Committed to Greatness

2016 – 2022 Strategic Plan
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The past 19 years at RIT Croatia have been filled with excitement and wonderful outcomes. From our strong start in September, 1997, through to the present, there have been many changes. Starting with a single undergraduate degree program in International Hospitality and Service Management, we now have two additional programs in Information Technology, and International Business. Service Leadership and Innovation is now offered at the graduate level, and soon there will be additional graduate offerings in IT and Business Management.

We have progressed from a shared premises in Dubrovnik to having our own building. We established a second location in Zagreb 5 years ago, and now have our own facility there as well. Our name change from the American College of Management and Technology to RIT Croatia was a reflection of the increased global outreach of Rochester Institute of Technology (RIT), and it has positioned us for further growth in the region and beyond.

Since the founding of RIT Croatia, RIT has continued to grow and further establish itself as a world-class innovation university. Its unique approach to multi-disciplinary integration, industry partnering, cooperative education, and applied learning and research have made, and continue to make it a university of firsts. With careful attention to addressing student needs, and a constant approach to doing things differently, RIT has grown to become one of the largest private universities in the United States. RIT’s new strategic plan, Greatness Through Difference, capitalizes on the university’s uniqueness and sets the direction through to 2025.

Our path at RIT Croatia has at times been a challenging one. Most significantly we have seen substantial changes in the demographics in Croatia and the region. Continued decreases in birth rates, and increased competition in both public and private higher education, has resulted in more institutions looking to ‘get a piece of an ever shrinking pie.’

The bureaucracy of government in Croatia, and the region, continues to pose operating challenges and pulls resources in non-productive directions. But even with these challenges, we have thrived and continued to improve.

I can honestly say that in most aspects of what we do, we are well along the path of moving from ‘being good, to being great.’ In some areas we have already moved beyond great, and are now heading for greatness. Our ultimate goal is to achieve greatness in everything we do and fully realize our vision. This strategic plan, Committed to Greatness, will assist us with this pursuit during the next 7 years.

In Committed to Greatness, we have identified seven ‘greatness indicators,’ all of which are crucial components for our future success. Under these seven ‘greatness indicators’ there are a total of 22 objectives for us to attain during the next 7 years. Each objective will result in several action items, which will be completed by various groups within RIT Croatia. I encourage you to review these ‘greatness indicators’ and the corresponding objectives.

Committed to Greatness sets the direction for our journey, but ultimately our success will depend upon each and everyone of us at RIT Croatia embracing and internalizing our goals, and truly being committed to greatness in everything we do. We will discuss what greatness means for all of us who work at RIT Croatia, and what it means for our students, and all of our other stakeholders. And while we are pursuing greatness, we will need to be flexible and agile as the future continues to rapidly change. We will need to regularly evaluate our plan and continue to do things differently, and yes, this will often require us all to put in extra effort.

During the 2016/2017 academic year we will mark 20 years of operating in Croatia. We have a lot to celebrate, wonderful outcomes from the past to reflect upon, and we will make the most of achieving this milestone. But our past, is exactly that, and the present and the future is what is relevant. Although we can not completely plan our future, because the future is unknown and unpredictable, we can build an organization which adapts to change, embraces change, and creates change. This is how we will realize our vision.

I invite you all to join in this exciting journey and be Committed to Greatness.

Don Hudspeth, M.S.
Dean & President
Committed to Greatness: a pledge to continue building an outstanding educational environment

This partnership, global in its essence, is one of the reasons I am confident that when we talk about a global curriculum we really, really mean it.

These innovative programs in combination with a rigorous general education creates the best foundation for future success, we think. History is replete with instances in which a lack of general education had a catastrophic impact on decisions and actions – the danger of over-specialization, we realize from these examples, is finding that we know too little about the broader world to make rational choices. The very quality of the questions we ask and the answers we find is contingent upon a broad understanding of the world and this conception of understanding is at the heart of general education in the American system of education. The understanding of science, technology, mathematics, and the liberal arts are such essential components of any education that it would be unwise to think we can learn all about them by age 18.

