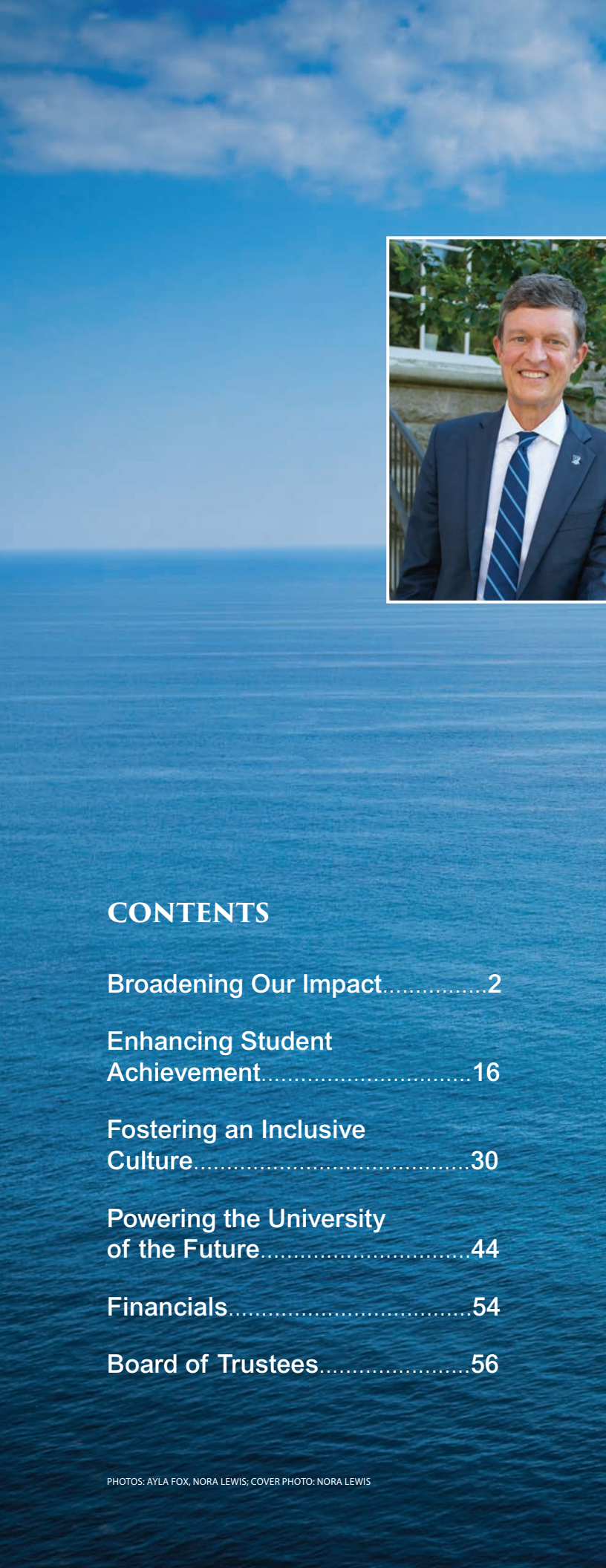


# FOCUS FORWARD

**PRESIDENT'S REPORT 2024**

THE  
UNIVERSITY  
OF RHODE ISLAND



## FROM THE PRESIDENT:

The University of Rhode Island has led an exciting year of growth, bolstered by a transformational period of exploring and building foundational blocks in everything from research and teaching to community and industry partnerships and philanthropy.

A year ago, we launched our 10-year strategic plan, a road map designed to help us navigate challenges, seize opportunities, and measure our success. This plan helped us set ambitious goals with a collective vision and commitment to increasing our impact on the state and in our communities; fostering a diverse, welcoming, and people-centered culture; supporting our students and faculty in their educational and research endeavors; and building a university equipped to meet the demands of a world that needs our leadership and innovation. I am pleased to share that we have made significant strides this past year, setting us on a positive trajectory for continued success.

### IMPACT REGIONALLY AND BEYOND

Our many achievements this year include the commencement of Phase II of the Narragansett Bay Campus revitalization project, supported by a \$100 million voter-approved bond. This initiative solidifies our leadership in the Blue Economy, helping us attract faculty, companies, and industry leaders to collaborate on innovative maritime endeavors. Work also began on our Fine Arts Center, made possible by a \$57.3 million bond, which, when complete, will support important creative endeavors of our students and faculty and serve as a gateway for the broader community to our Kingston Campus. We are also pursuing critical funding to help lead the state's life science initiatives, through an \$88.5 million bond to construct state-of-the-art biomedical science facilities for our faculty to conduct lifesaving research in areas of neuroscience and biotechnology. And finally, we are grateful for the state's \$65.8 million investment in our aging athletics facilities, which currently support championship-level student-athletes

and teams and provide vital services for the surrounding communities. This historic investment will bring much needed upgrades to several athletic and recreational areas of campus when work begins this fall.

Further sharing URI's impact on all Rhode Islanders, we hosted the second annual URI Day at the State House, with hundreds of attendees and participants from across the state and our campuses. We continued to raise the University's research enterprise through the successful federal funding of several faculty projects and partnerships, including the National Institute for Undersea Vehicle Technology. And we welcomed three accomplished educators and practitioners to leadership roles in Dean Kerry LaPlante in the College of Pharmacy, Dean Danny Willis in the College of Nursing, and Dean Patrick Vivier in the College of Health Sciences, who are actively shaping the impact URI has in critical areas of health-care research and practice. Building on this, the University will participate in a R.I. Senate-led study commission to explore the feasibility of establishing a public college of medicine at URI.

