

## The Newsletter of Ryerson Faculty Association

Spring 2021 Vol. 36 No. 2

### Message From the President

Colleagues,  
 Ryerson's enrolment has quadrupled in the last twenty-five years. This may not seem such a noticeable feature to many of you, because amongst Ryerson's 988 RFA members (faculty, librarians and counsellors), 378 (38%) have joined Ryerson within the last ten years, and a further 378 (38%) in the ten years before that. In other words, 76% of our membership joined Ryerson in 2001 or later.

Just in case some might be wondering, the number of Mode 1 faculty members at Ryerson is now 19. And the number of former Mode 1 faculty members who converted to Mode 2 now stands at 30. All faculty members who were employed at Ryerson prior to Dec 31, 1991 were deemed to be Mode 1 faculty members, and these 49 faculty members are those of us who were already at Ryerson at that time.. That date was around

the time that Ryerson was recognised as a university and was the date the workload provisions in our Collective Agreement were amended to facilitate, and to require, a level of SRC activity.

Thus, it is pretty clear that the transformation of Ryerson is pretty well advanced. A transformation **from** a much smaller university, almost entirely undergraduate, with small class sizes and a certain measure of intimacy and familiarity, flagship professional programs, and a meaningful commitment to students as individuals, **to** a large behemoth, providing undergraduate and graduate education to students, in much larger classes, on a campus that is suited for a much smaller body of people, still with flagship professional programs, with a commitment to students as a



Ian Sakinofsky, President

collective, and unfortunately with the highest student faculty ratio in Ontario, if not in the country.

#### What Type of University Does Ryerson Want to Be?

The question to be asked then, is: what type of university does Ryerson want to be?

A second question is: can faculty members do anything about it anyway?

And a third question is: is the midst of the third wave of the Covid pandemic the right time to raise these questions?

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### Contact Us:



40 Gould Street  
 Main Floor  
 Room KHS - 46



416-979-5186



416-979-5317



rfa@ryerson.ca



www.rfanet.ca



**Important Dates**

\* \* \*

**RFA General Meeting**

May 7, 2021

\* \* \*

**RFA List Servs**

If you are not receiving information sent out on rfa-announce, please advise the RFA Office at ext. 5186 or by e-mail:

[rfa@ryerson.ca](mailto:rfa@ryerson.ca)

We wish to keep you informed!

Thank you.



**Retirees**

Michael Arts - Chemistry and Biology  
Jennifer Mactavish - Disability Studies  
Karen Spalding - Health Services Management

## From the President....

1. The answer to the first question is not going to be found in this newsletter.

Nonetheless as RFA members we can ask ourselves whether we would prefer a collegially driven university that remains true to its values, in recognising and acknowledging its shortcomings and the issues that are confronting it in the performance of its core activities, and which establishes priorities and develops issue-based strategies to address these priorities. Rather than a public relations oriented organism that fetishizes a customer satisfaction orientation, premium paying enrolment and the creation of new Faculties, in an already overburdened infrastructure, in order to maintain sales volume, as the university teeters in the direction of the growth trap – size for the sake of unsustainable size.

In January 2019, the Ontario Conservative government reduced student tuition by 10%, and this was to have an effect on Ryerson' anticipated revenue for 2019-20, to the tune of an expected 2-4%. Ryerson's reaction was to reduce teaching resources to offset this loss in tuition revenue, and thereby maintain a steady course on most other initiatives.

According to the workload and complement data provided by the Administration to the RFA, as a result the number of CUPE FTE equivalent appointments in 2019-20 dropped from 332 the previous year, down to 286. This represented a reduction of 46 CUPE positions, and translated into roughly 460 courses that would need to be picked up by RFA or absorbed into other courses. It probably reduced the University's costs by an amount in the region of \$4m.

On the other hand, the RFA's data shows that the 2437 courses taught by RFA faculty members in 2019 was almost identical to the 2431 taught in 2018/19, but needed to absorb an additional 13,172 student course registrations as a result of the reduction in courses provided by CUPE instructors in 2019.

This was on top of already swollen numbers in many RFA taught classes.

Yet, at more or less the same time, when the Ontario government stated that it was unwilling to provide the necessary funding that Ryerson had been depending on to establish a new Faculty of Law, Ryerson declared that it was able to comfortably fund the new Faculty internally.

