

This is the City This is the World This is a Small School Diversity and the RISD Population

By Edward Clapp

I recently had the opportunity to sit down with Dot Ford, Coordinator of Multi-cultural Affairs at RISD. Ms. Ford has been on staff here for 23 years, working with multi-cultural and international students.

Currently she is serving on the Diversity Committee created by President Mandle in the Fall of 1994.

The Diversity Committee was set up in order to assess the schools needs in the areas of diversity and multi-culturalism. The committee has been busily at work, preparing for the recent publishing of the findings gathered during the Diversity Needs Assessment. During this process, Ms. Ford found a key issue was coming to an understanding of what diversity actually means and where we stand as a community in regards to the issue.

Some questions Ms. Ford and the other committee members confronted include: What does diversity mean? What are its barriers? If, when and how [the RISD Community] confronts diversity?

At first, the factors that contribute to a diverse community may seem as obvious as one word: variety. Variety in regards to race, gender, and ethnicity; however, the variables continue: color, sexuality, gender, age, economic standing, education, political orientation, and religion all come into play. The list goes on to include nearly every trait imaginable. Diversity is huge. The pieces in this puzzle are of so many different varieties and have so many

different sides to them that the task of tracking them is overwhelming, and that is the easy part. The hard part, of course, is fitting them all together and making them work.

Diversity acceptance is largely based upon individual perception. Just as each individual has their own specific characteristics, like wise, each individual has their own manner by which they accept or react to other individuals' characteristics. "We need to try to identify the human relationships we deal with...the challenges, levels of inclusion and barriers involved," says Ms. Ford, "diversity is a matter of accepting other people's differences as much as it is a matter of being aware and sensitive to other people's differences."

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Getting Rid of Freshmen

By Adam P. Hartford

Lately there has been increasing concern among members of the RISD community regarding the size of the Foundation studio classes. There are those who believe the classes are too large, and that reducing the number enrolled in each class would be beneficial to the students. Many faculty members in the foundation department feel this would allow for increased interaction between students and instructors, therefore improving the quality of education dramatically. However, despite concern, the situation has not changed and a future solution does not look promising.

Although the issue directly effects the quality of the education they receive, most students seem indifferent to the situation. (This is not surprising since the RISD student body embraces indifference to school related issues as if it was a virtue.) Some freshmen say that they are satisfied with the number of students in their classes now, but question the difference that reducing the class size by one or two people would actually make.

A few others expressed concerns about the lack of dialogue in small classes, but agreed that cutting the class down to approximately twenty students would be fine. For the most part the students seemed unenthusiastic about the issue. It can not however be expected that any group of students would be adamantly concerned about the issue of freshman studio size, because it is not a perpetual problem for them. They are in foundation for only two semesters, then move on to another department.

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MEETING TONIGHT!

And every Monday at 6:30p.m. in the Met.

WRITE! WRITE! WRITE!

Submit to Box E8 by Thursday. See page 2 for details.

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Diversity *continued from page 1*

It goes without saying that RISD is an environment which welds together many different backgrounds. However, the consciousness of the average member of the population to the diversity which surrounds them is often very low. This extends outside the student population and into the academic and administrative offices. For instance, the Diversity Needs Assessment Study points out a general feeling of uneasiness on the part of non-artists when confronting faculty or students active in the arts. On a similar note many lower level staff feel the weight of a hierarchy above them, which leads them to feel undervalued, even less accepted and respected.

Whether or not an individual in the RISD population is aware of diversity is a secondary element of the question, 'how well does one deal with diversity?'

"[A community] set up with different points of view at times makes it difficult to respond to one another in a sensitive way," explains Ms. Ford. If situations are ignored, they still exist. Ms. Ford says that it is common when dealing with 'sensitive issues' to not talk about the topic, hoping it will no longer exist. If we are to make progress, such an approach can not be taken. "We need to allow people to celebrate their differences," mentions Ms. Ford, "it should not just be understood; and this has to happen across the board." Ms. Ford also emphasized that no single group should be focused on, that everyone has to expand their radii to encompass a broad array of differences.

