

# Thriving at RPI

MentorSHPE Program



**2015-2016**

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# TRANSITIONING AND THRIVING AT RPI

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## **Campus Life: Striking a Balance**

The transition from living at home to living independently in a dorm can be an exciting change. To make a smooth transition, you'll want to keep in touch with your family and have fun as you become acquainted with your new surroundings, meet new people, and develop friendships. Balance is one of the most important lessons to learn as a college student. Being at college and living away from home comes with many freedoms. Every student should allot time for class, extracurricular activities, and time to relax. Time and task management are key to organizing your work load and reducing stress. Make time for regular phone calls or emails to family and friends from home to curb feeling homesick. Get out of your dorm room, engage with people, explore, and have fun! Don't know how to get started? Ask your mentor about what he/she did as a first year student to get adjusted to campus life.



## **The Residence Hall Scene**

Are you afraid of sharing a room with a stranger? Consideration and open communication are the cornerstones of good relationships. Make time to discuss with your roommate the times you like to get up, shower, and go to bed. If something bothers you, such as a snooze alarm that goes off 20 times, ask for time to speak to your roommate and share your concerns. Be open and compassionate and the year will run smoothly. The last thing you need is something that prevents you from focusing on classes and your work!

## **Residence Staff Members**

There is an RA (Resident Assistant) on each floor of your residence hall, an RD (Resident Director) and LA (Learning Assistant) for each building. All of the staff in your dorm are there as resources to help you adjust and become comfortable in your new settings. They can answer questions, help you to solve conflicts, and provide guidance.

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## **Social Life**

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As a freshman, it may be comforting to you to remember that all first year students are in the same boat as you! Everyone is looking to meet new people and make friends, so don't be afraid to introduce yourself! College provides a broader and more diverse spectrum of individuals than you've probably grown up with, so begin by taking small steps outside of your comfort zone. You will find some of your best friends during your freshman year. If you're looking for a way to connect with people, think of exploring your residence hall, getting involved in an extracurricular activity, or even just introducing yourself to the person sitting next you in class. RPI provides the perfect atmosphere because you'll run into your friends everywhere and there will always be someone new to meet.

## **Sororities & Fraternities**

RPI is home to more than 30 Greek chapters, including sororities, fraternities, and co-ed fraternities. Each fall and spring there is a designated recruitment period where students can attend events with the houses to meet new people and see if Greek life is a good fit for them. If you are interested in Greek life and want to learn more, you can visit <http://ifc.union.rpi.edu/> or <http://panhel.union.rpi.edu/>

## **Extracurricular Activities**

There are over 190 clubs and activities on campus plus an extensive intramural athletics program. Can't find an activity you love? Get a few people together and start a new club! Take advantage of the Activities Fair where you can meet club members and learn about club activities. The fair will be held in the Armory on Thursday, September 3<sup>rd</sup> from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. As a freshman it's good to try out things you never had a chance to experience in high school. Most clubs offer free lessons or interest meetings at the beginning of the year to give you a chance to experience a club without having to join immediately. Put your club meetings into your schedule, so you don't over-commit your time and lose focus on your studies!

## **Dating**

Similar to extracurricular activities, one must find a balance when starting a relationship. College takes dating to a new level, because there are no more curfews or parental oversight. Don't let a relationship get in the way of your studies and

respect your date's need to study! Also, remember to respect your roommate's space and need for privacy. Don't put your roommate in an awkward or uncomfortable situation. Check with your roommate before bringing your date into a dorm room that you share with someone else.

## Health & Safety

### Escort Service & Emergencies

Take advantage of Public Safety's Escort Service. This is important advice for any student, male or female, who has been studying or socializing until the wee hours of the morning and has to walk home alone. Don't risk your safety! Call Public Safety at ext. 6656 and ask for an escort. Blue light emergency phone stations are scattered throughout campus in the event you find yourself in a dangerous situation.



### Developing & Sustaining a Healthy Lifestyle

You'll probably find that during your first few weeks of school your college schedule is very different from your past high school routine. Balancing your time to attend classes, study, network, and stay healthy will be a challenge at first. To make it work, you'll need to develop a plan for how you will spend and schedule your time.

In order to stay alert throughout the day, it helps to aim for getting a full eight hours of sleep each night, or as much as your body needs. Realize that some individuals only need 6 hours of sleep while others will need

10. You have to decide what works best for you! Additionally, waking up and going to bed at the same time each day will greatly help you manage the challenges of college life.