And a little more than a year later, when during the pandemic Ryerson found itself with a \$31.5m deficit due to Covid costs, it again declared that it was quite comfortably able to draw on internal reserves to meet this shortfall.

It is no surprise at all that Ryerson has the financial depth to weather such storms. The point being made here is one of recognising where the University's priorities lie, versus where faculty might think these priorities should lie.

2. Turn now to the second question above, namely can faculty members do anything about influencing the future choices made by Ryerson? This was addressed at the March meeting of the RFA Reps Council. It was suggested that in order to increase faculty influence, faculty members speak to their colleagues who are members of the Board of Governors, that the RFA establish some rapport with the faculty members serving on the Board of Governors, and of course that more faculty members take interest in themselves being elected to the Board of Governors.

Similarly, it was suggested that faculty members take an interest in matters that are brought to Senate and speak to their colleagues who serve on Senate, not to mention offering themselves for election as senators.

Finally, an obvious avenue of expression for faculty members is the RFA itself. As members you are invited and urged to seek our roles that you can play within the RFA through seeking membership on various RFA

## From the President....

Committees, responding to nomination calls, participating in activities organised by the RFA, and generally raising issues and initiatives with the RFA.

3. The last question above asks whether the moment of a Pandemic is necessarily the most appropriate time to raise existential issues with respect to Ryerson.

Is it ever?

Not only has the Pandemic occurred at a pivotal time in Ryerson's evolution, but it is also during this Pandemic that Ryerson appears to have moved from a bicameral system to a tricameral system. Decisions appear to be made at command tables, with behind-the-scenes planning, and information being issued on a need-to-know basis. There really is an impression that decisions are being made by senior administrators who have little academic experience or appreciation of faculty needs. An increasing corporatisation seems to be setting in, and it is not likely to serve the University well.

As you can read in this newsletter in the report submitted by Jesmen Mendoza, the RFA Grievance Officer, it is during this Pandemic that Ryerson has unilaterally introduced changes to members' pension plan contributions. The RFA has grieved this, as a violation of the Collective Agreement.

It is also during the pandemic that the Administration has forged ahead with its agreement with Navitas, a private sector company exploiting the public education sector. The RFA has grieved this too, as a violation of the Collective Agreement.

It is also during this Pandemic that the senior administration appears to have adopted a disconcerting communication strategy. This is particularly so with respect to such matters as an in-person return to campus. Announcements have been issued which appear to be directed at the public at large, with optimistic messaging, but which undermine or contradict what faculty members perceive to be happening at a local level in their own particular work environments.

When following up on general announcements we have been told that they are really catch-all statements and actual decisions are to be made at the local level after all. However, at the local level decision makers are still dependent on information and direction from the senior level.

The net result, whether intentional or inadvertent, probably the latter, is leading to a state of almost paradoxical suggestion, not unlike those situations where such techniques are used to create compliant followers. This has resulted in some wariness of these general announcements.

### Compulsory versus Voluntary Return to Campus in the Fall

The RFA has conveyed to the Administration that faculty members are seeking peace of mind with respect to a return to campus in September. We have been told that June 09 is the deadline by which faculty members, and other community members will be informed of Ryerson's plans for the Fall 2021 semester.

We have advised the Administration that if faculty members are assured now that there will be no compulsory return to campus in the Fall, that would remove tension at the present time and also allow for informed planning to occur earlier.

We have also repeatedly expressed the view that a partial return to campus cannot be carried out in the absence of considerable planning and preparation, and cannot take place at the last minute simply subject to easing Covid conditions. On that basis we do not see a likelihood of a return to in-person teaching in the Fall unless particular individuals have prepared for it in contingency fashion. Therefore, we have asked for an earlier commitment that faculty will not be required to return to campus in the Fall 2021 semester.

## From the President....

We have failed to secure such a commitment but we are hopeful that we will receive one in advance of the June 09 deadline. It does appear by all reports that the majority of Faculties and programs are already expecting to continue with emergency remote teaching in the Fall.

### The Negotiation of the Collective Agreement

As you will also read in this newsletter, in the report from Brian Ceh, Chair Negotiating, the arbitration dates for our dispute on the negotiation of the Collective Agreement, are coming close. At the time of your reading this, one or two of the four scheduled arbitration sessions might have already occurred.