### A PEOPLE-CENTERED CULTURE

Our investments also extended to our students and greater community. We introduced new graduation traditions, including an inaugural fall commencement, enhancing our students' sense of belonging and fostering a stronger alumni network. Furthermore, initiatives such as the "Years of Service Program" have been instrumental in recognizing our staff's contributions to the University, reinforcing a positive living, learning, and working environment. And we reestablished and enhanced the Inclusive Excellence Awards, recognizing the diverse talent and contributions of everyone in the community.

Dedicated to making a URI education attainable and affordable for all, particularly in light of a challenging year with federal changes to student aid, I am proud that we awarded a record amount of student financial aid, more than \$150 million, including to Talent Development and Narragansett Scholarship students.

### A FOUNDATION FOR SUCCESS

We thank Gov. Dan McKee, Speaker of the House Joe Shekarchi, Senate President Dominick Ruggerio, and

members of the General Assembly for their renewed investment in URI. Building on the momentum of increased state support, we initiated the development of a new URI budget model. The framework for the model better aligns our resources with strategic priorities, promotes innovation, and diversifies our revenue streams. Extensive community collaboration has been vital in driving this transformative change for a model that ultimately helps enhance transparency and builds financial predictability and sustainability for the years to come. We also launched a pilot strategic investment initiative last year, which funded several new initiatives, including stackable and professional master's programs in arts and sciences, health sciences, and engineering, as well as admissions programming that has already seen remarkable success in attracting undergraduate applicants.

### LOOKING AHEAD

As we continue to implement our strategic plan, I am confident that URI will elevate its standing as a leading global research institution that drives positive social, economic, cultural, and environmental change. Our national notoriety continues to improve in many areas, including recognition as a "Best Value" school and a top school for veterans, and enhanced rankings for our engineering, undergraduate business, and nursing programs—the latter of which ranks among the top 10% in the nation.

Rhody pride runs deep, and I am continuously grateful for your support and commitment to our mission. I am excited to be the president of URI and a member of this remarkable community, and I am certain that, together, we are having a meaningful impact and building a university for the future.

Marc B. Parlange  
President, University of Rhode Island

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**Strategic Priority 1:**

# BROADENING OUR IMPACT

The University of Rhode Island’s commitment to creating transformative impact, both locally and globally, is redefining the role of the traditional flagship public research institution.

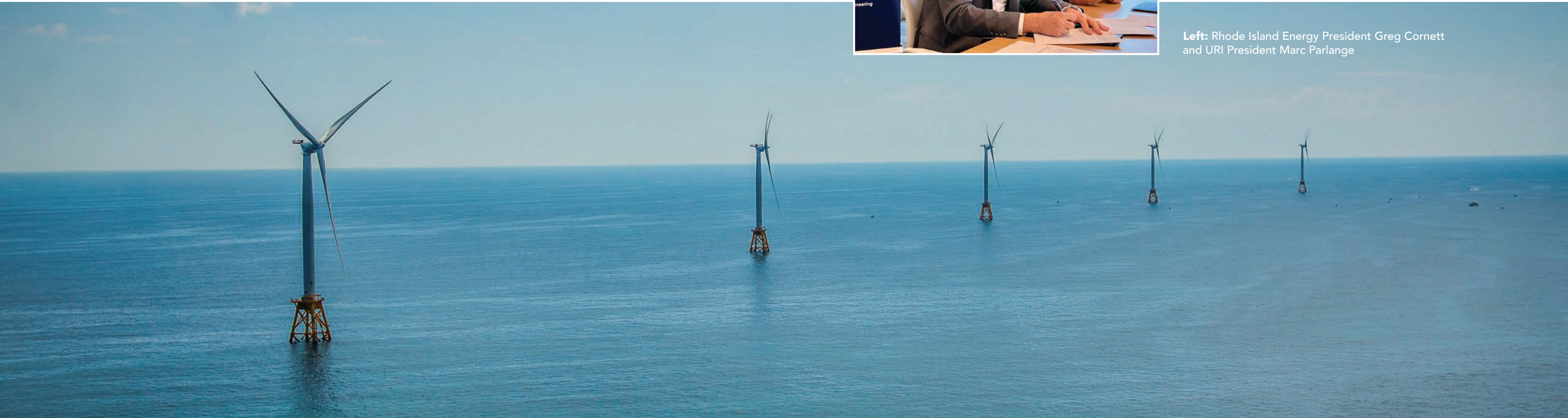
As a beacon of innovation and excellence, the URI community is at the forefront of addressing critical issues that shape our world. Through groundbreaking research on offshore wind, URI is pioneering sustainable energy solutions. In the fight against Alzheimer’s disease, our researchers bring renewed hope through advanced biomedical research and training. In the marine sciences, our studies on microplastics offer vital insights into

environmental and human health. The University’s work in measuring global respect for human rights underscores a commitment to social justice. And we are at the forefront of efforts to expand the workforce into quantum technologies, reflecting our dedication to leading in emerging fields.

Through these diverse and impactful endeavors, the University not only advances knowledge but also drives meaningful change, setting a new standard for how flagship public research universities can contribute to the betterment of society and the global human condition.



# EXAMINING THE EFFECTS OF OFFSHORE WIND



## URI and Rhode Island Energy partner to propel research

URI and Rhode Island Energy, a PPL company, announced a strategic partnership in June 2024 that will propel research in renewable energy, energy alternatives, and sustainability. In addition, the PPL Foundation launched the \$100,000 Brighter Futures scholarship to support URI students who are passionate about clean energy, sustainability, decarbonization, and grid reliability.

