This committee reviewed Goal 2 of the new College Strategic Plan; met with Carol Thornber, Associate Dean of CELS, regarding support provided to faculty to conduct research within her college; and reviewed notes from the Fall 2018 college faculty meeting made by the subgroup focused on research, scholarship, and creative work. Based on these considerations and other discussions with faculty, we developed a list of recommendations for you to consider in support of Faculty Research, Scholarship, and Creative work. We would greatly appreciate the opportunity to meet with you to discuss these further.

Please note: our committee understands research to encompass not only empirical and data-driven investigation but also creative projects and what some call “scholarship.”

1. Workload and time
College faculty have consistently listed time as a key need for increasing research productivity. Research projects in all fields covered by the College necessitate substantial and ongoing investments of time.

1.1 Course releases
One avenue to provide more research time, would be instituting a process, perhaps involving a short preproposal, where A&S faculty can apply to the College for a course release to conduct a specific research project. The College might also develop other initiatives to provide more release time for research such as incentive programs for course releases, and relieving faculty from service and advising obligations for a semester. Devising programs for pre-tenure faculty, whether course releases, summer support or even sabbatical leave, is the biggest need in this area.

1.2 Teaching loads
Faculty teaching loads in the College are heavier than those in other colleges at URI. A&S needs to devise ways of bringing these teaching responsibilities more in line with the rest of the University. A&S can work with departments, chairs, and individual faculty to help structure teaching responsibilities in ways that might better maximize research time: permitting faculty to distribute their teaching unevenly across the academic year; allowing faculty to carry teaching credit between academic years;
working with faculty to devise alternative teaching arrangements by tweaking threshold numbers for large lecture courses (changing enrollment cutoff numbers for counting a large class as worth two or more sections: shifting from 200 to 170 seats, say, though specifics will vary from department to department, and from course to course).

1.3 Crediting grant proposals
Submitted grant proposals should count appropriately in annual reviews as these proposals are very time consuming to write and less than 10% are funded. The amount of time invested is worthy of recognition.

2. Funding Support
2.1 Conference Travel: Faculty across the College have noted how little support is provided by the University for travel funds for conference presentations. Academic conferences not only facilitate sharing research but also help spur developing new lines of inquiry. Increasing the monies provided by the College for such travel would greatly aid A&S faculty and their research projects.

2.2 Summer support: Faculty, especially those not yet tenured, have struggled to make ends meet, finding themselves having to choose between teaching over the summer and spending the time devoted to research. Offering summer research stipends/grants would be a great help. One model might be to begin with a limited number for which faculty might compete with preference given to those who were preparing for tenure and pre-tenure review (now that 4th year review is required at the Provost level), as well as those completing major research projects. Another model might be to provide summer money as part of the start-up package for incoming faculty: say, $5000-$7000 for the first two years of their time here at URI.

2. 3 Increased support for social science, humanities, and arts: In 2012, the Vice Provost for Research used a small portion of overhead funding to offer $50,000 in grants to sponsor research in the social sciences, humanities, and the arts. Though the total was a small amount, this funding made quite a large difference in providing support for projects in disciplines that usually must do without. We recommend the College work with Vice Provost Snyder to reinstitute and regularize a similar plan to help ensure robust productivity throughout all departments and programs in A&S.

3. Research chairships
Our committee also examined research chairships at other universities. These competitive awards provide an honorarium for the faculty member; funding for research that might be used for travel, equipment, supplies, research assistance, or
summer stipend; and monies that might be used for course releases (such as for engaging part-time faculty to help alleviate the faculty member’s teaching responsibilities). We recommend the College develop a similar program for A&S faculty on a competitive basis whether through existing budget funds and/or through funds donated to a special College endowment.

4. Position reallocations
One complaint heard across the College has been the cumulative effect of losing so many tenure stream lines in many A&S units. Loss of those lines means much greater service work for remaining faculty. A&S departments need more tenure stream lines and our inability to secure them has led to increasing strain on faculty in these units. Being able to better spread the service work around will enable faculty to spend more time on their own research. Moreover, having more faculty conducting research fosters synergy in and across departments. It is thus vital that the College emphasizes tenure-stream lines, positions in which new faculty members are expected to and provided with the resources to conduct research, in its hiring priorities. It may make sense in some cases to transform a lecturer line into a tenure-track line.

