Constitution changes hotly debated

IN HER SECOND TIME COMING before the Senate, Senthilnathan failed to be approved as an E-Board representative by one vote. (file photo)

Jack Wellhofer
Senior Reporter

THE STUDENT SENATE OPENED ONE of its final meetings with a motion to appoint Deepika Senthilnathan ’21 as a Club/ICA representative. Senthilnathan had come before the Senate the previous week, where the motion to approve her failed 8-8-3. The day after, Senthilnathan was re-appointed by the Executive Board 12-0-1, to have her serve as a representative for the last four weeks of the term. The E-Board currently has 18 voting members, due to study abroad, co-ops, and resignations.

Much of the same discussion points were brought up from the last time, detailed in last week’s Senate article at poly.rpi.edu/s/senover8. Senthilnathan has been working with the Policies Committee and recently joined the Business Operations Committee, and is a member of the Indian Student Association, but is focused mainly on student government. After some discussion, the Senate voted 14-8-1 for her approval. Approving an E-Board representative requires a two-thirds vote, meaning Senthilnathan was one vote short at only 63.6 percent of the vote.

Nicholas Luczak
Senior Reporter

ON WEDNESDAY, THE EXECUTIVE BOARD PASSED a motion to approve the proposed redesign of the Union’s logo pending approval of Strategic Communications. They also announced the official opening of the Student Veterans Lounge and discussed some points of interest about the new space.

The meeting started off with a few committee reports including the director’s report, the Senate report, and the president’s report.

In the director’s report, Business Administrator Martha McElligott told the E-Board that the proposed Union Annual Report was approved by President Shirley Ann Jackson.

After the director’s report, Senate-Executive Board Liaison Joseph Venusto ’18 reported on what the Senate had worked on that week.

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**Senate: Official start of campaigning**

*Draft proposals of revisions to Union Constitution presented, discussed, no votes made*

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**E-Board:**

*Meeting closed to discuss logo*

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**SPERAZZA EXPRESSED desire to have Senate review handbook each year. (file photo)**

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**THE CEREMONIAL OPENING OF THE STUDENT VETERANS LOUNGE IS PROVISIONALLY SCHEDULED to take place the Friday of GM Week.** (file photo)

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**THE SENATE WILL vote on the Constitution changes on February 28. (file photo)**

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**E-Board Meeting closed to discuss logo**

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**THE EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETS every Thursday at 8 pm in the Rensselaer Union’s Shelnutt Gallery.**
Tickets on sale Wednesday, March 21 at 10am

TUESDAY, APRIL 10 // HOUSTON FIELD HOUSE
7pm doors // 8pm show
Tickets $25 on sale at the Houston Field House box office 518-276-6262
Tickets available to RPI students only. Only 2 tickets per student

show produced by

UPAC CONCERTS
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RENSSELAER UNION PRESENTS

blackbear
With special guests

TIPXQSPEVDFECZ
**LETTER TO THE EDITOR**

From being told on the playground by a friend, “Well you can’t keep switching back and forth. If you want to go play with the guys, you can’t come play with us girls tomorrow,” to having to pick between my Latino friend group or my Caucasian friend group of the same gender. As I previously discussed, and this is a trend that I’ve noticed was younger, I noticed this trend, and the fact that it seemed to cause some humans feel the need to label, categorize, separate, and segregate? When I was younger, I noticed this trend, and the fact that it seemed to cause some humans to naturally complicate the problem-solving process. Instead of focusing on one thing: it doesn’t matter if you’re a Republican and your neighbor is a Democrat or vice versa. Humans seem to naturally complicate the problem-solving process. Instead of focusing on this human tendency until I tried to research, and took a few sociology classes, I’m discussing this problem of separation as it applies to discussing “solutions” to our mass shooting epidemic.