Faculty excellence, both inside and outside of the classroom, is critical to our approach at RIT Croatia. Scholarship ensures that our faculty deepen their own understanding as they engage in discourse with their peers. This engagement in turn is transmitted back to our students, enhancing the learning experience, offering added value to the classroom. Our professors don’t teach by the book – they write the book. The interactivity and availability of our faculty to their students is equally essential to our commitment to greatness and is another way in which knowledge is transmitted at RIT Croatia. Professors are available not only during consultation hours, but throughout the day to meet with students and participate in their development as thinkers and doers. Our professors, not graduate students, teach our courses and evaluate their students’ work. Interactivity and individual attention is a key difference between our approach and the approach of other colleges.

Another difference is our emphasis on a certain style of education – our emphasis on practice. Both in the classroom and in their cooperative education, the student is focused on doing. Practice may not, as the proverb goes, make perfect, but I would rather listen to a violinist who has been practicing than one who has not, and so I suspect would you. So part of our commitment to greatness is teaching our students how to practice learning. Frederick Douglass, one of my heroes, says it better: “Man’s greatness consists in his ability to do and the proper application of his powers to things needed to be done.” Exactly. As they spend many co-op months interning in businesses throughout the community, our students learn to apply their classroom lessons to the marketplace. Meeting and working with professionals in the market adds opportunity to classroom effort. Hours in the classroom plus hours in the marketplace make for an unparalleled education, I believe.

Our commitment to greatness – as it should – extends far beyond the 7-year scope of this strategic plan. In committing ourselves to such lofty ideals, we recognize that our own efforts will need to combine theory and practice. In focusing on the development of people through creating a comprehensive and high quality education, we realize that we must remain focused on our own development and growth. Educating people is a type of education too – and one that requires constant study and effort, that demands continual improvement in the face of change. To pledge ourselves to such an endeavor is perhaps the surest sign that the success of our students matters.

Shawn Sturgeon, Ph.D.
Associate Dean for Academic Affairs
OUR VISION

Committed to personal excellence, RIT Croatia will be the university of first choice in south Central Europe for globally minded students who wish to receive an American education and excel in their careers.

OUR MISSION

Future-oriented, committed to integrity, academic excellence, personal and professional growth, RIT Croatia:

• Builds diverse learning communities that transcend geographical boundaries.
• Creates bonds between students, alumni, faculty and industry.
• Fosters innovation, creativity, and an entrepreneurial spirit.
• Promotes a rich research portfolio through global campus collaboration and international partnerships.
GREATNESS INDICATORS

1. High quality and relevant career-focused degree programs
2. Academic excellence
3. Educational technology
4. Research excellence and collaboration
5. International education experiences
6. Outstanding employees
7. Best value proposition
GREATNESS INDICATOR 1

RIT Croatia will deliver high quality and relevant career-focused degree programs, and industry will increasingly recognize the value of its graduates.

A

s a branch of RIT, a globally recognized leader in professional and career-oriented education, RIT Croatia offers advantages unmatched by other regional colleges and universities. The quality of currently offered programs and curriculum has been confirmed by many international accreditations, such as The Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools, The Middle States Commission of Higher Education and The Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business. The undergraduate programs in International Business, International Hospitality and Service Management and Information Technology, as well as the Master of Science program in Service Leadership and Innovation were chosen in anticipation of the job market demands as well as student interest, and are completely aligned with the programs offered at RIT in Rochester. While graduates of these programs possess disciplinary depth in their chosen area of study, they are also provided with a strong foundation in humanities and social sciences, and this is what makes the RIT educational experience a unique blend of rigor and imagination, of specialization and perspective, of intellect and practice. RIT Croatia will continue to enhance existing programs and try to anticipate the knowledge, multiple skills and competencies that will be required in the ever-changing workplace of the future. Annual curriculum feedback will be provided by the advisory boards, as well as assessments of market relevance and student interest. The same rigorous criteria will be applied in the exploration of potential new programs of study.

