

All the “news”
that’s “fit” to print

The Reed College Quest

Write for the *Quest*!
Writers’ meetings are
Mondays at 7 p.m.
in the SPO (GCC 047).

VOL. 220 ISSUE 05

THE FISH-MAN BECAME A HEARTTHROB IN THE SOVIET UNION

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 29, 2023

Grounds Crew Hiring Gone Wrong:
Sam King ’27 and Lillian Tolman-Bronski ’26
break down the Grounds’ hiring situation.
Page 4

In-Person vs. Online Lectures:
Adrian Keller-Feld ’25 and Ray Perry ’27 debate
the state of HUM lectures.
Page 4

**Introducing the Queer and
Trans STEM Collective:**
Louis Chase ’26 profiles Reed’s newest club.
Page 7

“I mean I don’t really know how cameras
work, but I feel like they need electricity”

FLAW IN CAMPUS DIRECTORY EXPOSES ID NUMBERS OF STUDENTS, STAFF, FACULTY, ALUMNI

Investigative reporting by the Quest confirmed that a vulnerability allowed any IRIS user, and in some cases the general public, to access ID numbers and clone ID cards of any Reed community member.

By Declan Bradley

After first being alerted to the existence of a critical vulnerability in the IRIS system by a student who wished to remain anonymous, *Quest* reporters were able to independently confirm that the college’s “campus directory” — which is accessible to all students — had unintentionally exposed the Reed ID numbers of all students, staff, and faculty.

Furthermore, while the original vulnerability has now been closed, the *Quest* has reason to believe that one or more users retained locally saved copies of a spreadsheet that allows them to continue to obtain ID numbers for any user, leaving students, staff, and faculty continuously vulnerable to impersonation. Student sources have also asserted the existence of further vulnerabilities in the college’s harassment reporting system which, while unconfirmed, potentially exposed ID numbers for alumni in addition to current students, staff, and faculty.

Investigative reporting by the *Quest* also confirmed that the properties of Reed College ID cards are based directly on the owner’s ID number. Such magnetic swipe cards do little more than encode simple information — a line or two of text

— on a physical object. In the case of Reed ID cards, that information seems to be a simple text file containing the user’s ID number followed by their name. Combined with the ease of obtaining exposed ID numbers, this means that any user could clone the ID card of any other user using a simple magnetic read/write device — standard models of which connect to a laptop through USB and cost about \$90 from Amazon.

Forbidden to reveal the security protocols of the reactor control room, one student who underwent reactor training confirmed anonymously that there are “a few more steps” necessary to gain access to the reactor than simply presenting a standard swipe card, which means the reactor is at least somewhat secured against this vulnerability.

While the *Quest* only learned of the vulnerability during the first

*“Oh, yeah, I have Audrey Bilger’s ID,” said
one student, casually, while speaking with a
Quest reporter.”*

Using such cloned ID cards, users could then spend board points, swipe through locked doors (including those meant to be closed to students), or otherwise impersonate the target to any automated system at Reed that identifies community members by their ID cards.

This raised concerns for some reporters about the security of the Reed Research Reactor, which the *Quest* was able to confirm uses swipe cards as at least one of its security steps. While Reactor Operators are

week of September, the anonymous source claimed it had been known by “multiple people in Reed CS [computer science]” since at least early 2023.

In an email to the *Quest*, Reed Cybersecurity Architect Payam Damghani confirmed that the college was first alerted to the issue by a student worker in IT in May 2023, which the *Quest* has independently confirmed. Despite this, the vulnerability remained open through the beginning of September 2023, four months later, and reporters did not

observe a patch to the IRIS system until September 16 — eleven days after the IT department was contacted by the *Quest* on September 5.

The original source claimed that students had made “several” fruitless attempts to alert the college to the seriousness of the issue, although the *Quest* has been unable to confirm this beyond the original May report. The source said that they had chosen to come to the *Quest* with this information at least partially because “it seemed like the only way to get any of this fixed.” “I know it had been brought up internally previously but nothing seemed to have been done about it,” the source said, “it didn’t seem like they would have any motivation to fix it without external pressure.”

