Elections Reform Task Force chair removed days after appointment

Brookelyn Parslow  
Senior Reporter

On April 25, Intra-Intra Vice President for Student Life LeNoreman J. Strong announced via email the creation of the Elections Reform Task Force of the Student Senate. According to Strong, it was planned to work with Vice President for Information Services and Technology John Kolb and others to “develop a project timeline and approach to analyzing the current election system as the student leaders decide whether to repair or replace the electronic system.”

Strong wrote that they would “engage an audit firm at the appropriate time” for the purpose of “work[ing] with student leaders to identify issues and vulnerabilities with the voting system.”

Class of 2020 Senator Joseph Lyon was appointed as the chair of the task force; its restricted membership included Elections Commissioner Zachary Taylor ’21, Grand Marshal Stefanie Warner ’19, former Web Technologies Group Chairperson Sidney Kochman ’19, and Facilities and Services Chairperson Nancy Bush ’19.

The task force replied to Strong’s email the following day supporting an audit of the elections process. It also listed a number of requests, including the ability to communicate directly with the auditors and that the task force would be the primary group for handling the audit process.

The task force then created an anonymous survey to “collect campus sentiment on student government elections,” which asked respondents about changes with elections they would like to see as well as their thoughts on Rensselaer elections as the student leaders conduct an external audit.

The survey was then distributed to all of the undergraduate email lists by Undergraduate President Josephine Lyons ’20 on May 1, accompanied by a message from Chairperson Joseph Lyon.

Later that day, Lyon was removed from his position as chairperson and his membership on the task force was revoked. According to Lyon, he was removed because Warner felt that approaching the undergraduate president and asking to send out the email with the survey went over her head and she didn’t like that dynamic.

“With the goal of this survey being to gauge student sentiment about the elections, I felt it was appropriate to seek out my undergraduate president and ask her to send it,” he later added.

Lyon acknowledged that he should have sent a message about his decision to the rest of the task force, but that, as the chairperson distributing agreed-upon information, he didn’t feel required to run it by her.

Warner told The Poly that Lyon’s decision to approach the undergraduate president about sending the survey was an action that “went behind the task force’s back” and “abused the lists that [Undergraduate President] Josephine [Lyons] had.”

Warner further elaborated that “he should have at least given the task force a heads-up” and that sending the email without notifying her was “a very harsh thing to jump to.” When asked if sending the email— and spreading the survey as widely as possible—was what she wanted to accomplish, Warner said that it was, but not without the task force in “good communication.”

“I did want to reach as many people as possible, but I just think that he made a split second decision that could have come [from] a conclusion of the task force, but that he just kind of irrationally did it himself,” she explained.

When asked if there were any other issues expressed with his performance as chairperson, Lyon shared that Warner had pulled him aside earlier that day and said that she wanted to ensure he was “not operating with bias” due to the error that he experienced during the election.

Lyon ran a write-in campaign for both Class of 2020 senator seat he did not receive sufficient nominations, and was not on the ballot until the voting system was updated partly through election day. According to Lead Systems Administrator David Raab ‘19, the votes that he received while listed on the ballot could not easily be recovered. The discrepancy in the election for the last Class of 2020 senator seat was settled by a vote of the Class of 2020 Council, which Lyon won.

Lyon’s personal experiences raised questions about other parts of the election, such as the possibility that a candidate was removed from the ballot immediately re-added—which would not be noticeable from a voter’s perspective, if done quickly enough. This action would essentially reset the candidate’s vote count. While these changes would be recorded in a log, that log could have also been edited—which would not be immediately noticeable from the perspective of a system administrator or an Elections Commission member.

According to Raab, editing the log would likely be traceable, but the Union systems administrators are not familiar enough with the technologies involved to investigate this; however, it could likely be revealed by an audit.

When The Poly asked Warner why she removed Lyon from the task force, she expressed that her first concern was his “predispersed bias” and that she spoke about his personal involvement in the elections multiples times during internal meetings. The second concern was having the survey sent to the undergraduate mailing lists. According to Lyon, the issue of bias was not cited as a reason for his removal during their one-on-one meeting in which he was removed from his position.

