disillusioned, and require time to adjust. To combat this, there needs to be a level of communication such that the student can rationalize the changes happening, feel that he or she is a factor in the decisions being made, and move forward. However, to have students undergo a rapid series of changes, and repeatedly telling students when the time for critical input has passed, only worsens the situation. Low levels of communication creates within students the cold sense that they are only used as a source of revenue and potential marketing. Students feel that once they are no longer valuable to the university, they will be cut off and left adrift.

At the town hall this past Wednesday, the president made a statement to the effect of "repeating something does not make it true." While I am inclined to agree to this on matters of fact and the physical world, perception and culture are different beasts entirely. When a student hears from a classmate, faculty, or staff "don't say that you disagree; bad things can happen," it may mean nothing the first time, taken as a joke, ignored, etc. However, I promise you it will have an effect every time afterward. Akin to the horrors in *The Turn of the Screw*, the fear then arises from the ambiguity of the danger. Extra graduation requirements, reduced financial aid, being fired or expelled, getting shut down in career endeavors—all of these are fears that people have firmly held onto, and they are the product of the negative mantra we, as a community, repeat to ourselves, even when evidence fails to support it.

Further, continual changes to the fundamentals of student life on campus leaves students feeling that their right to a voice is continually challenged, and subsequently ignored. When a voice is repeatedly denied, the natural response is to question whether or not the voice is important to begin with, along with the rights it aims to express.

All of this culminates in a negative experience for the student, independent of any career success they may find. With that in mind, it is hard to see those with negative experiences donating back to the university. Until the problem is addressed, we are actively creating disillusioned alumni communities, and they have a vital influence on the students currently attending. Until the problem is addressed, we are hurting the future of Rensselaer many years down the line, when these students will have the opportunity to donate significantly.

Now, I do not claim for these factors to be comprehensive, but I say that their impact on our community must be acknowledged. These are no small obstacles, but by identifying them, we can begin to move towards a solution in addressing them. ♦



Nick Dvorak
President of the Union

Sports

Wednesday, April 6, 2016

BASEBALL

Engineers, Raptors split doubleheader

Jack Wellhofer
Senior Reporter

BASEBALL SPENT THIS PAST SATURDAY AT BARD College, where they split their doubleheader 1-1 with the Raptors.

The Engineers started their first game of the afternoon with two successful innings. Sophomore rightfielder Weston Hawkins started off the first inning with a walk, and junior outfielder Thomas Desmond singled to left field. Sophomore shortstop Ethann Meister smacked a double into center field, sending both runners home.

The second inning was even better for the Engineers. Senior catcher Chris Holomakoff reached first on an error, stole second, and advanced to third on a hit by sophomore leftfielder Christian Spagnuola. A sacrificial bunt by Hawkins allowed Holomakoff to score and Spagnuola to advance. Later in the inning, Spagnuola scored on a throwing error by Bard shortstop Preston Gittelson. A double by junior first baseman Jason Ramos to center field sent two more home, bringing the score to 6-0.

Bard chalked up two runs—one in each of the two following innings, but it would be the only runs the Raptors would score for the game. The sixth inning brought in two more runs for the Engineers, just for good measure. One came from Spagnuola, who scored on a sacrifice fly to center by Desmond, and the other came from Hawkins, who scored on a single by Ramos. Senior pitcher Stephen Schiavone earned a complete game victory as Rensselaer won 8-2.

Then, in what seems to be a theme for the season, the Engineers started off game two with a rough first inning, allowing Bard to rack up five runs by the end of the first.

The Raptors posted their first run on after a throwing error by senior catcher Michael

Croke allowed Bard's David Schlosser to steal home. A single to right field by Gittelson drove in two more runs, putting Bard up 3-0. Another Bard single to left sent two more runners home, leaving the Engineers down 5-0.

Spagnuola started the second with a walk. Croke, next at bat, advanced Spagnuola to second when he was hit by a pitch. Both players stole after a wild pitch. Then, freshman Tyler Stephens grounded to Bard's shortstop, allowing Spagnuola to increment RPI's score.

Rensselaer chipped away at Bard's lead again in the third through a pair of walks by Spagnuola and Croke with the bases loaded, bringing the score at 5-3. The Engineers tried to capitalize more on the load bases, but sophomore third baseman J.T. Sawyer grounded into a double play, ending the inning.

Back at it again in the top of the fourth, the Engineers scored off Ramos' sacrifice fly ball to left field that allowed Desmond to score.

The bottom of the inning proved profitable for the Raptors, who were able to extend their lead just as RPI was closing in. A combination of singles, walks, and a wild pitch brought the score to 9-4.

The Engineers struck back, chalking up two runs in the fifth from Hawkins and Spagnuola.

RPI was unable to score any more runs for the remainder of the game, while the Raptors put up two more; one in the seventh and one in the eighth. The second game concluded 11-6.

The Engineers are back in action this weekend against Skidmore College, with a doubleheader away on Saturday and a home doubleheader Sunday afternoon. ♦



Sidney Kochman/The Polytechnic

SOPHOMORE PITCHER AARON KALISH LOOKS to the first baseman before firing.

