Student Life Handbook
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Graduation Requirements and Registration

Many of the forms necessary for degree changes and specifications may be found on the Registrar’s website at http://srfs.rpi.edu/, under the left-hand menu heading “Forms.” Copies may also be picked up in the Registrar’s Office located on the 2000 level of Academy Hall.

How to Change Your Major
To change your major, you must fill out the Undergraduate Change of Major/Change of Status Form (Form 9), which may be found at the Registrar’s website at http://srfs.rpi.edu/, under the left-hand menu heading “Forms.” Form must be signed by the Associate Dean for the School of Engineering (located in JEC 3018).

A new adviser will be assigned to you by the Associate Dean’s Office, and you should arrange to meet with your new advisor as soon as possible to outline the program necessary to complete your degree in your new major.

Doubles, Duals, and Minors

Double degrees
You may become a candidate for a second baccalaureate degree when you have completed the following:

- The equivalent of at least two terms (30 credit hours) of additional work beyond the requirements of a single degree.
- The courses in the department in which you are registered, and such other courses as are required for the second degree.
- You must fill out the Undergraduate Change of Major/Change of Status Form (Form 9). Form must be signed by the Associate Dean in JEC 3018. Advisor will be assigned by the Associate Dean’s Office.

Dual majors
If you fulfill all the degree requirements for two curricula and have met the conditions below, you will have completed a dual major. (Please note that you will receive one diploma noting both majors.)

- You must designate a first-named and second-named major by filing out an Undergraduate Change of Major Form (Form 9) at least one semester prior to graduation. Form must be signed by the Associate Dean in JEC 3018.
- Advisor will be assigned by the Associate Dean’s Office.
- The degree clearance officer in each program will certify that you have met all degree requirements in that department.
Note that the 24 credit hour mathematics/science requirement and the 24 credit hour humanities and social sciences requirement will satisfy the Institute's requirements for both majors.

**Minors**
There are many possible minors at Rensselaer. Take Form #20 from the Registrar’s Office – Undergraduate Minor Approval Form - to the department for the minor. They will list the courses needed and approve your minor, your advisor will also need to sign the form.

If you are a student interested in Rensselaer’s co-terminal program, meet with the department coordinator in charge of co-terminal, and they will help you develop a class plan.

**Humanities & Social Sciences Requirements**
Required 24 credit-hours of Humanities and Social Science

- 2 credits are part of the Professional Development classes (PDII)
- **5 courses**, or 22 credit hours
  - 2 of which must be in ARTS, PHIL, STSH, IHSS, LITR, WRIT, or COMM
  - 2 of which must be social sciences (PSYC, ECON,STSS, or IHSS)
  - 2 of which must have the same prefix (to fulfill the depth requirement, you must take one course at the 4000 level with the same pre-fix as another lower-level course you have taken).

Note that only three of these courses may be at the 1000 level, and that at least one of these courses must be at the 4000 level or above. For questions on this, see Elizabeth Large in Sage 5208 (or call at 518-276-2576).

**Communication Intensive Requirements**
Included in the requirements for engineering degree:

Two communication-intensive course:

- One within your major (automatically filled by your senior design course).
- One course that is “Communication-Intensive” from the School of Humanities, Arts, and Social Sciences.

For more information on these requirements, and for a list of “communication-intensive” courses, check the main log-in page of SIS at [http://sis.rpi.edu/](http://sis.rpi.edu/) and click on “Communication Intensive Courses.” This will bring you to the Registrar’s website, where you can see the “Approved Communication Intensive Course Listing” for a list of current courses offered.

**Course Registration**
In order to register for classes for each semester, the Registrar’s Office will email you a time ticket, which details when you will be able to register. You will want to check your account for holds before your time ticket slot to ensure you are able to register. You can check this on SIS.
During your registration time, you will be able to log onto SIS and register for the courses you wish to take.

If you do have a hold on your account, see the Registrar’s website at [http://srfsrpi.edu/](http://srfsrpi.edu/). Click on the Students menu>Registration>Holds.