In the Senate meeting wherein Warner was appointed as the chair, Warner said that “[she] is only over-seeing” and that “[the] fully tried[ing] Joey to lead that task force.” When asked what changed, she said that “the bias presented itself” and that she anticipated his role as more technical.

“I think it comes down to Joey came into this with the situation that I didn’t think would affect him being able to lead, but I think the bias really stems from he doesn’t know what’s going on— neither do—no one knows what’s going on with the logs in the task force. We can assume but we’re not sure. And then, on top of that, there’s a lot of human errors that happened. So, I just think that these could create some strong bias,” said Warner, while discussing how Lyon’s experiences with the election would affect his performance as chairperson.

“Without total knowledge of how the system works, I have only been able to speculate with the information I have. This is why I would hope for a full review of the election processes, and why I was very interested in the role of leading the Elections Reform Task Force,” wrote Lyon in an email to The Poly that outlined his concerns with the election.
New food vendor approved; Panera catered

Darby Burns
Senior Reporter

The E-Board meeting on April 24, started out closed so that the Board could discuss the future of Union dining and the Union facilities assistant position. The meeting then opened again to discuss the affiliation of the Christian Students on campus, the reallocation of funds for multicultural events at the Experimental Media and Performing Arts Center, and an amendment to the report on National Affiliations the Board made earlier in the semester. The meeting was catered by Panera Bread.

Five motions were passed during the closed portion of the meeting. The first was to “approve [redacted] as the food vendor for the McNeil Room and approve renovations funded by [redacted] and Hospitality Services during the summer of 2018.” The second was to approve reallocating Thunder Mountain Curry to replace Subconnection, and the third was to approve transitioning Mega Burger to an undisclosed vendor. The fourth was to approve renovations to Father’s during the summer of 2018.” The final item on the E-Board’s agenda dealt with a motion the national organization, for example, Cru, and that they are non-hierarchical and treat meetings not like a lecture, but as an opportunity for all members to share with one another.

After the members of the Christian Students on Campus stepped out, discussion continued to revolve around the question of what makes the club unique, and the eventual consensus was that religion is so broad that there is room for another group to have a different voice amongst the others.

Next to come before the Board was the Christian Students on Campus, who were seeking Union affiliation. They explained that their goal is for Rensselaer students to experience the truths in the Bible and apply them to their daily life, as well as to care for those who have just moved here or are from abroad. One major point of discussion that came up in questions from the Board was the differences between them and the many other religious clubs on campus. They explained that they weren’t a national organization like, for example, Cru, and that they are non-hierarchical and treat meetings not like a lecture, but as an opportunity for all members to share with one another.

The original motion was to retract and rescind approval for the entire report. However, several members of the Board voiced issues with that, saying that a lot of time and work went into the report, and that an issue with one club shouldn’t negate the rest of it. As a result, the original motion failed 1-10-2.

Another motion was made to amend the report to add an additional line stating that, after further investigation, the club is now assigned a low-risk status, which passed 8-1-4.

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RACQUETBALL
Team places second at national conference
Michael Kowalczyk
A Special to
The Poly
The RPI Racquetball Team traveled to Warren, New Jersey for the 2017 - 2018 Eastern Collegiate Racquetball Conference Regional Championship over the weekend of February 23.
Following the meet, the 2017-2018 regular season standings were announced. This season, the RPI Racquetball Women’s Team finished in third place, the Men’s Team finished in second place, and the Combined Team finished in second place. This is the best finish for the Combined Team since the early 2000’s.

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The team then travelled to Minneapolis, Minnesota on March 13 to 17 to compete in the 2018 USA Racquetball Intercollegiate National Championships. The team competed against schools such as Oregon State, Brigham Young University, Texas, and Missouri and defended their Overall Team Division II Championship.