TRACK AND FIELD

P.A. invitational

Michael Baird
Senior Reporter

UPON THE CONCLUSION OF THE INDOOR TRACK & field season in March, runners and field athletes spent two weeks gearing up for the start of the competitive outdoor season, which opened this past Saturday in Allentown, P.A., at the Muhlenberg Spring Invitational hosted by Muhlenberg College.

Senior Tyler Yeastedt won the men's discus with his 46.20 meter launch, but his effort would not go without an encore, as he proceeded to mark 13.90 meters in the men's shot put to finish third in that event. Junior Mike Pensanello came in two spots behind with his throw of 13.43 meters.

Junior Joe Grella threw 52.82 meters in the men's javelin to place fifth. Junior Erik Trinkle took fourth in the men's high jump with his height of 1.88 meters. Placing fourth in the other jumps were sophomore Matt Vitagliano in the triple jump and freshman Alex Monaco in the long jump.

Freshman Marissa Folk placed sixth in the women's discus with her throw of 37.68 meters. She was seventh in the shot put. Freshman Aurora Freedman earned sixth in the javelin with her 34.42 meter throw. Freshman Lauren Parker took third in the women's high jump with her height of 1.62 meters.

In the women's 5000 meter run, senior Loki Rasmussen set a personal record with her third-place time of 18:23.8. Junior Allison Thayer came in two spots behind in a personal record time of 18:55.6.

Sophomore Matthew Stewart placed fourth in the men's 5000 meters with his time of 15:31.3. Junior Chris Angelo finished fourth in the 3000 meter steeplechase with his time of 10:08.5. The men's 4x400 meter relay team placed third.

Senior Isabel Johnson said it felt "fantastic" to get back onto the outdoor track again. She competed in the women's 800 meter run. Both men's and women's teams travel to Massachusetts Institute of Technology this Saturday. ♦

MEN'S LACROSSE

Rout-filled week

Joe Saulsbery
Senior Reporter

THE ENGINEERS SCORED SIX CONSECUTIVE GOALS AT Plattsburgh State University last Wednesday en route to a 9-6 win. Then on Saturday, Rensselaer flexed their muscles at East Campus Athletic Village Stadium, outscoring Vassar College by nine goals in the second half to win 17-5. The Engineers rounded out their week with a second consecutive blowout win, this time knocking off SUNY Oneonta 16-6.

For much of the first half of the game against Plattsburgh, the Cardinals and Engineers went back and forth, answering each other goal for goal. Down 1-0 early in the first quarter, freshman attacker J.T. Kelly started the scoring for the Engineers with his seventh goal of the season. Twice, Plattsburgh scored in the first quarter to pull ahead, and twice, sophomore attacker Matthew Gilman scored to tie the game for RPI. His second goal of the game came midway through the second and evened the game at three goals apiece.

With 5:54 remaining in the first half, Plattsburgh attacker Ryan Callahan scored to put the Cardinals ahead 4-3. The lead was short-lived though, as junior attacker Breannainn McNeally scored nine seconds later to tie the game at four. Then, another 30 seconds later McNeally found the twine again to give the Engineers their first lead, 5-4.

Freshman midfielder Lucas Bastarache scored for RPI with three and a half minutes left in the second quarter to give the Engineers a two-goal lead heading into halftime. Then, he opened the scoring in the second half to put Rensselaer up 7-4. Later, junior attacker Matt Hall fired the ball past Plattsburgh goalie Matt Massaria 7:34 into the third quarter to extend RPI's goal streak to five.

McNeally scored his third goal of the game with four minutes left in the third quarter to cap off the Engineers onslaught and put the game out of reach. ♦

TENNIS

Women in Nor'Easter

Joe Saulsbery
Justin Etzine

Senior Reporters

THE WOMEN'S TENNIS TEAM WAS UNABLE TO SECURE VICTORY IN THE 2016 Nor'Easter Bowl, which took place this past weekend in Massachusetts.

On Friday, April 1, the women's team earned a win against Stonehill College with three doubles and three singles wins. Senior Emily Laurilliard and sophomore Melanie Frank took the first doubles seed 8-5. Both other doubles matches followed suit close after. In singles, Laurilliard, junior Pooja Ganesh, and freshman Nisha Rajamohan took home wins.

The next day, the team faced a tough loss against Babson College, winning just one doubles and one singles match each. Ganesh and Rajamohan defeated Babson's Alexandra Blizard and Claire Foster in the third doubles match of the day. In singles, Rajamohan pulled through to win the sixth singles match 9-7.

Finally, women's tennis took a painful loss against Wellesley College, concluding their participation in the Nor'Easter Bowl. The team saw a doubles win; freshmen Maria Salmon and Mailani Neal defeated Dasha Kostikina and Samantha Stone. At the conclusion of the bowl, the team's record stood at 4-7, and RPI will be facing off against Rochester Institute of Technology in a Liberty League match on Saturday, April 9.

