

THE UNIVERSITY OF RHODE ISLAND

SEARCH FOR THE VICE PRESIDENT OF COMMUNITY, EQUITY, AND DIVERSITY

The University of Rhode Island

Kingston, Rhode Island

THE SEARCH

The University of Rhode Island (URI or the University) seeks an inspiring, collaborative, and solution-oriented leader to serve as its next Vice President for Community, Equity, and Diversity (VPCED). Reporting to the President, the VPCED will serve as the University's primary advisor on all issues related to community, equity, and diversity and aid in developing and sustaining an intellectually curious, welcoming, and diverse community of and for students, staff, and faculty. Working collaboratively across the campus community, they will assess and address needs that enhance the University experience for all constituents in order to advance the University's mission and strategic plan. As the University looks to its future growth, the VPCED will provide innovative leadership in the University's effort to cultivate diversity as an institutional asset and educational resource.

As a part of [URI's 2023-2033 Strategic Plan](#), President Parlange has made fostering an inclusive, people-centered culture a core priority. Indeed, URI is deeply committed to cultivating a diverse, inclusive, equitable, and accessible learning, living, and working environment. To do so, every member of the community must strive to ensure that the values of community, equity, and diversity are imbued in all that they do, from policies and programming to collaborations and conversations. Above all, URI's commitment centers actionable change to enhance and improve its vibrant intellectual community.

The URI community recognizes the seismic changes wrought by the social unrest stemming from increasing political polarization and racial, gender, and sexual discrimination and a global pandemic. They know that they must emerge ready to adapt to those changes and, even more, harness the opportunities they present by ensuring that they continue to promote collaboration, reward excellence, maintain flexibility, provide and support opportunities for personal and professional growth, and be responsive to new ideas so that the University may attract and retain the very best students, staff, and faculty. In this galvanizing time of change, the VPCED has an incredible opportunity to harness the energy of this current moment to guide the URI community into actualizing a more just and equitable future.

The University of Rhode Island has retained Isaacson, Miller, a national executive search firm, to assist with this search. All confidential inquiries, referrals, and nominations should be directed to the search firm as indicated at the end of the document.

THE UNIVERSITY OF RHODE ISLAND

The University of Rhode Island sits on the traditional land of the Narragansett people, past and present, and honors with gratitude the land itself and the people who have stewarded it throughout the generations.

Founded in 1888, URI has grown and evolved throughout its 150-year history, always seeking to serve the needs of the state and the students that it serves. Originally called Rhode Island College, the Rhode Island state legislature renamed the institution the University of Rhode Island in 1951.

Today, URI is the only public institution in Rhode Island that offers undergraduate, graduate, and professional students the distinctive educational opportunities of a major research university. The University has a committed and supportive faculty, with 86% of full-time faculty holding terminal degrees and with an overall student-to-faculty ratio of 16:1.

Since its inception, URI has remained a learner-centric institution, and the University works to provide students with a distinctive educational experience designed to meet the challenges of an increasingly connected global community. The University's core values include nurturing development from a holistic perspective; affirming intersecting identities; fostering cultural competence through transformative learning; advancing equity, inclusion, and diversity in a global community; and modeling honesty, integrity, and social justice.

The University of Rhode Island's main campus is in the historic village of Kingston, Rhode Island. Recognized on the National Register of Historic Places, the location is an idyllic place for students to thrive, located close to the ocean and 30 miles south of Providence. The main campus is 1,200 acres and is comprised of historically significant buildings and contemporary architecture. The Narragansett Bay Campus provides additional opportunities for academic exploration and houses the Graduate School of Oceanography.

Leadership

On August 1, 2021, Marc Parlange became the 12th President of the University of Rhode Island. Recognized internationally for his expertise in environmental fluid mechanics, Parlange's wide-ranging research in hydrology and climate change addresses several important issues, such as heat transfer in cities, energy dynamics in hurricanes, and water resource challenges in remote communities. Born in Rhode Island and with leadership experience on the international level, President Parlange will continue the transformation

of URI into a leading teaching and research institution. Prior to his appointment at the University of Rhode Island, Dr. Parlange served as the Senior Vice President and Provost at Monash University in Australia.