If the class you are trying to register for is full, and you need to take it, you can get signed into, or put on the waiting list for a course. In order to do this, start by talking to the instructor teaching the course. For general engineering (ENGR) courses, go to JEC 3018 to put your name on the wait-list for the class.

Some classes may be taken as Independent Study—speak with the professor and fill out form 4U: Independent Study Registration Form found on the Registrar’s website at [http://srfsrpi.edu/](http://srfsrpi.edu/). Click on the Students menu> Registration> Independent Study.

All students are required to take at least 12 credits to remain a full-time student and pay full-time student tuition. This tuition covers up to 21 credits in any given semester without having to pay extra for overload credits.

If you wish to audit a course, fill out Form 12, the Full Time Rensselaer Student Audit Registration Form, found on the Registrar’s website under the Forms menu.

**AP and Transfer Credit**

If you took any Advanced Placement (AP) courses in high school, request that the Educational Testing Service (ETS) send your AP scores to Rensselaer's Registrar's Office; the Registrar will in turn evaluate your scores and provide you with the results. Note that although you may receive credit for your AP courses, you will not receive a grade for them, and the credits are not included in any grade point average (GPA) calculations.

If you received college credit during high school or if you wish to take courses somewhere other than Rensselaer during your undergraduate career, you will have to fill out Form 8, Transfer Credit Approval Request Form (found at the Registrar website under Forms). Bring a copy of the form and the course description from the other school to the appropriate office for approval. Engineering courses: Associate Dean, Kurt Anderson (JEC 3018), Science courses: Acting Dean, David Spooner (SC 1C05), HASS courses: Elizabeth Large (Sage 5208), Management courses: Beth Macey (Pittsburgh 3210). Your advisor will also need to sign the form. Have an official transcript from the other school sent to the Registrar’s Office. You must get a grade of “C” or better to receive transfer credit.

A maximum of 32 credits may be transferred towards a Rensselaer degree, including AP credits. Study abroad credits, through approved programs, do not apply to this maximum, but a maximum of 16 credits may be transferred from non-affiliated study abroad programs. To earn a degree, at least 64 credits and four full-time semesters must be completed at Rensselaer.
Academics

Student Advising
As a freshman, you will meet with your advisor three times during the fall semester and once during the spring semester. Your first meeting with your advisor will be during the second week of classes. After freshman year, you are required to meet with you adviser once a year, usually in the spring semester, in order to be cleared for registration. Reminder emails will be sent out every year from Advising & Learning Assistance Center (ALAC) to remind you to meet with your advisor.

You may check who your current advisor is by logging into SIS. Under the student menu, under Curriculum Information, click on “View my Advisor and Curriculum Information.” Select the term you are looking for. Your advisor’s name will be listed in the row titled Primary Advisor.

If you want to take an unrestricted elective that is not part of your major’s class plan, you will need permission from your degree clearance officer. A list of degree clearance officers by department may be found at http://alac.rpi.edu/ under “Advising.” If for some reason your advisor leaves Rensselaer, you will be automatically assigned a new one by the Associate Dean’s Office (an email will be sent to you). It is then up to you to contact (email or call) the new advisor to get to know them, and to attain registration clearance.

Study Aids
If you are not doing well in a course, talk to the instructor. They are there to help you and will do everything they can to help you succeed. There are lots of ways to get support for a course you are struggling with (see below).

You may drop a class without appeal within the first eight weeks of the semester. To drop a class, you simply go to SIS and drop it (the same way you registered for it).

There are many programs in place to help you academically succeed at Rensselaer. A good place to start is with the Advising & Learning Assistance Center (http://alac.rpi.edu/ or 518-276-6269, Sage 2106). ALAC offers drop-in tutoring, supplemental instruction sessions for freshman classes, time management assistance, and other assistance programs.

Another good resource is the APO test bank (http://apo.union.rpi.edu/services.php). APO is a service fraternity with an office in the Student Union—room 3420. They keep files of backtests for most classes that you may borrow, copy, and use to practice.