The *Quest* first formally alerted Mr. Damghani and Information and Security Officer Valerie Moreno to the existence of the vulnerability on the afternoon of September 5. When neither Mr. Damghani nor Ms. Moreno responded by noon on September 8, a *Quest* reporter, considering it an urgent issue, approached Director of Instructional Technology Services Trina Marmarelli — a professional in a different division of IT who is not

Continues on Page 3

Senate Beat Is Scheduling Meetings

By Henry Kendrick

Student Body President Safi Zenger began Monday’s Senate Public on September 25 by revealing that the Renn Fayre Czar application is open on Handshake and encouraged anyone to apply. President Zenger and Senator Lily Garvey spoke with Christy Martin from Academic Support and Services on September 15, discussing the goals of the Senate’s Academic Success Committee.

President Zenger and Head Treasurer Nina Gopaldas also met with Jason Maher from the Registrar’s Office, who updated them on changes they are making to Reed’s registration-related systems. They will be updating both IRIS and the academic catalog to be more user-friendly. A new IRIS feature will allow new students to be able to plan out all eight semesters of their education, which will help departments plan ahead for over and under-enrollment in certain classes. These updates will be rolling out sometime this semester. Finally, President Zenger and Vice President Sean Brown met with Reed’s webmaster and discussed their priorities for the Senate’s upcoming website, which will be online by the end of the semester.

Senator Garvey discussed personal and faculty committee goals at the Academic Success meeting she attended. She also attended the meeting held by the Student Committee on Academic Policy and Planning (SCAPP), in which members reviewed the external evaluators for the History and Music Departments. There was also a SCAPP meeting on the college’s AI policy, and there will be another shortly to continue discussions of how to combat the use of AI in and out of the classroom. Senator Garvey also revealed that work from the Bylaw Review Committee has begun.

Senator Lindsay Worrell met with acting Title IX Coordinator and Dean of Students Chris Toutain to discuss which items may be removed from the college’s Title IX policies in order to provide students and staff with a more condensed policy. Senator Worrell also attended J-Board interviews, which were completed last week. And Senator Bella Moore reported that she is working out dates for meetings with the Accessibility Committee, and is still trying to get in touch with the chair of Institutional Animal Care. The Reed Union Committee is also not yet active, as it is not yet fully appointed on the administration side.

Senator Andee Gude has spoken with multiple members of the Admission Committee. They are working to find times that work for meetings with the Center for Life Beyond Reed (CLBR) and Disability and Accessibility Resources (DAR). Senator Gude and Vice President Brown have also met with Claudia Islas from Student Life, and Senator Gude is wanting to work more closely with the Office for Student Engagement (OSE).

Senator Meera Balan wanted to clarify her position on installing more nighttime lighting on campus, explaining that she primarily wants more lighting around the Studio Art building on the east end of campus, and does not wish to install any new lighting in the canyon or near dorms.

For her committee work, Senator Balan is working with Senator Worrell on contacting the Committee on Alcohol and Other Drugs (AOD) and is still working on setting up a meeting with Commons. Additionally, Senator Balan wants to look into the Peer Mentorship Program (PMP) and discuss why Peer Mentors are not guaranteed on-campus housing like OWLs and HAs.

Senator and Appointments Committee chair Jefferson Ratliff has clarified

Continues on Page 3

In Leaked Letter to the President, 70 Faculty Say They “No Longer Recognize the College”

By Owen Fidler

On August 16th, seventy college faculty signed a joint letter to President Bilger expressing their concerns about the college’s ongoing handling of last spring’s staff pay protests, during which staff objected to proposed changes to their compensation structure which were then put on hold. In the letter, a copy of which was obtained by the *Quest*, the seventy signatories say that “[n]on-teaching staff should be viewed as important members of a mission-driven community who should find their work deeply rewarding and, indeed, joyful. This has long been one of the defining features of Reed. To the degree that it no longer obtains — to the degree, for example, that ‘best practices’ of personnel management have been imported from the outside — we no longer recognize the college.”

