

HOW TO PRESIDENT IN 6 EASY STEPS

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This manual has been laid out by the job description of the President in the Constitution and other sections relevant to the President. This is a both a manual on what the President does and advice on the Presidency. They will often mix but every effort will be made to make the distinction clear. This document will also often mix the first, second, and third person writing formats, just go with it.

STEP 0: The Presidency

The RPI Players are a proud and wonderful organization and the presidency cannot be summed up completely in a manual. It is much more than a collection of tasks to be completed but rather a reflection of the organization itself.

In order to succeed you must not only be a proficient manager but a leader. There are three main types of leadership that must be exercised by the President, leadership of the Executive Committee, leadership of the members, and leadership of the club. Each of these has distinct requirements and will present distinct challenges that face your term.

Leadership is both a badge and a burden and it is important that you understand the meaning of both. The badge is the honor of holding the position. It is signing players' cards to welcome new members, giving tours, showing off the work of players, and kicking off the closing night parties. The burden is that you are accountable for everything that takes place in the organization. You and your Executive Committee will delegate large portions of responsibility to producers, Technical Committee members, and others but ultimately you are accountable for everything that takes place in Players. You will be the role model, you will be the symbol of the organization, you will be asked to make decisions that are difficult, and you will decide the success of the season. Every action you take and every action your Executive Committee takes will be looked over by the membership and anything that goes wrong will ultimately be tied back to you; whether it's show selection, a producer or auditions you will be contacted about why it went wrong. Handling complaints with delicacy as well as weighing the needs of the Executive Committee with the needs of individuals is difficult.

This is not to say that you are alone. You have support from your Executive Committee; they are there to help and also lead the organization. The Executive Committee is your team, and you should always treat them with respect and trust. But you must never forget that you are not just a member of the Executive Committee, you are its leader. Make sure to consult your fellow officers and make your decisions as a team whenever possible.

I have also found it useful to cultivate a relationship with the previous president(s) of Players as well as the Director of Alpha Psi Omega. Previous Presidents will understand directly the difficulties of working in Players and the Executive Committee. They may have also faced similar problems. The Director of Alpha Psi Omega may also be of help because the two organizations are always in close contact but the large overlapping membership means they may have more input in some situations. I have found both to be good resources of information but also of support during trying events.

You also have guidance and mandates laid out in the Constitution and Bylaws that go beyond this manual. Make sure to read them carefully so that you are following the rules the members of the club have bound you to. However, they are not set in stone. There are avenues to change them and each year you should endeavor to update them to better suit the needs of the organization.

Always remember that the members of the organization that you love so much chose you to be their leader. They have trusted you to lead and care for one of their most valuable experiences at RPI. Let that humble you and guide your decisions. You are no longer the sole factor in your decisions. You must act for the club. You must act for the people of Players.

While the presidency is filled with challenges and struggles it is also a great source of pride. Remember that on the days where things are hard. Remember that people look up to you and trust you. Be proud of that; you have earned it and you have earned the presidency because of it.

I and the other presidents have been through your struggles and we know that te membership chose you for a reason. You are capable of this task. Have faith, collect your thoughts and just remember to put Players as a whole as the first priority.

Good Luck.

STEP 1: The Day to Day Job

“The President shall be the Chair of the Executive Committee.”

–RPI Players Constitution, Article IV, Section A: Titles and Duties of Officers

This is the day to day job of the President. As chair you have a few vital responsibilities. The first is not an official responsibility but a function of the position. You set the tone for the Executive Committee. The other officers will follow your lead. It is imperative that you set a tone for your Executive Committee that is professional but friendly. It is your job to ensure that the Executive Committee is productive and on task. In the past, Presidents have set tones that were more somber or “gloom and doom” which lead to mistrust between the Executive Committee and the membership.

It is also helpful to choose an informal vice president who you can trust to both support you and challenge you when you are wrong. Traditionally this has been the Business Manager. However, you should choose whoever from the Executive Committee will be the best sounding board and make you the best leader you can be with their advice. This does not need to be a formal relationship but can simply be the person you go to first to hash out ideas before bringing them to the rest of the Executive Committee. **This relationship is also beneficial in helping to control ones feelings. As the president you are often called to restrain or hold back on ideas or initiatives that you are passionate about.**

The second of these responsibilities, is to schedule meetings. You are required to have Executive Committee meetings every other week at the latest. They are usually held weekly to keep everyone on track with the business of the club. WhenIsGood.net is a wonderful tool to help navigate everyone’s busy schedules. **I have found it well worth my time to invest in whenisgood’s paid accounts.** Executive Committee meetings should be at a time when all officers and people giving reports can make it. You should also take into account times when the most members can make the meeting in case they want to attend. These meetings must be announced to the Players mailing list before they take place. It is helpful to do this two days before the meeting.

You will also have advisor meetings where you will meet with our Union SARP (**Alex Piazza** at the time of this writing) and our Faculty Advisor (Dean Louis Trzepacz at the time of this writing). The 85th Season Executive Committee chose to hold these **every other week**. This is to keep our advisors up to date on what we are doing and to solicit suggestions from them on how to improve. It is up to you and your Executive Committee to decide how often to hold these meetings. **Your advisors are excellent resources in terms of publicity as well as relations with the rest of the club.**

Third, is setting the agenda for Executive Committee meetings. The agenda is currently broken up into four sections: reports, discussion points, new business, and the closed portion. An example agenda is given in Appendix A. Each Executive Committee officer, the season publicity director, the webmaster, and the producers for the current shows will give a report. These reports should be updates and overviews on everything that has happened in that person’s realm of responsibility in the last week. You will also give a report; although, often yours will be the shortest.

