

President's Update



NEWS FROM PRESIDENT NIRSCHEL

ISSUE 2 | FALL 2007

A GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE...

The State of the University 2007



In late September, I invited all faculty, staff and administrators to our wonderful Dining Commons for this year's State of the University address. The past year, my seventh at Roger Williams, has seen major developments at the University, and I savored the chance to welcome new members of the community, highlight successes and share my thoughts on the future of this dynamic institution. Let's review some of the highlights.

We had a great start to the year with record enrollment, the largest community service day in Rhode Island, a thoughtful fall conference, a new Board of Trustees, a historic agreement with the town of Bristol and a new entrance. We have outstanding new academic leadership in Provost Laura de Abruna, and this summer 25 new full-time faculty members joined a strong and committed group, 40 percent of whom have been hired in my time.

This fall we had 7,600 applicants for a class of 1,150, a 100 percent increase over the past six years. Our acceptance rate has improved by 26 percent, our graduation rate has gone from 36 percent to more than 61 percent. And this fall, U.S. News & World Report ranked RWU as the No. 9 school in our category.

Instead of resting on our laurels, we are actively engaged in strategic planning, taking a 360-degree look at how we function as a university. This summer we approved a campus master plan and ground will soon break on some major projects, all of which take our commitment to sustainability into consideration.

Promoting wellness on campus is another objective. Beginning in January 2008, we will start the process to make the campus core smoke-free. It won't be universally popular, but it's the right thing to do. And every full-time member of the faculty and staff will be able to use the Recreation Center for free from 6 a.m. to noon.

To further our efforts toward instilling a global perspective, we are working to ensure that every student at RWU has the opportunity to study abroad; and a program to send 10 faculty and staff members abroad per year is in the works, too. Finally, starting in January, all RWU employees—married, unmarried, common law, domestic partners of opposite and same sex—will have access to the same health care coverage. It's overdue, but again, it's the right thing to do.

That strategic plan I mentioned, RWU 2020, is about the future, because the world has changed and our competitive set is very different. We face demographic changes in America and higher expectations from parents, students and the public. It's at times like these that special institutions emerge and special people surface. As we enter the second half of our first century, RWU is a special institution and all of you are special people. Thank you all for a great start to this year and for giving me six great years as your president.

Roy J. Nirschel, Ph.D.

Symposium to Celebrate Artistic, Cultural Traditions of Region's Ethnic Communities

Many of history's most significant population shifts have come in the 20th century, and with technology advancing exponentially over that same period, how have new media forms affected the cultural traditions of displaced populations?

On Oct. 5 to 7, Roger Williams will host a distinguished group of global academics and artists to explore answers to that question. Titled "New Media and the Global Diaspora," the symposium will feature panel presentations, hands-on arts workshops and a concert/dance production.

Presentations include sessions on "Cultural Identity" and "Politics, Culture and Media." The workshops will explore traditions in music, art and other forms. The concert and dance (Saturday, 7:30 p.m., Hawk's Hangout) will feature singers, musicians and dancers that exemplify traditions from Rhode Island's major immigrant cultures.

Events will be held in the New Academic Building. Students, faculty and staff are encouraged to attend the entire conference or portions that interest them. Visit www.newmediasymposium.org for registration details. For questions, contact Assistant Professor Roxanne O'Connell at extension 3249.

UNIVERSITY CALENDAR

OCTOBER 10

Civil Discourse: Eugenie Scott

OCTOBER 19-21

Homecoming & Family Weekend

OCTOBER 23

Mary Tefft White Lecture: Col. Brendan Doherty

Competition Unites Campus in Search of RWU Fight Song

Tired of simply yelling “Go Hawks!” at athletic events? Well, soon students and faculty will be able to proclaim their school spirit via a fight song, something that Roger Williams has never had, if all goes to plan. And you might even be the composer.

As part of an initiative to bolster school spirit, the Department of Student Programs and Leadership is seeking RWU students, faculty, staff and alumni to submit lyrics and recordings for an original Roger Williams fight song.

“A fight song unites a campus community,” said Josh Hiscock, the department’s associate director. “In light of the University’s recent 50th anniversary, it seems very appropriate that our community is coming together now to write one.”

Composers must submit written lyrics and a CD recording of the song to Student Programs and Leadership by 5 p.m. on Monday, Oct. 22. Detailed submission guidelines, instructions on how to make a CD recording and fight song samples are available at fightsong.rwu.edu.

