

Sun & Balance

VOL 60, NO. 2 – SUMMER 2025 THE RENSSELAER NEWMAN FOUNDATION

Welcome RPI's Dr. Katherine Skovira as our new Director of Music

We are thrilled to welcome Dr. Katherine Skovira, D.M.A. as the new Director of Music at the University Parish of Christ Sun of Justice, located at the Chapel + Cultural Center. Katherine currently serves as an RPI Faculty Fellow in Music, specializing in voice. She is a nationally recognized new music specialist, educator, researcher, and mezzo-soprano from Philadelphia.

Katherine has worked with innovators in the nonspeaking community, technology, and social justice in collaborative performances and education initiatives, and performed over 30 world premieres of new vocal and operatic works.



important for student voices to be heard in a musical context, as well as in a personal one.

I'd love to see a vibrant community that grows around the ministry of music as something that students feel is theirs. In faith-based music, it's critical for people to feel they can participate so fully in the process. I want to empower students to explore.

What first interested you in this position at the CSJ?

I had this realization I really wanted to get more deeply into church music. I had done it for many decades, and then, after my doctorate, I was doing a lot of performing and traveling, and it wasn't the lifestyle where you can stay and have that kind of commitment to a community.

But, because RPI has this unique relationship with the Chapel + Cultural Center, I find I have the ability to really immerse myself in this music and this community.

So, it was a perfect match. Perfect timing for everyone and I couldn't be more excited.

"Dr. Katherine Skovira's commitment to excellence will not only greatly enhance our liturgical experience, but her connection to RPI will enable us to further our mission in new and exciting ways and take our mission to the next level and beyond! I want our music here at CSJ to be exponential. I want us to be known in the community for our music."

-Jordan Lenaghan, OP DMin
Chaplain, Religious & Spiritual Life

We sat down with Katherine to talk about her goals for the music ministry.

Welcome Katherine. What will you be doing as Director of Music?

Primarily serving the students and RPI community through music. That means creating together different opportunities for students to engage with music, to write music, and to share it with the community. It's



Katherine Skovira with RNF Trustee Emeritus, David Haviland '64 and wife, Katie

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What's New at Hospitality House?

Over the summer, Rensselaer Newman's Hospitality House received several upgrades to make it even more welcoming and functional for the students and groups who use it throughout the year. According to RNF's Kevin Krolik, improvements included replacing the kitchen's worn linoleum flooring, installing a new washer and dryer, and rebuilding the back stairs.

These updates come just in time for the start of RPI's fall semester. The Hospitality House will first open its doors to an overnight group participating in RPI's *Navigating Rensselaer and Beyond* program. During their stay, students will take part in local community service projects continuing the tradition of faith, fellowship, and service that the Hospitality House supports year-round.



October RPI Reunion Events at the C+CC

Two of the marquee events on the RPI Fall calendar, Reunion & Homecoming Weekend and Family Weekend take place next month. Reunion & Homecoming is October 10 - 12, and Family Weekend is 2 weeks later, October 24 - 26.

Please join us for Mass, Saturday at 5pm and Sunday at 10am and 5pm on both weekends, at the Chapel

+ Cultural Center. Following each Mass, there will be a coffee hour and reception. Please stop by, meet Fr. Jordan, and hear about the RPI Catholic community, as well as our new Director of Music, Katherine Skovira.

If you are planning to attend any of the above Masses, please let us know so we can be sure to greet you.

Contact George Hauenstein at (617) 306-4732.



We've Moved!

After many years in the Rensselaer Union, the Rensselaer Newman Foundation offices have moved to Academy Hall.

Our new address is:

**Academy 4629, 4th Floor
Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute
110 8th Street, Troy, NY 12180**

RNF's 2025 Sun and Balance Award Winner

The Sun and Balance Award is the highest honor offered by the Rensselaer Newman Foundation. It is presented each fall to the person or persons whose work has had a significant impact on the work of the church at Rensselaer.

This year's recipient is Megan Adam, '23.