The discussion points are items of business you, an Executive Committee member, or anyone else wants to be discussed. There are usually one or two per meeting. It is important that you know when discussion items should be placed on the closed agenda. The bylaws stipulate that

in order to close a meeting the discussion items need to be about discipline, union policy changes, or appointing people to positions. In order to close the meeting you must formally vote to close it. This involves a motion to close a meeting, a second, and a majority vote in favor. As chair you cannot vote or make motions. There will come times when you will discuss things in the closed portion of meetings that are sensitive. Ensure that you and your Executive Committee treat that information with respect and it should be always be a group decision on whether or not that information is shared with the membership at large.

One important thing on this particular note is knowing how many agenda points to have and knowing when to cut things down or to wait a week on them. If your meeting is going too long items may not be treated with proper respect or given the time/energy necessary to fully examine the idea. Spacing out discussions is important for this.

Make sure to send a draft of the agenda to the Executive Committee before finalizing it so they have a chance to ask questions or add discussion items of their own. This also gives them time to prepare for any items to be discussed at the meeting. Once you've settled on the agenda it should be sent out with the meeting announcement. Make sure the closed business items are not listed on the public agenda. The agenda can also be altered at any point up until the meeting, just make sure to keep the Executive Committee in the loop. It's also a good idea to check in the producers from time to time and see if they need anything or have things that they want to bring up at discussion.

Lastly, is to run the meeting. You will make sure the meeting is smooth and efficient and that all the officers are on task with their duties. Meetings are done with a mix of parliamentary procedure and consensus. Always work to build a consensus on any issue you are addressing. A formal vote should only be used if there is absolutely no other way to resolve the issue.

During the meeting make sure you take your own notes in addition to the Secretary-Historian's official minutes so that you can keep personal track of what is happening. You should also be asking questions each meeting about updates, if not given in reports, and for more specific information. Some officers will treat the report section as a formality but it is imperative that you and the rest of the officers are up to date on everything happening in the building.

You will also moderate discussion and as such be responsible for making sure all parties—including regular members who attend the Executive Committee meetings—have a chance to voice their opinion and that discussion is constructive and reaches a goal. It is always helpful at the end of a discussion to recap the main items and the actions to be taken as a result of the discussion. Make sure these actions are delegated to a specific person and a deadline is given for them. Your opinion still matters in discussion but your primary purpose is to guide discussion, not dominate it. It helps to reserve your thoughts for last in order to focus on guiding and moderating discussion of the other members. Sometimes it may also feel as though the discussion isn't going anywhere. At these points it is helpful to provide a framework for the discussion such as a question that needs to be answered or a way to evaluate options. It's important to make sure that all voices in the discussion are allowed to speak; it can be difficult for you not to speak but it can be just as difficult for members to speak if one person has a very loud opinion.

The Executive Committee will make many important decisions about the club and policy at the meetings. Some recent examples from the 85th Season were decisions to create a formal archive of all Players documents, revise party policy, create mentor program guidelines, and establish a clear box office policy. There is nothing that is off-limits for you to address but make sure to use

good judgment in deciding what needs to be changed or addressed. **These changes should also be reflected in the minutes and in the Executive Committee drive.**

STEP 2: The Heart of the Matter

“The President shall be the titular head of the organization; the President shall oversee the general functioning and long-term direction for the RPI Players”

–RPI Players Constitution, Article IV, Section A: Titles and Duties of Officers

This is the most important part of your job. It enshrines you as the leader of the club, not just the Executive Committee and charges you with the responsibility to oversee the general functioning of the club. Being the leader of the club means that you must at all times be a role model for the club members. It is important that you set the standard for involvement in roles and work party and you communicate clearly through your actions what is acceptable and what is not. The other members will infer a great deal from how you act both personally and with regards to Players as a whole.

Because of your position as the leader of the club many people will come to you to make decisions that maybe aren't part of anyone's job but may be part of theirs and they don't know what to do. If it is part of their job try to help them with the decision, not make it for them. They may also sometimes just need you to make an executive decision. Don't be afraid to do this, you have the final say on everything that happens in the club. Also know when a decision needs to be made immediately and when it can wait until an Executive Committee meeting to be discussed. One example of this that comes to my mind immediately was during one of the closing night parties the side doors had been opened to try to cool down the house. We have had problems in the past with Public Safety being called for the music being too loud so the membership chair approached me concerned about noise. He wanted to know what we should do about it. I initially left it up to him to decide since the party falls under his preview but he wanted me to decide so that was a time where I needed to step up and make the call. I decided that we should alternate having the doors opened and closed in 15 minutes intervals to try to cool down the house and prevent us from being too loud for too long. With many of these decisions you will simply have to reason out your best solution.

In most cases if time is not of the essence I would urge you to move to leaving it to the Executive Committee member whose job it is most pertinent to; they were elected to that position for a reason just as you were elected to President for a reason. A good example of this is when I was working with a group on lights. There were two issues – one with having a lack of proper procedure on what qualified someone to teach how to use the fly system and then the people directly using the fly system. I stepped in and said only those who had been trained could use it for that night, but let my TD step in and decide at a later date what the qualification for being allowed to train would be.

With regards to overseeing the club as a whole, you are the one officer without a specific job with clear day to day tasks like the Business Manager or the Technical Director. It is your job to oversee them and make sure that the Executive Committee acts as a team and not five people working independently. It is also your responsibility to be the main agent for change in the organization. You were elected in part because of your vision for the organization. Don't be afraid to start implementing it and directing the other officers to work with you on your vision and ideas. Because you don't have a lot of day to day tasks this frees you to look at and enforce the larger picture and ideas of the organization.

This also opens up your position to take on more long term projects. The Presidency is filled with projects that are more long term in nature because the other Executive Committee members

fulfill tasks that are more daily or periodic in their nature. For example I've taken on the larger tasks of working with the counseling center on a membership initiated project surrounding mental health as well as I've been working with the Union lawyers on trying to convince them that we should be allowed to share equipment with other theaters. These projects are both more TD and Membership Chair specific but due to the long time vision it's a better fit for the President.