We, as Americans, have the problem of letting our need for separation prohibit our progress in solving even bigger issues. One of these big issues is that innocent people are dying due to mass shootings. The third sentence of the policy impedes students from participating in Executive Board meetings. With this new policy, no one is allowed to livestream a meeting, under any circumstances. The reason one can come up with for why the Executive Board decided to completely ban livestreaming is due to the fact that, once you livestream something, it’s out there for the world to see. Since the data is already out there, there’s no good reason to delete the video after the fact just because it’s a livestream. It’s alright for anyone to come watch the meeting, to be involved in their campus and community, but you deny the ability to get involved, learn, and take part in what’s going on just because they couldn’t make it to a meeting at that specific time? It’s alright for anyone to come watch the meeting, to be involved in their campus and community, but you deny the ability to get involved, learn, and take part in what’s going on just because they couldn’t make it to a meeting at that specific time? To me, it’s almost like a farce: to expect privacy during an open meeting is to expect rain on a sunny day. As I previously discussed, and this is a newfangled idea for the Executive Board, if you’re running a meeting correctly you’re already maintaining the privacy of anyone involved in the running of the meeting are asked to leave the room until the end of the closed portion of the meeting. It’s alright for anyone to come watch the meeting, to be involved in their campus and community, but you deny the ability to get involved, learn, and take part in what’s going on just because they couldn’t make it to a meeting at that specific time?

We've seen students become more engaged during past meetings due to the availability of livestreamed videos. Multiple students asked questions during the town hall meeting hosted by the Student Government on Wednesday, January 18, 2017. According to one student, more people were able to ask questions during the Board meeting on January 18 was viewed by almost 300 people. We know that livestreams are effective in engaging students and fostering participation; why wouldn’t you encourage this? Right now, there is only one comprehensive publication a year (the Union Annual Report), that lets students know what is happening with the money that they had to pay as their Activity Fee. People have a right to transparency when it comes to their money. To any Executive Board members who might be reading this, you have a responsibility to the students of Rensselaer to make the right and moral decisions. As members of the Rensselaer Student Government, you are accountable for the transparency of the activities and choices of the Rensselaer Union Executive Board Special Rules of Order, limiting the rights of individual people.

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CrystaL Vejar
Contribution Editor

**LETTER TO THE EDITOR**

**Governmental oversight in recent changes**

TWO WEEKS AGO, THE RENSSELAER UNION EXECUTIVE BOARD adopted a policy that no one is allowed to livestream a meeting, under any circumstances. The reason one can come up with for why the Executive Board decided to completely ban livestreaming is due to the fact that, once you livestream something, it’s out there for the world to see. Since the data is already out there, there’s no good reason to delete the video after the fact just because it’s a livestream. It’s alright for anyone to come watch the meeting, to be involved in their campus and community, but you deny the ability to get involved, learn, and take part in what’s going on just because they couldn’t make it to a meeting at that specific time? To me, it’s almost like a farce: to expect privacy during an open meeting is to expect rain on a sunny day. As I previously discussed, and this is a newfangled idea for the Executive Board, if you’re running a meeting correctly you’re already maintaining the privacy of anyone involved in the running of the meeting are asked to leave the room until the end of the closed portion of the meeting. It’s alright for anyone to come watch the meeting, to be involved in their campus and community, but you deny the ability to get involved, learn, and take part in what’s going on just because they couldn’t make it to a meeting at that specific time? To me, it’s almost like a farce: to expect privacy during an open meeting is to expect rain on a sunny day.

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Grand marshal encourages participation

When I tell people this, I have those who are quick to say yes or no, but the vast majority seem undecided, perplexed, or shy. Today’s Top Hat is dedicated to those in the middle.

One of the biggest drawing points for participating in student government is the ability to make a difference, both for their current classmates and for future students. Imagine being able to come back to campus as an alumnus, to see something you helped bring to campus, and to see the benefit students get from their contributions, and enthusiasm to keep our progress moving at a meaningful pace. I alluded to them above, but there are five bodies of student government—the Student Senate, the Executive Board, the Judicial Board, the Undergraduate Council, and the Graduate Council. The Student Senate is the chief legislative and policy-making body of the Union, and it consists of 26 elected members and is presided over by the elected grand marshal. The Executive Board is the chief financial body of the Union, and it is presided over by the elected president of the Union and consists of 15–20 appointed members. The Judicial Board is the chief judicial body, and it consists of an appointed chairman, six appointed regular members, and five appointed alternate members. The Undergraduate Council is presided over by the Undergraduate President and is made up of class councils for each undergraduate class, each of which have elected and appointed opportunities. Finally, the Graduate Council consists of the five elected graduate senators (who also sit on the Student Senate) and six representatives, and it is presided over by the appointed Graduate Council President.