When I asked Ms. Ford to identify some of the barriers facing diversity, among other things, some of the frailties of the school's infrastructure were mentioned. She explains, "space has been a problem." Even if a group wanted to meet on campus to discuss issues or hold events which celebrated diversity, there isn't really a common place to do that. In addition, it is nearly impossible to find a common time which is agreeable for everyone on campus. Other issues which Ms. Ford found to be a hindrance to diversity included the territoriality and separation of the academic departments. It is difficult for

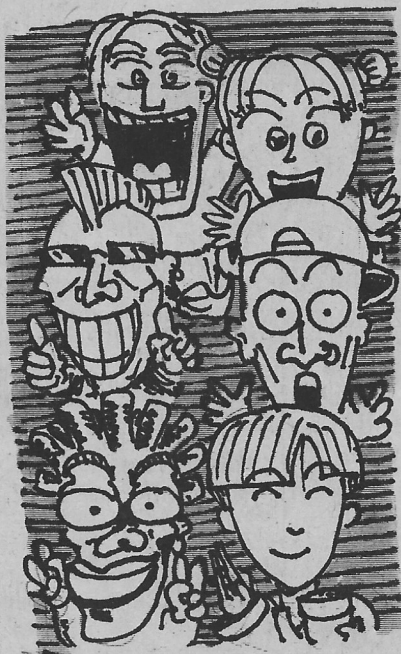


Illustration by Jiho Sohn

ideas to cross from department to department when little walls are in place marking off the specific domains of each different branch of academia. The issue of housing also contributes to the division of our community. The majority of RISD students live off campus in private apartments, "You can't expect to feel active in a campus if you never go there," explains Ms. Ford. A main reason why RISD social life is lower than other universities is that very few people live on campus to take advantage of campus activities. The last hurdle Ms. Ford feels RISD needs to clear is the school's poor method of communicating. *Mixed Media* has confronted this issue in prior articles, which Dot Ford heralded as, "essential."

"There is more to college than just the class room," explains Ms. Ford, "there is something more than your learning." Ms. Ford questions whether or not RISD actually does equip its students with the basics they will need out in the real world. These needs include the ability to interact with one another, be accepting of others, as well as nurturing and celebrating differences in a diverse environment. All of these needs contribute to a productive working and living atmosphere.

RISD in itself is a small community, but it is important to be aware of the larger picture. The values, merits and problems that individuals bring

with them from their own communities enhance and challenge our daily lives. We must all work toward making RISD a comfortable place for each of its members to work, play and interact in the most positive manner.

When I asked Ms. Ford if she thought we were in a state of crisis she responded that "we've been pretty lucky...but it is sitting there, dormant." Being that the RISD population is so small, it will often follow in the path of larger universities. "It can get really ugly, at which point we will need a vehicle to balance what's happening around us." Ms. Ford does not know what that vehicle is yet, however, she feels that the work of the Diversity Committee and other multi-cultural groups functions as pro-action to prevent a large event as opposed to waiting for something bad to happen then scurrying about trying to fix it.

Ms. Ford stressed that it is important to always be aware of the human element. "This country's population is changing, expanding so much that we can't see ourselves [in the future] from where we are now." With so many technological advancements happening in such rapid succession it is easy to get swallowed up in the surge of progress and forget about basic human needs.

When looking at the RISD population from any point of view, it is important to see it in its entirety; to respect it and appreciate it for all of its differences. RISD is just a small cross section of the rest of the world; our environment contains the same issues, problems and possibilities as larger communities. While the numbers may be smaller, the urgency, severity and level of sensitivity are by no means decreased.

For more information regarding multi-culturalism and diversity contact the Student Development Office, 1st floor of the College Building, 454-6637.

The diversity Committee has scheduled a series of information meetings during the next few weeks in order to communicate the results of the Diversity Needs Assessment Study. All are invited to attend these meetings. A schedule is provided in the calendar of this paper.

who we are:

RISD Student Body Statistics

ETHNICITY	1982	1988	1995
American Indian	0.14%	0.20%	0.02%
Asian	1.00%	5.20%	19.38%
Black	0.71%	2.80%	2.21%
Hispanic	2.00%	1.20%	3.12%
White	76.00%	74.90%	67.82%
Undeclared	20.00%	15.70%	7.45%
<u>U.S. REGION</u>			
Northeast	75.06%	70.25%	51.75%
South	4.92%	8.12%	12.40%
Midwest	5.49%	6.40%	7.45%
Southwest	1.76%	5.36%	10.95%
Northwest	2.40%	1.91%	1.55%
International	10.37%	7.96%	15.90%
<u>GENDER</u>			
Male	42%	41%	44%
Female	58%	59%	56%

