



# A Report on the RPI Players Situation

From the 'Inquiry Committee on the RPI Players Situation'

Chaired by: Natalie Hrytsyna - Senate-Eboard Liaison

Eboard Rep: Jacob Steingart

Senate Rep: Rachel Schneider

Players Rep: Cee Ray

*Presented on April 15th, 2025*

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## Background for Inquiry

- The RPI Players believe that alumni donations intended specifically for repairing the Playhouse have not been allocated as expected. To raise funds independently, the Executive Director of the Players started a GoFundMe campaign.
- However, they were informed that fundraising efforts must go through formal institutional channels, resulting in the suspension of the campaign.
- During a meeting held on March 25, 2025, the Executive Director and Treasurer of the Players appealed to the Student Senate for assistance in navigating the appropriate channels to ensure the Playhouse is repaired.
- The purpose is to be informative, not accusatory.



## Inquiry Purpose

The committee was tasked with:

- Investigating all relevant aspects of the RPI Players's situation concerning the Playhouse renovations, excluding budgeting matters.
- Preparing a public report with recommendations by April 15, 2025.
- Reviewing all formal communications between the Union Executive Board and the RPI Players, along with records of meetings or decisions involving the RPI Players.

How we accomplished this:

- Access to all relevant communications between the Union Executive Board and the RPI Players.
- Access to records of meetings and decisions of Union bodies concerning the RPI Players.
- Conversations with Dr. Potts and Will O'Brien.

## Timeline of Events

- January 22nd 2025: Players put on probation due to unauthorized reallocation of funds.
- January 29th 2025: Executive Board representative confirms there was no financial mismanagement by email.
- January 29th 2025: Meeting with Aron, Will, PU, VPBO about their probation.
- February 26th 2025: Players complete their financial workshop due to their probation from January.
- March 26th 2025: Players met with PU, VPBO, Aron, and Will to discuss the GoFundMe situation.
- March 26th 2025: Players put on probation again due to GoFundMe and the attached letter. Also, were told they had until April 2nd to publish an apology letter.
- March 31st 2025: Senate puts out a statement regarding the RPI Players and Playhouse.
- April 2nd 2025: Players publish their apology letter.

Note: Due to concerns mentioned that the Players EBoard representative had issues communicating, there was sufficient communication.

Between the time of the pipe burst and most recent situations (2025), there has been no major communications. There were mainly discussions about budgeting and their budget appeals.



## Conclusions from Communications

- Despite the Playhouse not being renovated, Executive Board and Union SARP's still continued to be supportive by approving purchases that were needed for their shows to continue.
- The Executive Board had fulfilled their responsibility of communicating during probations and during the most current issue. They had set up multiple meetings with the Players.
  - Hard to say that the Executive Board was treating Players unfairly, they approved additional subsidies even after their probation as well as sending all communications needed.
  - And as to why they came to the Senate instead of EBoard? Believed that there was nothing relevant to communicate with them with, and did not believe anything would happen due to their representative.
- The Players did not communicate to their SARP, Dr. Potts, or their E-Board rep regarding the GoFundMe. They only started to communicate once the GoFundMe got large enough that people noticed.

## Pictures from the Playhouse



Figure 1: A photo of the Playhouse main stage.



Figure 2: Photo of the mens bathroom. Figure 3: A photo of the Playhouse Stage with belongings still there.