So, with this information, please give your involvement some consideration. At the very least, please get out and vote during Grand Marshal Week in April. If you are interested in running, be sure to attend a candidate information session, read the handbook at http://elections.union.rpi.edu/handbook, and contact Elections Commission Chairperson Caleb Caraway ’19 if you have any further questions at carawc@rpi.edu!

And, of course, if you have any questions, suggestions, concerns, or ideas, please feel free to reach out to me at gm@rpi.edu!

Grand marshal encourages participation

Do you enjoy writing? Become a staff writer for The Polytechnic! Contact poly@rpi.edu for more information.

The Question:

What is your favorite movie quote?

Jared Fredette

AERO ’20

“I am a leaf on the wind—
watch how I soar.”

-HobanWashburn, Serenity

Ryan Smith

BME ’18

“Gretchen, stop trying to make fetch happen! It’s not going to happen!”

- Regina George, Mean Girls

Luke Withy-Berry

CIVL ’20

“No, I am your father.”

-Darth Vader, Star Wars: Episode V - The Empire Strikes Back

Geoff Warne

ELEC ’20

“My name is Jeff!”

-Jenko, 22 Jump Street

Dina Zaslavsky

CSYS ’18

“He touched the butt”

- Tad, Finding Nemo

Production Staff: Weston Brousseau, Jack Weilburger

The Rensselaer Polytechnic is published weekly, sacred during holiday and examination periods, by the students of Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute as authorized by the Rensselaer Union. Opinions expressed in this newspaper do not necessarily reflect the views of Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute or the Rensselaer Union. The Rensselaer Polytechnic is published in the interest of providing a forum for discussion of issues of interest to the Rensselaer community. Any student, faculty, or staff member may submit letters to the editor for publication. The Rensselaer Polytechnic reserves the right to edit for reasons of space, clarity, libel, or style and to compose headlines for all articles printed. Letters to the Editor must be signed, with names and titles. The editor reserves the right to accept or reject letters prior to publication, and letters sent in a Word document attachment via email to edop@poly.rpi.edu. All submitted material becomes the property of The Rensselaer Polytechnic. The Rensselaer Polytechnic does not accept, print, or republish solicitation letters, which may be considered advertising. All advertising is subject to review. The Rensselaer Polytechnic is not responsible for unsolicited material.

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LETTER WEDNESDAY SPEAKER SERIES
UNIVERSITY PARISH OF CHRIST SUN OF JUSTICE
AT
THE CHAPEL + CULTURAL CENTER
225 BURDETT AVENUE, TROY, NEW YORK 12180

OUR INSPIRING FIVE WEEK SERIES RETURNS, A MASS AT 5:30PM, A MEATLESS POTLUCK SUPPER AT 6:15PM AND GUEST SPEAKERS AT 7:00 PM. THE SERIES IS OPEN TO EVERYONE REGARDLESS OF RELIGIOUS AFFILIATION, SO COME TO ANY PART OF THE PROGRAM YOU WISH. IF YOU ARE ABLE PLEASE BRING A MEATLESS DISH TO SHARE FOR SUPPER.

OUR CHURCHES
WEDNESDAY, 21 FEBRUARY 2018
BR. MICKEY MCGRATH
ARTIST, AUTHOR AND SPEAKER
LEARN MORE ABOUT BR. MICKEY AT HTTP://BROMICKEYMCGRATH.COM/

THE COSMOS
WEDNESDAY, 28 FEBRUARY 2018
BROTHER GUY CONSOLMAGNO, SJ
DIRECTOR OF THE VATICAN OBSERVATORY, PRESIDENT OF THE VATICAN OBSERVATORY FOUNDATION
LEARN MORE ABOUT BR. GUY AT HTTP://WWW.VATICANOBSERVATORY.ORG/CONTENT/TECHNOLOGY/BR-MORANDO/CONSOLMAGNO-SJ-HTML

THE HUMAN PERSON
WEDNESDAY, 7 MARCH 2018
MICHELLE SARACINO, PHD
PROFESSOR OF RELIGIOUS STUDIES
LEARN MORE ABOUT MICHELLE AT HTTP://MANHATTAN.EDU/CAMPUS-DIRECTORY/MICHELE SARACINO