Left: Rhode Island Energy President Greg Cornett and URI President Marc Parlange

Under a new five-year agreement, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and URI are researching how offshore wind energy development affects marine ecosystems as well as those who live near, or work on, the ocean. The partnership leverages URI research, outreach, and education expertise and enables NOAA to more effectively respond to pressing and shared marine issues related to offshore wind energy development.

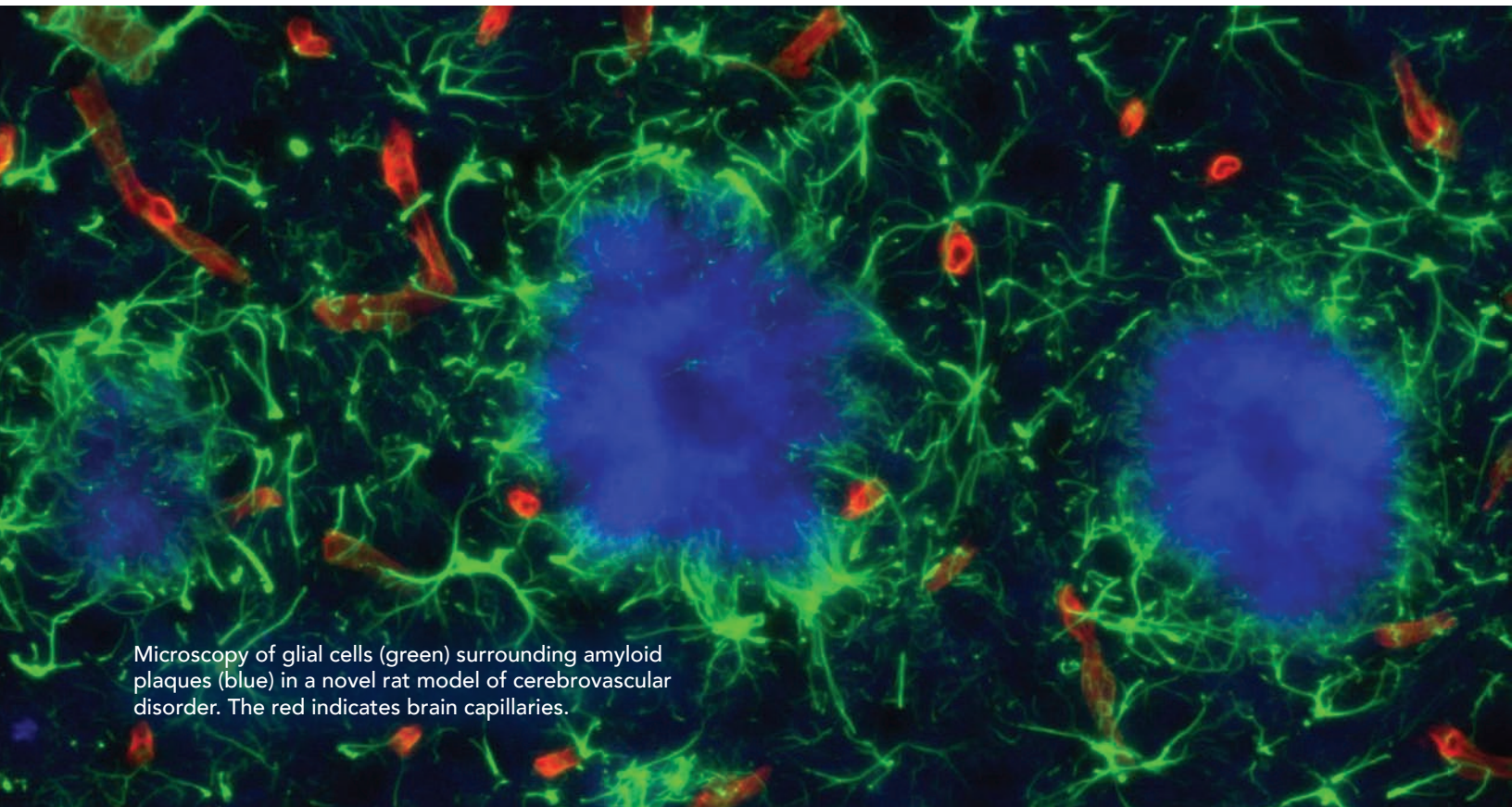
The collaboration is helping to ensure that offshore wind energy operations—key to the nation’s energy security—occur in a healthy, functioning ocean ecosystem that will support marine life, ocean livelihoods, and coastal communities throughout New England.

Through a separate five-year study funded by the U.S. Department of Energy, David Bidwell, associate

professor of marine affairs, is working directly with local communities to measure the effects of offshore wind energy development. Researchers are developing social impact markers for energy justice to measure whether the promise of offshore wind development is delivering for surrounding communities, especially marginalized and low-income communities.