Faculty concerns were broad but were sparked partially by the recent departure of staff members like Faculty Administrative Coordinator Emily Hebbbron. Hebbbron holds a degree in Social Anthropology from Cambridge and has seven years of US Congressional Staff experience — but was being paid \$26.18 an hour after seven years at Reed. Faculty felt she and other staff left the college, “because of their profound disappointment with the ways in which they have been treated by the administration pertaining, but not

limited, to questions of remuneration and respect for their experience and commitment to Reed’s academic mission.”

An academic mission, Hebbbron felt, that’s been losing strength in the last decade. In an interview with the *Quest*, she said “I feel really bad for students, because I think students at Reed today have been sold a vision of Reed that existed, you know, maybe five, certainly 10 years ago, but honestly, not so much anymore.”

The faculty letter was also written partially in response to a memo the president sent to staff on July 21 — a copy of which was obtained by the *Quest* — in which she promised, “an extended commitment ... to understand and respond to your concerns and hopes.” She then brought up discussion sessions that took place at the end of the 2022-2023 academic year, in which topics such as, “multiple elements of compensation, including living and livable wages and keeping up with inflation,” along with, “merit raise pool allotment, taking experience into account, job descriptions, and methods of sharing [staff] voice with [President Bilger] and others,” were addressed.

In regards to “next steps,” President Bilger described how she would work with a group of Senior Staff to, “organize existing input, to gather more perspectives, and to propose timelines.” This group, consisting of

high-ranking members of the staff and administration such as Gary Granger, Lindsey Hoyt, Karnell McConnell-Black, Sandy Sundstrom, and Milyon Trulove (a full list can be found on the college’s website), was tasked with, “gather[ing] information, conduct[ing] interviews, schedul[ing] group discussions, and propos[ing] solutions early this fall,” when President Bilger plans to report back to staff on “immediate steps [she] plan[s] to take.”

However, the seventy faculty signatories were concerned by the college’s choice to primarily consult only these senior staff members. The letter calls into question the college’s “long-standing traditions of democracy and equity,” which it claims are undermined by the “institutional crisis” of staff dissatisfaction. While the undersigned faculty are “pleased” with Bilger’s use of a group of Senior Staff members to address long-standing issues, the letter asks that faculty be given a greater voice in discussions, something which it describes as being “absolutely essential.” The letter ends with the request that President Bilger, “[ask] each of the five divisions to nominate one of their divisional colleagues to serve with Senior Staff as permanent members of the study group.”

After being asked directly about the letter at the September 11 faculty meeting, President Bilger issued

Continues on Page 3

Existence of IRIS Security Flaw Kept Under Wraps Even Within IT Department

Continued from Page 1

involved in systems security — in her office. The *Quest* reporter asked if the IT department had received the alert. Ms. Marmarelli did not seem previously aware of the details of the case but promised to pass along the request. The *Quest* received a response from Mr. Damghani soon after.

Anonymous sources within IT say that, since that date, the existence of the vulnerability — and students’ knowledge of it — has been kept secret even from many Reed IT professionals. At an all-staff meeting of IT on September 13, only a brief mention of IRIS maintenance was made, and the flaw was alluded to, “only in the vaguest possible terms.”

Director of Technology Infrastructure Services Gabe Leavitt, meanwhile, said in an email to the *Quest* on September 8 that he was not told of the paper’s attempt to notify the department until that afternoon, three days after it was originally sent.

The *Quest* was initially hesitant to publish information that would make the vulnerability easier to replicate, and on September 12 Mr. Damghani suggested that a 90-day embargo on the story would be “industry standard.” However, the shutdown of the IRIS system for “maintenance” between September 16 and 17 appeared to patch the most public-facing parts of the vulnerability, which sources from both within and without Reed IT have assured the *Quest* are no longer functional.

On the afternoon of September 22, a lawyer with the Student Press Law Center assured the *Quest* that coverage of the vulnerability would likely be protected, and that reporters may even have been “too responsible” in delaying their story to give the IT department time to fix the issue.