Career-focused degree programs offered at RIT Croatia are and will continue to be designed to prepare graduates for successful career paths with a special emphasis placed on providing experiential education. Thus, the cooperative education program is an important part of the career-focused curriculum at RIT Croatia. RIT is recognized as having one of the largest and oldest cooperative education programs in the world. Curricular and co-curricular activities which reflect the ideals of experiential education will continue to be encouraged, as well as other experiential learning opportunities, such as study abroad programs and research opportunities. RIT Croatia students currently have the unique opportunity to participate in various study abroad programs, Global Campus program which allows them to directly enroll in any one of RIT’s international campuses, and traineeships and study experiences through the ERASMUS program. In years to come, RIT Croatia will seek to further enhance and enrich the student experience with new partnerships to be formed with renowned international universities worldwide.

Nikolina Božinović, Ph.D.
Area Head

OBJECTIVES

1. Explore new programs and enhance existing programs that will meet market demands, student interest and employability.
2. Utilize advisory boards to provide annual curriculum feedback and assessment for market relevance and student interest.
3. Strengthen student competencies supported by new student evaluation instruments and curricular and co-curricular offerings.
4. Attract and retain strong faculty.
5. Create a peer mentoring program which will promote academic excellence and enhance positive interaction among students.
6. Support experiential learning by field learning, development of an entrepreneurial center, and collaboration with alumni-led businesses.
7. Explore certificate training courses to be offered for students to develop specific skill sets.
8. Develop greater financial aid assistance to ensure that academically strong students are able to succeed regardless of their ability to pay.

RIT Croatia will be committed to academic excellence.

OBJECTIVES

4. Attract and retain strong faculty.
5. Create a peer mentoring program which will promote academic excellence and enhance positive interaction among students.
6. Support experiential learning by field learning, development of an entrepreneurial center, and collaboration with alumni-led businesses.
7. Explore certificate training courses to be offered for students to develop specific skill sets.
8. Develop greater financial aid assistance to ensure that academically strong students are able to succeed regardless of their ability to pay.

Dedicated to the pursuit of excellence, RIT Croatia consistently recognizes and awards achievement in scholarship, service, creativity, teaching and learning. The continuous growth of our two campuses has been accompanied by a growth in our teaching force, with an emphasis on academic scholarship and professional expertise in the faculty search and hiring process. RIT Croatia will continue to attract and retain strong faculty through investments in research funding, provision of resources to enhance instructional creativity, provision of teaching support and professional development programs and training.

Academic excellence is further promoted at RIT Croatia through a student peer mentoring program in which senior students, recognized for their academic achievements and trained for a mentor position, serve as support and guides to those students commencing their journey in academia. The peer mentoring program was introduced in AY 2015/16, making RIT Croatia the first RIT campus to implement it, and the program will be further developed in years to come. Effects of specific aspects of this program on overall academic performance will be monitored and evaluated on an annual basis to further enhance the peer mentoring experience. RIT Croatia consistently strives to enhance learning excellence through a combination of curricular, co-curricular and experiential learning opportunities. Moving forward, RIT Croatia plans to further develop the experiential learning component and provide further internship, research and industry-related experience opportunities, through further utilization of the RIT Croatia alumni network. Academic programs enriched with co-op experience will be further complemented with co-curricular offerings in form of certificate training courses for students to develop specific skill sets needed for success in today’s competitive job market. These certificate training courses will be developed to reflect the needs of the job market and the requirements, opportunities and challenges of the work environment, and will be continuously updated. Currently, more than 13,500 RIT undergraduate and graduate students receive over $300 million in financial assistance in the form of scholarships, grants, loans, and part-time employment. RIT Croatia rewards academic excellence of students and offers both merit-based scholarships and needs-based financial aid assisting those students whose talent otherwise might not be realized. RIT Croatia is dedicated to sustaining and increasing this level of support.