Coach Kevin Mitchell voiced his praise for the team. He noted how hard the team practiced and competed during the second semester, “We knew as a team we were only 150 points out of second place going into the final meet, a difference of three matches. The players practiced hard and battled during the final meet of the season on our home courts in Albany. We were ultimately able to secure second place ahead of Army and Penn State.”

We completed the most successful ECRC regular season for RPI in over 10 years and I was ecstatic the team defended the Division II National Title. More importantly, I am proud the team continues to improve and recruit. I want to thank all the graduating seniors and wish them nothing but success in the next chapter of their lives. I am extremely optimistic for next season and truly believe RPI can compete for the ECRC Regular Season Championship.

Team president Will Puswald stated, “I’m extremely proud of what this team was able to accomplish this year. What I am even more proud of is that I know the team is in a place where it will only get better from here.”

If anyone has ever played the sport or would like to give it a try, please reach out to someone on the team or email Will Puswald '18 at puswaw@rpi.edu, Vice Presidents Melissa Helm ’20 at helmme2@rpi.edu or Nick Harrison ’19 at harrin4@rpi.edu.

TOP TEN
Ways to use your RPI degree

1. Frame It
2. Pick up girls
3. Change the world
4. Use it to taunt your professors
5. “Brag” to “friends”
6. Sell it to pay off debt and start again
7. Job hunt at home
8. Paper airplane
9. Herd sheep in Iceland
10. Frame It

If you have any funny jokes, send them to poly@rpi.edu.
UPAC FIELD DAY!

DE-STRESS WITH FREE FOOD & ENTERTAINMENT
Bring Your Picnic Blanket!

Thursday, May 3rd
’86 Field, 12pm-3pm
Rain Location: Armory
As a fan of Wes Anderson, I was super excited to see Isle of Dogs. I loved what he did in Moonrise Kingdom, and Grand Budapest Hotel is still one of my favorite movies. When I saw the trailer for Isle of Dogs, I was a bit puzzled. Instead of human actors, or even non-human actors, the trailer featured stop motion dogs and a tiny stop motion human. Honestly, this shouldn’t have been too much of a surprise, as Anderson's 2009 Fantastic Mr. Fox was done in a similar style, but I hadn’t anticipated seeing something like it anytime soon. I’m glad I went in having only seen the trailer though. Isle of Dogs is an incredible, albeit bizarre, movie that’s hard to describe.

Isle of Dogs is set in a far away future, located in stop motion Japan. Dogs have been subjected to a terrifying plague, and are multiplying out of control. This prompts the mayor of Megasaki City to deport them to Trash Island—a garbage dumping island far off the coast. The story splits the movie roughly in half, with part of it taking place on the island, and the other part in the city. On the island, we follow a young boy, Atari, as he crashes on the island in order to look for his dog. Spots. He is aided by a loyal pack of misfit dogs: former pets that desperately want to return home. They travel through dangerous terrain and narrowly avoid rescue parties sent to capture Atari, while their backstories are explored and the true effect of dog flu is explained. On the mainland, the story follows American exchange student Tracy as she works to uncover an anti-science conspiracy that has slowly taken over Megasaki City. She is followed as she uncovers a murder mystery, and a plot to rid the island of all its dogs forever.

If any of that seemed out there to you, then we’re on the same page. Isle of Dogs was all over the place, but in an incredibly fun way. Both plots were entertaining and full of twists. The movie was captivating, and even that which seemed far-fetched ended up being understandable and enjoyable. I liked the unique way of stop motion storytelling, which brought out a human-like persona from the dogs.

That’s not to say that I liked everything about the movie. All of the humans in the movie spoke Japanese, and the decision to only translate their lines when they were being translated theatrically—for example, when someone was making a speech—was questionable. Atari spoke entirely in Japanese, and the only words I understood were the ones which I was meant to understand: “Fetch-u, Biscuit-u.” Also, the character of Tracy was a bit overdone. She went from dorky exchange student, to conspiracy theorist, to cool motivational speaker, to political activist, and didn’t seem to fully mesh with any of her roles. Maybe that was the point, as she was meant to represent an American perspective into this whole charade. Overall, I enjoyed Isle of Dogs. It’s quirky, it’s fun, and I’d probably see it again. The stop-motion animation is something I applaud, and it’s unlikely that I’ll see anything like it soon.