Prior to the patch, users were identified in the IRIS database by an 8-digit number known as a PIDM. Such PIDMs were stored openly in the URL strings for each user’s page — obtaining one was as simple as searching for that user, clicking on their name, and then copying their

PIDM from the address bar in any browser. (URLs followed the format: “https://iris.reed.edu/directory/campus/[PIDM]”)

This was intentional. In an email to the *Quest*, Mr. Damghani said that PIDMs “were originally intended by Reed IT to be a publicly-visible unique user identifier specifically for use by web applications.”

However, students discovered that PIDMs were calculated by simply taking a user’s Reed ID number and adding a fixed constant. For example, if a student’s ID number was 20001000, their PIDM would be 20002000 (20001000 + 1000). While the actual fixed offset was not 1000, and the *Quest* will withhold the true value, the value seemed to be consistent across all Reed community members.

While reporters were careful not to access sensitive data themselves, the *Quest* was able to independently confirm that the fixed offset method correctly produced ID numbers to a high rate of accuracy across all students, staff, and faculty, something not even the original source had been able to confirm at scale. This meant that any student, after calculating the difference between their own ID number and PIDM with a simple phone calculator, could extrapolate the ID number of any other student, faculty, or staff member, up to and including the level of the president.

“Oh, yeah, I have Audrey Bilger’s ID,” said one student, casually, while speaking with a *Quest* reporter.

Even more significantly, further vulnerabilities in the autocomplete function of the IRIS database allowed any user to obtain a spreadsheet of all Reed community members containing each person’s name, PIDM number, and position at the college (job title, status as a student, etc.)

For the more technical reader, the autocomplete function sent whatever input the user typed to a remote database containing all possible search results and then returned the matching rows. However, the URL format of the search function allowed anyone

with basic programming knowledge to simply send the star character (*) — which in computer science stands for “everything” — as an input. Any user could therefore simply request results matching “everything,” and the system would promptly dispense the entire database as a pre-formatted JSON or CSV table.

Critically, these files of all PIDM data could then be easily downloaded by the user and saved to their computer. While this access has now been cut off, the *Quest* has been and will be, unable to confirm how many users accessed this data or currently retain local copies of it.

The *Quest* contacted IT on September 25 to ask how many copies of the data were downloaded during the at least four months it was available, and if the department had any way to ascertain that number. Mr. Damghani responded, “We are investigating potential access to the affected systems. We currently do not have any conclusive information that would indicate widespread access to or abuse of the affected systems that would be a violation of the college’s Computer User Agreement.”

While the IRIS system appears to have been overhauled, student, staff, and faculty ID cards are physical, non-connected objects that can’t be altered remotely. That means that the only way to completely protect Reed ID cards from the risk posed by the ID spreadsheet is to recall them and physically run each one through a read/write machine. This would also likely require the college to reset all student, staff, and faculty ID numbers to new — ideally random — values.

When the *Quest* asked IT if the college plans to carry out such a mass rewrite of ID cards, and when, Mr. Damghani repeated his exact words that the department does not “have any conclusive information” that would suggest “widespread access” to the system, and added that, “[IT is] working with our vendor to implement ISO codes for our card access system which would in turn address the issue of the unique identifier.”

Meanwhile, since the overhaul was implemented over the weekend of the 16th, student sources have continued to test the vulnerabilities of the system. One, who would only speak on the condition of anonymity, claimed to have identified a further flaw in the college’s harassment reporting form that simply printed the raw Reed ID numbers of all students, faculty, staff, *and alumni* — both making the step of converting between PIDMs and IDs unnecessary and raising the number of affected individuals into the thousands.

Critically, this flaw also bypassed the ‘directory visibility’ property, meaning that even community members who had opted out of the campus directory were still at risk. The *Quest* alerted IT to this new flaw on September 25, but will not print the details of the vulnerability, even though it had been fixed by the time the paper went to print on Wednesday night.