For most, if not all, of your classes, there will be Teacher’s Assistants working to help with grading and teaching. If you are struggling with a class, the TA’s office hours are meant to help you clarify questions about the material. TA office hours should be announced in the class syllabus at the beginning of the semester.

For group meetings and personal study sessions, Folsom Library offers private library study rooms that may be reserved and rented out for free (ask at the Circulation Desk).
**GPA Issues**
For any given semester at Rensselaer, your GPA must remain above a 1.5, and your cumulative GPA must remain above 1.60 at the end of freshman year; above 1.70 for both sophomore terms; and above 1.80 for the last two years. If placed on academic probation, extracurricular activities may be limited so that you concentrate on schoolwork. Keep in mind that some scholarships also depend on good academic standing. The probation will be lifted once the student raises their GPA. For more information see [http://www.rpi.edu/dept/advising/academic/prob.html](http://www.rpi.edu/dept/advising/academic/prob.html).

On the other side of the spectrum, in any given semester, if you achieve a GPA of 3.0 or above, you will be granted the honor of being placed on the Dean’s List. A letter of congratulations will be sent to your home address.

It’s important to know that many internships, programs, jobs, and graduate schools (including Rensselaer’s co-terminal program) require a minimum GPA of 3.0, so keeping your GPA around or above that point is a great goal.

**Pass/No Credit**
You may also take a course as pass/no credit. You may only do this if the course is *not* required in your major. No course within your major may be pass/no credit, and generally you may only use pass/no credit for free electives or for one of your humanities courses. To claim a pass/no credit, Fill out **Form 5, Pass/No Credit Request Form**, which may be found on the Registrar’s website under “Forms.”

You may take no more than 12 credits on Pass/No Credit (16 for the 5-year B. Arch program). No more than 6 credits of these may be Humanities and Social Sciences courses used toward the 24 credit hour HASS Core Requirement. No more than one course of the Science core may be taken as Pass/No Credit. Courses graded Satisfactory/Unsatisfactory are not included in the above restrictions. A Pass/No credit course may not be used in the H&SS Depth Requirement.

You may re-take a class that you fail (or get a bad grade in) if you have time later in your schedule. If you re-take the course, both grades will appear on your transcript, but the **re-take grade** (not necessarily the *higher* grade) will be used in your GPA calculations.

**Learning Management System (LMS)**
For many classes, professors will use this online system to upload documents critical to the course that students can log in and access. From [www.rpinfo.rpi.edu](http://www.rpinfo.rpi.edu), click on the LMS link in the top bar. This will direct you to [http://rpilms.rpi.edu/webct/entryPageIns.dowebct](http://rpilms.rpi.edu/webct/entryPageIns.dowebct). From here, click “Log In” and enter your RCS ID and password. This will direct you to a homepage with course names that will allow you to access class documents.

**Missing Class/ Excused Absences**
The only way to get an excused absence from a class, lab, or test, is to attain a Student Experience excuse. The **Excused Absence Form** ([http://se.rpi.edu/ >Policies and Procedures>Excused Absences]) must be brought to the Student Experience Office in Academy Hall. The only valid excuses are: funeral, health reasons, wedding, Rensselaer-sanctioned event (such as an academic conference), religious, sports, job interview, or weather related. In all cases, documentation must be provided. Note that the Student Health Center only grants excused absences if you are broken, barfing, or bleeding.
Leave of Absence
To request a leave of absence, see the Student Experience Office on the 4th floor of Academy Hall, or at http://se.rpi.edu > Policies and Procedures> Undergraduate Leaves of Absence, or call 276-8022.

Financial
Paying Tuition
You are expected to pay any charges on your student account every month. Tuition is charged in one chunk once a semester, so be prepared to pay hefty bills twice a year. You can pay in person at the Bursar’s office (by check or cash—there is a financial penalty for paying by credit card, so try to avoid that). Your bill can be checked online at http://finance.rpi.edu/ if you sign up for the eBill (which you can do by clicking on eBill). You can then pay your bill with bill pay from your bank.