A selection committee will vet submissions and pluck the top eight. Then the RWU community can listen to the semifinalists online and cast votes starting in early November, narrowing to three or four top choices. Voting will open on Nov. 9 and run through Dec. 7.

“The judges will be looking for a song that promotes the school’s colors of blue and gold, supports the Hawk mascot SWOOP, honors the traditions of Roger Williams University and gets fans spirited and excited,” Mr. Hiscock said. “This is a song that will be used at all University events—both athletic and non-athletic—so it also needs to be versatile.”

The competition will culminate on Jan. 26, as the finalists perform their fight song with accompaniment from the RWU Pep Band at a special rally reminiscent of Fox’s “American Idol,” with the winner announced at the end.

Students, Professors Team to Create “The Feed” Video News

Have you “been fed” today? If not, login at YouTube or Facebook to get filled in! The brainchild of a student/faculty collaboration, “The Feed” is a new video news program on campus that’s broadcast via the web. In the five editions published to date, reporter Lorin Richardson (junior communications major) has interviewed students, faculty and staff on topics including the new front entrance, the campus no-smoking initiative and Sept. 11 memorial activities. Filming occurs on Wednesdays, and the Feed team boasts nearly 400 video views and 150 friends on Facebook.

Assistant Professor Michael Scully initiated the project to introduce new media journalism to campus: “For the last 10 years, the news industry has been attempting to publish news on the Internet in a thoughtful way; and it’s been trying to reach the very fickle and illusive 18- to 25-year-old demographic. As a college professor, I’ve learned that most students are addicted to Facebook and that publishing news inside this media community would help solve both those problems.”

In addition to Ms. Richardson, the current student team includes field producer Michael Hurley and cameraman/editor Phil Yacoby; Professor Ted Delaney provides technical support. If all goes to plan, Professor Scully hopes to launch a full-blown New Media class next spring that will feature 18 students



With Michael Hurley at the camera, junior reporter Lorin Richardson interviews senior Mike Hollander about the school’s no-smoking initiative.

working in teams of three to produce video news packages. Check out “The Feed” at www.youtube.com/user/thefeedRWU.

Tech Collective Honors University for Technology Education Efforts

On Sept. 20, nonprofit technology champion Tech Collective honored Roger Williams for its commitment to technology and education at the second annual Rhode Island Innovation Awards and Tech Laureates Night.

At the sold-out event, Tech Collective presented the award for Outstanding Partner of the Year to President Nirschel, recognizing the University for its exemplary commitment in partnering with the organization in its mission to champion technology and innovation in Rhode Island.

“In keeping with their own visions and goals, under the current leadership of President Roy J. Nirschel, RWU has worked to fulfill each of Tech Collective’s missions in numerous ways,” said Tim Hebert, president of the nonprofit’s board of directors. “Through providing workforce development trainings, housing several events each year, including GRRL Tech for the past two years, and sponsoring Tech Collective at the Bio 2007 Conference, RWU has gone above and beyond its call of duty.”



Greens and vegetables for the Eat Local Challenge came from three local farms: Mello's, Young's and Johnson's. Beverages available to students included assorted sodas produced by Empire Soda in Bristol.

Bon Appétit Highlights Local Food through Eat Local Challenge

Fresh, line-caught cod from the waters off the coast of Galilee, R.I., served with a Portuguese crumb topping. Butternut squash and crabmeat bisque, featuring Massachusetts crabmeat, squash from Young's Farm in Little Compton and cream from Wright's Farm in North Smithfield. Or eggplant ratatouille with vegetables picked minutes earlier at Mello's Farm in Portsmouth.

These were just a few of the choices on the lunch menu at the Dining Commons during the Eat Local Challenge on Sept. 25, sponsored by Bon Appétit Management. The event, designed to highlight local food producers and promote sustainability, required that everything used in the food's preparation come from within a 150-mile radius of the University, the only exception being salt.

Students, faculty and staff enjoyed the exquisite options prepared by Executive Chef Robert Lavoie and his team. He notes that even on a regular basis, nearly 80 percent of ingredients are grown in the region: "This day challenges us to come up with a menu and find every single ingredient that can be produced locally," Chef Bob said. "But on a daily basis, it works, too: Most of the fish we use are harvested through local waters, for example, and throughout the growing season, we call our three local farms to see what kind of produce is available."

Local farmers and fishermen were on hand to explain how buying locally benefits food producers and the local economy. And the Dining Services staff spared no efforts in creating elaborate desserts with local ingredients.