Further such flaws, which had not been fixed at the time of publication, continue to expose PIDM numbers of either students or Reed employees through at least three different avenues — all of which the *Quest* alerted IT to on the 25th. One of these also overrides the ‘directory visibility’ property.

While it is important to note that, since the September 16 update, these vulnerabilities only return ten rows of data at a time, there is nothing to stop users from simply making repeated requests until all of the data is eventually returned.

The *Quest* has not been able to independently confirm these vulnerabilities, but reporters have seen screenshots that seem to demonstrate their existence. If real, these gaps in security remained open after the weekend overhaul of IRIS — and there is no way for individual users to protect themselves or their information.

This is a developing story and the Quest will continue to follow it in the coming weeks.

Senate Acknowledges Lighting Petition Controversy

Continued from Page 1

fied some misunderstandings and miscommunications between the Senate and the Computer Planning and Policy Committee (CPPC). Senator Ratliff will also be meeting with Vice President Brown to discuss overlapping committee goals, especially regarding the Health and Counseling Center (HCC). Senator Ratliff is glad to see the college has hired a new SHARE director, finally taking work burdens off of students, and wishes to establish regular meetings with SHARE, as well as with Community Safety Director Gary Granger.

Head Treasurer Gopaldas reported her Finance Committee (FINCOM) work, explaining that Quiz Bowl came to FINCOM without a completed budget and was asked to return for final budget allocation. White Water Club’s budget requested money for a spring event, which FINCOM denied. The rest of White Water Club’s budget for the fall semester was approved unanimously. Gopaldas emphasized the explanatory notes printed in the *Quest*’s publication of the funding results for students who may have been confused by certain funding decisions. Gopaldad revealed that Treasury has moved \$80,000 from their main account to their endowment account, and has set up a master wage system for the semester.

Gopaladas also met with Gwen Sandford and Fiona Ahn from International Student Services (ISS) and spoke about the rise of exchange students at Reed. Sandford is working on an advisory board with President Audrey Bilger called “Global Reedy,” which seeks to restart many of the college’s pre-pandemic international programs, outreach, and support. Finally, Gopaldas announced that all current students can now view an unofficial transcript on IRIS under the “Documents” tab of their “Student Information” page.

Newly hired Assistant Treasurer Lucy Knight-King introduced herself, as this was her first Senate Public. It was also Senator Xixi Dukes’ first meeting, after being out with food poisoning. Senator Dukes reported that she has begun reaching out to her assigned departments and committees, such as Conference and Events Planning (CEP), the Reactor, Sustainability, and Commons. She is planning on meeting with DAR to discuss bylaws, as well as with the Students with Disabilities Coalition.

Senate Secretary Margot Becker talked more about her upcoming Senate bulletin board and requested that Senators send her photos and fun facts to use. The bulletin board will likely include information on elections and Secretary Becker’s notes. President Zenger revealed that the new Senate website will be constructed on a new domain, as opposed to spending over \$5,000 to buy back their old domain.

Vice President Brown announced that any student who wants to work on a project concerning equity and diversity should speak with him. He also described an odd run-in with an Alumni Relations member, who he will be meeting.

The meeting ended with calls for new business. Audience member Ares Carnathan brought up the strong opposition to Senator Balan’s lighting petition found in the MCs and wanted to make sure that the final decision on whether to proceed will be made by the entire Senate, considering the divisiveness of the petition.

Both President Zenger and Senator Balan assured Carnathan that for a project of that scale, the entire Senate will have to vote on its approval, and Senator Balan described the complex administrative and bureaucratic hurdles the proposal will have to clear even beyond Senate to become a reality. Senator Balan also expressed frustration with how heated the debate has become, revealing that some students have treated her rudely in face-to-face interactions.

Senators discussed some of the reasons for and against more lighting, with Senator Balan explaining that some art majors have felt unsafe leaving their studio at night, and Senator Worrell saying that many students want to see statistics linking lighting and crime. Senator Balan acknowledges that more lighting will not necessarily reduce crime. Secretary Becker recalled a meeting with Dr. Karnell McConnell-Black, in which he argued that more lighting on pathways would actually make dark areas off the paths more dangerous and difficult to see. Vice President Brown ended the meeting by suggesting they could dedicate a future Senate Public to the issue.