The Bursar’s Office is located on the 2000 level in Academy Hall. It is very busy, so it is often best to go there in person instead of trying to call.

How to get an on-campus job
Students who qualify for need-based financial aid may receive a work study job on campus, where they will work in an office or on-campus job for pay. For a list of work study opportunities, see: http://admissions.rpi.edu/aid/WS.pdf For more information on work study, contact financial aid.

For those who don’t qualify for work study, there are other on-campus job opportunities:

- Ben & Jerry’s in the Union—ask at the counter on the 1st floor of the Union
- Catering for Sodexho
- RenExchange—more information will be given to you during your freshmen year
- Ushering at EMPAC—ask at the EMPAC box office, main floor of EMPAC

To apply for these jobs, go to the office, or email the associated entity for more information.

More options are available off-campus. There are many restaurants and cafes in Troy that students can work at. Or you can take the bus for free (with your Rensselaer ID) to other job locations.

Undergraduate Research Projects (URPs)
An Undergraduate Research Project is a research opportunity Rensselaer undergraduates can take advantage of for credit or for pay. To get a URP, start by talking to your advisor. It is also good to talk to professors you have about their research. Or just search the Rensselaer website for research you are interested in, and email the researcher working on it. See http://undergrad.rpi.edu/ or your Department Booklet for more information.

For more information of the types of projects available, see the department you are interested in working for.
Career Information

Professional Career and the Career Development Center (CDC)
Rensselaer’s Career Development Center offers:

- Resume critiques
- Mock interviews
- Information sessions with recruiters.
- Redhawk Joblink, an online job-search system, found at https://rpi-csm.symplicity.com/students. To use this system, you must pay an annual enrollment fee of $5, which may be paid at the beginning of each year in the CDC office, located in DCC, Suite 209.

Spring Career Fair

NSBE/SHPE Fall Career Fair: This larger career fair is held every year in early Fall and offers a great opportunity to get to know potential employers. For more information, see the website at http://careerfair.rpi.edu/home/.

The Fundamentals of Engineering (FE) and Professional Engineering (PE) Exams
While it is not required in all engineering fields, you may want to consider taking the Fundamentals of Engineering (FE) and the Professional Engineering (PE) exams sometime during your engineering career. It is common to take the FE in your junior or senior year of college, or just after you graduate. The FE is often required for starting Civil Engineering positions.

Chi Epsilon, the Civil Engineering Honors Society at Rensselaer, offers registration for the FE every year in October and FE Exam Review Sessions each spring.

For more information, see Tasha McDonough in JEC 4049. The exam reference manual may also be downloaded at http://www.ncees.org/.

Professional Development Requirements
All engineering students are required to take:

- Professional Development I (part of your sophomore design course)
- Professional Development II - Choose between the PSYC 4170 and STSS 4840 sections. The STSS course counts towards the communication-intensive requirements
- Professional Development III

The Archer Center for Student Leadership also offers the Professional Leadership Program, a 1 ½ semester no-credit competitive program that allows students to challenge their leadership potential and get more in-depth leadership training. The class must be applied to during a
student’s sophomore year—inivtations will be sent through the mail and the program will be advertised calling for applications. The course is taken during their junior year if you are selected.

Health & Safety

Health Center
The Rensselaer Health Center is available to students who have purchased the Rensselaer student health insurance. It is located in Academy Hall and offers medical treatment, referrals for more serious conditions, counseling services, and public health programs such as Alcoholics Anonymous. The Health Center also runs flu shot clinics in the Fall that are free to students.

All enrolled students have access to the Counseling Services, which offer:

- Individual/group counseling
- Relaxation training for anxiety
- Biofeedback training
- Study skills/time management
- Reducing test anxiety
- Limited screening for learning disabilities (as time allows)
- Vocational interest testing
- Computerized stress testing
- Group workshops scheduled upon request
- Consultation
- Outreach

These services are available by appointment, which may be scheduled by calling 518-276-6287 for medical appointments, 276-6479 for counseling appointments, and 276-6287 for information on health education programs.