Men's tennis traveled to Bard and swept the Raptors 9-0 Saturday afternoon. To start the match, the Engineers won a decisive 8-2 prossets at first and third doubles. At second doubles, the pairing of senior Alain Grullon Gonzalez and sophomore Tristan Wise took just two additional games to win their match, defeating Bard 8-4.

In singles, junior McKinley Grimes dominated his first singles match winning 6-0 twice. Seniors Sherman Uyeno and Grullon Gonzalez were not far behind, taking their second and third singles matches by the same 6-1, 6-0 margin. Junior Stephen Baxter and senior Graham Harris won their fourth and sixth singles matches, respectively, with ease as well.

The only close match of the afternoon was at fifth singles. After winning handily in the first set 6-2, senior Anthony Kim had to fight off Bard's Satchel Fisher in the second set, winning 6-4.

The win is the Engineers third in a row and improves their spring record to 4-4. Next up for the men is a trip to RIT this Saturday, April 9. ♦

MEN'S GOLF

Opening tempest

Michael Baird
Senior Reporter

ON A COLD AND WINDY SUNDAY MORNING IN HERSHEY, P.A., the RPI men's golf team opened their competitive spring season with a conquest for the Hershey Cup, which pitted them against 14 other colleges also seeking the treasure. After the first day on the course, the Engineers shot 333 to finish eighth. They improved to fourth overall on Monday after scoring 311.

Senior Craig Bokenfohr led the Engineers on the par-71 East Course at Hershey Country Club in 15th place with nine-over-par after Sunday. Junior Andrew Galvin and senior team captain Jamie Jackson both achieved 12-over-pars and junior Aaron Schauger shot 17-over-par. The scores from these four golfers are what counted toward the combined team score of 333.

Back on the course on Monday, the Engineers climbed the rankings to come within sniffing distance of their nationally-ranked opponents. Jackson shot six birdies to help him get a four-over-par and finish 16-over for the weekend, putting him in 14th overall with a two-day total of 158. Bokenfohr repeated his nine-over par performance from Sunday to finish 160, and Galvin also scored 160 from going 83-77.

The Engineers finished with a combined two-day total of 644. Carnegie Mellon University won the championship with 624, and Allegheny College and the University of Rochester were second and third, respectively.

"This finish placed RPI ahead of two teams ranked in the top 50 in the country including St. John Fisher College and Franklin & Marshall University," said Jackson. "Going forward, we hope to carry this momentum from our second round at the Hershey Cup to piece two rounds together and get a win at the NYU Invitational next weekend."

The invitational begins this Saturday and lasts through Sunday. It will be held at the Forest Hills Field Club in Bloomfield, New Jersey. ♦

CAMPUS EVENT

Eve and the Devil appear onstage in Mother's

RPI Players perform four one-act short plays featuring both one male, one female lead