As part of the "big picture" view you need to make sure that you are aware of pretty much everything that is happening in the building and in Players. You do this through asking questions at Executive Committee meetings to make sure you are getting all the information you need from your officers and by always staying alert and curious as to what is happening around you. Part of this is that you need to remain approachable so that when people have concerns they know that they can come to you to express them.

There is a hard balance to be found here. Running Executive Committee meetings requires a more serious disposition to make sure that topics are being viewed with the proper respect. I try to balance these two things by very much adopting a "hat" during Executive Committee meetings. It's hard to balance because being friendly and joyful outside of the meetings means it can be difficult to take more control during the meeting. That being said I personally would rather have a president who I could talk to over a president who I am too scared to approach.

You will also be responsible for managing the work of the other officers. It is imperative that you make sure they are following through with their work. It is also important that you are familiar with each of their jobs. Read the manuals for the other Executive Committee positions so that you are familiar with how they go about their job. This will also give you a good basic understanding of what they will be doing in their job so that you can ensure it is being done. This will also help you to notice if certain things you need done are missing from the manual. In short, you can't manage the other officers if you don't know what they are supposed to be doing.

There also comes a time when you have to decide what is best. While the President is in charge of managing the Executive Committee what is better is to lead the Executive Committee. Leadership should inspire your Executive Committee to do more than what they are expected to do. I have been blessed with an Executive Committee that wants to do more but that won't always be the case so you should be prepared. There's also comes a time when if an Executive Committee member is failing to do their job it is your responsibility to pick up the slack. For example I had an Executive Committee member who showed up late to a meeting they were supposed to be running for a subcommittee. Due to the urgency of the meeting I began the meeting as they were unresponsive to phone calls and conducted the meeting until they were able to arrive. It's unfortunate but it is the responsibility and duty of the President.

Additionally, it is especially imperative that you thoroughly understand the current Players and Playhouse budgets. This is so that you can also knowledgeably answer questions about the financial status of the Union and ensure the proper administration of both budgets.

I often realized too late that something needed to be done because I didn't know about it. One example was inventories of our equipment. The TD and Technical Committee didn't know when they needed their inventories in by and we found out that it was a week earlier than we expected. I should have known what the timeline was and been able to enforce it. Make sure you always know "what's next" on the to-do lists of all the officers.

The current todo list under the President's folder on the google drive has been updated to reflect more of the budgeting aspects. It's also a good idea for you to compare the budgets and inventories that the Technical Committee submits to those of previous years. One of the FY16 budgets was drastically different from previous years leading to difficulties and large amounts of reallocations. We also noticed that another Technical Committee member attempted something similar this year leading to the Business Manager, Technical Director and I rewriting their entire budget that night on our own.

Inventories is one of the larger tasks you need to make sure happens. Another is budgeting. Make sure that the Business Manager and Technical Director submit a budget to the Executive Committee about a week before it is due to the Union. This way you can all have a chance to look over it as a group and make a joint decision on how to spend the money for next year. Just a side note, we cut about \$3,000 from the Players budget for FY 16 so don't let the Union push you into too many cuts for FY 17. We've already done more than enough of our part to help the Union. The last big task that I had written down is the website and making sure it is always updated. That is where people go to learn about us and who we are so make sure that it is always up to date.

For this year's budgeting what I found effective was splitting Playhouse and Players into two groups. (It's important to note that the Playhouse budget will be due weeks before Players). First the TD, Business Manager and I met to do the Playhouse budget. After that we created a pdf and sent it to the rest of the ecomm and tcomm to review and comment on. A week later we were ready to submit it. A week after that the entire ecomm met up to go over the Playhouse budget. Both meetings were five to six hour meetings but it has resulted in FY17 having an excellent budget.

It helps to create and enforce a to-do list for the Executive Committee and each officer individually. This is something I never got around to doing which I regret. I know it helped Linda significantly in her managing and staying up to date with the other officers between meetings. It is important that you enforce a sense of continuity in the club so the work of the officers never seems disjointed. *I have found that the todo lists for each individual member is so important in how I work with my Executive Committee.*

One of the more technical tasks that falls to the President is making sure all the rules are being properly followed. Between the Constitution, Bylaws, and the policies the Executive Committee creates there are a lot of policies that govern and guide how to act in the club. Its your job to make sure those are all being followed and that if they need to be changed they are changed in an open and democratic way.

Lastly, for this step are General Meetings. These are your chance to both update the club on what has been happening since the last meeting and try to engage the membership in a discussion about future projects and ideas. Unlike the Executive Committee meetings this is not a time to try to conduct the business of the club but a time for the Executive Committee and other officers to open themselves up to the membership and answer their general questions and try to solicit their ideas and suggestions. These meetings must be held at least once a month and have traditionally been on the first Sunday of each month. An example of an agenda for a General Meeting is in Appendix B.

Don't get too bogged down in the management part of being President. Remember that you are leader and a role model for the whole organization and take pride in being the face of the organization.

STEP 3: The Diplomat

“The President shall be responsible for all relations among the RPI Players, the Rensselaer Union, RPI, and the surrounding community.”

–RPI Players Constitution, Article IV, Section A: Titles and Duties of Officers

As alluded to in the previous step the President is the face of the organization especially to outside groups. The President is responsible for forging and maintaining good relations with the Union, RPI, other clubs, and other theaters in the area. This is done through our SARP, E-Board representative, and advisor as well as joint events with other clubs, the performing arts committee (PAC), and personal relationships with the Union staff, club heads, and Institute officials.