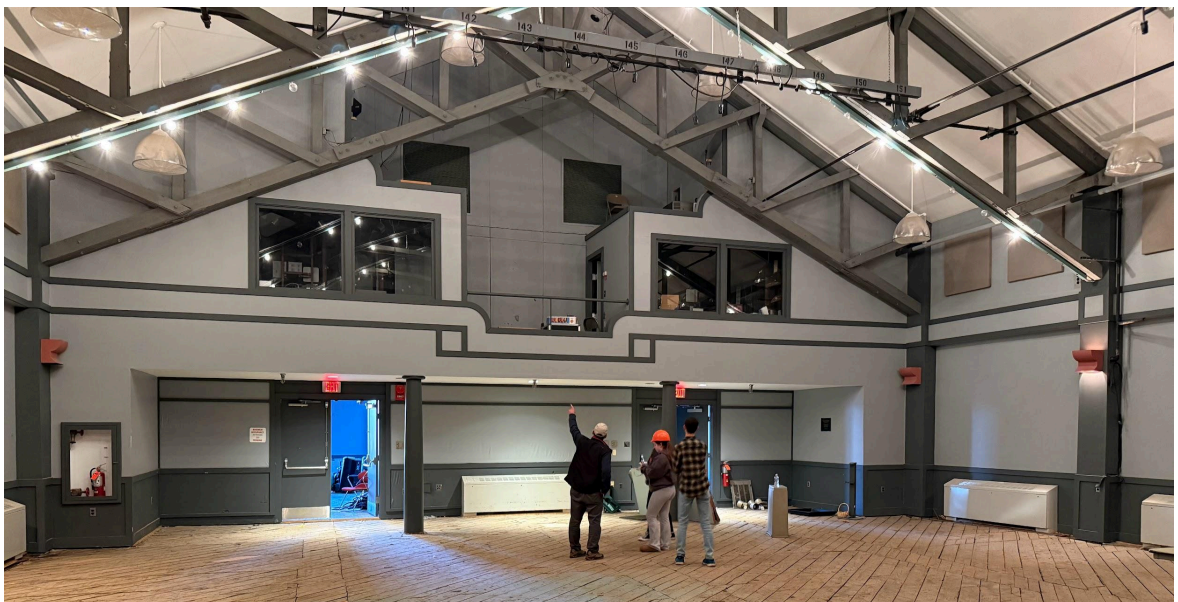


Figure 4: Another view of the main stage area.





Figure 5: A picture of the siding that was replaced from the wind storm.

## Playhouse Renovations

- The renovation process is extremely time consuming and complicated.
  - A renovation plan requires multiple reviews by engineers and architects before even being seen by the school.
  - Has to be scrutinized and redone multiple times- this process usually takes months to years.
  - Longer it takes, higher prices (inflation has to be considered, would explain the increased costs that were a concern from Players).
- Prioritization Issues
  - When the pipe burst in February 2023, other academic buildings experienced the same.



- Sadly, those buildings were prioritized due to their importance to academics.
- Possibility of building expansion from CBIS or DCC due to its prime location.

## Numbers

- Due to inflation and the time consuming process of getting renovations approved, the recent number according to Dr. Potts is up to \$2.5 million dollars.
- Money for renovations so far:
  - When the pipe burst happened- from insurance (\$112,860 estimate)- one of 12 numbers for flood damage across campus- so a lot of money for repairs was needed.
  - Institute is self-insured through the Pinnacle Consortium of Higher Education - \$500,000 deductible.
  - Replaced siding from wind storm where DCC was- was considered a preventative measure to prevent further damage.
- Photo attached below has an email from February 19th, 2025.

- E-Board and Board of Trustees approval for a renovation 2022 funded by Student Activity Fees
  - Reorient the entrance to the Sage Plaza
  - Update the inside lounge, etc.
- Flood from burst pipes during cold spell February 2023
  - Estimated damage \$112K
  - RPI is self-insured so it had be paid by Institute during a time of multiple other claims from the same cold spell
    - Repairs delayed due to lack of available funds
- Players "go on the road" for spring 23, fall 23, spring 24, and most recently fall 24
  - Primary venue Sage College in Troy but some other venues including Chapel and Cultural Center
  - Functional but not satisfying due to limited availability of venues, not more than three weeks out
    - Development of "modular production systems" to simplify the "moving around".
- Architectural/engineering review of the building reveals significant fire safety/code deficiencies 2024
  - Estimated cost \$500K; delayed due to lack of available funds
- Request for Institute capital funding of \$600K for restoration of the Playhouse
  - All costs are infrastructure related, thus no Student Activity Fees can be used
  - Generally the annual requests for capital project funding significantly exceed the money available
- We are currently waiting word for this year's priority projects campus-wide
- Concurrently, we are updating the entire Games Room/Rathskeller/Mother's area; anticipated opening fall 25
  - Building 80 seat theater (15' x 20' stage); not big enough for full Player productions but usable for showcases, etc.
  - Relationship with Sage to continue for the larger shows
  - Theater available to all student groups through standard reservation processes established by E-Board
- We'll continue to work on supporting the Players and all other performance groups as we work through these challenges

Figure 6: Email from February 19th, 2025 with numbers from 2022.



