

## 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!

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