

Minutes of the September 9, 2024 Meeting of the CELS Executive Council

Call to Order: A meeting of the College of the Environment and Life Sciences Executive Council was held at 10:00AM in CBL5 435. Members present were Department Chairs Becker, Boving, Brown, Chandlee, Forrester, Lane, Petersson, and E. Uchida; Associate Deans, Sartini, Townson, and Wilga; Faculty Secretary Rice and *ex-officio* members Dias, Palmer, Wilson, and York. Dean Kirby presided.

Approval of Minutes: *It was moved by Lane and seconded by Becker to approve the May 20, 2024 Minutes of the Executive Council. The minutes were approved unanimously as presented.*

Announcements:

Dean Kirby

1. It was announced at the Council of Deans that the next capital project will be new on-campus student apartments.
2. The University Master Plan is under review. All the CELS Farms were asked to be reviewed as part of the effort. All CELS stakeholders in the farms are encouraged to participate in the process.
3. Provost Barbara Wolfe was invited to Woodward for a walking tour. She inspected classrooms, some offices and the labs to gauge conditions.
4. Faculty position lines will be retained by the Provost and will pull back FTEs from the colleges in support of the new budget model.
5. Beginning this July 1, 2024 FTEs will be regulated by the Provost requiring a firm statement as to the source funding. The new budget model is fully in place.
6. Due to many faculty hires in the last decade, there is a strain put on the sabbatical application process with sabbatical applications potentially being denied if program delivery is deemed to be unduly impacted. *Chairperson Becker pointed out that a five-year planning exercise as part of workload planning can help with scheduling. Discussion ensued about the relationship between planning and requirements of the AAUP contract.*
7. Some departments are discussing reorganization to better avail of opportunities presented by the new budget model. *Discussion ensued with Chairperson Boving mentioning that retreats with a moderator are best means for discussing and developing successful reorganization. Dr. Christopher E. Lavan of the Office of Advancement of Teaching and Learning was mentioned as a skilled moderator.*

Associate Dean Wilga

1. There has been an 8% increase in CELS total research awards in the last year.
2. CELS has been receiving an effective Indirect Cost return rate on funded grants of only 25%.
3. About half of the grants awarded to CELS have off-campus rates associated with them due to the nature of our work. Investigators are reminded that in most cases planning, data analysis, and other functions most often make up over 50% of the grant activity, so On-Campus indirect cost rates should be the norm going forward, and extra scrutiny will be given to proposals per requirements of the new budget model.
4. *Dean Kirby interjected that the new university budget provided by the RI General Assembly & signed by the governor has the state Land Grant matching funds mentioned explicitly for the first time.*

Associate Dean Sartini

1. Information about J-term courses to be offered this upcoming ASAP
2. J-term courses may be a good opportunity for graduate student teaching.
3. J-term students may be good for students to retake in a differing learning format.
4. There is an ongoing call for 100-level courses to be lined up for on-line offerings.

5. Associate Dean Sartini is working with the URI Foundation to announce student scholarships earlier so that student awards of TAs & RAs can be allocated in a more timely manner.

Associate Dean Townson

1. There is a new IT website for CELS with a work order tag system that all should use. So far, the system appears to be working for those with up-to date computer operating systems.

Skip Wilson

1. URI has raised \$303M over the last 8 years, which is a record for any campaign.
2. There is no stop in fundraising, but there is a phenomenon of ‘campaign fatigue’ among donors
3. On September 26, there will be a donor recognition night at the Ryan Center
4. For endowed chairs, the college goal is \$8M per year; Each \$1M in endowment is now yielding only about \$35K per year.

Monica York

1. Now working on the CELS budget for the next fiscal year
2. The new Unit 2 budget coordinator is working on a backlog of indirect cost distributions
3. Working on a system of workload distribution among fiscal staff so that critical issues are identified dealt in a timely manner.
4. Reimbursements for student travel (>\$5k often abroad) on research grants can be put on PI’s T-card.
5. Faculty and CE-Staff should consult the business office beforehand about honoraria and keep formal lists of those to be paid for services in cooperative programming.
6. Refer to the slide presented at at the August 28, 2024 CELS All Faculty and Staff Meeting for workflow within the Business Office. The aim is increased responsiveness and efficiency.

Old Business:

1. There was no old business

New Business:

1. Chairperson Lane announced an NSF funded program to pair scientists with artists toward a goal of improving science communication. A reception to be held on September 12, and the Metcalf Institute is involved.

Adjournment: *It was moved & seconded to adjourn. The meeting was adjourned at 11:00am.*

Respectfully Submitted:

Michael A. Rice, CELS Faculty Secretary