International Breakdown as of December 15, 1995

<u>COUNTRY</u>	<u>TOTAL</u>	<u>MALE</u>	<u>FEMALE</u>	<u>COUNTRY</u>	<u>TOTAL</u>	<u>MALE</u>	<u>FEMALE</u>
Argentina	1	0	1	Portugal	1	1	0
Australia	5	3	2	St. Vincent and Grenadines	1	0	1
Bahamas	5	2	3	Saudi Arabia	4	3	1
Barbados	1	0	1	Singapore	8	0	8
Bermuda	1	0	1	Spain	1	1	0
Bosnia	1	0	1	Sweden	1	0	1
Brazil	3	1	2	Switzerland	1	1	0
Canada	22	10	12	Syria	1	1	0
China	3	2	1	Taiwan	10	3	7
Colombia	8	5	3	Thailand	8	3	5
Costa Rica	1	0	1	Turkey	10	3	7
Cuba	1	0	1	United Arab Emirates	1	0	1
Cyprus	1	1	0	United Kingdom	12	8	4
Dominican Republic	1	0	1	Venezuela	8	2	6
France	2	1	1	Zimbabwe	1	1	0
Germany	11	7	4				
Greece	2	0	2				
Guatemala	1	0	1				
Hong Kong	13	7	6				
India	8	1	7				
Indonesia	6	2	4				
Israel	4	2	2				
Italy	2	1	1				
Jamaica	1	0	1				
Japan	37	16	21				
Jordan	2	1	1				
Kenya	1	0	1				
Korea	73	21	52				
Kuwait	1	0	1				
Malaysia	1	1	0				
Mexico	3	2	1				
New Zealand	1	0	1				
Pakistan	6	2	4				
Peru	1	0	1				
Philippines	5	3	2				

Source: RISD Fact Book

UCLA Reports on RISD

By Amy Lombardo

Think Back: all the way back to the beginning of your freshman year, to the UCLA survey. Don't remember? Well, amidst the whirlwind of new people and countless orientations, you filled out a survey in the auditorium. By now you probably have forgotten your answers and you have probably even forgotten the questions, so here is a reminder. The following are some of the interesting results from the UCLA Survey of Entering Freshman at RISD, 1995 which is published by the Planning and Research Office.

Eighty-five percent of the freshman class could care less about politics, and even fewer students showed any interest in participating in community action programs. However, when asked about marijuana, more than half the class expressed an interest in seeing it legalized. So, one might wonder, why did sixty-one percent of the same class feel employers should require drug testing?

According to the profile report, "RISD students rate themselves, 'above average' in categories including academic ability, artistic ability, creativity, drive to achieve, self-confidence, and sensitivity to others. These self rankings match or exceed ratings by students in comparable institutions."

Another statistic that exceeds the norm of college students nationwide deals with learning disabilities. Eight percent of RISD students identify themselves with learning disabilities, which is a much greater proportion than the national average of four percent.

The survey revealed that eighteen percent of the freshman class is comprised of Asian students.

Although the student body is slowly becoming more ethnically diverse, the executive summary points out that, "the majority of students are still white, affluent, U.S. citizens."

The profile also reports, "While RISD students matched other students nationally in their concern about college costs, fewer RISD students expect to get a job to help pay for the expense. Overall, it can be noted that while many entering students worry about financing their education, they still do not feel personally responsible for those costs."

By comparing the 1995 survey with past RISD surveys, the executive summary concludes, "there continues to be a downward trend toward apathy about getting involved in causes or activities, or trying to change things...Overall, we can see a trend toward the individual's choice to take care of personal goals and aspirations over the needs and interests of others, or even society, at large." For further information about the UCLA Profile, contact Felice D. Billups at the Office of Planning and Research.

On The Bathroom Wall

Anonymous

Since the publication of our last issue, several members of the RISD community have offered their help and suggestions to *Mixed Media*. We love to hear from you, so thanks for the input, and keep it coming!

On The Bathroom Wall (an idea for a column)

As I was sitting recently in a public restroom I was thinking (as many of us assuredly do) about life and its many mysteries. There, to help me along, were the remnants left behind by those who had gone before me. For this literature I was very grateful. I wanted to find a way of immortalizing this wonderful tradition.

This newspaper (I thought) would be a wonderful way to pay due gratitude and elaborate on some of these brief notes by amplifying the glorious randomness of a brain's gas-passing. It is my goal to create an open, unjudged, primarily uncensored presentation and expansion of the things left on the bathroom walls.

It is important to remember that the restroom readings are part of a special society. All of us (at least those of us who use public

restroom facilities) are involved in this writing, either as the creators or the audience. Thus, in a strange way, we are all implicated.

Any of the things you encounter, any ideas you lack the means of writing at the time, any other applicable notions you get send them here to:
On the Bathroom Wall, RISD Box#E8

MOLD *continued from page 5*

Only recently have we been fully recognized by the administration. MOLD operates by student interest and faculty encouragement. With our first group show under our belt, we hope to innovate more collaborative experiences that create benefits for those involved. In providing ourselves with a support group, our aim is to grow beyond the bounds of RISD as independent artists.

Meetings are held regularly about every other week. Please bring your finished or in progress works, all are invited. Viewing equipment and refreshments are provided. For further information, contact Sonia Yoon - Box#1419.