## GoFundMe & Donations

- Note: based off past communications, Players have fundraised through appropriate channels (weRgold program 2024).
- As of 4/6/25, their GoFundMe is no longer up, donors were refunded.
- Raised \$22,000 (approx.) with a letter attached: (next slide)

Alumni donations:

- Freestyle donations- whenever they wanted to donate
  - Ex. \$100 each year in the past two years was donated from an alum.
  - They are all small dollar amounts.
- Players alumni did not donate a large amount of money like the GoFundMe through the institute.

## Letter attached to GoFundMe titled “A Letter to the Friends of the RPI Players”

A Letter to the Friends of the RPI Players

A summary of this letter is as follows:

- There has been no meaningful progress, only broken promises and dismissive responses from key officials, including President Schmidt.
- The Playhouse is historically significant, serving the RPI community since 1946.
- Since the flood, the Players have performed 14 shows using external venues, which has caused logistical challenges, financial strain, and equipment damage due to lack of proper on-campus facilities.
- The Players continue to be promoted as part of the school's image, even appearing on RPI's Bicentennial website.
- They emphasize that donations made directly to the Union may not be used appropriately, so contributions to their GoFundMe will be held until a contractual agreement ensures funds are applied toward repairs.
- Incorrectly wrote that the Union takes 10% of donations, when actually the Institute does.
- Incorrectly wrote that the Union uses its donations for other purposes other than what it is for.



## Consequences from GoFundMe

- Upset Alumni- Reddit
- Distrust in Institute and Union management with donations.
- Alumni distrust in Institute and Union.
- Will be much harder for the Players to receive money to get the Playhouse fixed (especially from Institute Advancement).

Hello Union Officers,

Happy Sunday, I hope you're all having a great week. I got an email from the Players Officers today asking the Alumni to support an RPI Players GoFundMe to repair the Playhouse. As part of their request, they made the Alumni aware of some salacious accusations regarding a lack of communication from RPI leadership. Are you aware of the email and the ongoing issues?

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1lvDykQbPI8wL1mjN03AlQX1tJ8799mox/view>

Figure 7: An email from an alumni.

To whom it may concern,

In the process of writing an e-mail to you all highlighting the importance of the RPI Players and the RPI Playhouse, every public cry for help seems to have vanished. While I completely understand that GoFundMe is not an appropriate way to fundraise for this, attempting to remove the call for help from the public eye is not a good look and will only serve to further provoke the situation. I was fortunate enough to read what they wrote before it "disappeared", but I am interested in what your view is.

I'll summarize the e-mail I was going to send you before the final post went down - The RPI Players and the RPI Playhouse were the deciding factor in my attendance and subsequent employment at RPI. To this day, I consider the RPI Players my family and the RPI Playhouse my home. The experiences and the relationships developed in that building working with those people are worth much more than the degree I was ultimately issued, and was worth the price of admission. Without them I simply wouldn't have gone to RPI, and even if I did, I would have a much less favorable view of the Institute and wouldn't have been sending friends and family to go there.

When was the last estimate of cost to repair done and what was that estimate? Why do you think the Players felt like they needed to reach out in this way? When will a more appropriate fundraiser be established if one is required?

Go to Settings to activate Windows.

Figure 8: An email from an alumni.





Hello RPI Union Officers!

I hope you've been having a great semester thus far. My name is \_\_\_\_\_, I'm a class of \_\_\_\_\_ Alumni of RPI. During my time at RPI I served on the Student Senate as an Independent Senator and Chair of the Student Life Committee, the President of the RPI Players, and was a volunteer EMT with RPI Ambulance.