Rex Hu

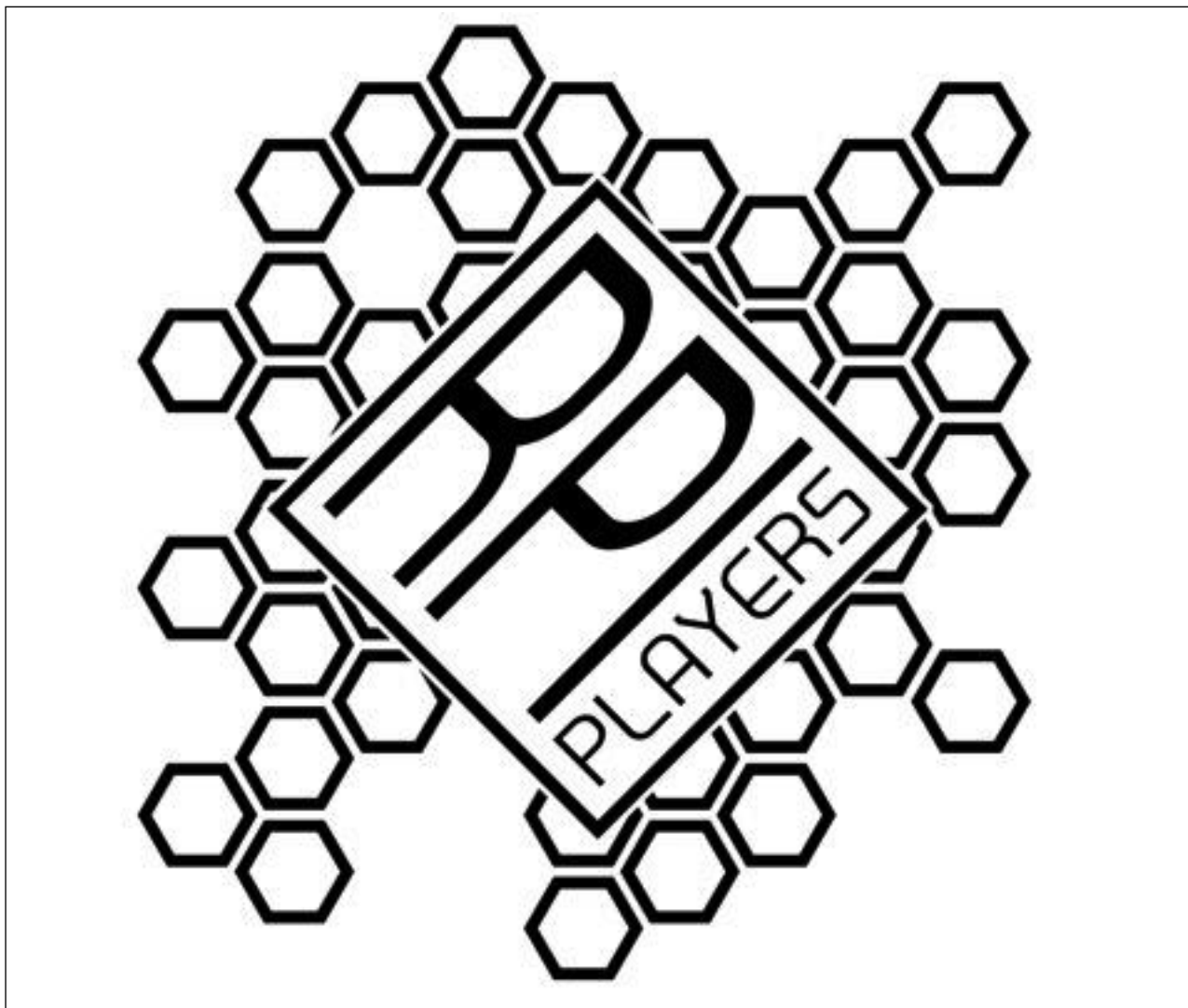
Senior Reviewer

THE RPI PLAYERS WILL BE PRESENTING THEIR SPRING SHORTS this weekend. The show consists of four one-acts that are not particularly related—the first three are different takes on drama, and the last is a comedy, to end the night on a happy note. I was given the opportunity to sit in on their Tuesday rehearsal for an early preview. I was greeted by director Jeremy Feldman '16, who explained that the actual show will be in Mother's Wine Emporium; their equipment and venue was not fully prepared, but the actors still had a lot to offer. I was given a water bottle, and I found myself in a front-and-only-row seat. It was nice to watch the Players again (I covered a show once during *Navigating Rensselaer and Beyond*), though I didn't have a friend with me this time either. Here is your fair warning: if you don't like spoilers, stop reading now!

The director called lights up, and the first act, *Heart of Hearing*, began. The general tone of this act was rather strange. It details a girl, Angie, calling a boy, Josh; it is gradually revealed that they have a strange dynamic, owing to the fact that they only occasionally call each other; there is a palpable silence that reflects the distance a relationship like theirs is destined to have. However, I liked that the actors gradually move across the stage to embrace and kiss, physically representing the intimacy that they share nonetheless. They reminisce about old times, until Josh touches upon the harshness of reality, and Angie reminds him that he also has a girlfriend in reality; they end the call with Josh promising to call her later. The revelation that they are each other's old "sweatpants" is certainly dramatic: they will always be lingering in the back, but only appreciated from time to time, and never enough.

In the second act, *I Dream Before I Take the Stand*, a woman yields to the interrogations of a man in a suit. I could feel my stomach tighten and my brow furrow as I felt the stress alongside her. I did think that her consternation was a little forced sometimes, as her breathy, protesting scoffs came off with weak sincerity. But the man continues to interrogate her, even about the tightness and scantiness of her clothing. It is blatant by this point that he is emphasizing her sexual objectification, playing on the traditional sense of gender roles and female appeal. The constant rigidity of both of their characters (her uptight expression and stuttering and his torrent of assertions) makes the viewer question who is right, in a play on the recent fight for women's rights and the injustice in rape cases. Toward the end, he starts to describe things as 'sexy,' and as he holds onto the chair behind her and yells, it becomes clear that—even if she was not the victim in the interrogated situation—she is now being victimized. I initially thought it would be nice if the actors varied their tones for more emotion, but in retrospect, their consistency provided a strong parallel to the implied situation. When he is finally satisfied, he asks her to start from the beginning, and we are left with the knowledge that he will continue until she is broken.

The third act, *In the Garden*, was written by the Players' Jocelyn Griser '16. An angry woman storms over to a man, and asks, "how could you?" He responds that he wanted to



Courtesy of RPI Players

RPI PLAYERS PRESENT their Spring Shorts in Mother's Wine Emporium with one comedy and three drama plays.

make her equal to him, and that he wants to be with her. At first glance, it seems like a typical reconciliation between lovers, but when the man says, "I love you, Eve," we realize that it is much more. Eve asks if she deserves to be damned, and the man says that she deserves to be complete, and to be with whoever she wants; if that means Adam, then so be it. She kisses him and confesses her love, but they ultimately face the fact that she will be with Adam. As the lights fade on stage, a voice is heard saying, "Morning star, my son, you have sinned." I thought this act was particularly powerful; it was short enough to leave the audience reeling, but it had enough substance for consideration. Not only is it a reinterpretation of a traditional story, per recent trends, it also provokes a reassessment of traditional values and beliefs, both biblical and secular.