WES ANDERSON DEMONSTRATES his usual mesmerizing and notable eccentricities.

**ON-CAMPUS EVENT**

**SYMPOSIUM PROMOTES natural hair care, pride**

**Weston Brousseau**

**Staff Reviewer**

CURL CONNECTION’S FIRST ANNUAL NATURAL HAIR SYMPOSIUM TOOK PLACE LAST WEDNESDAY IN THE Academy Hall Auditorium. For those of you who don’t know, “natural hair” is simply hair that has not been chemically altered in any way. This means no relaxers, color, or texturizers. Recently, particularly in black culture, natural hair has become more mainstream, due to it being viewed as part of the “Black is Beautiful” movement. This is one of the reasons that Curl Connection wants “to connect and cultivate a community to promote hair growth, hair health, and success for all hair types.” This event was meant to kickstart the club’s future events and generate interest.

The event took about two and a half hours and was very relaxed, with many of the speakers being humorous and interacting one-on-one with the audience. The symposium had several local vendors setting up tables to sell their products, and a raffle for some items that local shops had donated, which gave the whole event a fair-like quality. This gave the attendees time to get personal advice from vendors and discuss what the symposium had presented, making the whole mood very light and happy.

The four speakers at the symposium were mostly experts who spoke about the physical maintenance of natural hair. The first speaker was Jade Gibson, the owner Jade’s Hair Envy a salon in Albany. She spoke about certain techniques that could be done before going to sleep to improve the overall hair quality. One of the techniques demonstrated, was stretching hair out using rubber bands while sleeping to avoid shrinkage.

The second speaker was Danielle Colin, who spoke about the politics of natural hair, and its history in the African American community. Colin ended her short talk with a powerful poem about the misconceptions of natural hair. The third speaker was stylist Necco Piper, who spoke about different products that she had found to be effective in her own work, and when and how to use the products mentioned.

From the personal perspective of someone who has never given much thought to hair care this symposium was incredible. When I went with a friend, neither one of us really knew what we should be doing to take care of our hair; however, we both walked away from the symposium ready to start our own natural hair journey. The speakers were very supportive of everyone there, and seemed to genuinely care that we took care of our hair even if we didn’t buy any of the products at the event. With that said, I look forward to future events from Curl Connection and to starting my own natural hair journey.
Editorial
Wednesday, May 2, 2018

Comfort, confidence gained through growth

EVERYBODY HAS A STORY TO TELL, BUT DOES EVERY STORY NEED to be told? I faced that question when I sat down to write this notebook. I have a story about my time at RPI and on The Polytechnic, and I was unsure whether anybody needed or even wanted to hear it. I decided that I would write an abridged version—hopefully it suffices.

I do not remember much of my first semester at RPI, only brief moments of normal life. However, I do remember the general feeling of unhappiness I had. I was uncomfortable, I was in a completely new environment, I was having difficulty in courses, and in my last year my family was not there. At this time, I really hated The Poly. I would have quit, but I wanted to finish my term as associate Features editor. Thankfully, I stuck with it long enough for Chris Leong to convince me to stay for the following semester.

It was that next semester that I changed dramatically for the better. I was a different person and I saw an attractive girl sitting by herself eating. I thought to myself, why not ask to sit down with her? The answer I gave was that I was not good enough. That means I didn’t have confidence in myself, and in reality this had propagated to all of my interactions with everything I did. After that, I made it my goal to have the confidence one day to sit down with her.

The third time I tried to completely overhaul how I looked, I got a new haircut—I hadn’t cut my hair once during my first semester—and a completely new set of clothes. The clothes were the single biggest confidence boost I had. I still remember the day the first clothing package arrived, and it was night to day and my confidence level. I remember I got a compliment a couple weeks later on one of the shirts I had bought; I was giddy the rest of the day after I heard that.