The Players’ relationship with the Union is complicated and multi-faceted. First, it is important to note that Players would not be remotely possible as an organization without the support of the Union. Players received approximately \$19,000 from the Union in subsidy alone. This is the amount of money the Union is paying us each year to keep Players running. This is equivalent to 21% of all our members’ activity fee (\$136 per member). We absolutely could not function without the support of the Union. Make sure to introduce yourself to all the staff in the Union office before taking over and be familiar with what each member does. Appendix C has a list of all the Union professional staff that you should know.

There are two key people in the Union that the Executive Committee will work with on a regular basis: your Student Activities Resource Person (SARP) and Executive Board Representative. The SARP at the time of writing is **Alex Piazza**. The SARP is your main point person in the Union for helping run club events, manage the budget, give advice on Union policy, and of any other help the club may need. The SARP must approve all expenditures from the budget and they are kept up to date on club operations in the bi-weekly advisor meeting mentioned in Step 1.

The Executive Board Representative is your asset and advocate on the Union Executive Board. They must sign off on all proposals that need to go before the Executive Board such as budget reallocations and constitution revisions. It is also imperative that you review the finalized budget with them before it is submitted to the Executive Board. The more familiar they are with the budget the better they can advocate for you during the budgeting process. The involvement of the Executive Board Representative in club operations is usually less than that of the SARP and varies based on who is the representative and who is the President of the Union.

The President of the Union is the head of the Executive Board. It is important to try to build a relationship with them so that they know you on a personal level not just a professional one. This will make any requests put forward to the Executive Board go much more smoothly and will give you a good inside picture on the workings of the Executive Board.

In recent years the Union has been shifting more and more towards a managerial view of student groups over an empowerment view. This has manifested in the reduction of autonomy of student groups and imposing of greater policy restrictions. An example specific to players is the increased supervision required at parties and installation of the card reader. It is important that you recognize this trend in the Union and do what you can to maintain the level of autonomy that helps Players to flourish without picking the wrong battles that may create animosity in the Union. It is important to approach the Union staff not with a sense of entitlement to autonomy but that you deserve it for the reasons you’ve proved over the years. Unfortunately, this is a tricky political game

that has to be navigated on the fly. My best advice is before you go into any meeting or present any proposal to the eboard is to sit down with your TD and Business Manager and ave them ask every single question they can come up with on the subject. One so you can practice responding but also so that if there's something you don't know the answer to you can learn it then.

As mentioned in Step 1 Players also has a faculty advisor, Dean Louis Trzepacz at the time of this writing. The purpose of the advisor is provide the Executive Committee with a consistent voice throughout the years who is familiar with our past operations and can extend our four year institutional memory as well as provide an adult and professional perspective to our operations. Dean Trzepacz is always filled with great ideas and advice on how to improve the club. I regret that the 85th season Executive Committee did not have the chance to implement more of them.

The Performing Arts Committee is a relatively new group that was put together by Amy Corron in the Union office during the 85th Season. It meets once a month to discuss promotion of the Performing Arts on campus, coordinate activities and schedules, and to promote other dialogue between performing arts groups. It is unfortunately not very well attended and underutilized by other clubs as a resource. It is a great way to reach out to other clubs to hold joint events and coordinate production dates as to not overlap too much. As of the 86th Season the PAC has essentially ceased to function.

Some interclub events that we currently hold or have held are Sheer Idiocy as a performance in EOP, RPIgnite performing in the Playhouse, and acapella performances as part of the NRB trip. Players is a fairly insular group and hosting joint events helps promote our reputation on campus as well as provide other groups the opportunity to use the Playhouse which is a spectacular facility. More Acapella groups have been using the playhouse as of this year and two of the dance groups have hosted events here.

Another large event in the Playhouse by an outside group is Genericon. Genericon is one of the largest and most profitable experiences in the Union. That being said we should try to work with them but it can be difficult getting in contact with them. You should endeavor to work with them because it is one of the longer standing cooperation that Players has with other groups.

The RPI Players also have close relationships with RMA whose members regularly compose our pit orchestra for the musical. This year we started a new goal of involving RMA in the selection of our Musical Director who they work with just as much with them as we do. I would highly suggest continuing this as it helps build our relationship with them. Once the musical producer is picked you should also make sure that RMA is put in contact with him or her as soon as possible as they will have to contact them regularly.

This year during EOP our producer started working with RMA and the acapella groups to perform before and during intermission of RMA. This was seen as a very positive experience by both Players and RMA. As of writing this now I haven't get been able to contact the groups themselves. Hopefully they enjoyed it soon. Will update once I have.

There are two major theater groups on campus that Players regularly interacts with. The first is YAG, the Young Actors Guild, who as of writing this are no longer part of the Union. They are run by Mary Damico, who while very capable, doesn't follow the same safety standards as Players. My TD and I have been working on creating a User Agreement to discuss how user groups use the Playhouse.

The other is Alpha Psi Omega, the theater honor fraternity on RPI's campus, who's members are recruited from Players. They have a show for the two weekends after labor day weekend in September. After their show selection you and the TD should have a meeting with their Director and Stage Manager to organize for what they're going to need in the summer. One thing that I want to emphasize with AYW is that regardless of your personal feelings on AYW as it is a touchy subject to some, that as President you should be supporting Alpha Psi Omega as a fellow Theater organization on campus. Alpha Psi works to provide a service to Players and if we work with them both groups are able to succeed.

As of recently Players has attempted to build with more solid relations among local theaters and college programs in the area. Our current relationships with them are very dependent on community members we bring in to work with having relationships with those groups that we can use. I encourage continuing to build these local relationships so that we can expand the educational opportunities and resources of Players.