Vanda Bazdan, M.S.
Area Head
At RIT Croatia, our main focus is education and our main goal is to prepare students for the future as professionals and persons. This idea has been part of our strategy since the very beginning, and will continue to be so. Higher education today is experiencing a digital shift more than ever. Technology is highly interlinked with our everyday lives, and educational trends are influenced by trends in technology. Therefore, we believe that excellence in education has to follow these trends and adapt to changes. Once we introduced different educational tools and technologies, tremendous opportunities opened to our students, faculty and staff. In the classroom, technology is used to enhance critical thinking, foster creativity, and improve problem solving methods and skill. The appropriate and responsible use of technology allows students and faculty to access, analyze, integrate, and create information and ideas. While our educational platforms allow faculty to exchange materials with students on the campus, it also supports ubiquitous and mobile learning. Students’ personalized accounts allow them to access course materials from anywhere at anytime. On the other hand, educational technologies at RIT Croatia allow our faculty to gain insight into students’ learning approaches and habits. These data help faculty to determine students’ strengths and weaknesses more accurately to serve as a guideline while designing personalized teaching models for individuals or group of students.

At RIT Croatia, technology enhanced classrooms are used to foster global education. Having in mind excellence in teaching and research, our faculty exchange knowledge, experience, and collaborate globally. Course materials are designed, updated, and shared among campuses on a global level. Students also use different communication platforms, broadcasting systems and educational platforms to interact with RIT students and RIT professors globally. Both RIT Croatia campuses are equipped with POLYCOM Systems featuring top HD audio and video quality, enabling students to attend courses remotely in real-time at the main campus in Rochester or at one of our global campuses and so master the skills in which they are most interested.

When it comes to technology enhanced learning, RIT Croatia is committed not only to teaching students how to use specific technologies, but to understanding how they work, why they are convenient for a specific task and what kind of problem solving methods they support.

Iva Bačić, Ph.D.
IT lecturer

OBJECTIVES

9. Invest in new technologies and its integration in all courses to enable knowledge sharing, collaborative research and accessibility among all programs offered at RIT Croatia.

10. Enhancing access to software resources that provide new solutions for students, faculty and staff.
Advanced Research is one of the major topics that is nurtured at RIT Croatia. We emphasize aspects of research that are highly applicable to industry and that are also highly appropriate for our students, who have the opportunity to explore the boundaries of the latest research in computer science, programing, human resources, psychology, liberal arts, and the natural sciences.

We at RIT Croatia are acutely aware that only by developing new ideas, methods for optimization, and new organizational approaches are we able to create a new original framework for producing new added value. Research itself requires adequate funding; therefore, we are highly active in providing the best information for collecting grants, while at the same time conducting market surveys looking for suitable research topics in order to provide efficient synergy between pure research and applied solutions for industries of various types. On the other hand, RIT Croatia cares deeply about our faculty research by providing an encouraging environment and by offering assistance for attending conferences, delivering conference talks, and making new contacts with scientists within the same or similar research fields. Another approach, created by RIT Croatia, is to invite numerous distinguished experts to deliver guest lectures on a broad spectrum of activities. These events show the scope and impact of research results to our students, once more showing that deep connection between classical education, creative research, and real-life industry. Even the English Department places a strong emphasis on research: Here, the curriculum is designed not only to develop skills for efficient, clear writing, but also to give students a thorough grounding in the process of developing a research project, placing special emphasis on the ethical and moral aspects of research by respecting others’ work and avoiding potential plagiarism. RIT Croatia continues to provide a valued service to researchers, students and other faculty by making available subscriptions to the most famous and the biggest world science databases through the online libraries at RIT, while also providing full service from personnel at RIT’s main library.

Through special events, where RIT Croatia students meet with industry representatives, RIT Croatia provides an environment for our students to use the opportunity to recognize a chance or market niche where they can contribute their original solutions, while being at the same time fully aware of the research aspects that are covered in their formal education.

Kristijan Tabak, Ph.D.
Area Head

**OBJECTIVES**

11. Promote and initiate joint faculty and student research projects through exploring EU and US grant funding opportunities.
12. Initiate classroom projects that will foster innovation and involve direct industry and local community partnering.
RIT Croatia will prepare graduates for careers in a global environment by offering more international education experiences.

The demands of today's business world are greater than ever and students need to be prepared for the opportunities and challenges of a global environment. In line with the strategic plan, we at RIT Croatia take this as a very serious task. Through mandatory cooperative education, joint international course assignments, international work and study abroad opportunities our students significantly expand their horizons and grow, both personally and professionally.