Faculty, Staff Discuss Issues of Faculty Governance

Continued from Page 1

tenured,” Miyoshi explained, “and we worry that even though the Senior Staff members are supposed to report to President Bilger, they do not have job security.”

Former Administrative Coordinator Emily Hebbbron, whose departure partially inspired the August 16 letter, said in an interview with the *Quest* that, “Reed’s governance model prioritizes faculty, in a lot of ways, and really I think it’s fair to say it just straight up ignores staff, which to a degree was kind of fine for a long time for a lot of staff members because a lot of staff felt that the faculty could always go to bat for the staff and the faculty. At the end of the day, we’d be listened to.”

Cutting out faculty and only consulting a group of Senior Staff, Hebbbron argued, constituted an unraveling of the faculty-centered system. The exclusion of faculty members from the decision-making group of Senior Staff, Hebbbron said, is an example of a shift “from faculty governance to administration governance,” that was carried out, “largely under the cloak of the pandemic.”

Significantly, Hebbbron also said such a shift in governance changed the relationship between administrators and staff. While adminis-

trators have frequently been presented to staff as staff themselves, Hebbbron notes that “it became clear very quickly that the administration was setting themselves up as a third group entirely in opposition to faculty and staff instead.”

Hebbbron claimed that the issue of faculty governance touches deeper issues in the ethos of the college, and that, “[g]oing back to a stronger faculty governance model is the only way for the college to move away from a corporate system and re-engage some of what makes Reed Reed.” Hebbbron sees the two groups as having a deep interdependence, saying that, “where there’s fire for the staff, there’s smoke for the faculty ... and the staff are on fire because faculty power has been denigrated so significantly.”

However, some in the faculty question whether a system of faculty representation on staff issues is truly in the best interest of staff, despite the protection tenured faculty receive. Drumm called into question whether faculty can truly speak on the issues for all staff, and said, “The other issue would be that not all staff members work closely with faculty. So those of us who do work closely with staff, people are able to step up

and say, ‘Wait a minute, you know, what’s going on? We were concerned about this.’ And other staff members who are working equally as hard, equally valued part[s] of the community don’t have that same direct relation.”

Hebbbron, similarly, said that “Reed tends to be pretty siloed ... we didn’t know what the issues were for the other staff members.” As Miyoshi put it, members of the staff lower in the hierarchy, “should also have a way to participate, because their lives are really being impacted ... isn’t that self-governance?” Addressing the potential for a representative governance model for the staff, Hebbbron said, “There have been efforts over the years to try to achieve that one way or another. And it just never happened.”

Hebbbron believes that hope for staff at Reed lies in balancing the power of the staff-faculty-administrator relationship entirely. “For Reed, the only way forward would be for them to voluntarily recognize union membership for staff, and encourage staff to organize, invite staff to organize. If they’re willing to accept the concept of tenure for academic freedom, then they should accept good contractual work for staff similarly,”

she argued. She also described Reed’s struggle with staff compensation as part of a national issue, saying that, “[h]igher education is absolutely in a crisis, don’t get me wrong. That much is really clear. If Reed wants to buy into the crisis, which so far they have, it creates a culture of scarcity that becomes really evident throughout the institution. And scarcity does not promote learning. And scarcity does not provide an environment that encourages the life of the mind.”

Yet Hebbbron believes that Reed’s identity as a unique institution amongst its peers can reject the notion of scarcity, as long as the college sets itself on a path to, “embrace the joys of a liberal arts education, engage with the work at all levels, and respect workers at all levels. If you have that, I think Reed could absolutely go from an institution of where it is today, when I left it, it felt very frankly mediocre. And it could very quickly attract a class of staff that would just be incredible. And when you have that, it becomes really easy for people to see ‘Why Reed?’ ... I think Reed could really get to a place again of attracting the best and brightest at all levels of the college. And that would be revolutionary. And that would be Reed.”