It is unfortunate that this round of negotiations has had to proceed to arbitration. When we examine the issues after it is over, we will be able to critique the situation further. However, it is pretty clear that the restructuring of the VPFA office, and the outsourcing of the Administration's negotiator role, has had an overwhelming influence on the demise of the process here.

It is in keeping with the increasing corporatisation referred to earlier, and the erosion of collegiality, that for the first time this round of negotiation has not had faculty members on the one side and the University represented by an academic administrator on the other side. The Administration has employed an outside lawyer to conduct its bargaining and then to provide legal counsel, and has appointed a 'virtually outside' Executive Director. Nobody benefits when all of the parties are not fully informed, and not familiar with that about which they speak.

It also speaks to our senior administration's disinterest in, or lack of appreciation of, the fabric of our bargaining relationship and the substance of the bargaining, where they presume to simply farm out the negotiation process in technocratic fashion. More to the point however, it is also not clear to the RFA Negotiating Team who exactly it is that the RFA is negotiating with. It is not clear who, on the Administration side, reports to whom, and who it is somewhere in the ranks of our Administration who is empowered to make decisions. Clearly this is not a basis for any constructive movement at the bargaining table, and it speaks to why there was barely any.

Another element of weirdness is in the fact that the RFA has regular dealings with the VPFA but there is no indication of how engaged or not the VPFA is in the bargaining process. We are not accustomed to a Vice Provost Faculty Affairs who has so little connection with such an important component of faculty affairs as the development of the Collective Agreement.

All of this of course is at the expense of you, the membership who are now in your tenth month without a new contract.

### Laurentian University

On behalf of the RFA I call on all of you to pay attention to the situation at Laurentian University, and to provide whatever support you can to our colleagues at Laurentian.

The very fact that the Provincial Government is treating the circumstance at Laurentian as an insolvency - and has resorted to the Companies' Creditors Arrangement Act to resolve the situation, rather than providing support for what is ostensibly a public institution - is measure of the degree to which market driven corporatisation has become a fact of the post secondary education environment in Ontario.

The insolvency process is moving swiftly, and although the Laurentian Collective Agreement is still operational, by mid-April faculty members at Laurentian may well be on the receiving end of a great deal of pressure to agree to substantial concessions, and will be facing attacks to education security and to job security.

This does not only speak to the university funding deficit in Ontario, but it also speaks to the value of public education as a whole, and to the future autonomy and sustainability of public universities in Ontario.

You can find out more by visiting the OCUFA website at: <https://ocufa.on.ca/support-LUFA-APPUL/>

## Report from Chair, Grievance - Jesmen Mendoza

The RFA currently has 17 active grievances at various stages of our grievance procedures. Six of those grievances are scheduled to be or are in arbitration. Additionally, one grievance will be settled by the time this bulletin is published and, as always, the Association continues to work diligently in finding resolution to all of the outstanding matters above.

Amongst the grievances and one that might be of interest to our general membership is 2020.15. This grievance is related to the University Administration's failure to assign bargaining unit work with respect to their agreement with Navitas, a private company that claims to assist post-secondary institutions at accelerating their internationalization efforts. Prior to the grievance being filed and presented, the RFA had approached the Administration since August 25, 2020 on a number of occasions, asking to have an opportunity to review the agreements that the Administration signed with Navitas. By December 22, 2020, the RFA had not received copies of all the agreements that the Administration had signed with Navitas and thus the RFA filed a grievance.

On February 10, 2021 the RFA did receive a copy of those agreements. On March 5, 2021, this grievance was presented to the VPFA, and shared our understanding of the agreements that they had entered into with Navitas. In essence, our grievance is with the academic courses being delivered by the affiliated College, formed by Navitas and named Ryerson University International College (RUIC). The first-year academic courses taught through RUIC are meant to be part of a delivery of degrees to international students and upon their successful completion of these RUIC taught first year academic courses, are these international students guaranteed a place in the second year of an identified Ryerson degree program.

Further, the University's Administration also positions these academic courses as being Chang School continuing education courses. However, there lies an important distinction between Chang School courses and what has been proposed for the academic courses to be delivered by RUIC. Courses taken through Chang School, as articulated in their website, which states that such courses "**can** be used toward the requirements of relevant certificate and degree programs," but do not guarantee that they will be transferred to a degree program, unlike the academic courses taken through RUIC. This is an important distinction as these academic courses to be taught through RUIC are functionally Ryerson courses and essentially is bargaining unit work.