The fourth and final act, *Sure Thing*, was a comedy meant to lift the mood after three emotional and thought-provoking scripts. Betty is reading in a cafe, when Bill approaches her and asks if the seat next to her is taken; she says it is. Every subsequent time they have a negative interaction, a bell is rung to reset the conversation to a prior point, and they banter back and forth. Once again, the Players modified the script for RPI. Bill says that he went to college at Union, and then not at all, before Betty is satisfied when he

says he went to Harvard. There is some delightful overlap between replays that catches us by surprise. Finally, at the end, they strike upon a series of similarities, including the hatred of brussels sprouts. When they confirm that they would like to have three children (two girls and a boy who go to Harvard, Vassar, and Brown), the act ends.

I thought that the actors did impressively well, especially considering that this was a practice. I would've liked a bit more volume, but the actual venue will be much smaller. The only issue I noticed was that the actors had small memory lapses in the fourth act, but it's a long script, and they should have it fully memorized by the weekend.

When practice was over, I asked Feldman a few questions. Many shows leave viewers confused by an end that is open for interpretation, so I asked if there was any particular message he wanted to send. He mentioned that this production is unique because lots of the gaps are left to be filled in by the actors. There is no answer, so things are still up for interpretation.

In *short*, the Players' Spring Shorts were quite nice, and they will be free. If you don't have plans, drop by, and they just might convince you to donate the suggested \$5. I know that I'll be there—with friends for once—and I hope to see you there! ♦

INTERVIEW

Kimball promotes student voice in campus affairs

Jonah Duch

A Special to The Poly

One of the signature thrusts of *The Rensselaer Plan 2024* is communication. Professor Miles Kimball, the current head of the Communication and Media Department at RPI, says communication skills are more valuable in our modern era than ever before. "Good communication skills will make you more valuable," he said in our interview. "Communication skills help you get the job, help you get the promotion." These skills come in many forms, from creative writing to technical communications.

Kimball got his Ph.D. in English from the University of Kentucky. He described technical his expertise in communication as, "getting the right information to the right person at the right time." More

traditionally, technical communication is about writing manuals. But nowadays, with the widespread usage of the internet, communicating essential information has become greatly more efficient.

But technical communication also has much more important uses. "Let's say that you had a control panel that had four buttons," Kimball said, "and you had to press those four buttons in a particular sequence. You could make a fifth button that does that for you, but that's an engineering solution. That costs a lot of money. Instead, you might have a communications solution where you tell people in which order to punch the buttons." However, if this is a solution is in a nuclear facility, for example, this type of solution will be temporary, "until an engineering solution can be done." Mainly, technical communication fills in the

gap between the way technology ought to work and the way it actually works.

The Communication and Media department at RPI prides itself on its interdisciplinary structure. This means that this department at RPI offers courses that most Communication departments can't offer. "RPI is very good in putting different disciplines together in different ways, and I hope that I can contribute to that," Kimball said. He's right; the department offers collaborative majors with the arts and social sciences, as well as a doctorate in Communication and Rhetoric. In that past, RPI had one of the few technical communication majors in the county, but over time, those faculty retired. But tradition never dies at Rensselaer. Kimball hopes to capitalize on this history and start offering more technical writing classes.

He also hopes to expand the department to offer more interdisciplinary courses. Currently, he is most excited about a new major that is currently in development called Digital Humanities. As of right now, it is a work in progress, but outside of his office, on the fourth floor building, is a poster that shows videos and animations when you look at it through your phone, an example of what technology can bring to communication.

RPI students are well prepared for the working world in relation to hard, technical skills but communication skills are typically lacking. Kimball said, "If graduates of the Institute recognize it and the Institute recognizes it, we just need to convince more students that it's more important." ♦

PODCAST REVIEW

Podcast reminds listeners to think of everything



Courtesy of Casey Fiesler

INTRIGUING PODCAST LEAVES listeners wanting more to figure out the answers to Sarah Koenig's mysteries in season two of *Serial*, the critically acclaimed series.

Nathan Dorer
Senior Reviewer

WHEN SARAH KOENIG'S PODCAST *SERIAL* WAS FIRST RELEASED in October of 2014, critics approached the weekly installments as a well thought out, intriguing, and engaging critique of the current United States justice system. Within the first season, Koenig structured her podcast as an objective presentation of evidence surrounding the murder of a Baltimore high school student, Hae Min Lee, and the incarceration of her then-boyfriend Adnan Syed. Week by week, the podcast presented listeners with evidence surrounding the case and encouraged the audience to make their own interpretations of the events. Koenig presented

her listeners with the unique opportunity to be directly involved with a murder case; she gave the evidence, and the listeners searched for the answers. Her unique approach to broadcasting earned her a Peabody Award in April 2015, in which it was noted that "*Serial* rocketed podcasting into the cultural mainstream."