I never did get a chance to sit next to the girl, but I know now that I could. It still would not be easy, but I could.

Sophomore and junior year I did not really have any major changes, just gradual growth. Throughout this time, I slowly realized I was more capable than I had originally given myself credit for. I took on larger and more important roles in The Polytechnic, and joined RPI’s Design/Build/Fly team. I transitioned from being somebody who was mentored to being the mentor myself.

Being able to pass on my knowledge and help new members, especially in the layout department, was a great feeling. I joined a good group of guys from my major who studied together for almost every test. That group and the interactions I had with them helped me immensely with being more knowledgeable in not only the subject we were studying, but also just general socialization. I had no real friends in high school, so to have something like that for the first time was great.

My senior year has had its good and bad moments. I’m confident in myself and my abilities, I have gotten good at school so I have not been worrying about it like I had my freshman and sophomore years, and I was just comfortable to do as I wanted. The main rough bit has been the job search, but with the help of others, I landed an interview with my dream company last week, so things are definitely looking up.

To the current members of The Polytechnic, I wish you all the best of luck with the upcoming transition; I believe you will do great. If you ever need anything from me, I will be here to help.

My time at RPI, while not the most enjoyable at points, has been a great period of growth and change for me. I think I will look back at my time here fondly, but I am ready to see what the future holds.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Integrity is integral

INTEGRITY IS THE TRAIT THAT A SET OF PEOPLE HAVE IN THEIR, OR OTHERS’, ABILITIES TO TRULY adhere to moral values. This is the critical part of a regimen of an ethical code that assures us that our capacities will not fail us; to foster the growth of our moral character and therefore ourselves. The strong gravity of dignity tends to cloud our judgment of our self-reflection on our integrity, so this ability of critical introspection is lauded by society. Idealistically, this is how we should do before graduating! I wish I could say I have crazy ideas in mind, or something illegal—breaking the law is always exciting, right? Unfortunately, nothing like that. My biggest hope is to not lose steam. Senioritis hit me real hard in high school, and I can’t afford that in college. My schedule next year looks quite packed, which is actually good news. My laziness is triggered by any hint of slacking off. With a full schedule, I shouldn’t have an opportunity to get triggered. So, this seems promising. In addition to that, I’ve found that using weekends to relax adds balance.

I’m excited to see what’s to come next year. I hope I can make the most of it and graduate as a more functioning member of society. Plus, I look forward to prancing around campus with dignity, always being able to boast, “I’m a senior.”

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See ETHICS. Page 3
Search for director lacks student involvement

As many of you know, last fall’s hiring process for the director of the Union was reconstituted. The administration has acknowledged their failure to communicate and made a number of commitments to increase student involvement in a reconstituted, student-driven search for our next director.

In November, vice presidents Curtis Powell and LeNorman Strong made several promises to student leaders to ensure that this reconstituted process consists of ample student involvement. These promises included allowing students to edit the job description and performance management tool, screen the resumes of candidates, participate in candidate phone interviews, select finalists to bring to campus for in-person interviews, and participate in different interview groups in addition to—not instead of—a dedicated student interview group session.

The administration has since reconstituted the search and none of these promises have been fulfilled. When the interim chairman of the student interview committee brought attention to these failures, Powell simply dismissed him from participating in the search and made several unsupported, libelous claims to a large group of students, rather than address the issues raised.

In March, Powell described the redesigned format to student leaders. He explained that the new search will not include a student interview with director of the Union candidates, but rather will include two students on each panel of administrators and campus constituencies.

In April, the full list of 213 signatures in support can be viewed at poly.rpi.edu/s/cosby/. union.rpi.edu demanding the rescission of Bill Cosby’s honorary degree.