THE CONTEMPORARY SCENE
WEDNESDAY, 14 MARCH 2017
JOHN G. WAITE, FAIA
ARCHITECT
LEARN MORE ABOUT JOHN AT HTTP://WWW.JGWAARCHITECT.COM/ABOUT/STAFF.HTML

LITURGICAL SERVICES
Penance Service
SATURDAY, 24 MARCH 2018, 11:00 AM
INDIVIDUAL CONFESSION
WEDNESDAY, 28 MARCH 2018, 6:00 - 8:00 PM

Palm Sunday
SATURDAY, 24 MARCH 2018, 5:15 PM
SUNDAY, 25 MARCH 2018, 9:00 AM,
10:30 AM AND 5:00 PM

Holy Thursday
29 MARCH 2018
AGAPE AND MASS, 6:30 PM

Good Friday
DRAMATIC READING OF THE
PASSION OF JESUS AND
COMMUNION SERVICE
30 MARCH 2018, 7:30 PM

Holy Saturday
31 MARCH 2018
THE GREAT EASTER VIGIL, 8:00 PM

Easter Sunday
1 APRIL 2018
9:00 AM, 10:30 AM (FOCUS ON CHILDREN), 5:00 PM

Daily Mass
MONDAY, TUESDAY, THURSDAY 5:15 PM
WEDNESDAY 5:30 PM
FRIDAY 12:30 PM
SUNDAY MASS
9:00 AM, 10:30AM, 5:00 PM

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CHAPLAIN’S OFFICE:
518-276-6507
518-276-6508
WWW.CHAPELANDCULTURALCENTER.ORG

Serving the Rensselaer community since 1885
The Black Students Alliance hosted students and professionals in the community as part of Black History Month, featuring motivational speeches, poetry, and music.

UPAC Cinema highlights student interests

CLUB SPOTLIGHT

from the University of Albany, sang “Broken-Hearted Girl” being gay. RPI’s Chinese American Student Association read original poems about living with cerebral palsy and Jon Gilroy, a traveling poet and motivational speaker, team. Eighth Wonder’s energy resonated with the audience. Remache ’19, who performed “You Need to Let It Go,” a poem on love and self-respect. After Remache was Eighth Wonder’s energy resonated with the audience. People standing around the edge of the room danced along. Jon Gilroy, a traveling poet and motivational speaker, read original poems about living with cerebral palsy and being gay. RPI’s Chinese American Student Association performed a mesmerizing fan dance. Shannon Alexander, from the University of Albany, sang “Broken-Hearted Girl” by Beyoncé. Navpreet Singh, also known as Nav the Poet, spoke on being Indian American and Sikh. Singh discussed underrepresentation and misrepresentation of Indians in American media. “Going from Aps from the Simpsons to Raj from the Big Bang Theory is not an improvement,” Singh said before reading a funny but poignant poem on the topic.

Albany poet, Poetik, read from her book “Labyrinth of a Melaninized Being: A Collection of Poems.” Charles O’more performed a passionate song of his own composition on Black identity. RPI Bhangra and Bollywood, a North Indian dance team, gave an energetic and well-choreographed routine. Nedyah Alexis, a University of Albany student, read an untitled poem on the intersection of love and faith. Alexis punctuated the sentence “I found God in this black boy” throughout her poem. The scheduled performances ended with author and poet Alyssa Harris. Harris read several pieces. The topics covered love, Black identity, pain, sexuality, and religion. Davis thanked the artists and gave the stage to open mic performers. Ashley Sierra read her original piece, “Poem for my unborn son.” RPI student Seretsi Khabane Lekena ’18 beatboxed. University of Albany student Kyra sang, and the audience waved their cell phone lights. Maya read original poetry on young love and heartbreak. Justina, a new RPI student, talked about discovering a supportive cultural community at RPI and read a poem. The open mic ended with Carlos, who read original poetry on Mexican history and identity. He ended the show with “If” by Rudyard Kipling, a poem, he says, that gives him strength during difficult times.

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The Placid Baker offers tasteful pastries, cheerful customer service, wide variety

A Special to The Poly

In Troy, there are many small, niche shops with unique and appealing features. One of my personal favorite spots to go to in Downtown Troy is a little artisan bakery called The Placid Baker. Each staff member has a wonderful and friendly smile on their face, and greets you with a warm “Hello, have a nice day” to every customer that orders.