Not recognizing that this is bargaining unit work is akin to contracting out the first year of a degree program for international students that have been recruited by Navitas. Further, the lack of recognition undermines our bargaining unit and our corresponding rights. Additionally, it exploits international students through their tuition fees and deceives them regarding the quality of instruction that they will receive.

The Association has sought, as remedies, a declaration that the University Administration has breached the terms of the Collective Agreement; damages to the Association for the breach of the Collective Agreement; an order that the Administration offer or recognize all teaching of RUIC academic courses as bargaining unit work and as part of our members' workload; an order making any affected Association member whole; and any other remedy that the arbitrator may deem appropriate.

Since the presentation, the RFA has been invited to explore ways of resolving this grievance. The Association welcomes the invitation and is interested in finding a way forward. However, the RFA can't go without saying that we find this partnership between the Administration and Navitas troubling. The RFA decries this partnership with a for-profit company that parasitically enriches itself on the back of a publicly-funded university. This agreement takes advantage of desperate and/or wealthy international students willing to pay a hefty premium to gain access to the Canadian Education System and Canadian society. This agreement also undermines the goals and culture of the University in that it creates a situation where it is in the interest of both RUIC and Ryerson to support the retention of these students, regardless of their academic capacity and performance and this stands in the face of our firm belief in public education, and will ultimately erode the social good that is supposed to flow from an institution like ours.

## Report from Chair, Grievance....

### **Grievance Committee**

The RFA Grievance Committee makes careful deliberations on how grievances should proceed. Each member has provided much effort, employed deep listening, and given support without hesitation, when considering all Collective Agreement concerns. Each member has readily volunteered to act as co-Grievance Officer on select matters. The current members who serve on this committee are Jennifer Poole, Maureen Reed, and Tisha Ornstein, with our President, Ian Sakinofsky, serving as an ex-officio member. Along with these members, Andre Foucault, our Executive Director of Labour Relations, and Shiraz Vally, our Labour Relations Officer, both serve on this committee and help in the day-to-day grievance affairs handlings. Their assistance and vast knowledge is key to the effectiveness of our Grievance Committee.

As the year comes to a close, the Grievance Committee says a heartfelt goodbye to Jennifer Poole as she finishes her term this year. The Committee is extremely grateful for the contributions that Jennifer has made and she will be missed! In May, the Grievance Committee looks forward to welcoming Cecile Farnum from the Library and Diane Pirner from the Daphne Cockwell School of Nursing. Both come with extensive experience from serving on Negotiations and we are thrilled that they will be joining us!

### **Summary**

Finally, not all issues that members bring forward to the Association become a grievance. Again, the Association works diligently to take reasonable steps at resolving a member issue(s) under dispute. The RFA encourages all members to bring forward any concerns that they might have, no matter the size. We look forward to assisting all our members.

## Report from Chair, Negotiating - Brian Ceh

The RFA negotiation committee would like to provide an update on bargaining with the employer. As you are aware, the negotiation committee was in mediation with the employer from January 17 to February 28, 2021. We were able to make progress with some items and were prepared to extend mediation in an attempt to bring negotiations to an end, and to secure a new collective agreement. Our Counsel (or lawyers) indicated that the employer was preparing for arbitration and was not obliged to settle in mediation. In response, we will meet with the employer in arbitration starting April 10, 2021. While the negotiation committee believes that arbitration was avoidable, we believe that the employer is keen on seeking ways of saving additional operational costs.

It seems that the employer seeks to add new language in our Collective Agreement on gaining greater unilateral control of our pension. As you might be aware, the RFA has filed a grievance on the employer and its decision to unilaterally set our pension contribution rate. We also anticipate that the employer will submit proposals in arbitration that recommend other cost and administrative efficiencies.

We have four arbitration dates that span from April 10 to May 31, 2021. The arbitrator will likely issues an award in mid to late June. This will make this round of negotiations one of the longest at Ryerson.

The negotiation committee remains committed to seeking the best possible outcome for the RFA. In arbitration we will work hard to convince the arbitrator that our positions are fair and reasonable.

**Report from the Health and Safety Officer - Habiba Bougherara**

I would like to take this opportunity to share with you some updates on occupational health and safety.

