Leading edge

Alumni say campus activities provided an advantage after graduation

Education is more than what can be learned in the classroom, library or lab. Involvement in other areas of campus life – student government, athletics, clubs, volunteers projects – often proves as important as academic success.

Henry Freedman '75

"I'm an inventor, basically," explains Henry Freedman '75 (printing & photographic science).

He earned that remarkable job description in his student years at RIT when he came up with a revolutionary single-bath process for developing lithographic film. That innovation led to 22 credits in Photographic Science and Engineering with an A grade average from Dr. Burt Carol, an Eastman Kodak scholarship, a fellowship from the Technical Association of Graphic Arts and a Graphic Arts Technical Foundation scholarship at RIT.

Freedman came to RIT because the university was the acknowledged leader in printing and photographic sciences, and Freedman's family had been in the printing industry for two generations. Besides his exceptional work in and out of the classroom on printing and imaging projects, Freedman was deeply involved in the "student hearing board" with Fred Smith, now secretary of the institute and assistant to the president, and Stan McKenzie, now provost.

"I was a defender," notes Freedman who handled close to 50 cases over two years. "It was interesting work, and worthwhile, I think." The board handled student offenses that might otherwise have required intervention by law enforcement agencies.

After first being introduced to the Washington, D.C. area by the National Security Agency in 1975, the 3M Corporation awarded Freedman a graduate research fellowship to attend George Washington University, where he received an MBA in Govt. & Business and had a combined course program with the GWU School of Law. Freedman researched unexpected consequences of emerging communications technologies as they related to public policy.

"In my graduate thesis, I foresaw that printing would go electronic," Freedman says. In 1977 he received a $150,000 research grant from the National Science Foundation for evaluating the long-term impact of printing-on-demand systems. He developed the first courses in the United States on electronic printing and taught these at the GWU School of Engineering and Applied Science, until 1985. Freedman was elected Director of the Washington, D.C. chapter of The Society of Photographic Scientists and Engineers, whose members comprise the leading imaging scientists at NASA, DoD, civilian agencies and their system contractors who run highly advanced and complex imaging systems for national needs.

In 1989, Freedman received a U.S. Patent for his "invention automating interconnection of printing requestors with printing manufacturing facilities." This "pioneering patent" anticipated the development of e-commerce and business-to-business online commerce – ideas that became reality with the dot-com revolution. Freedman's insight resulted in a highly successful patent licensing business. Hundreds of millions of dollars of printing are processed using Freedman's patented method.

That success provided him the means to pursue a wide variety of business and academic interests. He consults with major companies in the area of imaging and printing technologies. He edits, publishes and has written over 400 articles in his publication Technology Watch, a newsletter for the graphic arts and information industries. He is a frequent visitor at RIT, where he is especially interested in the development of the public policy program in the College of Liberal Arts, particularly as it could pertain to scientists and engineers.

"RIT has a wonderful opportunity to leverage this effort to all areas of campus," he explains. "I'd like to see that happen."

Regarding his own success, Freedman says, "There's a formula for luck. It's the intersection of opportunity and preparedness. RIT was a key element in that formula for me. I feel very good about the university and I want the best for it."

Henry Freedman '75