Walking into the bakery, you can immediately smell fresh baked bread, and freshly baked pastries. The warm bread and pastries are very understanding and patiently wait for me to decide what I want. They always serve with a smile, and say “have a nice day” to every customer that orders.

Below the colorful array of macarons lie the creamy, chocolatey, and ever so smooth brownies. There are other treats on display within the store, all of which are just as sweet, light, and heartwarming as the last.

While being distracted by the display of food, customers are primary greeted by the wonderful staff of The Placid Baker. Each staff member has a wonderful and friendly smile on their face, and greets you with a warm “Hello, can I help you with anything?” To this, I am generally too busy to even think about what I want, so I just say “have a nice day” to every customer that orders.

The Placid Baker also has a small menu of a sandwich or two, salad, soup, tea, and coffee. They also sell a variety of pastries, cookies, cinnamon rolls, and other freshly baked bread products. On Wednesdays and Saturdays, The Placid Baker makes pizzas for lunch, one that is vegetarian and one with meat. Not traditional New York style, the pizzas are baked on thick, freshly made ciabatta-like bread. Each bite of pizza has bursts of flavor in sauce, toppings, and bread—all come together and create a masterful symphony that is pizza.

The Placid Baker always has a stand in the Troy Farmer’s Market, for both indoor and outdoor markets. Each farmers market, they bake a new item that is not found in the everyday day store selection. So, to keep having a new Placid Baker treat, it is always best to go to the farmer’s market and stop by their stand. They are open from 8:30 am to 3 pm every Tuesday to Friday, and 8:30 am to 2 pm on Saturday.

Everything in the store is moderately priced and well worth the brief walk down from campus to go buy a treat and make your day better. Every time I walk in, I leave with a big, satisfied smile on my face. It is both a wonderful delightful and a nice therapeutic walk to relax in the midst of being at RPI. The Placid Baker is one of my favorite places in Troy. It never ceases to live up to my expectations and leave me walking away as a very satisfied customer.
Renewed hopes for upcoming season

**MEN’S LACROSSE**

**MADISON WAGNER**
**Staff Reporter**

Following the Men’s Lacrosse team’s successful preseason and fourth place ranking in the 2018 Liberty League Men’s Lacrosse Preseason Poll, Head Coach Jim Townsend is excited and enthusiastic for the season to begin. When asked his opinion about the upcoming season, Townsend said that, with “big things, returning players,” as well as some fresh feet on the field, the team is looking to have a strong start. Carrying 44 student athletes on the roster, Coach Townsend has tasked the team with maintaining an average GPA of 3.1, no doubt only one of the challenges that the team will overcome this season.

Following the disappointing ending to last year’s season at 10-5 and being ranked 15th in the NCAA Northern Region, the team is hoping to “learn from their mistakes” and come back even stronger. With a “fast-paced game and drive to score,” RPI’s lacrosse team is sure to leave it on the line. Two big games to keep your eyes peeled for are the games against RIT, the number two seed in the Liberty League Conference, at home on April 7, and the away game versus Union College on April 18. Coach Townsend is looking forward to seeing the team tackle a challenging schedule which began on Saturday, February 24 at Keene State.

At the game on Saturday, what seemed to be a strong start soon became a hard-fought loss against Keene State College. However, the Engineers made it clear that they are willing to put in the hard work to overcome adversity on and off the field. Goalkeepers Parker Smith ‘18 and Brian Dougherty ‘21 worked hard to earn 15 defensive saves, and Captain Zach Lukas ‘18 leads the team with five goals, one assist, and seven shots on goal. The most impressive play of the game was midfielder Lucas Bastarache’s ‘19 rallying goal right before halftime, which brought RPI to within one goal of their opponent. Ending in an 11-18 loss and being outshot 34-49 on goal, the Engineer’s efforts from their loss is going to make for an interesting season.

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DURING BIG RED FREAKOUT, MEN’S HOCKEY LOSES to Colgate University 2-5 in contentious struggle largely due to a risky late game strategy.