You've probably heard about how difficult it is to avoid gaining the infamous Freshman Fifteen. With unlimited dining hall access and without your parents control over your diet, it can be easy to pick up unhealthy eating habits. There are, however, healthy meal options offered at every dining hall, and by eating three well-balanced meals a day, you are sure to feel more focused during this important time in your education.

Exercise boosts your mood, so make use of the many options available that are right on campus! You can participate in athletics, join active clubs, sign up for dance classes or boot camps, or even work out at the Mueller Fitness Center. If you have further questions on nutrition or exercise, the Health Center offers several links on their website at <http://studenthealth.rpi.edu/>.

### Cigarettes, Non-Prescription Drugs, and Alcoholic Beverages

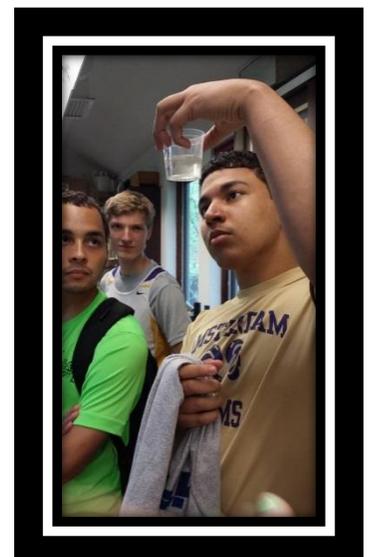
In accordance with the Federal Uniform Drinking Age Act, it is illegal for anyone under the age of 21 to purchase or possess any alcoholic beverage. Still, there is a good chance that, at some point during your freshman year, you may be exposed to alcohol and/or illegal, non-prescription substances. It's important to have a plan in mind for how you will react if exposed to alcohol or drugs. The Rensselaer Health Center offers TIPS (Training for Intervention Procedures), that teach you how to intervene when someone is using alcohol in a high risk manner. You should also be aware that Rensselaer is a smoke and tobacco-free campus.

### Health Center

The Student Health Center is open seven days a week, Monday through Friday from 8:30 am to 5 p.m. and Saturday and Sunday from 10 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. During vacations, a more limited schedule is offered. The center offers a physician-directed outpatient medical clinic for students who are not feeling well as well as a gynecological clinic and an allergy clinic.

They also offer a health education program that teaches students about health issues that typically affect college students. Please see the Health Center Article in the Summer Newsletter for more information. To schedule an appointment at the health center, you should call 518-276-6287.

If you are having a difficult time adjusting to college life, feeling homesick, or are generally in low spirits, the Student Health Center also offers counseling services. Counseling is free and confidential. Staff counselors work with students to develop their self-esteem and sense of potential and help individuals to sort out issues with their social



and academic lives. Counseling is helpful for anyone who wants an impartial sounding board. To schedule a counseling appointment, call 518-276-6479.

**Staying in touch with family and friends** Don't forget all of those people back at home! At Rensselaer, you will be surrounded by new friends and will have countless exciting experiences. It's easy to get wrapped up in all of this, but you will find that making that phone call home every once in a while will make it easier to adjust to your new campus environment.

## Academics: How to Excel @RPI

**Hey, you! Yes, you!** Turn off the music, shut off the TV, and don't even think about going back on Facebook! Academic work requires focus. Sure, you were good at multi-tasking in high school, but college is a whole different ball game. For many at RPI, learning is a passion! While you may have a particular subject that you enjoy above all others, you may need to schedule more time for subjects that don't come as easily. The recommended minimum study time for each course is 2 hours per every hour spent in class! While many first year students ignore this recommendation, don't fall into the same trap! If you don't stay on top of your studies, you will quickly fall behind and your grades will suffer. Balance your work and play so you can enjoy both!

### Define your goals and outcomes for success

There are many paths to success at RPI, and every student is capable of finding their individual academic strengths. The more effort you put towards your academics, the more you will get out of your education. You may want to pursue a dual major, a minor, a co-terminal Master's degree, or continue on to Graduate School. Whatever your goals may be, develop a four-year plan with your advisor(s) and meet with them regularly to stay focused and on track!



### Studying: What Works Best for You?

Where are you most comfortable studying? In your dorm room by yourself, in the Library where you can find total silence, in the Student Union McNeil Room with one or more friends, or with a study group? Whatever way works best for you, stick with it. Spend as much time as you feel is necessary to get a good grasp of the material. Some subjects will require more time and attention than others. Do practice problems and read the textbook and/or handouts. Dedicate time to review all of your subjects and spend extra time on more difficult coursework.