**Formal Recommendation from JHSC to the administration**

A formal recommendation to Ryerson University was made by the JHSC requesting that a high-level breakdown of confirmed COVID-19 cases are published and regularly updated on the COVID-19 microsite. The Chief of Staff, Office of the President provided a response to the formal recommendation made by the Committee. The Chief of Staff stated that Ryerson is committed to protecting the personal information of the community members. Due to the challenges related to privacy, confidentiality and ensuring complete accuracy, Ryerson will not be publicly posting the information collected and shared by EHS. General COVID-19 information is posted on the Ryerson COVID-19 Microsite (<https://www.ryerson.ca/covid-19/>).

**Updates on COVID-19**

- a) **App Armor:** Ryerson University remains under the essential service model to comply with the lockdown (Grey zone) requirements from the Provincial government. Ryerson is currently in the process of developing and testing App Armor integration within the Ryerson Safe App. There will be a two-week rollout process followed by a two-week employee implementation period. Rollout to students will be considered later. The app will be used for daily COVID-19 self screening for Ryerson staff and faculty.
- b) **Face mask policy:** Ryerson will be updating the mask policy to clarify mask requirements. Masks are not required indoors if alone or behind closed doors of private offices. Masks are required outdoors if physical distancing cannot be maintained. Ryerson will also be updating the daily health screening questionnaire based on recent updates to the Ministry of Ontario tool with respect to symptom identification, close contacts, direction provided by health care providers and travel. For additional information on Ryerson's face mask policy please visit: <https://www.ryerson.ca/policies/policy-list/face-mask-policy/>.

**Other updates- Mould Assessment for POD B44A**

A third-party consultant was retained in January 2021 to conduct a mould assessment after a complaint was made. The assessment included air sampling and a visual inspection of the space. Upon investigation, the room was found to have elevated mould concentrations and visual inspections showed water damage on plywood which resulted in mould growth. Access to the space has been restricted to allow for the necessary remediation work.

**Report from Chair, Professional Affairs - Rachel Berman**

The Call for Nominations for the Ryerson Faculty Association awards was sent out on March 1st and closed on April 1st. The Professional Affairs Committee, Rachel Berman (chair), Jacqui Gingras, and Kristin Snoddon look forward to adjudicating submissions for the following:

- ◆ The Ryersonian of the Year (the ROY)
- ◆ The Career Achievement Award
- ◆ The Distinguished Service Award

Please see our website for information about the awards and for a list of recent and past award recipients <https://www.rfanet.ca/awards/>

## Memoriam

### John Morgan

I am going to save my best John Morgan stories for his celebration of life which will take place once we can all be together in the real world, but Ian asked me to write a few lines. John was my colleague and friend in the history department, in the union and in the Imperial Pub (and outside it).

In the department, he was always someone with whom I could talk history, department gossip/politics and even, from time to time, teaching. John was, actually, a devoted teacher. And back in the day when we taught 5, yes, 5, sections a term, he took considerable pains to keep things fresh for his students, while encouraging them to produce their best work. John was also a dedicated and passionate historian. He reveled in the opportunity to travel to his much-loved London for archival work, the enjoyment of its pubs and museums, and even to take in the occasional game of footie (he was, to my disappointment, a Man U supporter).

In the Imperial (aka the “other” library) and beyond, John was a good friend to me and to my family. His humour was equaled by his generosity of time, spirit, and the occasional bottle of Brunello. For almost a decade, he phoned my daughter every December and, playing “Santa”, carefully went over her wish list. She never twigged that it was he, and one year, when her twelve-year-old self expressed a certain skepticism that the annual caller was really “Santa”, John asked her who then she thought was calling? She responded, “Probably, some weird guy in a phonebooth”. We collapsed laughing and the gig was up.

Finally, in the union, John was the go-to person on the collective agreement – he always maintained that it was our responsibility to read it and know it, yet he was happy to help out when some of the details of that arcane document were less than clear, or even, downright contradictory. As many know, John’s six years as negotiating chair was, at least in part, devoted to eliminating some of those obscurities. John was a firm believer in the power of organized labour and the value and dignity of work of all kinds. While acknowledging our privilege as academics in the “knowledge industry”, he insisted on our shared structural position with workers in other factories, plants and places of paid work. Our union and our working lives are the better for his efforts.