**WOMEN’S SOFTBALL**

**AMBER MAISONET**
**Head Coach**

Women’s Softball Head Coach Amber Maisonet returns for her 10th season at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, with this year being her eight as head coach, and she is looking for another winning season. Last season, the team made it to the National Collegiate Athletic Association championships, and her women are hungry for another exceptional time on the diamond.

“We set the bar high last year, and the majority of our players are coming back. They don’t know anything else but making it to the NCAA,” Coach Maisonet shared with me. “We will have a good defense and offense, and as long as our pitchers hold it together, we’ll be good.”

Coach Maisonet knows what she is talking about—an all-star in her own right while playing outfield at her alma mater, University of Albany. Coach Maisonet began at Rensselaer while working on her master’s in educational administration with a concentration in higher education. She played soccer while in graduate school for her first year, and then was a graduate assistant for her second year, and has been the head coach at RPI ever since.

Coach Maisonet has had winning seasons the entire time she has been at Rensselaer, consistently winning 25-30 games in a 40-game season. Last year’s team that made it to the NCAA finals won 27 games and are looking just as strong this year. When Coach Maisonet started, there were only five teams in the Liberty League, and currently there are eight, with Ithaca College being on the schedule this year as their toughest competition. In only her third year as head coach, the women won the Liberty League.

Every season, they begin during Spring Break and have several games in Florida there before they come back to New York. Some of the teams they play in Florida include Wheaton College, Westfield State University, and Framingham State University. When they return to New York, they play teams including Union College, RIT, and Ithaca College. Some of the players to look for are shortstop Cam Caswell ’20, 2nd baseman Tori Greco ’18, 3rd baseman Allie Hunt ’20, pitcher Jaime Cleasby ’19, and outfielder Maddie Provencher ’20.

Coach Maisonet has high hopes for this team and summed up their feelings perfectly saying, “they want it.”

**SCORES FROM THE WEEK**

**SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 24**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Score</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Men’s tennis at University of Rochester</td>
<td>8-1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women’s swimming at Liberty League</td>
<td>1st</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men’s swimming at Liberty League</td>
<td>1st</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men’s track at Liberty League</td>
<td>2 of 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women’s track at Liberty League</td>
<td>4 of 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men’s lacrosse at Keene State</td>
<td>11-18</td>
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<tr>
<td>Women’s tennis at RIT</td>
<td>2-7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men’s hockey vs Colgate University</td>
<td>2-5</td>
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**SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 25**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Score</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Men’s tennis at RIT</td>
<td>9-0</td>
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</table>
Serving the Rensselaer community since 1885

Join us at our closing nights in RU 3418 on Tuesdays at 7 pm.
PLP
Application for Fall 2018 & Spring 2019 is open to all undergraduate sophomore or junior students. Please submit the following materials in person at the Archer Center located in Academy Hall or scan and email to archercenter@rpi.edu by March 9, 2018:
- Resume
- Cover letter
- Completed faculty/professional reference form
- List of campus involvement activities
For more information, contact Christine Allard at bondc@rpi.edu

Professional Leadership Program
- Fall or spring semester, two-hour, co-curricular seminar series.
- Practice becoming a strong, resilient person who can translate that to a professional workplace.
- Students engage with corporate professionals, alumni/ae and community partners.
- Topics include communication, workplace ethics, understanding corporate culture, leadership, effective decision making, networking and negotiating, and managing change and more.
- No grades, no homework and no tests.
- Mondays from 6-8 PM in the Student Union.
OFF-CAMPUS EVENT

Excursion to D.C. fosters connections

Students given opportunity to travel, learn more about their culture through sponsored trip

Tatyana Fortune
A Special to The Poly

As we stepped into the lobby of the National Museum of African American History and Culture, I was struck with awe by all of the attention to detail in every inch of the room. Looking at the display, it really felt like the museum was crafted especially for me to experience, and I realized just exactly where I was. Each point of the museum was fully interactive—I could hear and touch and feel the atmosphere change in each room, in addition to just being able to see the images and artifacts of my history. There was no glossing over the graphic details of the African American experience and everything about it was extremely eye-opening. I cycled through many emotions in that building, from anger to embarrassment, to pride in my heritage and all things that had to occur in order for me to end up where I am Right now. I felt represented in every sense, especially when I gazed upon the leader of the Haitian rebellion, Toussaint L’Ouverture. I cannot remember a time when I felt closer to my ancestors, or moved by their resilience. I cannot remember a time when I felt closer to my identity, or recognized my culture, or felt represented in every sense, I felt represented in every sense, I felt represented in every sense.