PHOTOS: AXL/A FOX, URI PHOTO

## BRINGING NEW HOPE TO THE FIGHT AGAINST ALZHEIMER'S DISEASE



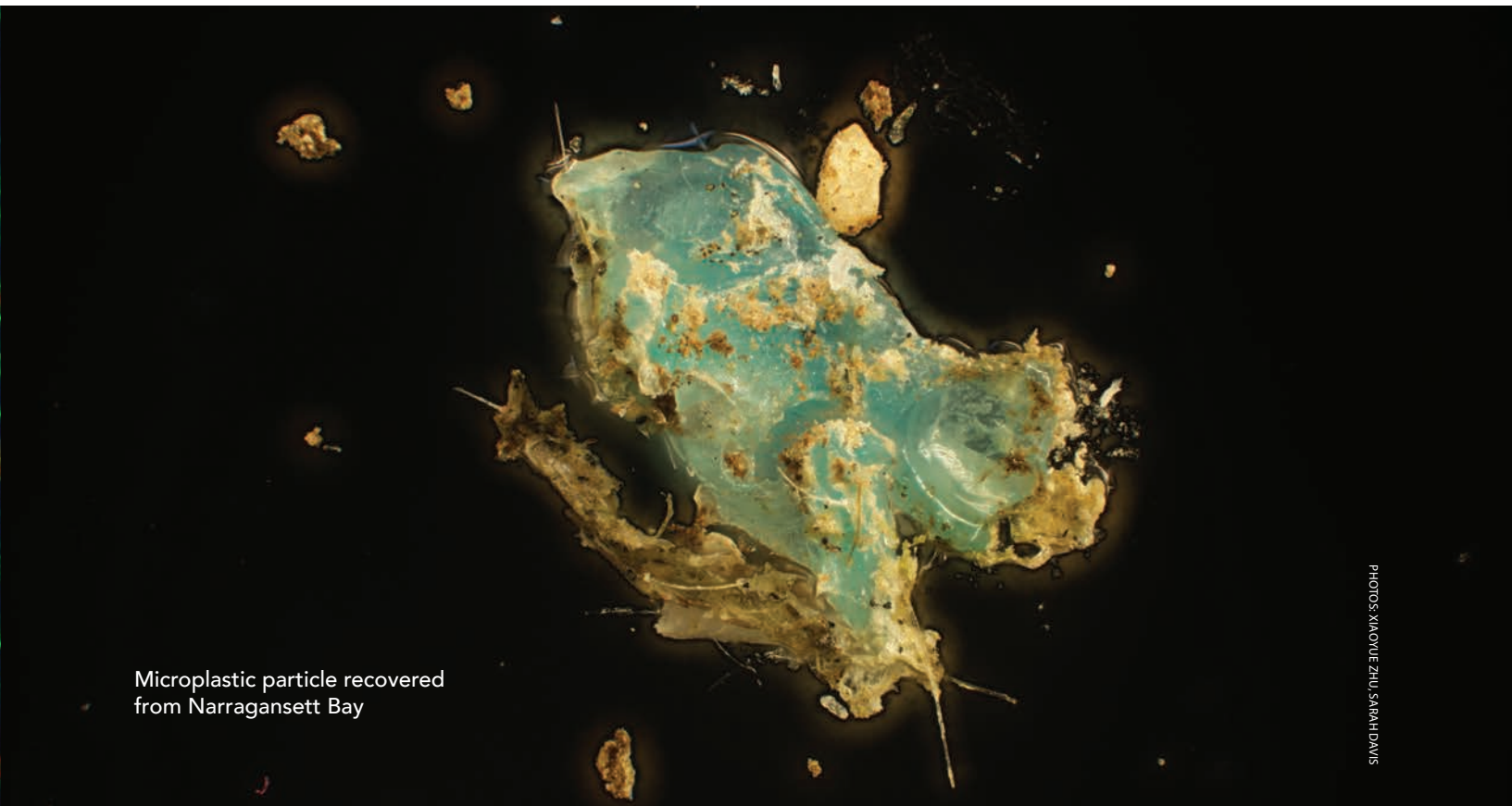
Microscopy of glial cells (green) surrounding amyloid plaques (blue) in a novel rat model of cerebrovascular disorder. The red indicates brain capillaries.

William Van Nostrand, co-executive director of the George & Anne Ryan Institute for Neuroscience at the University of Rhode Island, is part of an international consortium that is studying the brain's waste-clearing system as a contributor to cerebral amyloid angiopathy. The disorder causes brain bleeds and commonly occurs with Alzheimer's disease.

Increasing evidence suggests that a deficiency in brain clearance—the process by which the brain

flushes toxins and harmful waste—plays an important role in the disorder, yet there are fundamental unknowns as to how the process occurs. As the aging population increases, the occurrence of cerebral amyloid angiopathy also is increasing, but effective disease-modifying interventions are currently nonexistent. Better understanding the role of clearance will have major implications for helping to treat dementia disorders.

## UNCOVERING THE IMPACT OF MICROPLASTICS ON THE BODY



Microplastic particle recovered from Narragansett Bay

While the prevalence of microplastics and their negative impact on the environment is well-known, Jaime Ross and fellow URI researchers are studying the potential health impacts of microplastics on mammals. Ross, an assistant professor of biomedical and pharmaceutical sciences, and her team are focused on neurobehavioral effects and inflammatory response to exposure to microplastics, as well as the accumulation of microplastics in tissues, including the brain. They have

found the infiltration of microplastics in the body of mammals is as widespread as it is in the environment, leading to behavioral changes, especially in older test subjects.

Ross says future research will help to understand how plastics may change the ability for the brain to maintain its homeostasis or how exposure may lead to neurological disorders and diseases, such as Alzheimer's disease.

PHOTOS: XIAOYUE ZHU, SARAH DAVIS

# MEASURING HUMAN RIGHTS GLOBALLY



A new report that grades all the countries of the world on their respect for human rights paints a grim picture of human rights practices in the 21st century. Produced by the Global Rights Project, a research team based in the University of Rhode Island Center for Nonviolence and Peace Studies, the report draws on a vast quantitative human rights dataset and finds that approximately

60% of the world's countries receive a failing grade of "F" in their respect for human rights, while only 20% receive a grade of "A" or "B."