Since his appointment, President Parlange has worked with the Vice Presidents and other cabinet members to develop a new strategic plan. This new plan will be a singular university-wide initiative that will create a closely integrated set of goals and strategies to guide the next chapter in the story of URI. The new VPCED will serve as an important advisor for intentionally integrating equity and diversity in each part of the plan.

Academic Programs

The University of Rhode Island is comprised of eleven colleges and schools, nine of which are degree-granting: the College of Arts and Sciences, the College of Business, the Alan Shawn Feinstein College of Education and Professional Studies, the College of Engineering, the College of Environmental and Life Sciences, the College of Health Sciences, the College of Nursing, the College of Pharmacy, and the Graduate School of Oceanography, the University Libraries, and the University College for Academic Success.

The University offers a wide range of degrees. The most popular of URI's 97 undergraduate majors include psychology, kinesiology, nursing, communication studies, business, biological sciences, computer science, mechanical engineering, health studies, criminology and criminal justice, and human development and family studies. The University confers master's degrees in 66 programs and has a master's student population of 1,177 students and has 34 PhD programs enrolling 1,361 students. There has been an interest in and focus on expanding the offerings of the graduate programs and the master's programs to make use of the university's online learning technology.

For more information about academic programs, visit: <https://www.uri.edu/academics/>

The Student Body and Student Experience

The University of Rhode Island currently enrolls over 17,600 students, including over 14,000 undergraduates, 2,700 graduate students, and 1,200 certificate or non-degree-seeking students. It serves Rhode Island but also continually draws talented students from out of state. After Rhode Island, the top states represented in the student body include Massachusetts, Connecticut, New Jersey, and New York.

The University of Rhode Island serves hardworking and ambitious students. In the 2023-2024 academic year, URI received over 25,350 applications and admitted roughly 70% of applicants. Applications have increased steadily over the years despite increasing challenges for enrollment caused by the population decline in Rhode Island and the Northeastern United States more broadly. These application increases coincide with increases in student diversity, selectivity, and academic quality. There has been a significant investment in the Talent Development program, which recruits and serves Rhode Island high school

graduates from historically underrepresented backgrounds, and that cohort now represents 7% of the student body.

The total student population of URI for all degree programs is 70% White, 9.71% Hispanic or Latino, 5% Black or African American, 3.38% Asian, 2.8% Multiracial, 0.153% American Indian or Alaskan Native, and 0.068% Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander. Within the undergraduate community, 23% of students self-identify as people of color, 1 in 3 full-time first-year students are the first in their family to go to college, and the students represent 48 states and 76 countries. Last year, more than \$104 million in financial aid was awarded by URI and approximately 90% of students receive financial aid.

There are more than [150 active student organizations](#) at the University of Rhode Island from pre-professional, recreational, performing arts, Greek organizations, and civic-minded groups. The URI student senate, a group of elected undergraduate students, works closely with leaders across the student affairs division to create bridges between students and the administration and to ensure that there is student participation in the overall policy and decision-making process at the University.

For more information about campus life at URI, visit: <https://www.uri.edu/campus-life/>

THE VICE PRESIDENT OF COMMUNITY, EQUITY, AND DIVERSITY

Reporting directly to the President, the Vice President of Community, Equity, and Diversity will be the driving force behind developing, articulating, promoting, and measuring the effectiveness of a community, equity, and diversity strategy that comprehensively supports the University's mission and strategic plan, as well as its position as the flagship public institution for the state of Rhode Island and reputation as a leading national and global research university. They will serve as the President's eyes and ears on the ground, providing insight and guidance around existing issues and anticipating future issues to both ensure that all constituents feel safe and welcome on campus and weave the core values of community, equity, and diversity into every part of the University.

As the leader of the Office of Community, Equity, and Diversity, they will oversee a budget of approximately \$1.5 million and directly supervise the Assistant Vice President of Community, Equity, and Diversity, as well as an Executive Assistant. In addition, the VPCED provides strategic direction and oversight to the leaders of the [Gender and Sexuality Center](#), the [Women's Center](#), the [Multicultural Student Services Center](#), and the [Center for Military and Veteran Education](#), which serve to connect students to a number of community- and identity-based resources, contacts, programs, and supports. They will also support the work of six college-based Assistant Deans of Diversity in creating tailored programs, initiatives, and solutions that speak to the issues surrounding community, equity, and diversity within each subject area. Additionally, the VPCED will advise the Vice Presidents of each administrative division on matters pertaining to community, equity, and diversity, and assist each in developing self-sustaining knowledge and capabilities in order to effectively create and execute division-specific diversity-enhancing organizational policies and practices and measurable actions to infuse community, equity, and