To try and help foster relations we donate sets of four tickets to both the annual Troy Downtown Business Improvement District (BID) annual fundraising dinner in September as well as tickets to the Winter Carnival in February. We also send VIP letters with complimentary tickets to the Union staff, important RPI administration members, and other individuals on case by case basis. The Secretary-Historian has the complete list which should be reviewed by the SARP, advisor, and President before letters are printed. Make sure letters are delivered about two weeks before the show and hand deliver as many as possible.

STEP 4: The Delegator in Chief

“The President shall be responsible for delegating all official duties of the RPI Players not delegated to another officer.”

–RPI Players Constitution, Article IV, Section A: Titles and Duties of Officers

The bulk of the work done in Players is delegated to other people. Specifically these are the publicity director, webmaster, producers, directors, production teams, actors, and stage managers. All of their power to act in their capacities is derived from this clause in the constitution. This is essentially a catch all phrase that allows the President to appoint people to take care of projects and execute business of the Players. As with all things, this is a power that should not be exercised unilaterally. As with all things delegation of power should be a discussion and group consensus among the Executive Committee. This catch all phrase also allows you to assign additional tasks to Executive Committee members as you see fit.

Appendix D contains a list of all the major calls that need to be put out during the season and when they have been put out since the 82nd Season. All calls should be open for about two weeks except for director and show calls which should be open for three to four weeks. It is easiest to have the calls close just before the executive Committee meeting for that week so you can give people the maximum amount of time to submit. Make sure to have the Executive Committee review the email announcing the opening of a call and send it to players-l@lists.rpi.edu. Calls for main stage directors should also be sent to the local theater auditions list: capdist-auditions@dx.ayw.org. The 85th Season Executive Committee found Google Drive to be the most effective way to have people submit for calls and many examples can be found in the Google Drive. Send a reminder about the call each week the call is open so that people remember to submit.

For producers, once the call closes you will have a closed portion to discuss who will be selected as producer. Use their submission, knowledge of the person, knowledge of past successes and failures, and any other criteria the Executive Committee deems important to select a producer. **The 86th Season also experimented with having interviews for producer selection. We found it to be very helpful, most of the interviews were 10-15 minute conversations where we simply asked them some follow up questions or even the same questions as the application because we wanted to hear more or get elaboration.** It is important to ensure there is a consensus on the decision since they will wield a large amount of power and influence over the success or failure of a production. After picking a producer the President will offer them the role, preferably in person or on the phone. If they accept then send polite rejection emails to all else who applied and encourage them to put in for future positions (unless they are simply awful). Once they have accepted and the rejection emails have been sent announce the producer to the players-l.

After the producer accepts the president will sit down and discuss a few key topics with them. You will give them the rough timeline of how the previous year’s production went (audition dates, production team call announcements and deadlines, rehearsal schedules, etc.). Also make sure they have the contact information for the director so they can immediately begin coordinating for the show. You will also inform them of the process for casting and selecting production team members. They have full discretion in selecting the production team and approving the cast list the director chooses. However, before either of these lists can be finalized they must be sent to the Executive Committee for final approval. This is to ensure that the rules about casting community members are being abided by, that the goals of the production line up with the goals of the club, and the Executive Committee is privy to information the producer may not be privy to. If the Executive

Committee feels the producer needs to be made aware then this gives them a chance to tell the producer before making a decision. This is not a formality. While the Executive Committee traditionally has not interfered in the producer's decision making process the Executive Committee may deny all or parts of the producer's lists.

How this will be handled from by the President is that when you receive the email you will send one back immediately letting them know that you have received it and it is under review. Then in a private email thread or in person the Executive Committee will discuss if they have any issues with the list. Only once all members have confirmed that they have no issues or the issues have been worked out will you email the producer to let them know the list has been confirmed. Also make sure that the producer does not send the tentative cast list to any member of the Executive Committee who auditioned or the tentative production team list to any member of the Executive Committee who applied for a role. This is to prevent potential conflicts of interest. If the President falls into this category the discussion will be handled by the highest ranking officer without a conflict.

It is important to convey to the producer that the Executive Committee is there to support the producer as a resource. If they desire more information about something, need help with a decision, or want advice on how to do something make sure they know that the committee is there to help. Remember that in these matters unless it affects larger club operations or is otherwise deserving of the decision being made by the Executive Committee that it is still the producer's decision and you are there to advise. Producers also have a great resource in the producer's manual which is in the Google Drive. There is also a manual specific to NRB producing. Make sure you get them this resource ASAP. Also have them revise the manual so that it can be continually updated. The Executive Committee should review the producer's revisions before officially adding them to the manual. Along this line make sure they conduct a post mortem and put the results in the Google Drive.

Directors and shows for sideshow go through a similar process to producers. A call will go out for shows and if a person puts in a show they are agreeing to direct it if selected. Once all the shows are submitted the Executive Committee will decide which to produce for sideshow. There are two equally important factors in this decision: the show and the director(s). The show must be appropriate for side show with its limited budget, limited timeframe, and parent dominated audience. This is not a time for black box theater. Second, is the director(s). You need to have confidence in the skills of the director to make the show happen in sideshow limited timeframe and budget. Once the Executive Committee has decided, follow the same steps in offering a role to the producer. The Executive Committee does not need to sit down with the director but should facilitate the introduction of the producer and director if they do not know each other.

Directors for main stage shows go through a slightly different hiring process. As applications come in to direct, set-up interviews for the candidates on a rolling basis. It is highly unlikely that all ten members of the old and new Executive Committees will be available at any time but try to schedule for times that maximize the number who can attend. Prioritize members of the new Executive Committee since they are the ones who will be working with the directors. As a committee come up with questions you wish to ask each director. Examples of past interview questions can be found in the Appendix E. More of these examples can be found in the Google Drive.