Report grades are based on the extent to which countries respect a suite of 25 individual human rights, including physical integrity rights, such as freedom from torture or political imprisonment;

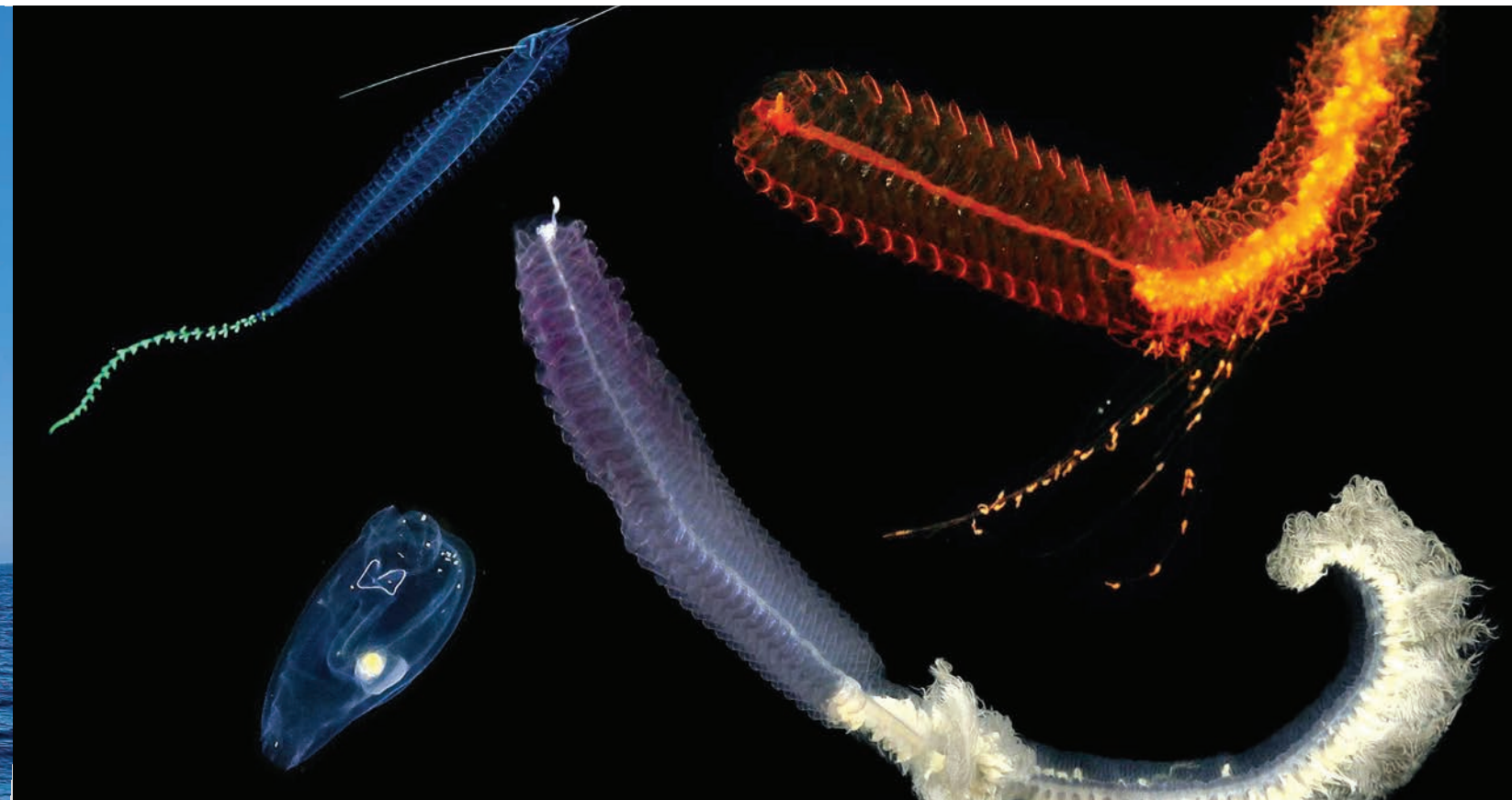
empowerment rights, such as freedom of speech and assembly; worker rights, such as the right to unionize and freedom from child labor; and justice rights, such as the right to a fair trial. Researchers say it has been more than 40 years since there has been an annual human rights report card for all nations of the world.

**Above:** Tibetan prayer flags fly on the Quad during International Day of Peace. URI's Center for Nonviolence and Peace Studies organizes a celebration and cultivation of peace each September in recognition of this day.

PHOTO: NORA LEWIS

# RESHAPING MARINE EXPLORATION AND RESEARCH

**Left:** ROV SuBastian with rotary actuated dodecahedron (RAD-2) mounted on the front and about to be lowered into the sea  
**Right:** Composite image of gelatinous deep-sea animals observed and sampled in the study



A multidisciplinary research team led by principal investigator Brennan Phillips, URI associate professor of ocean engineering, has successfully demonstrated new technology that can obtain preserved tissue and high-resolution 3D images within minutes of encountering some of the most fragile animals in the deep ocean.