diversity into undergraduate and graduate teaching, learning, and research. To aid in this work, the VPCED will also convene, engage, and partner with the [University Diversity Council](#), whose primary objective is to advise the Vice President on university-wide policies, procedures, and initiatives that community, equity, and diversity throughout the University. The 19-member Council is comprised of undergraduate and graduate students, staff, faculty, and alumni representatives.

KEY OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

Build a successful and sustainable Office of Community, Equity, and Diversity

Partnering with the Assistant Vice President of Community, Equity, and Diversity, as well as other stakeholders in the Office, the VPCED will ensure that the Office has sufficient resources, both fiscal and human, to be successful. With an entrepreneurial spirit, they will work to maximize existing resources while identifying other potential revenue streams and lucrative partnerships, both within and outside of the campus. They will assess the current programmatic offerings and, where necessary, work to better align initiatives and programs to create tangible outcomes. As an experienced manager, VPCED will bring exemplary organizational development skills to manage a team of high-performing, empowered, and motivated individuals. Beyond the central office, the VPCED will ensure that the four diversity-enhancing centers provide useful resources that respond directly to the needs of those specific campus groups.

Serve as a key advisor to University leadership on equity, diversity, and inclusion issues to develop actionable solutions

The VPCED will serve as a member of the University's senior leadership team as an advisor on emergent issues of community, equity, and diversity within the University, and both locally and nationally. As such, the VPCED must quickly work to be recognized as a reputable subject matter expert, able to advise and be an ambassador to multiple campus stakeholders in a wide range of administrative and academic matters. As a credible leader within the campus community, the VPCED will bring deep practical and theoretical knowledge of community, equity, and diversity issues and an appreciation of how they intersect with the core academic mission and the student experience. The VPCED must possess a deep understanding of the academy and stimulate important institutional discussions, posing challenging questions and insightful solutions on difficult topics. At the same time, they must be able to synthesize the core of those discussions into actionable solutions. This will require deep communications skills, including crisis management and conflict resolution. The VPCED must have a successful track record of working across a diverse range of constituents with varying levels of fluency around CED work, along with the ability to influence at all levels of the institution, and with an emphasis on action and accountability.

Work to ensure an inclusive and equitable campus environment and diverse community

The VPCED must curate a deep knowledge of the institutional and community needs around community, equity, and diversity to tailor strategies that are unique to the URI community and influenced by its history

and context. They will give a voice to those who are underserved by the University and work with the administration to proactively respond to community needs by identifying and dismantling systemic and institutional barriers that are inhibiting the community from realizing its full potential.

With other senior college and academic unit leaders, the VPCED will work to create decentralized and self-sustaining capacity in each unit in order to effectively execute programs and initiatives that work to foster the recruitment, development, and retention of faculty, staff, and students who have been historically underrepresented and disadvantaged within higher education. While representational diversity is by no means the apex of URI's community, equity, and diversity work, it is imperative that URI's student body, faculty, and staff are reflective of the rich diversity of Rhode Island. The VPCED will partner with campus leadership to support pipeline programming and targeted recruitment strategies to identify and increase diverse stakeholders in all campus categories. With a focus on retention, they must strive to create the conditions in which a myriad of stakeholders not only persist but thrive.

Create clear lines of institutional communication to ensure that all campus constituents understand the work happening now and celebrate progress

Since community, equity, and diversity touch all parts of URI's academic and social life, the VPCED must be a present and attentive leader and resource on campus. Creating clear lines of communication between the administration, the Office of Community, Equity, and Diversity, and the campus community on institutional progress toward shared community, diversity, and equity efforts will be central to their success. Acting as a voice for the community, the VPCED will ensure that URI's administration communicates in ways that speak to the ever-changing legal and regulatory landscape at the intersection of higher education and community, equity, and diversity work. It will be essential that the VPCED has experience in crisis and conflict management and is willing to partner with HR and administration on matters of academic and intellectual freedom.