Serial released the final episode of its first season in December 2014, and for a period of time went silent. However, on December 10, 2015, Koenig released her second installment of the podcast and intrigued audiences when she chose to abandon the case of Adnan Syed and started from scratch once again. The second season is interesting in that the audience is already aware of who is at fault for the crime at hand,

since Koenig opted to report on the case of Sergeant Bowe Bergdahl, and the fact that he deserted his post in the U.S. army and was ultimately captured by the Islamist militants in Afghanistan. Claims have been made that Bergdahl may have actively been seeking out the Taliban, while Bergdahl himself has stated that he was attempting to leave his post in an effort to bring attention to the poor conditions faced by soldiers at his outpost. Ultimately, Bergdahl spent five years held by the Taliban, and was only freed after U.S. officials negotiated the release of five Guantanamo Bay detainees in exchange for one American soldier.

See SERIAL, Page 15

Festival: Student program provides good time

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(Muslims) and Christians over *latik* (coconut meat), performed by men wearing coconut shells on their shoulders, hips, backs, and thighs. Coconut shells in hand, they proceed to hit the other shells on their body in time with the music. The influence of Spanish rule is evident in the style of music that is played during the performance of these dances. Each of which were well-done.

Beyond the comedic skits, culturally enriching dance performances, well-made parody music videos, and the traditional Philippine hospitable mentality of "eat more food," the night served as a meaningful explanation of what it meant to be Filipino. Individuals of all races and cultural origins were present and were highly interested in learning and experiencing more. I revelled in all the jokes, I savored all the food, but most importantly, I was reminded of something important that all people can relate to: who you are is heavily influenced by your culture.

I had the great privilege of speaking with members of the PAL. "It's an annual event where we get to share our Filipino culture with other people. We do it as an integrated show where we do Filipino dances and host Filipino food while doing a skit of a show to make it relatable to other people. It's a beautiful event that we love to host. It's a way for us to reach out to the community," Co-President Aerrol Ampeloguio '17 stated. "We all feel really great about this event. We are all very welcome to having more members. If you

want to join us, you can contact me on Facebook or at ampela@rpi.edu."

"This is my favorite club. It's like a family away from home. We're all like brothers and sisters," says Mary Margaret Sta. Cruz '19. "This club helped me break out of my shell. In high school, I was very shy. I've never done anything like this [event] before. Now, I'm one of the leading roles in a show. The members of this club made me feel like I can be myself with them. I feel like I've known them all my life. We're a family here in PAL, which is exactly what the Philippine culture entails. Even an audience member said to me 'I didn't know you guys were like a family in PAL.' Despite being a member for only less than a year, this club has already influenced the person I am."

"I love this club. It literally is a family. Especially being a Filipino in a school that's predominately white, it's really nice to have your culture here, and celebrated here, which is really, really awesome. This is the one event that nails it in, that we are a family," according to Adrian Pangilinan '17.

It's clear a common sentiment was made among the members. Bayanihan, the event's name, derives its meaning from *bayan* (community), and the word translates to "being a bayan," or "being a community." The unity amongst these RPI students is displayed in their pride in Philippine culture and their love of their heritage. ♦



Courtesy of Francis Maranon

FIONA FLYNN '19 PLAYS the stereotypical Filipino mom, crying with gifts in hand.

Interview: Author reveals details from his past writing

Millhauser speaks of his passion for literature since an early age; writing since childhood

From **Page 16**

Which writers do you lean on, or who are your literary heroes? How does what you read affect what you write?

“I don’t lean on writers—it hurts my shoulder. My early heroes are writers I discovered in my late teens and early twenties, writers like Thomas Mann and James Joyce and Franz Kafka. As a young writer, I could feel the influence of my reading in my sentences, and I didn’t like it. I wanted to hear my own voice, without knowing what my own voice was. At some point I stopped thinking about things like this.”

The tone of “Getting Closer” was very conversational, and read to me as, “this is what I felt at the time, or would have if I was placed in the situation.” How much of yourself do you allow into your narrators or characters?

“I do two opposite things simultaneously: I put all of myself into my narrators and characters, and I maintain a cool distance. To do both of these things at the same time is exhausting, impossible, and absolutely necessary.”

How much of your fiction is fiction? Do you feel that adding the title of “fiction” in some instances allows you to write more truthfully?

“Another paradox: my fiction is fiction, as opposed to memoir or history, but at the same time it liberates me into a world that I would claim to be true. Fiction that’s essentially autobiography holds no interest for me. But fiction that allows itself to do anything it likes, for the sheer hell of it, without any relation to whatever is meant by “truth,” strikes me as frivolous.”

For each story of yours that’s published, how many never make it out of your notebook?

“When I was starting out, in my early twenties, I’d begin a story in my notebook without knowing anything about it. The story often died before it was even sketched out. It’s now much harder for a story to make it into my notebook—I do a lot of writing in my mind, before I allow myself to write even a draft. These days, most of what I write makes it out of the notebook and onto the computer. But it’s still a long, long way from being finished, and some stories end up in a drawer.”