Public Safety
The Department of Public Safety has an office in the middle of campus (between the footbridge and the Mueller Center).

An important feature offered is the Public Safety escort system. Public Safety will provide an escort to students from campus to other locations on or near campus. It’s a really great service, and you can use it as many times and whenever you want by calling 518-276-6656.

There are also various blue emergency lights set up all over campus. The large help buttons on these emergency lights will call public safety to that location in the event of an emergency.
Student Life

The Basics
Rensselaer has a very active student life. The campus has over 175 clubs and organizations. You can learn more about them at [http://home.union.rpi.edu](http://home.union.rpi.edu) or at various Activity Fairs held throughout the year.

The Mueller Center is the main gym on campus—offering a pool, track, weight rooms, workout rooms, and a variety of classes.

The Student Union is the heart of student life. In the center of campus, the Union houses the offices required to run student life, the religious offices, study and meeting rooms, study spaces, cafeterias, the games room, the post office, performance spaces, club offices, and the student government offices. [http://home.union.rpi.edu/](http://home.union.rpi.edu/)

The Student Senate serves and represents the interests of the student body, developing projects and passing legislation within the Union involving academic affairs, facilities, student rights, and all other topics pertinent to the student body. The 40th Student Senate meets regularly each Tuesday at 4:30 pm in Union 3202. The student body president at Rensselaer is known as the Grand Marshall (or GM), and the director of student activities is known as the President of the Union (or PU). Elections for the student senate and the race for GM and PU are held every year during a week in April known as GM Week. The week is full of fun activities and political campaigning, with no class on Wednesday so that students can vote. Elections for freshman student government are held each year a few weeks after school has started.

Greek Life
Many students find Greek Life an important aspect of their social lives at Rensselaer. It’s also a great way to get involved in community service, and have leadership opportunities. About 26% of undergraduates pledge in a fraternity or sorority. For more information on Greek Life, see [http://ifc.union.rpi.edu/](http://ifc.union.rpi.edu/) and [http://panhel.union.rpi.edu/](http://panhel.union.rpi.edu/). If you are interested in pledging, you will have the opportunity to meet many of the Greeks during Fall or Spring rush or at the Greek Fair. More information is available from the Office of the First Year Experience and the Dean of Students Office.

Housing
All first and second year students will be required to reside in Institute-owned or leased residence halls. This requirement is consistent with our expectations for students as part of the First Year and Sophomore Year Experiences. Housing will be guaranteed for the first two years while limited options will be available for students during their junior, senior and fifth years or beyond. Contact Residence Life at 518-276-6284 for questions.

If there are any handyman-type problems in your residence, you need to email Fixx, who will send someone to fix the problem. See [http://fixx.rpi.edu/](http://fixx.rpi.edu/)

Study Abroad
Many students at Rensselaer study abroad, usually during their junior or senior years. It is important to plan ahead if you wish to study abroad so that you can still take all the courses
required to graduate. A list of study abroad options can be found at: http://undergrad.rpi.edu/update.do?catcenterkey=84

For more information on study abroad programs, go to the Office of International Programs, located in Walker 4103, or see the Office of Undergraduate Education website at http://undergrad.rpi.edu> Office of International Programs.