Megan studied architecture at RPI and graduated with her Bachelor of Architecture degree. It was through serving at the Chapel + Cultural Center and partaking in a wide variety of events with the RPI Newman Club that she was able to more personally embrace her Catholic faith. Megan was also fortunate to serve as a team leader on the Emmaus Retreat for local college students and young adults during her time at RPI and has continued working with the retreat team since graduation.

She is beyond grateful to the RNF community for their ongoing service and dedication to RPI, to Troy, and the surrounding region. The C+CC holds a special place in her heart, as it is a place where she has truly made lifelong connections.

Megan's connections with the RNF and C+CC inspired her to connect with a local Catholic ministry after moving back home to New Jersey. She has become increasingly involved with the St. Peter the Apostle Community Parish in New Brunswick, NJ, primarily as a member of the Petros young adult group. Through this ministry, she partakes in and volunteers to arrange monthly adoration evenings, women's Bible study, and other gatherings. With the Petros group, she attended



a pilgrimage to Rome and Assisi in March, and was blessed to see the four major basilicas, the tombs of St. Francis of Assisi and St. Carlo Acutis, and much more!

Megan has witnessed firsthand the impacts of the service-oriented Rensselaer Newman Foundation. During a time in life where students are looking to find their place in the world and nearly everything is new, having a dedicated Catholic space like the C+CC makes a world of difference. Megan believes that one of the strongest assets of the

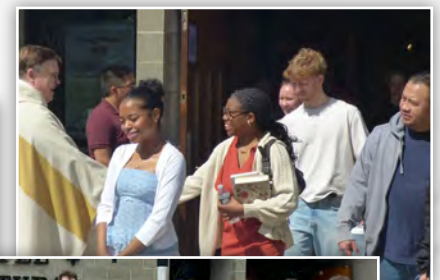
RNF is that it is multigenerational, offering students opportunities to learn from, serve, and connect with peers and parishioners. Through the efforts of the RNF, multiple generations can come together to honor the Lord and love their neighbors well. Not only the building, but the people themselves become a safe haven.

Megan currently works as a community planner at a consulting firm in Red Bank, NJ, where she has been working for over 2 years. Megan enjoys being able to work for a variety of municipalities in New Jersey, from urban to rural, and apply her design background into daily practice. The overlap of architecture, historic preservation, and law fuel her ongoing passion for the city planning profession.

The RNF community was truly here for Megan when she needed spiritual guidance and a sense of peace the most. She holds close the chance to continue to serve with the RNF and cannot wait to see what God has in store!



Some of our Favorite Student Moments from the Spring



Welcome RPI's Dr. Katherine Skovira...

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What else excites you about this?

I think it's a great thing to be situated in such partnership with the University.

I really appreciate Fr. Jordan's approach to planning the music and the Mass. He's encouraging and open to such a variety of music, and we have some wonderful plans coming up for Advent and Holy Week and Lent.

I do love the idea that a priest once shared with me when I was a child. That singing is praying twice. I take that to heart as a vocalist and as someone who is now directing music here. But I think that we should never be completely wedded to a form, we have to stay flexible. So, for example, if there is a hymn that we get a sense the congregation just loves to sing, let's make space for all the verses.

We're actively talking about a choir for the students to participate in at least monthly. We want something that works with students' busy schedules, but also really feeds their experience because the student experience is paramount here, and if we set up those healthy habits now at RPI they'll carry that through the rest of their lives.

When did you first realize music and teaching music would be your career?

I knew it in my earliest days in the church. I knew it from how I listened to the cantors singing. I knew it from studying classical flute because I wanted to participate more fully. Leading the pageants at my church, I just knew that directing music, singing, and performing were, you know, my heartbeat. And to give people that kind of access to that kind of joy is just so critical at this point, I think, in our society.

Katherine Skovira
and Fr. Jordan Lenaghan



With everything you have accomplished in your career, what are you most proud of?

Supporting new music and supporting young composers, helping new singers realize that they have a voice and helping non-speaking people understand and really embody the fact that they deserve to be on stage like any able-bodied person.

