

Dear RISD Trustees,

As you all know, the Student Alliance this year has been working with the theme “*with*”: communicating *with*, decision making *with*, and staying safe and in community *with* students and the RISD community. As such, our focus has been on increasing transparency, accessibility, and agency for students while balancing this with the challenge of engaging and connecting with one another during the pandemic.

Student Representation in RISD’s Committees

Since our last letter, we have successfully gained cabinet and committee leader buy-in to facilitate the selection process of students sitting on committees. We worked to create a catalogue of RISD’s committees along with leadership and assignment information to share with students along with an application form to pass forward interested students to committee heads and reinforce student participation. We were able to implement an initial round of this process in the Spring and look forward to running this process again at the start of the next academic year when selected students will be able to serve their full term.

Compensation Plan

To ensure that student representatives on the Alliance are compensated for their labor and that our own positions are accessible to students who require the financial support of paid work, we have continued to work on and proposed a [Compensation Plan](#) for future Student Alliance members. This involved discussions among the Alliance Executive Team, research and benchmarking from other AICAD institutions, feedback from Department Representatives, and finally bringing the proposal to the cabinet. For the 2021-2022 academic year, the cabinet has approved a Pilot Program compensating Executive Team members \$850 per semester. Since receiving this decision, we have informed the student body and those nominated for Alliance positions for 2021-2022 as a part of our current election season, and added the pilot compensation structure and required role expectations to our [Amended Constitution](#) which students will also vote for or against during our elections season.

Elections

We are currently in the midst of holding elections with voting set to close by Tuesday, May 18th. While elections normally occur earlier in the month of April, this year we made the decision to delay elections while waiting to hear back from the administration with more concrete details regarding compensation so that we could communicate the most accurate information to students interested in running who may need to factor compensation into their planning. With our updated role descriptions, we also worked to better communicate the expectation and responsibilities for our positions and ultimately saw an unusually high number of nominations this year demonstrating marked interest in Alliance participation.

Rebranding

Making the most of efforts and resources redirected from canceled in-person events, we undertook a long-awaited rebranding project for the Student Alliance led by RISD Design Guild, creating a visual identity that met our goals of being “less corporate” and “more engaging”.

As of May 14, 2021

Final Town Hall

For our Final Town Hall, we looked back on our events and initiatives from the past year and invited students to voice feedback, questions, and concerns for the future. We timed this at the beginning of the election season to provide a space for students to get to know who we are and what we do, and for those interested in joining the Alliance to hear other students' concerns and ask their own questions. We were able to answer questions about this year's election process as well as questions about Alliance operations which helped provide us some greater information on how the Alliance may communicate to the RISD student community in the future.

Look Forward

We anticipate that next year at RISD will be defined by a number of significant changes, resets and new challenges. In addition to the transition of the RISD President, we are aware of a number of other leadership changes within RISD's academic departments which will mark important opportunities for the Alliance to reintroduce itself to all areas of administration and invest in a productive working relationship moving forward. We have also been following RISD's mandatory vaccination policy as well as the shifting conditions of the COVID pandemic anticipated for Fall 2021 and plan to take advantage of any new opportunities for in-person events and community engagement opportunities whether concerning Town Halls or Open Studios. Broadly responding to this idea of a "reset" or a "refresh," we intend to focus and commit our platform to organizing student voices in response to both immediate and systemic issues at RISD - whether concerning accessibility in academics, living or health and while addressing the effectiveness of RISD's offices. We plan on building a stronger network between all student leaders and community groups on campus, strengthening our projects such as student representation on committees, developing new and effective means for collecting student feedback, and continuing to advocate for a full compensation plan for the entire Alliance team. We are eager to await the results of our election and are excited to begin onboarding our new team.

Best regards,

Alliance Executive Committee

Amy Huang 21 ID, President
Andrew Wang IL 22, Vice President
Mindy Kang 22 TX, Secretary
Blue Williger 22 Intar, Treasurer
Victoria Lin 23 IL, Communications Officer
Dylan Fan 23 ID, Communications Officer

May 2021 Report to the Board of Trustees

submitted by Charlie Cannon on behalf of the Faculty Steering Committee

May 13, 2020

As I write this, we are coming to the end of what feels like an 18-month semester. Across the school, faculty, students and staff have met the many challenges of the year, including reinventing the character of teaching at RISD. We adopted new Learning Management Systems to include both onsite and remote students, teaching classes for students in time zones often twelve or thirteen hours apart. After difficult negotiations in summer 2020, we agreed to pay cuts and the almost complete removal of faculty retirement benefits for AY 2020-2021. We maintained morale and supported sick students and peers, especially during the vaccination period and towards the end of the academic year when students' exhaustion and sadness became manifest. Our professional research and exchange has been severely curtailed since March 2020. Everyone's home life was disrupted. Through it all, we managed our increased workload without the pleasure that comes from teaching and meeting face to face. With great determination however, we participated in searches and policy changes to ensure greater institutional equity and inclusion. Faculty can be proud of our work this year.

Over the Spring, and indeed over these 18 months, we achieved a lot: two extraordinary meetings over the summer and seven faculty meetings, all conducted on Zoom, with consistently high turnout including full-time and part-time faculty, deans, staff, administrators, Board members, and other community members. In-person faculty meetings are traditionally open to all and our Zoom meetings were likewise hospitable.

Among many discussions, actions, and motions to improve representative and policy processes in our community, I would like to highlight

- Greater equity and participation as evinced by the extension of the right-to-vote to senior lecturers and senior critics (part-time faculty with more than ten years of service) on all motions and elections that come before the faculty meeting (December to May).
- A detailed and extensive faculty survey identifying faculty standards and values for a new RISD President (February/March).
- Successful motions from the Instruction Committee to increase transparency and inclusivity of departmental decision making; and revised student absence and grading policies (throughout the Spring).
- The creation of a new faculty-led task force to examine faculty roles and responsibilities. An essential investigation to enable the various efforts of the strategic plan (elections are being held as of the writing of this report).
- Initiatives to foster communication and representation of faculty at administrative meetings. Steering Committee members now serve on the President's Cabinet - a precedent we hope will continue with the next president. FSC members now serve on the Dean's Council chaired by the Provost. And we look forward to meeting with the Board in June.