When we write, we inevitably explore some element of human nature. This is more constrained in nonfiction, where we’re bound to the actuality of the events—in the end we have to report them faithfully. In fiction, though, there’s more freedom—the writer faces endless possibility, which can sometimes be as crippling as it is empowering. Where does one start when one can write anything and everything?

Dangerous Laughter investigates our world through alteration. I wouldn’t be a physicist if everything didn’t remind me of physics. In my quantum mechanics class, we take a system we already know about a cat in a box, say. Change one small element of it put a dent in the box, and see how it responds. Does the cat meow? Inside the ragged-edged pages of this collection lie a series of worlds, all slices of a continuum of possibility, differing by a range of angles. Through each perturbation, Steven Millhauser examines how we as humans react—ironically, he captures our nature more truthfully than he ever could under the restriction of reality. ◇

Serial: Podcast wins listeners

Koenig takes on a second season

From **Page 14**

Within her second season, Koenig encourages listeners to consider the moral repercussions of the case surrounding Bergdahl. Considering that we already know the events that have occurred, it is up to listeners to determine whether deserting should be excused in the event that he did it for the greater good, and whether serving five years in Taliban captivity has been enough punishment. Koenig extends her reporting to allegations that Bergdahl has struggled with mental health, as well as whether or not the exchange of five Guantanamo Bay detainees was worth it for the sake of a single American soldier.

Serial prides itself on being a presentation of facts interspersed with the editorial backdrop of Koenig’s interpretation. Within her reporting, Koenig approaches the events of the case with remarkable dignity, and her investigation is interesting in that it seems to bring up more questions than it answers. At the end of the season, the audience simultaneously has a comprehensive understanding of the events in Afghanistan, yet a complete lack of answers. It is impossible to understand Bergdahl’s motives with absolute surety, but Koenig makes a sincere effort to do so.

However, it is worth noting that the second season loses a bit of the spark associated with the first; because the listener already knows who is at fault; the mystery that made the case of Adnan Syed so intriguing is missing. It is no longer a case that seeks to determine whether someone is guilty or innocent in black and white; the case of Bowe Bergdahl will be handled by lawyers who will determine whether reprimand is in order for his desertion. There’s a sense of drama that is simply missing, and it largely has to do with the type of case that Koenig has chosen.

The new season of *Serial* still does its job as presenting one story week by week, but it’s not necessarily the kind of story that the listener is desperate to hear. Koenig has continued her legacy of smart reporting and clever interpretation, but it’s almost impossible to avoid the sting of disappointment as the listener will never have the same impact on the case of Bowe Bergdahl as it did on that of Adnan Syed. ◇

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Features

Wednesday, April 6, 2016

CAMPUS EVENT

Pride in culture; family away from home

Elisabeth Ryan
Senior Reviewer

MY FAVORITE FOOD IN THE WHOLE WIDE WORLD is chicken adobo with steamed rice. The first month I spent here, I got so homesick that I texted my mom and announced that I would be making it. The one word I could easily associate the Philippine American League's spring event, Bayanihan, would be that—homesick.

After a delicious buffet of common Filipino dishes such as adobo, pancit, lumpia, caldereta, and cassava cake, members of PAL lead the audience in the national anthem of the Philippines, "Lupang Hinirang", and "The Star Spangled Banner." Following that, the show began.

Being half Filipino, I've experienced my fair share of the culture's idiosyncrasies, and the night was full of them. A charming narrator laid out the scene of a young man returning to the Philippines to visit his family. His *nanay* (mother) was there, of course, to drop him off at the airport. Fiona Flynn '19 played my mother to the tee. Her character's obsessive need to make sure that Brian Villejo, played by Phil Vincent Castanares '19, remembered to bring all the presents to all the aunts, uncles, and cousins, was an exact replica. Her line "I'm going to miss you, *anak!*" was executed with all the gusto and sincerity that only a Filipino mom could achieve.

As the narrator further explained, Brian found himself sitting next to a talkative *tita* (aunt) played by Mary Margaret Sta. Cruz '19. With her impressive grasp and control of the main language of the Philippines, Tagalog, Cruz adorably plays your typical *tita* with too much to say. Brian, in his attempt to ignore her, plays



Courtesy of Francis Maranon

MEMBERS OF PHILIPPINE AMERICAN LEAGUE PERFORMED on stage together at the end of their spring event, Bayanihan.

a series of Filipino parodies of popular movies and tv shows. These movies and TV shows included *The Lord of the Coconut*, *How I Met Your Tatay* (father), and other more familiar titles of *The Last Airbender*, *High School Musical*, and *Pitch Perfect*. Each of these parodies had funny versions of the original story based upon Filipino stereotypes and traditions.