### Taking Notes, Studying for Tests, Test Crib Sheets, Reading the Text

College academics are very different from the academics of high school. There is more to learn, and you will have to change your study habits in order to adjust to the new work load. Assume that you will be spending a larger portion of time on homework than you did in high school. If you didn't read your textbook before going to class, or didn't take notes in class, now is the time to change! Think about dedicating extra time to the subjects you struggle with and make sure that you always do your homework. Reviewing frequently is also a good way to keep up with the material. Make sure you spend time carefully reviewing for tests and study until you feel comfortable with the information.

### Resources to Help You Meet Your Goals

There are a variety of resources to help you meet your goals. Professors and Teaching Assistants (TAs) offer office hours and classmates and upper class students in your major are usually eager to help. For FREE tutoring assistance check out the Advising, Learning, and Assistance Center (ALAC) at

<http://alac.rpi.edu/update.do?artcenterkey=4>

<u>FREE Tutoring Services</u>	<u>APO in Student Union</u>
<p>Don't be afraid to admit that you need help. If you have trouble understanding material and need a little extra help, look for tutoring opportunities from the Advising and Learning Assistance Center (ALAC). There are drop-in tutoring nights for most introductory subjects hosted by ALAC, and you can also request time with a personal tutor. ALAC is located on the fourth floor of Academy Hall.</p>	<p>APO, a co-ed fraternity on campus, has an office in the Student Union that contains a large collection of back exams from most subjects. These past exams are available for photocopying and they're an excellent resource to prepare for your tests. By reviewing back exams you'll get an idea of how tests are structured, the kinds of questions that are asked, and what information you'll need to study.</p>

## More Tips for Getting Good Grades!

### Homework and Study Materials

Your homework is essential – these are the problems that help you apply the knowledge you've acquired in class. Take advantage of any and all practice work, even if it's not mandatory. Each time you finish a problem set, you learn more about applying the information from your textbook. Lab reports are also an important part of your grade. They're geared to reinforce class concepts as well. Your lab work involves learning concepts that help you to evaluate a physical problem.

### Team Projects and Dynamics: What to Expect

Working on a team project is all about cooperation and communication. Begin by having a discussion with your team members about their strengths, weaknesses, and their semester course load. Divide up tasks so that everyone contributes. One person may have great computer skills, another person may like to do research, and someone else may enjoy writing a detailed analysis. Everyone should have a function and/or task. Develop a project schedule with task completion dates and include a date for meeting with the team to review and critique each other's work with sufficient time before the project deadline. Encourage team mates to report in if they need help to meet a task deadline. If someone isn't doing their share of the work, talk with them about how important the success of the project is to the team to re-motivate them.

### When To Seek Help From Those Around You

If you start feeling lost in a class, or frustrated because you can't seem to understand the material, don't get discouraged. Maybe you had trouble with your first homework assignment, or maybe you got your first test back, and your grade isn't what you anticipated. This is when you should seek help. Your professor and TA will both have office hours during the week, and you should take full advantage of the extra help. If a friend is doing well in the class, ask them to study with you. Take the opportunity to explore all resources that could help you improve your grades and meet your academic goals.

### Writing Resources

The Center for Communication Practices (CCP) is located in room 154A and B in the Folsom Library. Center staff are available to review your written work and offer suggestions. It's guaranteed that you'll run across a writing assignment in more than one course during your time at RPI. If you have trouble with language, grammar, or putting together a bibliography, you can find help at the CCP. Getting your rough draft corrected can be a good way to catch small mistakes, improve your writing skills, the quality of your papers, and your grades! For more information visit the CCP web site at <http://www.ccp.rpi.edu/>.

### Computing: Skills and Resources

Most professors will expect that you have basic knowledge of Microsoft Office software. Your classes will slowly teach you how to navigate new software relevant to your field that can help make solving problems easier. Also check out computer training at <http://dotcio.rpi.edu/support/helpdesk>

## THE COMMUNITY SURROUNDING RPI

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**Explore:** <http://troyny.gov/Home.aspx>

### **Troy Night Out**

Troy Night Out is a night with various art events, music venues, and restaurant tastings. This event is a great showcase of all the things to do in downtown Troy! It occurs every last Friday of the month, and you can find more information at [www.troynightout.org](http://www.troynightout.org).

### **The Arts Center**

Spend an afternoon enjoying the local arts scene or catching a visiting artist!