These revolutionary advancements in underwater imaging, robotics, and genomic

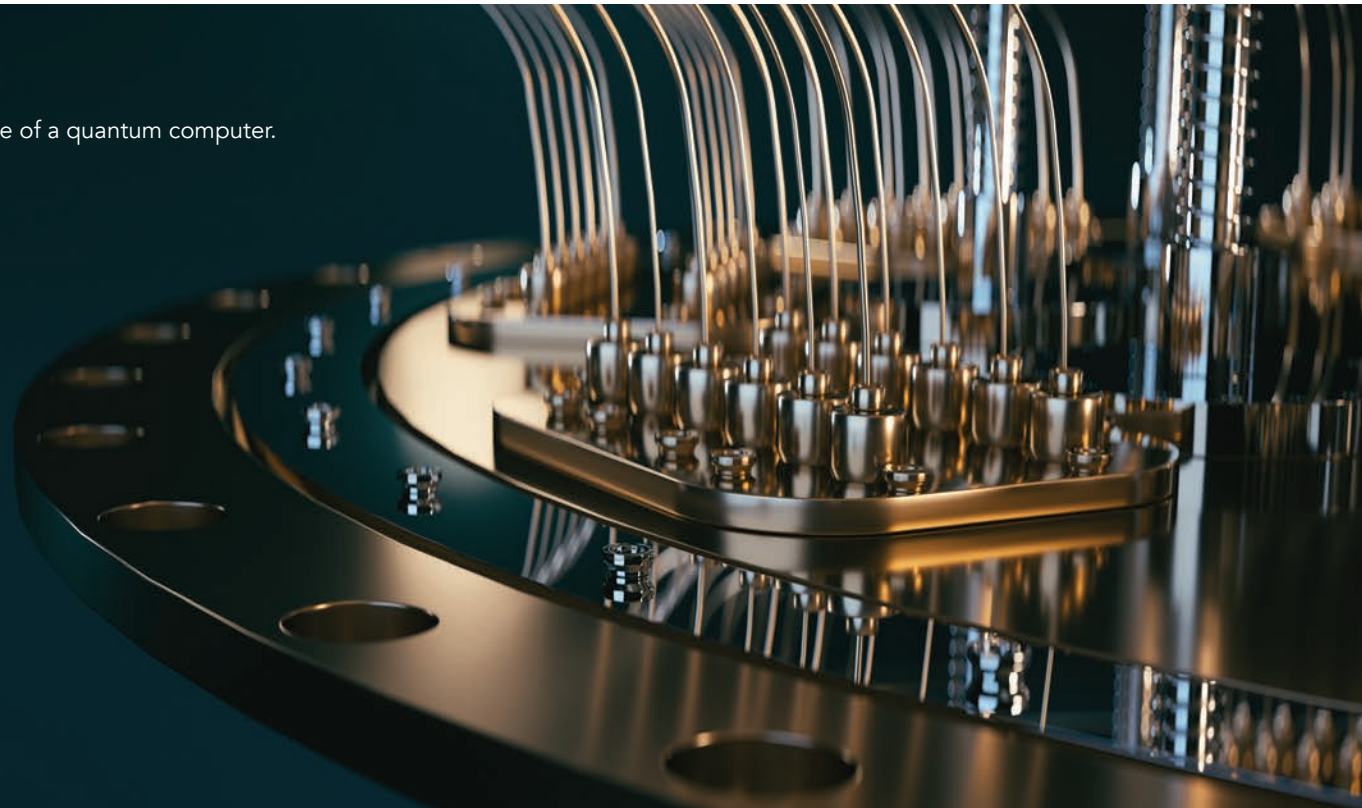
sequencing are reshaping marine exploration, shaving years from the process of determining whether a new or rare species has been discovered. Researchers were able to show that within minutes of an encounter with a deep-sea animal, it is possible to capture detailed measurements and motion of the animal, obtain an entire genome, and generate a comprehensive list of genes being

expressed that point to their physiological status in the deep ocean.

Information gained from the study—and others that follow—could be useful for extinction prevention studies. The work also responds to the growing call among researchers for compassionate collection, which minimizes harm to animals by using advanced technologies to collect information.

PHOTOS: COURTESY OF BRENNAN PHILLIPS, COURTESY OF ROV SUBASTIAN SCIENCE CAMERA, SCHMIDT OCEAN INSTITUTE

An example of a quantum computer.



## EXPANDING THE WORKFORCE INTO QUANTUM TECHNOLOGIES

Quantum computers, which can perform specific tasks millions of times faster than today's fastest supercomputers, have the ability to revolutionize technology, impacting countless industries. And while wide commercial use of quantum computers may still be a decade away, a shortage of skilled workers is already being felt.

To address the talent gap, URI is teaming with MITRE Corp. on an initiative to help professionals with STEM experience build the skills and knowledge needed to transition into careers in quantum information science and technology.

URI is among an inaugural group of just 27 U.S. higher education institutions that have been selected

for a new National Science Foundation (NSF) program that aims to grow and diversify the workforce in key emerging technologies.

URI launched one of the first master's degree programs in quantum computing in 2021 and has established a research partnership with IBM that provides students and faculty with access to IBM's cutting-edge quantum computing systems, while also adding faculty and postdoctoral researchers. Through the NSF initiative, URI is building on its established online quantum computing graduate certificate program and is working to expand opportunities for professionals from under-represented communities.



### URI formalizes partnership with Australia's Flinders University in support of AUKUS pact

The agreement, signed by URI President Marc Parlange and Flinders President and Vice Chancellor Colin Stirling, positions URI as the United States' university leader in support of AUKUS, a security pact signed by the governments of the United States, Australia and the United Kingdom, and opens the door for collaborative research and education programs. A delegation from the Australian university met with URI faculty and researchers, as well as representatives from the U.S. Navy and other URI partners, during the two-day visit.