After all the interviews have been conducted the Executive Committee will decide on which candidates it wishes to peruse hiring. An important aspect to keep in mind is that the Players is an educational organization as well and directors who have approached it as such have generally put

on more successful productions instead of those who have approached it more as purely community theater. For the ones who you wish to hire invite them to have a sit down with the SARP to discuss Union policy and procedure. If they are cleared by the SARP then you can offer them the directing job pending a background check. Once the background check clears you can send the rejection emails to the other candidates with encouragements to put in again (unless they were awful). The Business manager will work with the SARP to get a contract signed and once the contract is signed you can announce the directors to players-l.

Make sure to tell all candidates at the interview that you expect to make a decision in three to four weeks from the date the call closes. This gives you plenty of time to take care of all the paperwork for the candidates you want to hire without making it look like you forgot to say no to the candidates you didn't hire. This also prevents you from saying no to a candidate before everything is finalized and then asking if they will direct if your top choice for some reason couldn't sign the contract.

Step 5: One President, Two Clubs

‘The Executive Committee shall consult with the RPI Players Faculty/Staff Advisor and Rensselaer Union appointed Student Activities Resource Person about long term [Playhouse] goals and projects.’

–RPI Players Constitution, Article X, Section B: RPI Playhouse Budgetary Policy

One of the most confusing topics that arises about Players both within and without the organization is the questions of our two budgets. The Players budget is the money spent on the club that supports our club operations such as shows and membership events. The Playhouse budget is an administrative/facilities budget in the Union that is administrated by the RPI Players Executive Committee. The Playhouse budget is explicitly not for use on a specific show or players event but instead for general functioning of the building itself. Items purchased with Players budget are the property of the RPI Players and items purchased with the Playhouse budget are property of the building and the Players have no exclusive right to those items.

The reason the Players administrate the budget is because we are the primary users of the building and the Union has entrusted us to know what is best to keep the Playhouse up to date as a functioning theater and performing space. This topic has come up more than once at an Executive Board proposal hearing and in no case was the topic of discussion specifically related to difference between the two budgets until raised by the Director of the Union. It is important that they be reminded of the difference in the budgets, why we administer it, and that we take great pride in being trusted with the management of the Playhouse and treat that privilege with respect.

The Playhouse budget is mostly taken care of by the Business Manager, Technical Director, and Technical Committee. It is important, that as President, you take an interest in the proper administration of the budget. The president is still the head of the Playhouse as an entity in the eyes of the Union. So it is still the responsibility of the President to ensure that the Playhouse is being properly taken care of and that the separation between the Players and Playhouse budget is maintained both literally and in spirit.

Part of this is making sure that everyone in a position of power or in a position to spend money is fully aware of the distinct nature of the two budgets and their purpose. The Union still sometimes struggles with the concept of a separate Players and Playhouse budget and if it is to be maintained should the Players administrate the Playhouse budget. Make sure that the Union has no cause for concern and that the organization can be trusted as caretakers. Appendix F has an excerpt from the FY 16 Playhouse budget regarding the topic of the two budgets intended to explain the situation to the Union.

Step 6: The Beginning of the End

“Unless otherwise specified...the President shall call a meeting on the first Sunday in March that occurs while school is in session for the sole purpose of electing officers for the next term of office.”

–RPI Players Constitution, Article VIII, Section A: Elections Meeting

Elections mark the beginning of the end of the Presidency. Elections have become a little bit more complicated with the new Constitution and Bylaws. Be sure to carefully read them in addition to this step when the time comes. This step is intended as a rough outline of what the President needs to do regarding elections but it is still important to be familiar with the exact text of the rules governing elections. **Instant Run off voting has also not helped in the clarity of understanding process.**

Elections are run and organized by the Elections Committee. The Elections Committee is made up of voting members who will be ineligible for office for the next year (i.e. seniors or people graduating in December). Before winter break the Executive Committee will have to select a temporary Elections Committee Chair. This is technically the sole power of the Membership Chair but it should be discussed by the whole Executive Committee. The 85th season Executive Committee chose not to send out a call for Elections Committee Chair but decide amongst ourselves who we thought would be the best candidate(s) for the job and approach them directly. The temporary Elections Committee Chair will be responsible for getting members to join the committee. The committee must meet at least one week prior to the February General Meeting to select a permanent Elections Committee Chair. The permanent chair will be responsible for opening nominations at the February General Meeting and recording nominations at each subsequent Executive Committee Meeting. The Elections Committee will be responsible for selecting the chair (who must be a voting member ineligible for office) and the assistant chair for the Elections Meeting.

The chair of the Elections Meeting will work with the Executive Committee to decide on a date for the Elections Meeting (normally the first Sunday in March). The Elections Meeting Chair will reserve a space for the meeting. As President, you must announce the meeting two weeks prior to it being held. The Chair of the Elections Meeting will then set the rules for the Meeting in coordination with the Elections and Executive Committees.

If this sounds confusing that is because it is. I would suggest revising this process as the need for two separate and distinct chairs for the Elections Process is unnecessary. It also creates more jobs than are necessary to hold the meeting.

If there less than three people join the Elections Committee then there is no Elections Committee and it becomes the responsibility of the Executive Committee to appoint a chair and assistant chair for the Elections Meeting and keep track of nominations.

The 86th Executive Committee chose to delegate the duty of fixing the election procedures to the committee. The Constitution at the beginning of the year was very contradictory and confusing as to how elections was run. Once the elections committee was formed we delegated the task to fixing the bylaws and Constitution as well as their normal duties of selection and elections meeting chair.

