

Dear RISD Trustees,

We have concluded a year which feels difficult to describe. Exciting and promising. Familiar and disappointing. Re-connected and isolated. Hopeful and anxious, and somewhere in between.

In the midst of this limbo, the undergraduate Student Alliance has worked hard to make the most of every opportunity we had. We successfully organized the return of in-person Open Studios as part of our commitment to creating enriching experiences that help connect students with RISD and with the Alliance. Additionally, we worked on a Health Services + Public Safety survey and follow-up Town Hall where we invited students to share their experiences with these critical offices, to ask questions and illuminate key concerns regarding the support of our students.

Our success with these projects would not have been possible without the hard work of our full team. We wish to commend our Department Representatives in particular, who went above and beyond in contributing their efforts and insights. It showed. At Open Studios, for example, attendance was greatly expanded to both freshman and sophomore students in numbers that frankly surprised all of us.

In order to sustainably continue this work, such as future projects we are currently planning with the Title IX Office and a renewed Center for Student Involvement (CSI) Student Art Sale, the Alliance believes that all of its member's efforts must be recognized by fair compensation. Thanks to this year's limited pilot compensation program for the Executive Team, we now have a greater understanding of how to best support all of our members and feel ready to ask for full coverage for the rest of our Department Representatives so that we may continue representing our community as best we can, while making our work as accessible to students as possible.

Throughout all our work, we have found the time for difficult self-reflection. As the Alliance, we have never lost sight of our primary charge to speak on behalf of our community, and yet this basic premise feels increasingly fraught. How do we define the community we are a part of? What do we believe to be true when it really remains aspirational? What do we wish to turn away from when it really defines who we are? As we see great existential changes, dangers and possibilities approaching RISD, these questions only gain urgency.

Thus, as we move into uncertain weather, we ask the Board to keep our students, staff, faculty and Providence on the weather horizon, and to embrace this opportunity for real soul-searching. And, for real soul-searching to be possible, we urge the Board to prioritize fostering *trust*.

For trust to be fostered, there must be a commitment to clear and consistent communication, even when our capabilities are hampered by doubt and uncertainty. We must embrace

As of Friday January 28, 2022.

accessibility and generosity in how we connect and lead our community, especially when so many of us have been depleted, and have then been asked to give up more.

Trust is about policy. We ask RISD to be mindful of students and their concerns as we continue to live through this pandemic, and that—as new mandates and health strategies are deployed—students can trust that they will be adequately supported, such as through the welcome distribution of effective masks and vaccine clinics, and even when unforeseen difficulties arise.

Trust is about transparency, which is especially critical during periods of great change. We ask RISD to be receptive and respectful to students and their voices as we prepare for a major administrative transition. We are excited to welcome President-Elect Crystal Williams in her new leadership role, and we are fully committed to supporting and connecting with her during her transition. We are eager to demonstrate for President-Elect Williams our unflinching commitment to presenting all of RISD, including our shortcomings, contradictions, missteps and failures. If we are to give our community the light they deserve, then nothing should be left in the shadows.

Finally, if nothing else, trust must be about *grace* and *acceptance*.

Grace, because our community—however you define it—deserves it.

Acceptance, because our community—no matter how you define it—requires it.

We thank the Board for their time and for providing this opportunity to share our thoughts. Let us continue working to build trust together.

Best,

The Alliance Executive Committee, Spring 2022

Andrew Wang / *President (IL, 22)*

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

Muskan Jain / *Secretary (ID, 24)*

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

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

As of Friday January 28, 2022.

RISD Faculty Steering Committee Report to the Board of Trustees (as of 1/29/22)

Faculty completed the Fall 2021 semester and are now deep into Wintersession teaching, professional work, and service (including admissions). Fall 2021 teaching was mostly in-person, with everyone glad to be back in classrooms and studios. Some students, returning from a year's leave, found themselves a bit detached from the RISD regimen: they had grown and worked during the year away. Physical and mental health challenges impacted teaching and learning. Everyone had to accept limits imposed by pandemic conditions, relax expectations, and make appropriate decisions. Communication between faculty and students became richer, with difficult conversations happening, particularly about race. Students brought a phenomenal amount to the table, as did faculty.

Faculty made a huge contribution to initiatives across the arts, humanities, and design locally, nationally, and internationally since our last report (9/24/21). Colleagues with multiple book publications and exhibitions include Agnieszka Taborska (Senior Lecturer, Theory and History of Art and Design), with two books, *The World Gone Mad: A Surrealist Handbook on How to Survive* (BOSZ 2021), and *Archipelagi Rolanda Topora* (Lokator, Krakow 2021), and Stanley Wolukau-Wanambwa (Associate Professor, Photography), also with two books, *The Lives of Images, Vol. 1: Repetition, Reproduction, and Circulation*, and *The Lives of Images, Vol. 2: Analogy, Attunement, and Attention* (Aperture 2021); Duane Slick (Professor, Painting) had two solo exhibitions *Consequential Narratives* (Hearst Center for the Arts, Iowa), and *The Coyote Makes the Sunset Better* (Aldrich Contemporary Art Museum, 2022), the latter of which (accompanied by children's and family programming) runs through May 8, 2022. Associate Professor of Painting Jennifer Packer's *The Eye Is Not Satisfied With Seeing* (Whitney Museum) runs through April 17, 2022.

Professor of Architecture Hansy Better Barraza won a 2021 Women in Design Award of Excellence, and her practice, Studio Luz Architects, had multiple

recognitions. Professor Better Barraza also researched and proposed to the Faculty Meeting (February 2021) that Indigenous People's Day be observed on the second Monday of October. The motion passed unanimously and our community will observe Indigenous People's Day for the first time this year. Our gratitude to Hansy and to all involved.

The Faculty Steering Committee held 3 online Faculty Meetings so far this academic year (approximately 150 attendees each time). In addition to the ordinary business of reporting and advising on major policy making/change by faculty committees, we ran elections for faculty committees and introduced new administrative officers and initiatives. In October, the FSC, along with 6 faculty members (5 elected, one selected), met the Presidential Search finalist and wrote a collective response. This happened too late in the search process to be meaningful in terms of influencing the outcome. We were disappointed as our February 2021 survey, shared with the Search Committee, made it clear that the great majority of our 217 faculty respondents wanted candidates to meet with the whole faculty. Strong and broad inclusion of faculty in RISD administrative and leadership searches should be an unshakeable commitment.

In December and January, we wrote and distributed to faculty a questionnaire soliciting responses to the SEI Required Course Tagging proposal presented to the Faculty Meeting (December 2021); and have since shared responses with faculty and the committees concerned. Faculty emphasized that introducing a new required course in each undergraduate major will require an additional TU for many departments, and multiple additional TUs for large departments (where multiple sections will be necessary). Also that the new required course cannot be introduced at the expense of existing required courses in each department and division, or scraped from existing bare bones TU allocations.

We look forward to welcoming the new President to the Faculty Meeting in the Spring or Fall.

Our gratitude, as always, to you.