Every year more than 300 students are engaged in mandatory co-op assignments, and about 30 percent of our students complete their co-op placements abroad through the four years of their study program. Interestingly enough, when one counts all the co-ops conducted since the first days of RIT Croatia (at that time, ACMT), it turns out that our students have completed co-ops amounting to over 300 combined years at more than 3000 companies! Moreover, our students need to complete co-ops specifically related to their fields of study and must be prepared to work for at least 6 months during their schooling at RIT Croatia. One of the events we have been proudly organizing for years now is Career Education Day, a professional event where representatives of some of the most renowned companies from Croatia and the region gather to meet our students. RIT Croatia was the first to introduce such an event in the region.

We are also experiencing continuous growth in the number of international students studying at RIT Croatia, as well as the number of RIT Croatia students studying abroad at our campuses in Dubai, Rochester and Kosovo, as well as at other Erasmus partnering institutions. Over the years, we have witnessed how these opportunities help students develop the necessary skills to function in the interconnected world: appreciation of diversity and expansion of cultural horizons, improvement of interpersonal skills and language ability, development of flexibility, adaptability, and problem solving, increasing confidence and independence, and gaining lifelong friendships and networking.

The future global recruitment trends indicate how referral programs will emerge as the fourth biggest long-lasting trend in talent acquisition, taking up to 26 percent of the acquisition processes. Thus, the power of relationships will continue to play a significant role in employability, and we will insist on growing the number of international exchanges, as we believe this is a strategic path that will enable our students to make a difference and stay competitive on the global job market.

Marina Drmač, M.S.
Career Services & Alumni Relations Manager

OBJECTIVES

13. Conduct research and develop strategies to increase the number of international students studying at RIT Croatia.
15. Develop opportunities through which students can participate in a. study abroad, b. international cooperative education, c. team projects and course assignments, d. Erasmus and other student exchange programs, e. clubs, forums, conferences and symposiums.
16. Create study abroad/co-op abroad assistance opportunities and funding programs for students with limited economic means.
17. Increase the number faculty and staff exchanges with RIT campuses and with other institutions.

18. Develop a comprehensive professional development plan for all faculty and staff.

19. Increase the diversity of the faculty and staff.

We strongly believe that our employees are our greatest asset and the key to our success, synergy and growth. With the strategic plan, we are committed to building a model of excellence for all faculty and staff in the area of professional development and diversity enhancement. We are proud to be a branch of a global institution. We promote a culture of collaboration and our employees exchange knowledge, experience and best practices with colleagues from RIT campuses in NY, Dubai, China and Kosovo. This unique experience enriches our employees, both personally and professionally. We are committed to building effective processes and practices to offer more opportunities for faculty and staff exchanges and collaboration across international and intercultural borders.

We are a student-centered university, and all our employees serve as role models to our diverse student body. Our employees teach, mentor, guide and inspire students and prepare them for the opportunities and challenges of global society. Professionalism, enthusiasm, engagement and commitment to providing the best education and services are key characteristics of all our faculty and staff. When you talk to our students, you see how much pride they take in being a part of the RIT community simply because it feels like a community. They know they belong here and respect and appreciate all the mentoring and coaching done by all of our employees, faculty and staff. And this goes far beyond simple “studying”; we are all committed to teaching students how to think and find solutions to the presented challenges, yet this extends far beyond the classroom and typical “college projects.” As an active participant in our local communities, we also promote and initiate volunteering projects such as Community Service Day, and hold internal auctions where we collect and donate money to numerous NGOs. Students play a very active role in all of this. We help our students become what they strive to be in the business world, but also help them become responsible adults. That is why RIT Croatia is very thoughtful and intentional about attracting, supporting, retaining and developing the diverse talent needed to achieve and sustain our mission and vision.

Committed to greatness, RIT Croatia will be recognized as an employer of choice for its personal and professional development, integrity, diversity and pluralism, innovation, teamwork, global experience and international collaboration.

Jelena Zvono, M.S.
Human Resources Manager & Ministry Liaison

RIT Croatia will create a culture of professional development, the transfer of best practices, and the enhancement of diversity to attract and retain outstanding employees.