I saw a recent Instagram post that the RPI Playhouse still has not been repaired after two years. I was curious, is there a plan / timeline for the playhouse to be repaired? I've donated money to both RPI and the RPI Players in the past, and it's disappointing to hear that after two years the building is still not repaired.

I'd love to hear about the current efforts.

Figure 9: An email from an alumni.

## The Players Public Statement From Senate

On March 31st, 2025, the office of the 159th Grand Marshal released the following statement:

On March 25th, 2025, the RPI Players came to the Student Senate's Invitation to Speak segment to discuss concerns over the Executive Board & the state of the Playhouse, citing a recent letter they had issued titled "A Letter to the Friends of the RPI Players." They also addressed some of the concerns they have been facing with the RPI Playhouse and issues with miscommunication.

We sympathize with the struggles the Players have been facing in recent years. As a club with historic significance at RPI, the challenges with the Playhouse are not a loss to just the Players but to the Institute and to the Union as a whole. We recognize the complexity of the situation, and are working diligently to find a resolution. In the meanwhile, we would like to communicate some of our current stances and sentiments on the topic.

Based on the information we currently have, we fully stand behind the actions of Director Potts and fully believe he has followed proper procedure while carrying out his duties as Director of the Union when handling the situation involving the RPI Players. However, we understand and recognize the significant concerns the Players raised at the last Senate meeting and we would like to ensure all actions taken in handling the matter thus far were appropriate. As such, we intend on asking the Senate to use their power of inquiry, as outlined in its bylaws, to formally and independently investigate any



communications between the Executive Board and the RPI Players. The leadership of the Executive Board have concurred with the necessity of this formal inquiry. We intend for this inquiry to include representatives from within the Union governance structures, as well as independent students drawn from the greater student body and members of the Union Administration. We hope to present a complete, conclusive and public report through this inquiry to the student membership in the weeks to come.

*T. Benavides*

Office of the 159th Grand Marshal

## Apology Letter for GoFundMe & Letter

### Apology Document

Here is a summary of the apology letter issued by the Players for the GoFundMe and Letter:

- While progress wasn't visible to the Players, the Institute and Union were engaged in internal communications to ensure proper collaboration and funding acquisition through multiple means.
- The Players acknowledge inconsistencies in communication from the Union Administration, noting that information was rapidly changing and sometimes unclear. They clarify that this was not done out of malice.
- The Players acknowledge that while the Union's assistance was not as large as desired, they did provide support in evaluating agreements and handling administrative needs.
- The previous statement that the Union takes a 10% cut from donations was incorrect. Instead, this is an Institute policy, not a Union-specific action.
- The Players plan to work more closely with the Union and Institute to establish a method for collecting funds for the Playhouse's restoration.



## Recommendations

The inquiry committee has concluded the following recommendations:

- Club Financial Training could be revised to be a Percipio module with a quiz. This could be required for non-financial officers, while financial officers will still have to complete their in person financial training and not the Percipio module.
  - If an officer were to fail the Percipio quiz, they will have to attend an in person financial training.
- Emphasize to clubs the appropriate ways to fundraise (next slide has excerpt from RUGP)
  - As well as if you have any concerns or questions, you should go to your EBoard representative or SARP first.
- More training for E-Board representatives, ideally repeated annually.
- More effort on collaboration within clubs, Union, and Institute.
  - Ideas such as clear and designated communication channels, progress reports, keep track of all documents and plans.
- Communication is hard to track between representatives and clubs.
  - All representatives should be required to CC the VPCR.
  - VPCR should be able to request any communications from representatives and clubs for the PU/VPCR.
- Recommend to allow the Players to take their belongings from the Playhouse and have a storage room inside the Union.
  - Can work with the EBoard Business Operations Committee.
- A flowchart that shows who to contact first for certain situations (similar to the example on the next slide).
- Club-Alumni liaison
  - Can work with the Players, EBoard, and IA to help build trust again with the institute when it comes to donations.
- Set up a committee (similar to this) but continues to work with the Players, communicate with alumni, and help work out short term and long term solutions to the bigger issue.
- Clarify the definition of probation (what it means and what it doesn't mean).