Many of our readers are alumni or parents who may only be here once or twice a year.

Any message for them?

I would love to work with the chapel, and with Father, to have an alumni Mass where they come and participate in Mass and music.

The very first thing that we want to do is ask them what their favorite hymns are. What do you love to sing while here to worship and to visit? It's a coming home, and you know a faith home is someplace where you have to be able to do your favorite music. I think the music should speak to what the alumni would like.

It's exciting and it's wonderful to step into a position that already has such a vibrant group of people.

Katherine Skovira's full bio:

<https://faculty.rpi.edu/katherine-skovira>



Katherine Skovira at piano

Advancement Corner

Thank You!!

We are very grateful to everyone who has supported the Rensselaer Newman Foundation in 2025. Your financial gifts make it possible to serve the RPI students and help grow the impact of all that we do. You are truly our partner in this very important work!

If you have not made your gift for 2025 yet, you can send it back in the enclosed envelope or contribute online at rensselaernewman.org/give.

When you do, consider making a RECURRING GIFT. Weekly, monthly, quarterly, twice a year, or annually. Recurring giving significantly influences RNF's budgeting and advancement by providing a reliable source of funding. This enables effective fiscal planning and provides cash flow in times when other funding sources slow.

Leave a Legacy – Join the Phelan-Wiberley Society

Consider including The Rensselaer Newman Foundation in your estate plans and help sustain our mission for generations to come.

The Phelan-Wiberley Society is a community of people who share the vision of our early leaders, Fr. Thomas Phelan and Steve & Betty Wiberley, and who have made a commitment to extend their legacies by furthering the work of the Foundation.

If you have already included us in your estate plans, please let us know!

Legacy gifts have the potential to be forever transformative in growing our mission and supporting our students, ethically, morally, and spiritually.

To discuss further, visit rensselaernewman.org/legacy, or contact George Hauenstein at (617) 306 4732.

Memorial Giving

Did you know that memorial gifts can be made to the Rensselaer Newman Foundation in response to an obituary?

These gifts serve as a meaningful tribute in honor of a loved one, while also supporting the mission of the RNF.

We will report any such gifts to the family so they may thank donors as well.

Non-Cash Ways to Support the RNF

As we near the end of 2025, you may be thinking about supporting organizations that are near and dear to you, like the Rensselaer Newman Foundation.

There are a few easy and tax-advantageous, non-cash options to support your philanthropic intentions, including:

- Recommending a grant to RNF from your Donor-Advised Fund
- Making a qualified charitable distribution (QCD) from your IRA - (you must be 70 ½ or older)
- Giving a gift of long-term appreciated stock (held for more than one year).

Please speak with your financial or tax advisor to determine which of these gift options might be right for you. Thank you in advance for your support.



Leave A Legacy with RNF!

Create a legacy of faith and service for you and for the Catholic Community at RPI



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www.renselaernewman.org/legacy



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**Please visit our website or follow us
on Facebook to view a full list of
upcoming events.**

If you're getting this newsletter, you have been connected to the Rensselaer Newman Foundation and our mission at RPI, and you understand how important our work is, bringing together faith, humanities, science and engineering. Please consider making a gift to the Foundation to continue our work; know also that we're praying for you at every Mass at the Chapel + Cultural Center.

October 13-14	RPI Reunion & Homecoming '25 - Reception after Sat/Sun Masses	
October 18	Piano and Cello Recitals	
October 24	RPI Electronic Arts Program Concert	7:00pm
October 25-26	RPI Family Weekend - Reception after Sat/Sun Masses	
October 25	RPI Duly Noted Acapella Performance	8:00pm
November 15	RPI Rensselyrics Acapella Invitational	8:00pm
December 11	Lessons and Carols	7:00pm

Please refer to rensselaernewman.org for event times.

A New Look for the Sun & Balance

Let us know your feedback on the 'new look,' Sun & Balance Newsletter.
Our goal is to make it easier to read, and easier to include more photographs
of students and of activities in and around the C+CC.