Saturday night, our group went to see Black Panther. I can’t even begin to describe how hyped I was to see a superhero movie with a talented black cast. It was more than a movie. It was a whole political statement without leaving anything out—from the precarious relationship between Africans and Black Americans today, to the idea of giving back to your community when you get the chance to make it out. It’s a fictional story that imagines a time and place where black people were untouched by white colonization and systems of institutionalized racism. It was refreshing to escape reality for a few hours and see people with the same skin color as you portrayed in a positive light, and not in the repetitive roles that black people are cast in—the criminals, the thugs, the villains, the slaves, or those struggling to be happy in this country during any part of our history or present. Many people were anticipating this movie and celebrated by dressing up in traditional African dress to express their pride, and many left feeling touched and inspired.

There are so many other great experiences in D.C. that I am so glad I got to have. We visited Adams Morgan, the White House, the Lincoln Memorial, the Washington Memorial, saw statues of important American figures, and got to listen to D.C.’s famous Go-Go music. We took pictures with the portraits of President Barack Obama and First Lady Michelle Obama. We walked along the walls of memorials dedicated to veterans who fought for us. We grew closer as a group and got the chance to celebrate the birthdays of two of our freshmen by planning a surprise. This weekend helped me feel more connected to all aspects of humankind—my past and present, my ancestors and friends—I had the chance to delve deeper into what it means to be a Black American.

ON-CAMPUS EVENT

Discussion challenges thoughts on faith

Anahit Hovhannisyan
Senior Reviewer

A conversation centered around faith, humanity, and the intersection between identity and work sprouted at the Veritas Forum last Friday. Sponsored by the Rensselaer Christian Association, the Graduate Christian Fellowship, Alpha Gamma Tau, and Sigma Gamma Tau, "Is Science Enough?" facilitated an open discussion between two professors of differing faiths: Christian Professor Cullen Buie from MIT and agnostic Professor Amir Hirsa from RPI.

The forum began with brief introductions from each guest, speaking to his personal journey of faith. Buie described a turning point while picking up his brother from football camp one day. He realized he loved his brother, but did not know how he was perceived by his own university, which led to his discovery of engineering and a summer program by Multicultural Achievement Committee Scholars. After graduating high school, Buie enrolled in Ohio State, and became exposed to Christianity as a result of interacting with his roommate.

Buie grew inspired by his roommate’s way of life and shortly thereafter converted to Christianity. He describes, "It seemed like an easier way to live," and "Any success I’ve had is because of God." Later, Buie narrated the day his sister suddenly passed away, and attributed his perseverance to his faith in Jesus, ultimately stating his strength in faith developed that day as a result of a family tragedy. Following Buie’s emotional presentation, Hirsa presented his journey of faith in PowerPoint slides and light humor. He displayed a circle, representing roughly a hundred years of life expectancy and colored a quarter in to represent his faith as a Muslim. Next came a family tragedy, and another quarter piece to represent his faith as an atheist. In contrast to Buie’s response to a family tragedy, Hirsa reacted by retracting his faith. Following a rough estimate of 50 years, came a miracle, which Hirsa suggested was the birth of his children. The second half of the circle was labeled as "blissfully agnostic," "hopefully optimistic," and a question mark.

With a better understanding of the guest speakers, the conversation moved into various topics such as who you are versus what you do, money versus greed, and politics. As these topics were discussed, the speakers provided agreeing answers. On the first topic, regarding how society values human beings, both professors agreed that society values individuals by their career, instead of who they are and what they have to offer. Hirsa continued with the idea that money is the cause of human corruption, as it defines human value. Buie clarified, “The love of money is the root of all evil,” quoting the Bible. To conclude the forum, questions were collected from the audience and directed to the guest speakers. Questions fell along the lines of "Is human suffering justified," and "What life event would cause a change in your faith?"

Both professors offered words of wisdom to the audience. Most notably, Buie noted, “We don’t have tomorrow guaranteed,” and Hirsa stated, “Constantly question what you think or what you believe… it is the only way to grow.”