I would encourage that the Executive Committee discuss privately who they think would be good fits for the various positions in the weeks leading up to the opening of nominations, this way they can broach the subject privately with those who they feel are qualified to see if they are interested. Make time, and encourage your Executive Committee to make time for anyone who wishes to talk to you about an Executive Committee position. Show them this manual (except for the parts you deem to be for Executive Committee eyes only like the section evaluating the Union staff). However, in no circumstance should the executive Committee state a public bias or support for a candidate. It is important that the current Executive Committee remain as neutral as possible to avoid a real or perceived sense of anointing an heir. **For the 86th Executive Committee we tried to stay out of encouraging people for elections as much as possible. Not because we did not find people capable but due to a feeling that we would show favoritism. That being said the Executive Committee should approach every possible nominee with a willingness to teach and help.**

Once elections conclude the elect period begins. Make time to schedule a dinner or other causal outing with the elects where you can all bond, pass down wisdom and advice, as well as tell them about some of the difficult situations faced in the past and the information they need to know as an officer that they did not need to know as a member. You will know and remember what this information is. Try to do this as soon as possible after the elections.

Attempt to schedule the Executive Committee Meetings and advisor meetings at a time when both the current officers and the elects can attend. This is a crucial part of training the elects. In general you will want to supervise all the training and make sure that the elects are learning about their positions and that they are actively engaged in the discussions at Executive Committee and Advisor Meetings.

Scheduling will be hectic and meetings will run very long. You are now jumping from five to ten members (assuming no second term officers) which can be impossible to schedule for. It will also take longer to discuss topics than normal because of that. The end of the year also has a very busy schedule that involved picking two producers, hiring directors, and picking a publicity director. Also, due to a modified version of Murphy's Law the elect period ends up having some of the most stressful and out of the box situations that you have to deal with. Be prepared for that and make sure your elects are prepared for it and know that this isn't what the whole year will look like

There are some specific topics you will want to make sure you cover during the elect phase. The first is how to make decisions as a group. You will want to emphasize that you are a team. That they should make their entire major decisions as a team and consult with each other. Emphasize that they are there to support and help each other. Next is impressing upon them the responsibility of their office and how they are accountable for everything that goes on in Players and the Playhouse (while we have control of the building). It is important to cover the large degree and importance of delegation in Players but that they are still ultimately accountable for everything that happens. Lastly, is the more specific topic of the current party policy as established by your Membership Chair and Executive Committee. This is covered in detail in the Executive Committee Google drive and is subject to change depending on the current Union policy.

Specifically, for training the President-elect you will want to slowly begin to turn over most of your powers and duties to them. Start with small tasks such as writing the weekly agenda and sending it to you. You should also have them send out all calls after they are elected that the president would normally send (fall producer, NRB producer, Publicity Director) and have them coordinate the director interviews. When you feel they are ready you should begin to hand off running the meetings to the elect. Be ready to jump in to moderate a discussion if the elect is

struggling. Give them advice before and after every meeting so that you can continue to set them up for success.

It is important also to remember that during the elect period you are still the President. You are still responsible for knowing everything that happens in the club. Make sure any task you delegate to the President-Elect still flows through you at some point. Encourage them to make changes and add their own style to the presidency but make sure they discuss it with you first since you are still ultimately responsible for the club.

You will do an unofficial turnover of power during the closing night party. You will introduce the new President to the membership at the end of the ceremony and have them give the “don’t be stupid” speech and kick off the party with a rousing “which way is up?!” At the picnic you will also have an informal transition of power for the whole Executive Committee where you will introduce all of them and toast to them with champagne. This is the time, if you wish to make some small remarks about the past season and the season to come.

Before the official turnover of power on the last day of classes make sure to thoroughly read through and update this manual. It is critical that documentation be maintained on the Presidency so that each subsequent President does not have to re-invent the wheel. Be sure to update this manual as you go along throughout the year so that you can capture your thoughts on the Presidency as you have them. It is also critical that the Executive Committee Google Drive is passed down to the next Executive Committee. This contains documentation about a wide variety of operations in Players. Additionally make sure to make the new Executive Committee admins for the lists server and on the Union Club management system.

And that is all there is to it. That’s actually a lie; as stated in Step 0 there is more to the Presidency than can be summed up in even 11,000+ words. Future Presidents will continue to expand and add to the knowledge contained here. At the end of all this don’t forget to congratulate yourself on a successful term.

You were elected for a reason. Make the RPI Players proud that they chose you.

Appendix

Appendix A: Example Executive Committee Meeting Agenda

A. Reports

1. President's Report
2. Business Manager's Report
3. Technical Director's Report
4. Membership Chair's Report
5. Secretary Historian's Report
6. Season Publicity Report
7. Webmaster Report
8. Vagina Monologues Report
9. Dirty Rotten Report

B. Discussion Points/Business

1. Ticket prices
2. Interview Questions

C. New Business

This is your time to bring up new business ideas or ask general questions that weren't pertinent to any report or business item. Questions aren't limited to this time, please feel free to ask at any point during the meeting.

D. Closed Portion of Meeting

1. NRB Producer Selection

NOTE

The specific items of the closed session are not published with the meeting announcement

Appendix B: Example General Meeting Agenda

A. Reports

1. President's Report
2. Business Manager's Report
3. Technical Director's Report
4. Membership Chair's Report
5. Secretary Historian's Report
6. Season Publicity Report
7. Dracula Report
8. Almost, Maine Report

B. Business

Any official business of the club needing to take place at a general meeting may be proposed at this time.

C. Member Feedback and Discussion

This is your time to bring up new business ideas or ask general questions that weren't pertinent to any report or business item. Questions aren't limited to this time, please feel free to ask at any point during the meeting.

Appendix C: Union Staff

Joe Cassidy-Director of the Union

The President will have little direct involvement with Director of the Union. It is always good to say hello and catch up if you see him around the Union office when you are there. Be wary of him though. Joe is not as vested in the student run model of the Union as the past Director Rick Hartt. He has actively pursued taking power away from the students in recent years. This has mostly occurs in student government but it has manifested in Players as well with the card reader on the building and hiring Joe Campo as the Associate Director for operations to specifically oversee Union facilities including the Playhouse.