Rensselaer’s Student Information System
The Student Information System (or SIS http://sis.rpi.edu ) is every Rensselaer student’s online control panel to their education. On the home screen you can access important links, or log-in. Once logged in, you can check your grades, academic status, request a transcript, you name it. For a User’s Guide to SIS, see the following:

1. **Log-in**: UserID is RIN number, PIN is your chosen password (if you lose your password or have too many failed log-in attempts you will have to call the Registrar at 518-276-6231).
2. Everything you need is on the **Student Menu** (listed at the top)
3. **Under Registration Information**
   a. Be sure to “**Check My Registration Status**” before class registration comes around. This will list any holds you have on your account (you want all checkmarks). If you have a hold, you won’t be able to register until you get the hold cleared.
   b. To Add or Drop a class go to **Register, Add or Drop**
      i. Select the appropriate term and click submit
      ii. To Register or Add a class, scroll to the bottom and click **Class Search**. Select a subject (matching the course code of the class you are looking for) and enter the course in the Title box (or search by other methods like professor) and click **class search** *Note: Courses with course code ENGR can be found under “Core Engineering”. This will give you a list of courses. Select the section you want (listed in column Sec), scroll to the bottom and click **Register**.
      iii. To drop a class, find the class in your Current Schedule. Select “**Drop via Web**” from the drop-down menu in the Action column. Scroll to the bottom and click **submit changes**.
   c. “**View My Weekly Schedule Day/Time Grid**” will give you a copy of your schedule by course code on any particular week of the semester (enter the date in the upper right corner for the week you want to view). The schedule will appear in grid-form by day of the week and include location and hours.
   d. “**View My Weekly Schedule**” will give you a list of courses you are registered for including course title, course code (which you can take to the Bookstore to order books), assigned instructor, credits, times, classroom and term.
4. **Under Curriculum Information**
   a. **View My Grades** will give you your grades and GPA for any given semester. Select the Term you are looking for from the drop-down menu and click **Submit**.

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This will give you a list of your classes, the grades in each class, the GPA earned for that term, and your cumulative GPA. It will also list your academic standing for the semester (you want “good”). At the top of the page, you may also click on **View My Current Rank** to see how you rank in comparison to other students in your class, as well as in your school and major based on GPA.

b. **“View my Transcript”** will give you an unofficial web copy of your transcript, which lists all courses you have taken and grades received at Rensselaer. It will also list transfer and AP/IB credits and your cumulative GPA.

c. **“Request a Transcript”** will allow you to send up to two copies at a time to any address in the world for free. Select the appropriate transcript type and enter the address information of the receiver. Click **continue**. You may either pick up the transcript yourself at the Registrar’s Office in Academy Hall, or have the transcript mailed. Type the number of copies you need and Select your Delivery Method. Click **continue** and review your request before clicking submit request. You can check the status of your transcript (if it’s ready, if it’s been sent or not) by clicking **“Check My Transcript Request Status.”**

d. **“View My CAPP Reports”** can be used to track your degree progress. Select the degree you are currently pursuing (more than one may appear if you have changed your major). The CAPP report is a condensed and more-inclusive version of every aspect of your academic progress. Here you can see how the courses you are taking apply credit towards your degree and what you still need to take to fulfill your degree requirements. The CAPP report splits into different academic requirements and has the credits required. It will then list the courses you have taken under these requirements. If you have not fulfilled the requirement the CAPP will say NOT MET in the heading. If you have the number in “Credits Req” should match (or be greater than) that listed in “Applicable.” Scrolling to the bottom, there is a table of “Summary of Student Progress Towards Degree Requirements” that will list all requirements for graduation and whether or not you have yet fulfilled them.

5. Under **Personal Information** you may change your password, or update your address and emergency contact information.

**Frequently Asked Questions**

**Can freshmen have cars on-campus?**
Parking is hard to find, and freshmen are not allowed to purchase Rensselaer parking passes. If you do choose to bring your car, you must park it on the street, which may be difficult. For more information, see [http://www.rpi.edu/dept/parking/](http://www.rpi.edu/dept/parking/).

**Will I have time for extracurricular activities?**
Absolutely. Just don’t overdo it by signing up for everything at once—academics come first. Extracurricular are a great place to meet people and relieve stress, so don’t miss out.

**Can I change my adviser?**
Yes, go to the Associate Dean’s Office in JEC 3018 to request a change.
What should I do if I’m having problems with a professor?
If the problem is significant, you should consider speaking with the professor’s department. Go to the department office and explain your problem; someone will be able to direct you from there.