

Graduate Student Handbook

The Office of Graduate Education



Rensselaer

Troy Campus

4103 Walker Laboratory

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gradschool@rpi.edu

The RPI Mission Statement

Rensselaer educates the leaders of tomorrow for technologically based careers. We celebrate discovery, and the responsible application of technology to create knowledge and global prosperity.

ABOUT RENSSELAER & THE AREA

Rensselaer, the nation's oldest technological university, celebrates its 176th anniversary this year. A nonsectarian, coeducational institution composed of five schools: Architecture, Engineering, Humanities and Social Sciences, Science, and the Lally School of Management and Technology, the university's long-standing reputation for educational distinction draws students from every state and more than 83 foreign countries.

Rensselaer's student population consists of approximately 4,500 undergraduates and 1,800 campus based graduate students with an additional 2000 students pursuing Master's degrees at our Hartford campus and through Professional and Distance Education. More than 17 percent are self-identified minorities and more than 25 percent are women.

Rensselaer's nearly 400 faculty members include a Nobel Laureate, National Science Foundation Presidential Faculty Fellows, numerous members of National Academies, and other eminent professionals. One of the hallmarks of a Rensselaer education is the opportunity for intellectual partnerships between students and faculty. RPI's research ties are national and international with experiments conducted at the Saclay Laboratory in France, the Bates Accelerator, the National Radio Astronomical Observatories, Sandia, the U.S. Geological Survey, and the National Laboratories in Brookhaven, Los Alamos, and Oak Ridge.

The historic RPI campus sits on a bluff overlooking the city of Troy and the Hudson River. Troy is 10 miles northeast of Albany, New York's capital, and 150 miles north of New York City. The area is centrally located with easy access to Boston (3 hours), Montreal (4 hours), and Niagara Falls (5 hours). Troy and the Capital Region are rich in educational resources, including the University at Albany (SUNY), Albany Medical College, Albany Law School, St. Rose, Union, Siena, Skidmore, Russell Sage, and Williams Colleges. The area offers many recreational and social opportunities. The Adirondacks, the Berkshires, and the Catskills, all within one hour of Troy, offer hundreds of areas for camping, hiking, and skiing. There are also many arts organizations. From the Saratoga Performing Arts Center to Albany's Pepsi Arena, a wide variety of performing artists visit the area.

CAMPUS PHONE NUMBERS & E-MAIL ADDRESSES

(All numbers are in the 518 area code.)

Admissions	276-6216 - admissions@rpi.edu
Ambulance (from on-campus phones only)	276-6611
Athletics	276-6685 – www.rpi.edu/dept/athletics
Bookstore	276-6555 - bookstore.rpi.edu
Bursar	276-6610 - bursar@rpi.edu
Career Development Center	276-6234 - www.cdc.rpi.edu
Counseling Center	276-6479 - counseling@rpi.edu
Chaplains	276-6518 - chaplain@rpi.edu
Dean of Students	276-6266 - vienj@rpi.edu
Disabled Students	276-2746 - hamild@rpi.edu
Financial Aid	276-6813 - financial_aid@rpi.edu
VCC Help Desk	276-7777 - consults@rpi.edu
Health Services	276-6287 - doctora@rpi.edu
International Students	276-6561 - havisj@rpi.edu
Advising & Learning Assistance Center	276-6571 - saxbyl@rpi.edu
Library	276-8310 - www.lib.rpi.edu
Lost and Found	276-6516
Minority Student Affairs	276-6273 - smithm@rpi.edu
Payroll (for most matters, see your dept. first)	276-8696 - carlil@rpi.edu
Post Office	276-8602
Public Safety (emergency calls only)	276-6611
Public Safety (non-emergency calls)	276-6656 - www.star.dps.rpi.edu
Public Safety Information Line (school closings)	276-6600

Psychologist (Counseling Center)	276-6479 - counseling@rpi.edu
Registrar	276-6231 - registrar@rpi.edu
Residence Life	276-6284 - snydep@rpi.edu
Robison Pool	276-2642
Student Activities Office	276-6505 - union@rpi.edu
Telecommunications (student accounts)	276-6258 - fax# 3000
Transportation/Parking	276-6616 - parking@rpi.edu
Writing Center	276-8983 - www.rpi.edu/web/writingcenter

ACADEMIC DEADLINES

Add/Drop Deadline – Students have two weeks from the first day of classes to add a course, eight weeks from the first day of class to drop a course, and five weeks from the first day of class to receive a refund for credits they have dropped.