Thanks John.

I miss you.

By: Joey Power



The RFA Executive for 2021/2022 is composed of the following members:

President	Ian Sakinofsky
Vice President ,Internal	Peter Danziger
Vice President, External	Dave Mason
Treasurer	Anthony Francescucci
Secretary	David Naranjit
Chair, Grievance	Jesmen Mendoza
Chair, Negotiating	Brian Ceh
Chair, Professional Affairs	Rachel Berman
Chair, Equity Issues	Lila Pine
Health & Safety Officer	Habiba Bougherara
Indigenous Faculty Representative	Cyndy Baskin
Members At Large (2)	Corinne Hart Donna Koller

## **RFA General Meeting**

May 7, 2021 12 (noon) - 2:00 p.m.

Via Zoom Video Conferences

An announcement will be sent out shortly

### **Disclaimer**

Statements made and the views expressed in this publication are those of the authors and do not represent the position of the RFA unless so specified.

### **THANK YOU**

We would like to thank all contributors to this issue. Editors: David Naranjit

Produced by: Stacy Stanley and Agnes Paje

## RFA 2021 -2022 Representatives' Council Members

Accounting	Oliver Okafor	ITM	1. Abbas keramati
Aerospace Engineering	Seyed M. Hashemi		2. <i>Vacant</i>
Architectural Science	1. Umberto Berardi	Interior Design	Taymoore Balbaa
	2. <i>Vacant</i>	Journalism	Marsha Barber
Chemical Engineering	Chil-Hung Cheng	Languages, Literature & Culture	Ndeye Ba
Chemistry & Biology	1. Lynda McCarthy	Law & Business	<i>Vacant</i>
	2. Beverlee Buzon	Law School	Alexandra Mogyoros
	3. <i>Vacant</i>	Library	1. Val Lem
Child & Youth Care	<i>Vacant</i>		2. Ann Ludbrook
Civil Engineering	1. Saber Moradi	Marketing	Matthew Philp
	2. Khaled Sennah	Mathematics	1. Wei Xu
Computer Science	1. Alex Ferworn		2. <i>Vacant</i>
	2. Yeganeh Bahoo	Mechanical & Industrial Engineering	1. Mucahit Cevik
Counselling	Daniela Cristini		2. Sajad Saeedi
Creative Industries	Miranda Campbell		3. Kouros Zareinia
Criminology	Anna Flaminio	Midwifery	Nicole Bennett
Disability Studies	<i>Vacant</i>	Nursing	1. <i>Vacant</i>
ECS	Mehrunnisa A. Ali		2. <i>Vacant</i>
Economics	1. Richard Chisik		3. <i>Vacant</i>
	2. <i>Vacant</i>	Nutrition	Sandra Juutilainen
Electrical, Computer & Biomedical Engineering	1. Vadim Geurkov	Occupational & Public Health	Chun-Yip Hon
	2. Lev Kirischian	Philosophy	1. Antonie Panaïoti
	3. <i>Vacant</i>		2. Michael Milona
English	1. Sarah Bull	Physics	Jesse Tanguay
	2. Colleen Derkatch	Politics	1. <i>Vacant</i>
Entrepreneurship & Strategy	Kimberly Bates		2. <i>Vacant</i>
Fashion	Anika Kolowski	Professional Communication	<i>Vacant</i>
Finance	Lakeh Samarbaksh	Psychology	1. Maureen Reed
Geography & Environmental Studies	1. Evan Cleave		2. Tisha J. Ornstein
	2. Tor Oiamo		3. <i>Vacant</i>
Global Management Studies	Hossein Zolfagharina	Real Estate	David Scofield
Graphic Communications	Richard Adams	Retail	Janice Rudkowski
Health Services	James Pringle	RTA	1. Charles Zamaria
History	Joey Power		2. Marusya Bociurkiw
Hospitality & Tourism	Zhen Lu	Social Work	1. Susan Preston
HR & Organizational Behaviour	1. Ellen Choi		2. Dawn Onishenko
	2. Madhi Roghanizad	Sociology	1. Jacqui Gingras
Image Arts	1. Dimitrios Latsis		2. <i>Vacant</i>
	2. Izabella Pruska-Oldenhof	School of Performance	Michael Bergmann
		Urban & Regional Planning	Chris De Sousa