### URI's Aria Mia Loberti makes her debut in *All the Light We Cannot See*

Marie-Laure LeBlanc—a blind teenager in Nazi-occupied France during World War II—is at the center of Anthony Doerr's novel *All the Light We Cannot See*. For URI alumna Aria Mia Loberti, who brings Marie-Laure to life in a Netflix limited series based on the novel, the role is not just one of a lifetime, but her first role ever. It is also a role she was born to play. She won the part over thousands of hopefuls after a worldwide search for blind and low-vision actresses.



### URI's College of Nursing among best in the nation

The College of Nursing's programs are ranked among the best in the nation, according to *U.S. News & World Report's* latest rankings. For the second year, the college's Bachelor of Science in nursing program is tied at No. 67 out of 656 programs, placing it in the top 10 percent of nursing programs across the country. Its Doctor of Nursing Practice program is tied at No. 66 of 354 nursing schools across the country; while its master's program ranks among the top 50 in the nation, slotting in at No. 48 among 603 nursing schools surveyed.

PHOTOS: ISTOCK.COM/BARTLOMIEJ WROBLEWSKI, NORA LEWIS, COURTESY OF NETFLIX



# LEADING IN BIOMEDICAL RESEARCH AND TRAINING

## URI's College of Pharmacy ranks among top 10 percent in U.S. in total research grant funding

The College of Pharmacy is now ranked among the top 10 percent of pharmacy schools in the nation in total research grant funding after securing more than \$21 million in funds in 2022–23. The research funding places URI atop the list of all pharmacy schools in the Northeast, according to the American Association of Colleges of Pharmacy.

TOP 10%



For more than two decades, the Rhode Island IDeA Network of Biomedical Research Excellence (RI-INBRE), headquartered on the University of Rhode Island's Kingston Campus, has nurtured a vibrant community of researchers dedicated to advancing biomedical science at academic institutions across Rhode Island. Earlier this year, the program secured a five-year, \$21 million grant—raising RI-INBRE's investment in

biomedical research and training in the state to more than \$100 million since 2001.

Since its inception, RI-INBRE has supported 802 research projects involving 218 faculty members, who have trained 2,210 undergraduate students, graduate students, and postdoctoral fellows at URI, Bryant University, Brown University, Rhode Island College, Community College of Rhode Island, Providence

College, Roger Williams University, Johnson & Wales University, and Salve Regina University.

Originally created to support biological, chemical, and pharmaceutical sciences, the program has expanded to include neuroscience, engineering, biotechnology, nursing, and other health and environmental sciences. As the disciplines and research investment have expanded, so has RI-INBRE's impact on biomedical science

and job growth in the state—this includes developing a workforce development program in coordination with the Rhode Island Department of Labor and Training to offering intensive biomedical skills training and establishing the program's Centralized Research Core Facility on URI's Kingston Campus. The facility offers access to state-of-the-art research equipment for academic and industry investigators across the state.



**Strategic Priority 2:**

# ENHANCING STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

At the University of Rhode Island, we are committed to cultivating an active and engaged learning environment where students are empowered to shape their own academic journeys. Our approach centers on providing robust resources and support that emphasize inclusion, well-being, and holistic development.

By renewing opportunities through increased access to education, we ensure that every student can achieve their full potential. Our focus on preparing students who are leading the way reflects our dedication to excellence and leadership. We actively engage students in foreign language excellence and

provide enriching opportunities abroad, expanding their global perspectives and experiences. Celebrating our graduates underscores our commitment to their success and achievement. Additionally, our efforts to foster environmental stewardship highlight our dedication to sustainable practices and responsible global citizenship.

In this vibrant community, students are not only encouraged to excel academically but are also supported in their personal growth and development, preparing them to make meaningful contributions to society and the world.

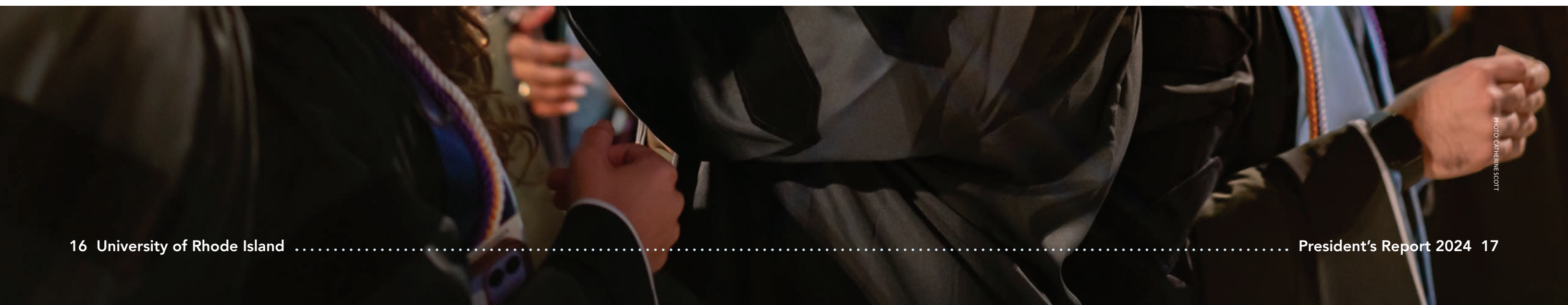


PHOTO: CATHERINE SCOTT

# RENEWING OPPORTUNITY

# 26,900

URI receives record number of first-year applications

Interest in the University of Rhode Island has soared to new levels as the University received a record 26,900 first-year undergraduate applications for the fall 2024 semester, a notable increase from the previous year's total of 25,391 applications.



Over the course of the COVID-19 pandemic, approximately 775 students who were in good academic standing left the University. For some, the challenges of online school or wearing masks meant that it was just not the right time for them to attend. They were not alone. In Rhode Island, several thousand students in kindergarten through grade 12 stopped attending school over the same period.