## How to Fundraise Properly – RUGP

Below is a following snippet from the Rensselaer Union Guidelines and Procedures on how to properly fundraise:



Rensselaer Union Guidelines and Procedures: § 2.3 A and D

Clubs may desire to fundraise income to meet their obligations for programs.

1. The Executive Board shall approve all fundraising initiatives as programs in advance based on full compliance with national, state, and local laws, Rensselaer community standards, and all Union guidelines.
2. Receiving or seeking donations does not count as “fundraising,” but may only occur in accordance with Institute policies and shall be processed by the Division of Institute Advancement.

§ 8.4 C

- Union Recognized-Funded Clubs are prohibited from creating or maintaining online payment accounts—such as Venmo, GoFundMe, PayPal—in the name of the club or organization.

## Problem Solving Hierarchy

Below is a chain of command diagram for how a club may come to a resolution for a conflict or concern that they have.

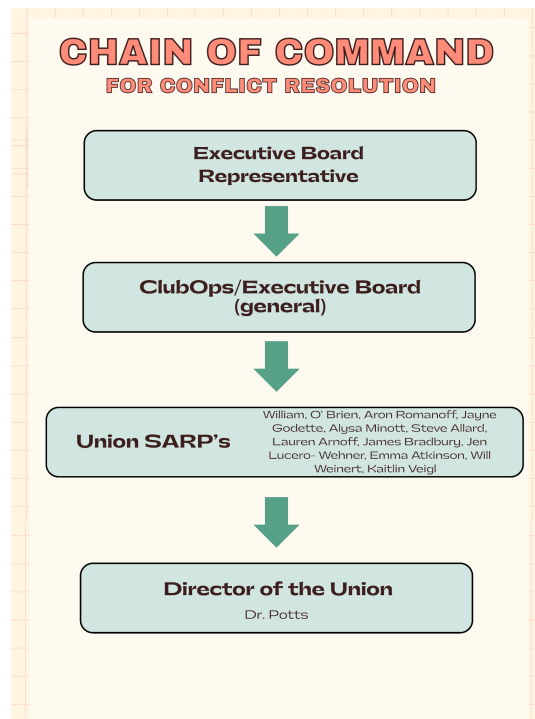


Figure 10: A flow chart of the “chain of command” in the Union.





## Final Conclusion & Recommendations [Summary]

Despite the Playhouse not being renovated, Executive Board and Union SARP's still continued to be supportive towards The Players by approving purchases that were needed for their shows to continue.

The Executive Board had fulfilled their responsibility of communicating during probations and during the most current issue. They had set up multiple meetings with the Players, and it's hard to say that the Executive Board was treating Players unfairly, they approved additional subsidies even after their probation as well as sending all communications needed.

It's also worth noting that The Players did not properly communicate to their SARP, Dr. Potts, or their E-Board rep regarding the GoFundMe. They only started to communicate once the GoFundMe got large enough that people noticed and it was brought to public attention.

In summary, we recommend that:

- More training and resources will be made available regarding how to handle club finances.
- The Executive Board continues to accommodate The Players, ensuring that they have proper equipment storage (through the Business Operations Committee) and can continue to hold performances in alternate spaces.
- Work with the Players, EBoard, and IA to help build trust again with the institute when it comes to donations. *(Copy-pasted from Recommendations section 04/16/25 at 10:10pm)*
- Set up a committee (similar to this) but continues to work with the Players, communicate with alumni, and help work out short term and long term solutions to the bigger issue. *(Copy-pasted from Recommendations section 04/16/25 at 10:10pm)*

Any more in-depth suggestions are mentioned earlier in this report.

## Sources

Senate Public Statement: [Players Public Statement](#)

Players Letter Attached to GoFundMe: [A Letter to the Friends of the RPI Players](#)



Players Apology Letter: [Apology Document](#)

RUGP: [Rensselaer Union Guidelines & Procedures March 2025](#)