Commencement Registration Deadline – Register in early spring to participate in the May Graduation Ceremony.

Degree Application Deadline—For Fall 2004 graduation, the deadline to file a degree application with the Registrar’s office is September 24. For Spring 2003, the deadline is January 31 .

CHOOSING COURSES & REGISTRATION

Your advisor will be able to help you select courses for your first semester, and will assist you in developing your Plan of Study within your first year of Office of Graduate Education.

If you are a full-time, degree-seeking student, you can register anytime after you have confirmed your intent to enroll, selected your courses, and provided your health form to the Health Services Office. Access is 24 hours a day, seven days a week. You can register off-campus by connecting via the Web to the Student Information System. On campus, you can use any public computer to register after you have picked up your Rensselaer Computing Services Identification Number at the Vorhees Computing Center Help Desk.

Both the Class Hour Schedule and the College Catalog can be accessed on line from Rensselaer’s home page at RPInfo by selecting “academics”. The schedule can be picked up in your department or at the Registrar’s Office in the Troy building. Copies of the catalog will be available at the General Orientation, which is held each year in August, the week before classes begin.

If you are a *non-matriculated* student, you must receive approval from the Admissions for each course you wish to take. After receiving approval, you are eligible to register by mail or in person for the course(s). This procedure must be followed each semester you wish to register as a non-matriculated student. Note: A university-wide maximum of 12 credits of coursework taken as a non-matriculated student can be applied toward a degree, with some departments allowing fewer than 12 credits. The department determines which courses are applicable to the degree.

GRADING SYSTEM FOR GRADUATE STUDENTS

The letter grades and their meanings are:

A = Excellent

B = Good

C = Average

D = Passed (not available to graduate students)

F = Failed

FA = Failed (due to administrative reasons)

I = Incomplete course work

IP = In Progress (multiple-term course)

NE = Not Examined

S = Satisfactory in a Satisfactory/Unsatisfactory graded course

U = Unsatisfactory in a Satisfactory/Unsatisfactory graded course

W = Withdrawn

WI = Failed (course that was previously graded "I" and the student did not meet the deadline for completing course work)

Z = Grade Unknown—see instructor

AU = Audit

"D" Grade The letter grade "D" does not apply to graduate students. Thus, when a graduate student takes a course that is also open to undergraduates and performs at a level equivalent to a "D" grade, this grade cannot be recorded. Such grades are automatically converted to "F."

"FA" Grade This letter grade is assigned by the registrar to students who withdraw from a course but do not submit a Drop/Add form or an official notice of withdrawal from the university.

"I" Grade The grade "I" (incomplete course work) is given, when, due to illness or other extenuating circumstances such as a personal emergency beyond the student's control, a student has been unable to complete the required course work. The "I" grade is given only after the contract form, Authorization for Grade of Incomplete, has been completed and signed by both the instructor and the student and received by the registrar.

The "I" grade is given only in instances of incomplete course work, such as laboratory exercises, course projects, term papers, etc. Under no circumstances may the "I" be given for the following situations:

absence from a final examination;

student on class list who has never attended class;

student who wishes to do additional post-semester work in order to improve a grade;

student who wishes to repeat the course as auditor, retaking examinations, etc., in order to improve a grade.

The "I" grade must be completed within one semester. If facilities (i.e., laboratory) are required to complete the outstanding work but are not available during the next semester, then one year is the maximum time limit, subject to approval by the instructor.

If the agreements made in the "I" grade contract are not observed, or if the "I" grade is not cleared in the time specified in the contract, the grade automatically becomes a "WI." Once the "I" grade is changed to "WI," no other grade change will be accepted. The "WI" grade will be calculated as an "F" in the student's QPA.

The grade of "I" is considered a penalty grade in the calculation of the term QPA. The grade of "I," until it is changed, is calculated as if it were the grade of "F."

"WI" Grade This letter grade is assigned by the registrar to students who received an Incomplete ("I") and failed to meet the criteria or the deadline specified in the "I" contract. It is calculated as an "F" in the student's QPA.

"IP" Grade The "IP" (In Progress) grade is given at the end of preliminary semesters of multiple-term courses such as Thesis, Project, or Research.

