MEMORANDUM

DATE: October 4, 2017
TO: Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute Community
FROM: Travis T. Apgar, Assistant Vice President for Student Life and Dean of Students
SUBJECT: Rights and Responsibilities Relating to Peaceful Assembly

The purpose of this memorandum is to provide clarity and guidance to members of the Rensselaer community who seek to conduct a peaceful demonstration. Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute is an academic community in which public discourse of differing thoughts, ideas, theories and beliefs is held as a fundamental value in the work we engage in around discovery, learning, innovation and personal growth. Discourse between members of our community allows the exploration of different perspectives on a topic, examination of the credibility of a point of view, and opportunity for understanding across difference.

While ours is a community committed to civil discourse, we need only look to recent incidents which have occurred in cities and on other college campuses to identify examples of the harm non-civil discourse can cause a community and the individuals. For the safety of our community, it is critical that all demonstrations be civil and peaceful, that the public expression of views, thoughts and opinions be shared respectfully, and will not impede the expression of opposing views through any form of harassment, threats, discrimination, or physical confrontation. The rights and responsibilities of our community members is outlined in this memorandum and detailed in The Rensselaer Handbook of Student Rights and Responsibilities (http://doso.rpi.edu/).

The following are excerpts of relevant sections of The Rensselaer Handbook of Student Rights and Responsibilities to be used as reference. The full text should be consulted prior to submission of application to hold a peaceful demonstration.

STUDENT BILL OF RIGHTS - ARTICLE V: FREEDOM IN STUDENT LIFE (Pg. 6)
Section B: (1) Students and student groups shall be free to examine and discuss all questions of interest to them and to express opinions publicly and privately. They shall be free to support causes by orderly means, including peaceful assembly, which do not disrupt the normal operation of the Institute. Unless otherwise authorized, students and student groups speak only for themselves in their public expressions or demonstrations.

RULES FOR MAINTENANCE OF PUBLIC ORDER – New York State Education Law Sections 6430-6435 (Pg. 28)
(Second paragraph)
Academic freedom is essential to a university community. Freedom of speech and freedom of assembly are essential to academic freedom. Every member of the academic community should be free to pursue full involvement in the educational process of the university without
interference from others. All members of the university community should be able to express their views by words and actions and to express by words and actions their opposition to the views and opinions of others. In order to preserve these rights all members of the university community have a responsibility to conduct themselves so that such rights may be exercised without interfering with the rights of others and without fear of violence or injury or interference.

Procedures (Pg. 29)
(Second paragraph)
Only peaceful demonstrations are appropriate in an academic community and the Trustees are confident that no member or group of the Institute community will go beyond the bounds set by these regulations. In order to maintain the safety and to safeguard the interests of all members of the Institute community, any group or individual planning a demonstration must submit an Application For Approval of Peaceful Demonstration to the Dean of Students Office at least seven (7) days prior to the proposed demonstration date and include its proposed location and the object of the intended protest, or other purpose. If a situation emerges for which a seven day notice is neither appropriate nor practical, the Dean of Students shall exercise reasonable discretion by reviewing the application to reasonably assure student safety and to safeguard the interests of all members of the Rensselaer community.

At any demonstration, meeting, or other occasion, judgment as to whether the regulations are being observed shall be made at the scene by the Dean of Students or designee. The Dean of Students or designee may, before making a judgment, consult with appropriate individuals at the scene who are not involved in the demonstration, meeting, or other occasion.

Responsibility for exercising such judgment shall rest solely with the Dean of Students or designee. It must be emphasized that judgment as to whether the regulations are being observed shall not be exercised by demonstrators, those demonstrated against, or spectators in contradiction to the expressed judgment of the Dean of Students or designee, except at the risk of such individuals.

Please take notice that adherence to all stated rights, responsibilities, applicable policies and regulations is required including, but not limited to, the Institute Sign Policy (Pgs. 34-36), and the Policy on Electronic Citizenship (Pgs. 23-24). Failure to comply with these policies or any other stated policy or regulation can result in disciplinary action.

Application to hold a peaceful demonstration are required to be submitted at least (7) seven days in advance. If you have questions or need assistance, please contact the Dean of Students Office in advance.

Thank you for your anticipated cooperation in maintaining a safe community for all members.
APPLICATION FOR APPROVAL OF PEACEFUL DEMONSTRATION

In order to be considered for approval, all applications must be received in the Dean of Students Office at least 7 Business Days Prior to the proposed demonstration date. Notification of Approval/Disapproval will be made within 2 business days after receipt of application.

NAME OF MAIN CONTACT: ____________________________________________

CONTACT INFORMATION: Phone #: ________________________________

Address: ________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________

Email: __________________________________________________________

NAME OF GROUP: ________________________________________________

PROPOSED DATE: _______________________________________________

PROPOSED LOCATION: ____________________________________________

SUBJECT / OBJECTIVE OF INTENDED DEMONSTRATION: ____________

________________________________________________________________

PROJECTED NUMBER OF ATTENDEES: ________________________________

HOW WILL THIS EVENT BE ADVERTISED? ____________________________

________________________________________________________________

I (print name) __________________________ have read, understand, and agree to abide by the Rensselaer Rules for Maintenance of Public Order, which can be found in The Rensselaer Handbook of Student Rights and Responsibilities. If appropriate, I have also read understand, and agree to abide by the Institute Sign Policy, also found in “The Handbook”, and the Rensselaer Electronic Citizenship Policy, which can be obtained at www.rpi.edu/web/comec/.

_________________________________________  ________________________

(signature)  (date)