OBJECTIVES

17. Increase the number faculty and staff exchanges with RIT campuses and with other institutions.

18. Develop a comprehensive professional development plan for all faculty and staff.

19. Increase the diversity of the faculty and staff.
RIT Croatia will be the private educational institution with the best value proposition in Croatia and the immediate region.

I am a strong believer in and supporter of RIT Croatia and the good work that faculty, staff and leadership do to create a great learning environment for career-oriented students. Successful graduates provide for the best ambassadors in virtually all industries today. My career would definitely not take the path it did, had I not been taught by a faculty of experts and had I not taken the co-op opportunities abroad provided to me by the college. These experiences created prospects for me to develop, learn and take responsibilities while living in extremely rewarding international environments. More than ever, this is what students are looking for when considering college education in the fast changing economic and political reality today.

Bonds made with faculty, staff and fellow students at RIT Croatia do not vanish once we leave the classroom. Alumni relations at RIT Croatia are extremely strong, and the Alumni Office is providing support to 20 generations of students now. I am proud to say that very often I hear compliments on how good a professor was, or how efficient a staff member. These compliments often come from students’ parents, and they make everyone in the organization extremely proud. Proud of the homebase that RIT Croatia is for both students and Alumni. As departing Alumni President, I believe that continuation and further development of industry events, such as those organized throughout 2014 and 2015, should be among the major objectives for any future Alumni government. Networking events have proven to be high on the list of priorities for both Alumni and current students, viewed as opportunities to either build or strengthen bonds they can benefit from in the future. These bonds remain strong in their future careers, whether dealing with a colleague or a boss, one RIT-er will always have a helping hand for another, knowing where we all started and that our goals are the same. And you know what? There are over 1800 alumni currently working in top notch companies, their own businesses, and government institutions – all over the world! From Croatia and the EU to far away destinations such as the US, Australia and United Arab Emirates... And they’re all working in fields they studied for – which is what this college has prepared them for!

Finally, I can only say that I am happy that our college is pursuing a private university status, as it will bring even more benefits to RIT future generations. Thank you RIT Croatia for providing opportunities to set our goals high.

Ana Jarak
RIT Croatia Class of 2003

20. Complete an extensive ROI study to better promote the RIT Croatia brand position in the market.
22. Develop programs within the alumni network that support their business needs, employability, and life-long learning.
I was very much involved with the establishment of RIT Croatia in 1997, and served as the first Board Chairman from 1997-2007. In 2014 I returned to again serve as Board Chairman. It was very rewarding to be involved with this exciting new initiative in Croatia, and to see the expansion and growth of the university. Although there have been a number of challenges faced during the past 19 years, all of us on the Board continue to be pleased with the wonderful outcomes and the contributions the university has made to Croatia and the region. In December, 2015, the RIT Croatia Board of Trustees approved the new strategic plan, **Committed to Greatness**. This plan will set the course for the university from 2016 through 2022. We are all supportive of the direction the university is taking, and the greatness indicators and objectives will serve RIT Croatia well in ultimately establishing itself as the university of first choice in south Central Europe for students who wish to excel in their careers.

It continues to be a pleasure for me to serve as the Board Chairman of this dynamic and inspirational institution of higher education.

Jay Holmes  
Board Chair, RIT Croatia Board of Trustees

From the early admissions programs all the way to graduation day, every member of RIT Croatia, from the staff, faculty or administration, is dedicated to the goal of ensuring that every student gains the highest level of education. With more and more graduates to spread the good word, the only concern will be if the current buildings are large enough. RIT Croatia will continue to grow, establishing itself as the best place to be to gain the required skills and knowledge for the ever-changing world of business.

Deša Brnada,  
Third-year Information Technology student and Student Government vice-president for Dubrovnik campus

Committed to Greatness!

There are a lot of activities on campus that our students can be a part of. For one, there is the Student Government made up of 12 members who actively work on improving the quality of student life. Every year we receive more and more students, and therefore, it is imperative to work on enhancing what RIT Croatia has to offer. We need to encourage the ambition of our students and help them achieve their potential. That is exactly where I see RIT Croatia in 10 years – on top of the world.

Lorena Rosean,  
Third-year International Business student and Student Government vice-president for Zagreb campus