The VPCED must be able to synthesize information from multiple stakeholders and provide a range of solutions to given issues. They will be adept at creating, maintaining, and improving efficient and transparent systems that facilitate the articulation of community, equity, and diversity priorities, accomplishments, and next steps while also providing opportunities for stakeholder feedback. To this end, the VPCED will serve as a connector and facilitator, bringing alignment and awareness to the many efforts taking place across the campus and celebrating URI's continued progress toward being a more equitable institution.

Develop methods and tools to assess and evaluate community, equity, and diversity strategies over time

With a deep and contemporary understanding of diversity and inclusion concepts and issues, the VPCED will employ a continuous-improvement approach to community, equity, and diversity assessment and evaluation that is data-driven and informed by theory and current best practices. Using analytics, and working alongside Institutional Research, they will establish metrics for success that are current and clear,

and they will ensure that community, equity, and diversity performance across campus is effectively tracked, contributing to the larger University mission, and in line with current state or federal mandates. When necessary, they will utilize data to communicate the necessity of new programs and processes to university leadership and to the campus community. Further, they will benchmark results against similar and aspirational universities and institutions to position URI on the cutting edge of the practice.

PROFESSIONAL AND PERSONAL QUALIFICATIONS

While no single candidate will likely have all the ideal qualifications, candidates should possess many of the following qualifications and characteristics:

Required Qualifications

- Master's degree from an accredited higher education institution;
- Demonstrated experience in a senior organizational leadership role related to workplace or institutional diversity, inclusion, and equity and community building;
- Demonstrated ability to work collaboratively with executive-level leadership and with decision-makers at multiple levels of an organization;
- Demonstrated administrative experience including supervision of professional staff, financial stewardship, and strategic planning;
- Demonstrated working knowledge of scholarly research and industry best practices regarding issues related to institutional access, diversity, multiculturalism, affirmative action, community building, and educational and workplace equity;
- Demonstrated understanding of the role of diversity, equity, and inclusion in supporting and enabling individual and organizational performance at a flagship, public, research-intensive university;
- Demonstrated understanding of individual and organizational performance management and measurement and the ability to generate, analyze, visualize, and effectively communicate diversity-related data to senior leaders and a wide range of organizational constituents;
- Demonstrated commitment to ensuring equal opportunity for individuals from underrepresented groups;
- Demonstrated ability to build boundary-spanning relationships across complex sets of individuals and organizations with the result of producing measurable performance outcomes;
- Demonstrated strong interpersonal and verbal communication skills;
- Demonstrated proficiency in written communication skills;

Preferred Qualifications

- PhD or equivalent degree and qualifications for a tenured or research faculty position, with a record of academic research and teaching accomplishments;
- Demonstrated professional, academic, or industry certifications;

- Demonstrated senior-level administrator experience in higher education;
- Demonstrated understanding of faculty tenure and promotion processes;
- Demonstrated publishing and scholarship in areas related to diversity, equity, and community and inclusion;
- Demonstrated verifiable public thought leadership in diversity, equity, and inclusion (e.g., organizational DEI consulting engagement, being featured in news or popular press, delivering DEI-related keynote addresses or providing expert witness testimony, awards or recognitions for DEI accomplishments, etc.);
- Demonstrated university teaching related to diversity, equity, and inclusion;
- Demonstrated higher education fundraising and donor-relations experience and/or experience applying for and obtaining grants and external funding.

TO APPLY

The University of Rhode Island has retained Isaacson, Miller, a national executive search firm, to assist in the search for the Vice President of Community, Equity, and Diversity. Confidential inquiries, nominations, referrals, and curricula vitae with letters of interest should be sent electronically to the following:

Donna Cramer, Partner
Angelo Alexander, Senior Associate
Ryan Smillie, Senior Search Coordinator
Isaacson, Miller

<https://www.imsearch.com/open-searches/university-rhode-island/vice-president-community-equity-and-diversity>

Electronic submission of application materials is strongly preferred.

It is the policy of the University of Rhode Island not to discriminate on the basis of race, sex, religion, age, color, creed, national origin, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, citizenship status, genetic information, marital status, aids/HIV and domestic abuse victim, homelessness or discriminate against disabled and Vietnam era veterans in the recruitment, admission or treatment of students, the recruitment, hiring or treatment of faculty and staff, and in the operation of its activities and programs, as specified by State and Federal Laws.