5. Research Staff in A&S
Due to the diverse disciplines in the College, a staff member in Chaffee with significant responsibilities devoted to research would be of great benefit for faculty research. Some faculty cited missing deadlines due to lack of needed support or time to write the proposal. Also, it is clear the pre-award and post-award processes can be so daunting some faculty opt not to apply for external grants. Further, it would help to have a staff member looking out for interdisciplinary opportunities and arranging meetings among faculty who might be interested in putting together a proposal. Our committee discussed a number of possibilities. In colleges such as CELS, an associate dean helps provide support for research projects; A&S might consider translating this model. Another option might be a support staff member who provides administrative, clerical, and supervisory support for grants including checking the solicitation, reading it for consistency of language, and advising on broader impacts, requirements for most government grants. A grant writer who understands different funding agencies would also be of use for many research projects in the College. One concern raised by the committee is that any staff member should not come at the expense of a possible faculty line for the College—many units are in dire need of new tenure stream faculty and requesting a completely new staff member would lead to further delays in securing lines for those programs. We would thus like to discuss possibilities with you: Could research be addressed at the associate dean level without overstretching those serving in these offices? Could existing administrative members within the College pick up grant support as part of their duties? Might it be possible
for the College to share a grant writer with other colleges/units on campus? Might the College devise ways of working more closely with the Office of Sponsored Research’s Implementation Group? Could a staff member help extend across the College the Department of Chemistry’s informal mentoring program (more senior faculty aid more junior faculty in preparing grant proposals)? Would more than one staff member be needed particularly if these are part-time or shared posts? The cost of added personnel or reassignments to personnel will likely be greatly outweighed by the increase in proposal submissions.

6. Infrastructure
Faculty have noted the need for the College to work with departments and building services to ensure older facilities are both habitable and fully functioning so as to maximize delivering the mission of the programs housed there. Further, newer structures need to be adequately maintained and equipment/infrastructure that were promised to faculty must be delivered. Some faculty have also expressed concern about the accountability of facilities support. Assigning an associate dean to liaise with departments and building services regarding infrastructure might help with this goal.

Summary of Proposed Strategies for Fostering Research in the College
1. Institute a process, perhaps involving a short pre-proposal, where A&S faculty can apply to the College for a course release to conduct a specific research project.

2. Develop other initiatives to provide more release time for research such as incentive programs for course releases, and relieving faculty from service and advising obligations for a semester.

3. Devise other programs to provide research time for pre-tenure faculty, whether course releases or even sabbatical leave.

4. Devise ways of bringing teaching responsibilities more in line with the rest of the University.

5. Work with departments, chairs, and individual faculty to help structure teaching responsibilities in ways that can better maximize research time: permitting faculty to distribute their teaching unevenly across the academic year; allowing faculty to carry teaching credit between academic years; working with faculty to devise alternative teaching arrangements by tweaking threshold numbers for large lecture courses.

6. Give significant credit for submitted grant proposals in annual reviews.
7. Increase the monies provided by the College for such travel to conferences for A&S faculty.

8. Offer a limited number of summer research stipends for which faculty might compete, giving preference to those preparing for tenure/pre-tenure review as well as those completing major research projects.

9. Provide summer money as part of the start-up package for incoming faculty: say, $5000-$7000 for the first two years of their time here at URI.

10. Work with Vice Provost Snyder to reinstitute and regularize a plan to help provide research support for the social sciences, arts, and humanities.

11. Develop an endowed research chair program for A&S faculty for which faculty will compete.

12. Emphasize tenure-stream lines, positions in which new faculty members are expected to and provided with the resources to conduct research, in its hiring priorities.

13. Create a position for a staff member in Chaffee with significant responsibilities devoted to research administration. (possibly through reassignments within the College); this post will a) provide administrative, clerical, and supervisory support for grants; b) serves departments across A&S; c) keep proposals moving in a timely manner, collecting all documents from PI’s and co-PI’s.

14. Adjust assignments for associate deans to provide more support for research, including
   a) looking out for interdisciplinary opportunities and arranging meetings among faculty who might be interested in putting together a proposal;
   b) understanding different funding agencies and what faculty might need to apply for those grants, e.g. attend workshops;
   c) keeping an eye on foundation grant opportunities to aline with potential departments or individuals;
   d) creating a formal mentoring program to provide resources for junior faculty to learn about grant writing from more successful senior faculty;
   e) working with departments and building services to ensure older facilities are both habitable and fully functioning so as to maximize delivering the mission of the programs housed there;
f) ensuring newer structures are adequately maintained and
equipment/infrastructure that were promised to faculty must be delivered;
g) developing a relationship with facilities to be a liaison when there are
concerns;
h) work closely with Julia Iacono, the grants and contracts specialist in the
Office for Research and Economic Development, to address issues that come
up and move proposals to submission;
i) work with individual faculty members on cost-share requirements.

15. Create grant writing service for faculty, possibly through sharing with other
colleges/units on campus. The person filling this position (possibly shared with
another unit) will also aid faculty with reviewing the solicitation to make sure
all parts are addressed; reading proposals for consistency of language; and
advising on broader impacts of the proposal.

16. Work more effectively with the Office of Sponsored Research Implementation
Group.

17. Schedule regular meetings between the Research and Creative Works Committee,
Dean, and Associate Deans to determine ways they can provide more research
support to A&S.

Committee members:
William Euler, Chemistry
Carlos Garcia-Quijano, Anthropology
Annu Matthew, Art & Art History
Joan Peckham, Computer Science
Ryan Trimm, English
Yinjiao Ye, Communication Studies
Susana de los Heros, Languages
Nancy Eaton, College of A&S