265 River Street

[www.artscenteronline.org](http://www.artscenteronline.org)

### **Knickerbacker Ice Arena**

Ice Skating (Indoor/Outdoor)

Enjoy the day learning to ice skate, or just sliding around on the ice with a couple of friends.

103rd St. & 8th Ave.

(518) 235-7761

### **Troy Waterfront Farmers' Market**

411 River Street

[www.troymarket.org](http://www.troymarket.org)

Year round Farmers Market located in downtown Troy. Producer made goods from over 60 local vendors.

Saturday, 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.

### **Uncle Sam Bowling Lanes**

Hit the bowling lanes! They're conveniently located at 600 Fulton Street, right next door to Blitman Commons, and they host dollar bowling nights twice each week.

(518) 271-7800

### **Prospect Park**

Entrance is off Congress, between Christie and 13th Streets in Troy. The Park includes approximately 80 acres of land, 14 court tennis facility, Playground, Picnic Areas, Softball - Soccer Field, Volleyball Court, and 2 Basketball courts.

### **Victorian Stroll**

[www.victorianstroll.com](http://www.victorianstroll.com)

The Victorian Stroll is a popular annual holiday tradition where all of Troy comes together in the historic downtown streets to celebrate with song, dance, and family entertainment.

### **Getting Around: Local shopping Malls and More!**

Your RPI ID gives you free rides on almost all CDTA bus routes. Just swipe your card as you enter the bus! Local bus schedules with maps and times can be found in the public safety office and on the first floor of the Rensselaer Union. You can also find them online at the CDTA website, <http://www.cdta.org>. The website also includes a trip planner that shows you how to get to any location in the capital region. RPI students like to take the 87 bus to Walmart or Price Chopper, just a 16-minute ride! The major shopping malls are Colonie Center and Crossgates Mall which can be reached by bus, but there are many stops in between. Try to find an RPI student with a car to take you!

## Restaurants in Troy

<u>Walking distance</u>	<u>Delivery</u>	<u>Within a 15 Minute Bus Ride</u>
<p><b>Ali Baba - (518) 273-2222</b>  <b>Cuisine: Mediterranean</b>                      2243 15th Street, Troy, NY</p>	<p><b>Domino's Pizza - (518) 273-3030</b>  <b>Cuisine: Pizza</b>                      218 Hoosick Street, Troy, NY</p>	<p><b>Pancho's Authentic Mexican Restaurant - (518) 273-3673</b>  <b>Cuisine: Mexican</b>                      740 Hoosick Street, Troy, NY</p>
<p><b>Knotty Pine - (518) 272-4557</b>  <b>Cuisine: Italian Pub</b>                      2301 15th Street, Troy, NY</p>	<p><b>Dante's Pizzeria - (518) 272-4533</b>  <b>Cuisine: Pizza</b>                      14 Spring Ave., Troy, NY</p>	<p><b>Friendly's Restaurant - (518) 273-2841</b>  <b>Cuisine: Family Miscellaneous</b>                      Hoosick Street, Troy, NY</p>
<p><b>Big Apple Pizzeria - (518) 271-4444</b>  <b>Cuisine: Pizza</b>                      108 14th Street, Troy, NY</p>	<p><b>Thai Spice Picnic Garden - (518) 238-1888</b>  <b>Cuisine: Thai/Chinese</b>                      4 Northern Drive, Troy, NY</p>	<p><b>Plum Blossom Chinese Restaurant - (518) 272-0036</b>  <b>Cuisine: Chinese</b>                      685 Hoosick Street, Troy, NY</p>
<p><b>I Love New York Pizza - (518) 266-0939</b>  <b>Cuisine: Italian Pizza</b>                      445 Hoosick Street, Troy, NY</p>	<p><b>A Dragon- (518) 271-8870</b>  <b>Cuisine: Chinese</b>                      564 Hoosick Street, Troy, NY</p>	
<p><b>Basil City - (518) 271-2274</b>  <b>Cuisine: Italian/Pizza/Wings</b>                      2304 15<sup>th</sup> Street, Troy, NY</p>	<p><b>Green Shell- (518) 272-1300</b>  <b>Cuisine: Chinese</b>                      120 Hoosick Street #11, Troy, NY</p>	



## Taxi Cabs

- Black and White Cab System - (518) 272-6961
- Star and & Strand Taxi - (518) 272-8248
- Troy Capitaland Taxi - (518) 270-8294