October 2, 2017

Dear Freshman,

Even though you've only been on campus for a few weeks, you are no doubt familiar with the sprawling building on 15th Street that serves as the center of student life, better known as the "Rensselaer Union." We write to inform you that our Union is in dire trouble and in need of your support.

The Rensselaer Union

Our Union is home to over two-hundred clubs, organizations, and intramural sports in addition to serving as a dining area, a bank, a bookstore, and space for studying and meetings. It also provides students with countless services like legal counseling, emergency loans, and free tickets to events in the capital region. The Executive Committee of the Board of Trustees recently referred to the Union as a mere "lab course," but students know it to be much more than that. It's a place where student initiatives can come to life, where students can work together, and perhaps most importantly—that functions as a home away from home.

Successfully Student-run for 127 Years...and No Longer Counting

The Rensselaer Union was created *by* students, *for* students, and for 127 years we had the freedom to control it. This means our Union was both funded and run by students, and it was one of the last remaining unions of its kind in the country. The Middle States Commission on Higher Education commended the Rensselaer Union in 2006, recognizing it "as an unusual, if not unique, student organization. Run entirely by students, the Union is a justifiable source of pride for the Institute."

The Power Struggle...and Why You Should Care

Once long-time Director of the Union Rick Hartt '70 retired in 2011, RPI President Dr. Shirley Ann Jackson saw her opportunity to seize control of the Union once and for all. Rather than follow the process of hiring a new Director as outlined in the *Union Constitution* and accept the Director as an employee of the Union, Dr. Jackson has instead repeatedly created new positions which report to her cabinet in an attempt to usurp control of our Union, ignored the countless student and alumni voices in fierce opposition to this, and most recently, reached out to the Board of Trustees to get her

way, as they possess the ultimate authority to give her what she wants. As expected, the Trustees sided with the president and enabled her to continue the hostile takeover by producing a resolution which allows her to be the sole authority in selecting the next Director of the Union, and having said director report to her cabinet, among other things. As a result, students will no longer be able to create and define their own experiences within the Union. Yes, the building is still there, yes, the services are still offered, yes, the clubs still operate, but the student experience will soon become a shell of what it once was. There will be no more freedom, no more meaningful choices, no more risk-taking opportunities like starting a controversial club or hosting a specific event, no real control in matters like what restaurant we want given space in the Rathskellar, or what comedian we would like to sponsor for a show on campus, and there will be no more power in managing the multi-million dollar budget funded by we, the students. It will all disappear because what we'll have is whatever the administration will allow and thinks best for us.

How You Can Help
We encourage you to be informed and join the fight to save our student-run Union before this beloved cornerstone of student life is lost forever. Follow Save the Union on social media for updates, spread the word, and get involved—be it attending the upcoming protest, signing a petition in support of a student-run union, putting up posters, or wearing black during Reunion & Homecoming to mourn the loss of the Union's student-run status!

www.savetheunion.xyz

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Best Regards,
Save the Union