

Dear RISD Board of Trustees,

We are excited to return to campus this year, and we are hopeful for a safe, healthy and fulfilling year ahead. The Alliance is proud to introduce our new executive team and department representatives, both returning and new, who reflect the dedication and resilience of our students everywhere. For the upcoming 2021-2022 academic year, we wish to introduce some of our concerns, expectations and priorities to the RISD Trustees.

**Clear, timely and effective communication with students:**

We ask RISD to be mindful of thoughtfully communicating with students as we navigate the uncertainties of an ongoing pandemic and the threat of COVID-19 variants. This includes communicating any planning for potentially disruptive scenarios to our learning and living on campus.

**Concerning Experiences with our Institutional Offices:**

The Alliance has heard from students who wished to privately express to us significant and urgent concerns regarding their experiences dealing with major RISD offices including Institutional Discrimination: Title IX, RISD Public Safety, and RISD Health Services. Concerns include difficulties with accessibility, the availability of services to students, and prioritizing legal decorum over student wellbeing. We are in the early stages of planning a strategy for collecting student experiences with our critical offices of concern, to then present to the Administration in hopes of a clear path forward for change.

**Supporting our RISD Staff, Faculty and the Providence Community:**

We recognize a number of significant challenges affecting our students, staff and faculty, and we recognize the many issues that currently define these changes including the COVID-19 pandemic, fiscal stress, labour shortages and staffing reorganization- and their unfortunate effect on community wellbeing and the student experience- and work to continue RISD's social equity and inclusion efforts facing our ongoing issues with racial injustice, systemic inequity and accessibility on campus.

These issues deserve so much more than a single letter in order to appropriately discuss them. Importantly, we also understand that the planned timeline for dealing with major institutional challenges affecting our community often stretches far beyond the limited time many of our students will have at RISD and, thus, progress may be difficult to perceive and feel in a way that is actually needed by students.

As a result, we wish to conclude our letter by stressing the importance of actively **communicating with, working with** and, most importantly, **listening to** students, faculty, staff and our community under your leadership. The Alliance is but one corner of our campus; we stand in solidarity with all of RISD's dedicated clubs, organizations and student leaders such as Black Artists and Designers, Mango Street Club, RISD Students for Justice in Palestine, our Residence Life Student Staff, Health Ambassadors, Peer Mentors and our Student Workers. We urge the Board of Trustees that, as we actively voice our concerns, call for change, invest our labour and time- and even provide suggestions for resolution- that the Board and the Administration earnestly recognize our efforts and **act** if we are to all continue to navigate these tumultuous times and imagine a better future for RISD.

Best,

**Alliance Executive Committee**

Andrew Wang / *President (IL, 22)*

Leslie Ponce-Díaz / *Vice President (Arch, 23)*

Muskan Jain / *Secretary (ID, 24)*

Blue Williger / *Treasurer (Intar, 22)*

Dylan Fan / *Communications Officer (ID, 23)*

Nishtha Nanda / *Communications Officer (GD, 23)*

*As of September 22<sup>nd</sup> 2021*

**Dear Chair and Members of the Board of Trustees,**

I hope all goes very well with you as we begin the new school year and approach the end of another very difficult calendar year for our communities. RISD full-time/part-time faculty and librarians performed phenomenally in the last 18 months. There can be no doubt about our flexibility, resilience, dedication to students, wholeheartedness, and sheer will to work. We came back to a shining campus, intensively prepared by RISD Facilities. We thank everyone who kept the RISD community safe, including and especially our tireless Provost, Interim President, and their teams.

RISD faculty and librarians had some opportunity to return to professional practice in summer 2021. At our first faculty meeting of the year (10/6/21), we will share news of current projects. In July, full-time faculty were relieved to have salary and retirement contributions restored, though only to July 2020 levels; we will never catch up. The cuts were particularly hard on assistant professors. The almost complete elimination of employer retirement contributions was very hard on all faculty. The American Association of University Professors' *Annual Report on the Economic Status of the Profession, 2020-21* indicates that the cuts and losses we experienced were not typical nationally. Continuing RISD part-time faculty also lost their agreed 3% cost of living increase, again with permanent effect on their subsequent RISD salary. AAUP national survey data for part-time faculty will not be available until next year.

We are working in a context of profound and daily change in terms of how and what we think, communicate, and teach. We're engaged in curricular and pedagogical analysis and action regarding decolonization and anti-racism. In this respect, it's a wonderful time to be a faculty member. This year we're joined by 9 new critical review-path faculty, including a cohort with expertise across divisions who share a focus on race in art and design; also 22 faculty with new term appointments; and 68 new part-time faculty.

We want to be part of the decision to select our next president. In the Faculty Steering Committee survey conducted in February 2021, 83% of respondents said that faculty members on the Presidential Search Committee should have the responsibility and power to report back to the full Faculty Meeting, and 79% of respondents wanted candidates to meet the whole faculty. Neither aspiration has been fulfilled, though we continue to expect scheduling for meetings between a small group of faculty and finalists. We have invited our faculty members on the search committee to provide an update at our October 6 Faculty Meeting.

On behalf of the RISD Faculty Steering Committee, I thank you sincerely for your work and support for RISD, and the long and generous relationships you maintain.

**Mairéad Byrne, RISD Faculty Steering Committee Chair**

as of 9/24/21