However, the highlight of each of these parodies was when the storyline devolved into coordinated dancing. While a lot of people

know the national dance of the Philippines, the Tinikling, a dance with bamboo sticks, I had the pleasure to witness and learn about a vast variety of other traditional dances of the Philippine Islands. Bulaklakan is a dance of young women with flower covered bamboo/wire. Subli, a ceremonial worship dance rooted in the Spanish Catholic culture, was performed with small-brimmed hats. Sayaw Sa Bangko and Binasuan are dances thought to have been passed down from the ancient Philippine ancestors. Sayaw Sa Bangko,

a dance highlighting the dancing couple's partnership, is performed on top of *bangko* or narrow benches. Binasuan, a dance praising the ancient gods, is performed with the dancers dancing with glasses or cups of water. Pandango Sa Ilaw, performed with the lights dimmed and flickering candles in hand, is a dance meant to simulate fireflies. Maglalatik, my personal favorite, is a dance telling the story of a war between the *Moros*

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INTERVIEW

Renowned author interviewed by RPI student

Nicholas Boni
A Special to The Poly

I FOUND STEVEN MILLHAUSER'S SHORT STORY COLLECTION *Dangerous Laughter* in the unfamiliar territory of the fourth-floor stacks of the Folsom Library, wedged between countless works of fiction I never knew our school had. I didn't think RPI students had the time to read for enjoyment, and to some extent I was right—it'd only been punched out once before, in 2009.

Millhauser will be the guest speaker at the 75th Annual McKinney Contest, RPI's very own writing competition. The ceremony will be held Wednesday, April 13 at 8 pm in the Center for Biotechnology and Interdisciplinary Studies Auditorium, where

he'll give a reading of his work, answer questions, and present awards and cash prizes in the categories of fiction/drama, nonfiction, poetry, and multimedia. He published his first novel, *Edwin Mullhouse*, in 1972. His novel *Martin Dressler* won the Pulitzer Prize in 1997. His work has received various awards, and the short stories that fill his many collections have been featured in such prestigious anthologies as *Best American Short Stories*. His story "Eisenheim the Illusionist" inspired the 2006 film *The Illusionist*, starring Edward Norton. He currently teaches at Skidmore College in Saratoga Springs, New York.

Dangerous Laughter probes the universe we live in and the people we are by taking various pieces of the world,

modifying them slightly, and then watching to see what happens. In the title story, for example, Millhauser asks, "What would happen if spontaneous laughter became a fad among restless teenagers?" He takes this idea and runs with it—we observe the complete evolution of the teens' behavior, how their love of the fad waxes and wanes. At the end of the story, he writes, "Tomorrow something was bound to happen," which seems to cast aside the events of the story and await the new trend to grip the neighborhood. Through this, the kids seem whimsical, mercurial, and easily bored—typical of children of that awkward age. We get to see the full dynamism of adolescent caprice by exploring it in a new situation, and in doing so, perhaps we learn more about it than if we'd read a "true" account.

"The Dome" explores the ambition of the human race. It starts with a simple idea: what if we built a dome that climate controlled our yards? We already do so with our homes, our cars, our offices. The concept doesn't seem too far off. But it doesn't stop there—what if we climate controlled our neighborhoods, our towns, our cities? What if the entire country was environmentally controlled? The dome becomes a watermark for human advancement, and the narrator looks upon it without judgment, with a quiet acceptance, as if he never knew any different. He looks upon it as we might look today at the Golden Gate Bridge—as a timeless feat of engineering, whereas someone at the ribbon-cutting ceremony might have thought it spat at the natural beauty of the unspanned bay.

"I do two opposite things simultaneously: I put all of myself into my narrators and characters, and I maintain a cool distance. To do both of these things at the same time is exhausting, impossible, and absolutely necessary." —Steven Millhauser

After reading some of his stories, I was fortunate enough to be able to send him along a few questions that came up as I read them.

Around what age did you start writing stories? When did you realize that you wanted to write for a living, and when did you feel it became a viable option?

"I remember writing a story in the fifth or sixth grade, though my real passion at the time was rhymed poems. I was the kind of kid who had many passions: playing ping-pong, catching fly balls in the back yard, drawing with colored pencils, learning how to play the piano. Gradually everything fell away except the desire to write stories.

I've never connected writing with earning a living. I somehow knew, even in my early twenties, that writing for me had nothing to do with income. I had a fierce desire, in my early twenties, to write a novel, after which, I told myself, I'd figure out my life. I kept writing. When I published my first book, at the age of twenty-nine, I received a check for \$2,500. I thought: I'm almost thirty years old, and I've earned \$2,500. I was right: writing has nothing to do with income. Now what?"

What advice would you have for young or aspiring writers?

"Three pieces of advice: first, write about what feels exciting or exhilarating or urgent. This guarantees nothing about the quality of the writing, but it means that you're in touch with something important in yourself. Second, understand that it's a long apprenticeship, filled with probable disappointments. If you crave immediate approval or success, do something else. Third, confront the difficult question of how to wrest time for writing. There's no correct answer to this one. Try to stick to a regular schedule, even if it's only a few days a week, a few hours a day."

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