University Commits to 20-year, \$42 Million Agreement with Bristol

Expanding on the tremendous economic benefit that RWU contributes to the town of Bristol, the University will now make an annual voluntary payment of \$150,000 to help offset the cost of emergency services provided by the town. Additionally, RWU will provide funds toward the purchase of first-responder equipment and vehicles (up to \$100,000 every five years) and \$25,000 in funds for civic activities per year.

"A solid relationship between Roger Williams and the town of Bristol is crucial for both parties," University President Roy J. Nirschel said. "I am pleased that the ongoing discussions with town officials have resulted in this agreement. It demonstrates the University's commitment to growing that relationship and benefiting the residents of Bristol for many years to come. As the son of a firefighter, I am particularly pleased that a portion of this significant commitment will be going to first responders."

The new PILOT (payment-in-lieu-of-taxes) agreement also outlines the establishment of a Town/University Cooperative Committee, a group comprising employees from both Bristol and Roger Williams. The committee will meet on a monthly basis to oversee the spending of the funds for civic activities, and to jointly consider items of mutual interest or concern to both the town and the University.

The pact also summarizes the variety of scholarships, grants and tuition remission programs that RWU will continue to offer to residents of Bristol and town employees. The value of the agreement is projected to be almost \$42 million over its 20-year term.



Fall Athletics Teams Start Season with Early Successes

The fall season is well underway with RWU student-athletes enjoying success on the field, the court, the water and in the ring. Men's soccer, picked as preseason conference favorites, currently stand at 3-5-1, led by senior Antoine Bell's eight goals on the year. The Hawks have reeled off three straight wins over conference opponents. Women's soccer is currently third in the Commonwealth Coast Conference with an impressive 6-2-0 record. An early highlight was a 2-1 overtime win over nationally ranked Elizabethtown College.

Sailing is climbing up the rankings! As of the Sept. 27 Sailing World College Rankings, the co-ed team was ranked eighth in the nation. Women's tennis is living up to its selection as a preseason conference favorite, standing in first place in the CCC with a 5-0 conference record (5-1 overall) as of Sept. 26.

Women's volleyball is currently tied for fourth in the conference, with an 8-5 record. Senior Amy Maurer is closing in on RWU's all-time kills record, 36 shy of Erin Carolyn's mark of 1,016. The equestrian team started the season with a tie for fourth at the URI Show on Sept. 22 and looks to climb the regional standings with four more shows this fall.

The men's and women's cross country teams are off and running, competing in a busy slate of non-conference invitationals. At the UMass Dartmouth Race, sophomore Emily Tran was one second off the 5K record for RWU women, clocking in at 18:42.

The Learning Commons: Creating a Library for the 21st Century

With Phase I complete, the Learning Commons initiative has transformed the RWU library into a state-of-the-art space for information sharing, technology education and cultural programming.

"The idea behind the Learning Commons project is to open the library up, lowering the barriers to personal interaction and bringing IT, library and media services to a single service point," said Joe Pangborn, vice president and chief information officer.

Phase I developments include a number of highlights: a redesigned layout for the first floor of the library; relocation of the Academic Technology Center computer labs from the Gabelli School of Business to the library; consolidated technology and reference personnel including two instructional technologists, academic technology services staff and reference librarians; more computers (including Macs) with improved software packages; and an Instructional Technology Development Center for aiding faculty with the integration of technology into their curricula.

"Our goal was to make the library a destination of choice for students," said Peter Deekle, dean of library services. "An effective library must be well-designed, navigable and accessible; and it should integrate instructional support services and new technology."

Up next on the to-do list? Coffee and more computers. Stay tuned.



U.S. Sen. Sheldon Whitehouse joined Roger Williams School of Law professors Jared Goldstein and David Zlotnick in celebrating the 220th birthday of the U.S. Constitution.

Sen. Whitehouse Addresses Law School on DOJ Independence

On Monday, Sept. 17, the School of Law welcomed Rhode Island Sen. Sheldon Whitehouse to campus to help the University celebrate the 220th birthday of the U.S. Constitution. The senator addressed a full house in the Appellate Courtroom and spoke about his work on the Senate Judiciary Committee investigating White House interference with the Department of Justice.

The topic of DOJ independence from political influence is a sticking point for Sen. Whitehouse, a former state attorney general and U.S. Attorney. He went as far as to compare the current state of the department to the partiality that plagued the DOJ during the days of the Watergate scandal.

Jared Goldstein and David Zlotnick, both associate professors of law who worked for the DOJ prior to joining RWU, spoke about their experiences and the changes that have taken place under the current administration, noting that attorneys in the department seem to be influenced more by an allegiance to the president rather than to their profession and the department itself.