"NE" Grade The "NE" grade is given only by the dean of students or the director of Graduate Services to students who have been excused from taking a final exam at its scheduled time. In each case the course instructor is to be informed. (See "Final Examinations" rules listed previously.) If the examination is not taken by the date specified, the grade automatically becomes an "F." Once the "NE" grade is changed to an "F," no other grade change will be accepted. Grades of "NE" given in the fall semester must be made up during the spring semester. "NE" grades given at the end of the spring semester must be made up during the summer recess and not later than two weeks after the beginning of the fall semester. The grade of "NE" is not considered in the calculation of the term QPA.

"S" and "U" Grades These grades can only be assigned in courses specifically approved for such grading by the Faculty Senate Curriculum Committee. Examples of such courses are seminar, thesis, or certain general electives, such as Tour of the Solar System, and others.

"W" Grade The grade of "W" is assigned when a student is permitted to withdraw from a course after the deadline to drop a course. Only the dean of the Office of Graduate Education or the Academic Standing Committee can permit a student to drop a course after the deadline. If permission is granted, the registrar will assign a grade of "W."

"Z" Grade The grade of "Z" is assigned by the registrar if the course grade is not submitted by the instructor in time to print the semester grade reports. The student should see his or her instructor for a grade.

TUITION & FEES

Costs for the 2004-2005 academic year is \$28,950 for tuition, \$239 activity fee for regular (full-time) students and \$370.00 for the Health Center fee. The Health Center fee provides access to on-campus medical, counseling, and health education services. Students whose primary activity is to pursue graduate study with us pay the Health Center fee and receive full services from the Student Health Service independent of the number of credit hours they are pursuing. The fee for Rensselaer Student Health Insurance plan is \$620.00. This provides nationwide preferred provider organization (PPO) coverage for full-time matriculated students. Dependent coverage for spouse and/or children is available for an additional fee.

Students with comparable health insurance coverage from another source may waive only the Rensselaer Student Health Insurance Plan by submitting a completed waiver form prior to September 15 for the Fall Semester or by February 15 for the Spring Semester. Waiver applications are available at the Bursar and Health Center Offices. The Health Center fee cannot be waived. The Dental Insurance fee is \$150.00 per semester and may be waived only if one has comparable dental insurance. Dental waiver forms are available at the Health Center.

Students whose primary activity is other than graduate study, e.g. full time employment, are considered to be in a part-time continuing studies status. Continuing studies students are not eligible to use the services of the Health Center and the Health Center fee is not charged. They are also not charged the activity fee. Bills are payable by cash, check, VISA, or Mastercard and are due 30 days from the date of the bill.

FINANCIAL AID

Departments will notify students directly of their decisions to offer assistantships and tuition scholarships. Please contact your department if you have not received notification of your financial aid status. If you have received a Teaching Assistantship or Research Assistantship, your department administrator can tell you whether all the necessary paperwork has been processed to the payroll office. If all is in order, the first paycheck will be issued on August 16th, location for pick-up to be announced.

MEDICAL

We offer the Rensselaer Student Accident and Sickness Insurance Plan, which is a low cost nationwide Preferred Provider Organization (PPO) program in conjunction with the on-campus Student Health Service. A PPO is a network of physicians and other health care providers that offer care to its members at a lower rate than through traditional insurance. The PPO can be used to supplement your existing family insurance or, in some cases, may be your only health insurance. There is also a dental insurance plan for all full-time

graduate students. For additional details, or to check on medical forms, you should contact the Student Health Center at (518) 276-6287.

STUDENT RIGHTS & RESPONSIBILITIES

Each student is expected to be familiar with the academic regulations of the university and the particular requirements for his or her educational program. The student has sole responsibility for complying with regulations and meeting degree requirements as set forth in the Rensselaer Catalog and as amended from time to time. Students should also consult the current edition of *The Rensselaer Handbook of Student Rights and Responsibilities*, which explains disciplinary regulations, and related matters. This handbook is available from the Office of the Dean of Students.

HOUSING—ON CAMPUS

A variety of apartment complexes are available on-campus. Some are within a ten-minute walk, others may require a short shuttle ride to campus. Apartment styles for single students vary from units designed for a single individual to those that can accommodate up to three students.