Cosby’s honorary degree unacceptable

On Thursday, April 26, Bill Cosby was found guilty of three counts of aggravated indecent assault: penetration with lack of consent, penetration while unconscious, and penetration after administering an intoxicant. Cosby is now a convicted felon guilty of sexual assault, after decades of suspected behavior, and can face up to 10 years in prison according to NBC news. Cosby, by his own admission, has repeatedly drugged and molested women. He was and is a predator, maliciously targeting women so he could rape them. He lied about who he was, hid his true agenda, convinced women they could trust him, and summarily violated them.

Cosby truly represents a complete breakdown of the moral values and ideals that we all hope to demonstrate and emulate. In 2001, Rensselaer awarded Bill Cosby an honorary doctorate in arts and humane letters. Of the 57 honorary degrees he has been awarded, 36 have been rescinded since 2014. His honorary rank of Chief Petty Officer of the United States Navy has also been rescinded.

We demand action from the RPI Board of Trustees: rescind Bill Cosby’s honorary degree. Cosby stands against the values that RPI claims to champion and hopes to instill in everyone who walks through our doors. We advocate and preach consent in our actions and undeniable respect for others. We are committed to the health and safety of our students, the non-violation of other humans, and the preservation of dignity for all. We hope that our students become virtuous, that they help those in need, and that they display an ethical character in every action they take. Cosby is the antithesis of these community values.

Recinding Mr. Cosby’s honorary degree isn’t an issue that requires speculation or excessive reflection; Cosby’s moral values are not a matter discussion. The RPI community should not—now or ever—honor Cosby in any way. It’s shameful that RPI has silently looked on, while Ivy League colleges such as Brown University and the University of Pennsylvania, as well as governmental services like the United States Navy, have denounced Cosby. We need to stand up and rebuke Cosby, unafraid to speak out and unwilling to continue our support of someone this abhorrent.

To our fellow students: no person so reprehensible, no actions so deplorable, should ever represent us and our values, and we should not stand behind someone as loathsome and disgraceful as Bill Cosby. We hope you join us in signing our petition at petitions.union.rpi.edu demanding the rescission of Bill Cosby’s honorary degree.

The full list of 213 signatures in support can be viewed at poly.rpi.edu/cosby/.

Serving the Rensselaer community since 1885

Ed/Op • 7 Wed, May 2, 2018

- Vahan Ionnisian
Elena Smalline
Staff Reviewer

*A Little Night Music* follows six main characters: a newly married couple, their son, a count, a countess, and a deviously sensual actress. Fredrik Egerman, played by Kyle Johnson '17, becomes restless when his virgin wife, Anne, played by Cassie Corey '19, refuses him after 11 months of marriage. Searching for sexual satisfaction, he returns to an old lover, a famed actress, Desiree Armfeldt, played by Hannah De Los Santos ‘16. What follows is a mad affair including an adulterous count, played by Nicolas Robinson ’19; his jealous wife, played by Claudia Howes ’20; a lecherous maid, played by Emily Fernandes ’13; and a lovesick seminary student, played by Matt Fields ’18. De Los Santos fully embodies an egotistical and promiscuous actress, with excellent vocals that carry the show. In addition, Johnson perfectly portrays a frustrated husband who cannot contain his desires. Both De Los Santos and Johnson display excellent chemistry. Corey embodies the face of perfect virtue and innocence, while still remaining humourous. It should be noted that Fields’ depiction of a lovesick, bashful young man is incredible. In addition, Fernandes demonstrates excellent vocals, especially in Petra’s solo, “The Miller’s Son.” Finally, both Robinson and Howes perfectly embody the persona of an unsatisfied, yet humorously spoiled couple, the count and countess. The remaining members of the cast do a great job of bringing the entire musical together.

In addition to talented cast, the show has a creative set and practical implementation of scene changes. Most notable of these sets is the estate, which perfectly utilizes the limited space. Overall, RPI Player’s rendition of *A Little Night Music* features a talented cast, quality set, and enjoyable vocals. The musical is quite entertaining, excellently tongue-in-cheek, and has a cast that perfectly embodies every character. ☺