Cameron McLean-Director of Student Activities

The President will also have little direct integration with Cameron as well. She is a great resource if you have questions about running programs and has been with the Union for a very long time.

Amy Corron-Asst. Director of Student Activities

Amy runs the Performing Arts Committee which is discussed later in this step. She is also the SARP for most every performing arts group on campus except for Players. As the administrator of the PAC budget you can go to her with ideas for shows to get tickets to in the area and get her help in coordinating with other performing arts group on campus.

Martha McElligot-Business Administrator

Martha is the person outside of the SARP that the President and Business Manager will interact with the most. She or Heather Showers, will process all purchase requisitions. She is also an extremely valuable resource if you have any questions about purchasing equipment or supplies or advice on financial matters of the club. She is extremely dedicated to the student run Union.

Heather Showers-Business Coordinator

Next to Martha, Heather is person the President and Business Manager will most interact with. She deals with most of the petty cash that we use for reimbursements and is in many areas just as knowledgeable as Martha in Union operations and finance policy.

Joe Campo-Associate Director, Operations

Joe is the newly appointed facilities director for the Union. He will mostly interact with the Technical Director. Due to family issues that came up shortly after his hiring Joe has not been able to spend much time at work during the 85th season and we have had little chance to get to know him. From the limited interactions we've had he seems willing, if reluctant at some times to help us out. It is unclear if he buys into the student run model of the Union and Playhouse.

Appendix C: Union Staff (continued)

Holly Nelson-Communications Specialist

Holly is a great resource for the Publicity Director and the President should encourage regular communication between them. She is a good resource for ideas about how to publicize events and communicate on campus. She is also currently our SARP at the time of this writing.

Jean Purtell-Operations Coordinator

Jean has little direct interaction with the Players. She is the one in charge of room reservations for the Union so if troubles arise using the new electronic room reservation system she is the one to sort that out. She also takes care of scheduling Academy Hall Auditorium and Mothers for large events so make sure to speak with her around April to schedule Academy Hall for sideshow or any other Players event.

Michelle Edwards-Administrative Specialist

Michelle is a wonderful resource for all things relating to the Union. If you don't know who to talk to about something or how to get something done she is the one to sort that out.

Appendix D: Timeline for important calls

Calls	86th	85th	84th	83rd	82nd
Producer for Fall Play	22-Apr-15	22-Apr-14	3-May-13	11-May-12	11-Jun-11
Director for Fall Side Show*		27-Aug-14	21-Aug-13	23-Aug-12	3-Aug-11
Producer for Fall Side Show		28-Aug-14	21-Aug-13	3-Sep-12	9-Sep-11
Musical Director and Choreographer		13-Oct-14	20-Oct-13	19-Oct-12	6-Nov-11
Producer for EOP		26-Oct-14	24-Oct-13	1-Nov-12	20-Oct-11
Producer for Musical		23-Nov-14	25-Nov-13	3-Dec-12	2-Nov-11
Mainstage Directors (for following Season)		16-Mar-15	12-Feb-14	22-Mar-13	29-Mar-12
NRB Producer (for following season)		4-Mar-15	4-Mar-14	28-Mar-13	
Season Publicity Director (for following season)		31-Mar-15	5-Mar-14	10-Apr-13	

*For the 84th and 85th season we opened the call for director, producer, and stage manager at the same time. We then gave the SM submissions to the producer after selected

Appendix E: Interview Questions for 86th Season Directors

Why do you want to direct this production? (was it the show, our reputation, recommended, etc.?)

What is your casting process?

What type of production organization are you used to working with?

How would you describe your directing style / process?

What different levels of expertise have you worked with?

What is your main goal going into this production?

How do you handle conflicts between your vision and the designer's vision?

How will you balance budgetary constraints with your artistic vision? Can you give us an example of a time you compromised?

Tell us about a production you enjoyed.

Tell us about a challenge you have faced during a production.

Follow up: And how did you overcome it?

Follow up: can you give us an example of an interpersonal conflict between cast or crew members?

Follow up: can you give us an example of a technical challenge you had to overcome in a show?

What does your schedule look like for the production cycle?

Follow up: how do you balance working on different shows at the same time?

What do you foresee as your biggest challenge that you will have to overcome working on this production?

What do you think is your best asset working on this production?

~For Love of Fruits~

What experience do you have with Commedia dell'arte?

~FOR MUSICAL PEEPS~

(Musical marshmallow candies?)

How do you work with the directorial team? (MD and Choreographer)

Appendix F: Appendix of FY 16 Playhouse Budget

In recent years there has been confusion about both the reasoning behind and the delineation between the Players and Playhouse budgets. As stated in the purpose section of this budget the Playhouse is home to three theater organizations and hosts several events throughout the year. The purpose of the Playhouse budget is to provide the Playhouse building with all the equipment and resources needed to make it a usable space by the multitude of different groups that use it. Without the Playhouse budget the building would be unusable without serious investment from the clubs and organizations that use it.

Without a well-maintained building to operate in, clubs and organizations would all need to purchase their own individual equipment to bring to the Playhouse. This creates a large redundancy in the Union's finances. While on the surface it may seem that the Players and Playhouse budgets are redundant, their separation prevents large scale redundancy by groups that use the Playhouse.

Put simply, the Playhouse, just like other Union-owned spaces, needs to be maintained and the Playhouse budget maintains it. The RPI Players officers are entrusted with the budget because as the primary users of the building they are the best qualified to know what will keep the building maintained. Their Technical Committee members are also recognized student experts in their respective departments.

If there is still confusion on this delineation please contact the RPI Players Executive Committee and they are more than happy to answer any questions you have.