Full-time, registered graduate students with family dependents are eligible to reside in Family Student Housing. There are four different styles of apartments with various configurations of rooms and space, with one to three bedrooms each. Family Student Housing is administered by the Office of Residence Life and Student Dining Services with the support of three live-in area managers, hired from within the family housing community.

Complete descriptions, along with a list of prices, are given in a brochure distributed by the Office of Housing and Residence Life. There is shuttle service to all on-campus apartments, but they are also all within walking distance.

HOUSING—OFF CAMPUS

A wide choice of apartments and apartment complexes surround the campus area. Experienced apartment hunters recommend that students allow a week or so before classes begin to find an ideal apartment. For those who are willing to share an apartment, message boards around campus contain frequent postings for roommates.

The Troy Record and Albany Times Union carry extensive listings of apartments. The Rensselaer Union also maintains an off-campus housing list which can be accessed through the web at: <http://offcampus.union.rpi.edu/>.

A Partial List of Area Hotels

Albany Marriott, Wolf Road, Colonie 458-8444
Best Western (Rensselaer Inn), 6th Ave. & Fulton St., Troy 274-3210
Days Inn, 16 Wolf Road, Colonie 459-3600
Gregory House, Rte. 43, Averill Park 674-3774
Howard Johnson's, 611 Troy-Schenectady Road, Latham 785-5891
Inn at the Century, 997 Rte. 9, Cohoes 785-0931
Quality Inn, I-90 & Everett Rd., Albany 438-8431
Ramada Inn, 1228 Western Ave., Albany 489-2981
Franklin Inn, 1 4th St., Troy 274-8800

MISCELLANEOUS

DATES TO REPORT TO CAMPUS

If you have been admitted to the school and have not received the "Reporting Dates for New Students," please e-mail the Admissions Office admissions@rpi.edu it will be sent to you.

FULL TIME STATUS

International students are required to maintain full-time student status during all semesters. Full-time status is also an eligibility requirement for certain U.S. student loan deferments. If you are planning to take less than the full-time course load, a full-time certification may be approved under certain conditions. For example, TA's and RA's can be certified by their department chairs as full-time if they are taking 9 or more credit hours. A full time certification form must be submitted and approved by your department, and in certain instances, also by the Office of Graduate Education. This form is available at the Registrar's Office or from your department.

ADVISEMENT & PLAN OF STUDY

A faculty adviser is assigned to each student to assist in academic program planning. A Plan of Study form must be submitted within the first year of the student's program. Accordingly, the advisor will approve the plan and submit it to the department chair for signature before sending the approved plan to the registrar's office and Office of Graduate Education. Unlike most other Office of Graduate Education forms that pertain to the student's educational program, the Plan of Study does not require final review from the Office of Graduate Education before submission to the Registrar. It does, however, become a part of the clearance process. The Plan of Study lists all credits that will be applied toward your degree, and must match identically those that appear on the student transcript, it is a beginning timetable for the completion of your degree. The plan can be modified as you progress in your program. In addition to the student's advisor and department chair, the professional staff of the Office of Graduate Education are also available to assist students with their Plan of Study.

CLUBS, ORGANIZATIONS, & SERVICES

For a list of clubs and organizations, go to the Rensselaer home page at RPIInfo and selecting **Rensselaer Union** under the heading **Campus Life**. On the next page under the heading **What's Happening** select the link for **Clubs and Organizations**.

ID CARD INFORMATION

To obtain a Rensselaer Advantage ID card, you should go to the Visitor's Information on 15th Street, ID's are prepared weekdays between 9:00 A.M. and 4:00 P.M. You will be asked for a form of identification such as a driver's license or passport. It then takes about five minutes to prepare the photo ID. The Rensselaer Advantage card facilitates your use of all services at Rensselaer including the Library, Bookstore, Gymnasium, and Campus Events. There is an initial one-time cost of \$30.00, however there is a \$10.00 replacement fee for the first lost/stolen card and a \$25.00 replacement fee for subsequent cards.

COMPUTER ACCOUNT INFORMATION

You can go to the Help Desk at the Voorhees Computing Center and they will set up an account for you. Please bring some form of identification, which includes a photograph such as a passport, US Driver's License, or Rensselaer ID.

PARKING

Contact the Parking Office at (518) 276-6616.

Rensselaer admits qualified students without regard to age, race, color, gender, sexual orientation, religion, national or ethnic origin, veteran status, marital status, or physical ability.

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