At URI, the Office of Enrollment Services has made a concerted effort to reconnect with students to help them consider their next steps and remind them they are still part of the University.

Students are offered a free coaching session to help bring perspective to the experience and a chance to reflect on both the decision to leave and what a re-entry plan might look like. Other campus supports and

activities are added as needed to promote a sense of belonging and readiness for academic success.

Since the program began in 2023, more than 50 students have returned to the University, with several more in the process or consideration stage.

PHOTO: NORA LEWIS

# PREPARING STUDENTS WHO ARE LEADING THE WAY



As the top finishers in the Global Sustainability Supply Chain Case Competition sponsored by the United Nations Group of Friends of Sustainable Transport, URI College of Business students played a major role in helping to solve real-world supply chain and sustainability problems.

The competition, which was held virtually over the fall semester, attracted 250 students from more

than 30 colleges and universities from around the world. Out of a field of 71 teams, Jose Gonzalez '24 and Maya Casagrande '25 won the gold in the paired-teams category, and Noah Blake '25 and Emily Tingley '24 earned the bronze. Both URI teams were paired with students from Beijing Wuzi University in China. Gonzalez and Casagrande's team also earned bronze in the Best Sustainable Solutions category.

Student teams were able to choose from a half-dozen case studies that outlined real sustainability challenges faced by local and international companies. Casagrande and Gonzalez's team chose a case involving Babemax, a Chinese retailer in maternity and infant products and included steps the company could take to reduce its carbon footprint. Blake and Tingley chose a case study

that involved efficiently integrating the use of electric vertical takeoff and landing aircraft in the Chicago metro area to transport cargo from the city's two airports.

PHOTO: JINI PHOTO

# FURTHERING FOREIGN LANGUAGE EXCELLENCE ABROAD



## URI undergraduate awarded Obama-Chesky Voyager Scholarship

Jasmin Valdivieso Sanches, a rising junior majoring in political science and gender and women's studies, is one of only 100 students nationally to earn the competitive Obama-Chesky Voyager Scholarship from the Obama Foundation. She is the second URI student to win the scholarship in its first two years.



Ten URI undergraduate students were selected to receive the prestigious Benjamin A. Gilman International Scholarship, which enables American students to gain proficiency in diverse languages and cultures, skills that are critically important to their academic and career development. The program, sponsored by the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs,

makes it possible for students of limited financial means to study or intern abroad. Its mission is to develop a generation of future American leaders who represent the rich diversity of the nation and have the international networks and skills to advance U.S. national security and economic prosperity.

URI's 2024 Gilman recipients include Dakota Watjen, Joceline Rodrigues, Joshua Amo, Sara Hamada

Mohamed, Jeremy Herrera Santos, Alexander Tsang, Fin Maloney, Amadou Kaba, and Patricia China. Over the past two decades, URI has produced more than 100 Gilman scholars, placing it among the top 20 institutions recognized for their support of equity, diversity, and accessibility in study abroad for American students through the program.

**Above:** Students climbing the Xunantunich Mayan ruins, Cayo District, Belize.

PHOTOS: COURTESY MARIO SUJUAN, COURTESY JASMIN VALDIVIESO SANCHES

# FOSTERING ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP

**Below:** Anya Hanson, director, URI Research Diving and Safety Program, captured this image of a student descending next to a boiler reef while on a faculty-led program for AFS/ART 395- Underwater Photography and Film in Bermuda.



Six URI sophomores were awarded the nationally competitive National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's (NOAA) Ernest F. Hollings Undergraduate Scholarship for 2024. The award is the most prestigious scholarship granted to undergraduates in the marine and atmospheric sciences.

This year's URI recipients: Mary Brantley, a member of the Honors Program and a marine biology major from Charlotte, North Carolina; Grace Dandeneau, a

marine biology and animal science major from Foster, Rhode Island; Alec Duffy, a marine biology major from Elon, North Carolina; Grace First, a marine biology major from Canton, Connecticut; Nicole Kobasa, a member of the honors program and a marine biology major from Mansfield, Massachusetts; Brooklyn Mitchell, a marine biology and wildlife and conservation biology major from Westerly, Rhode Island.

The Hollings Scholarship program aims to increase undergraduate training in oceanic and atmospheric science, promote public support for environmental stewardship, and prepare students for careers in public service at agencies like NOAA.

This marks the 16th consecutive year that URI students have been named Hollings scholars. Since the start of the program in 2005, 48 URI sophomores have been awarded a Hollings Scholarship.

PHOTO: ANYA HANSON

# BUILDING ATHLETIC SUCCESS

**Below:** Rhode Island men's track and field 2024 Atlantic 10 champions.



Rhode Island men's track and field collected its fourth straight Atlantic 10 outdoor track-and-field title and eighth consecutive conference crown during the 2024 spring season. Nine different Rams collected gold medals at the championship. Head coach Trent Baltzell was named Coach of the Year for the third straight outdoor championship. The team also had five student-athletes

featured on the Atlantic 10 outdoor all-rookie team—the most of any school.

Rhode Island women's rowing won its 10th Atlantic 10 championship in program history in thrilling fashion in May, with the result coming down to the final event. The team secured the conference's automatic bid to the NCAA Championship. Nine members of the team also

received national scholar-athlete recognition from the Collegiate Rowing Coaches Association.

The University of Rhode Island club sailing team capped off a successful race season with a trip to the national championship and a handful of regional post-season awards, including coach of the year honors for first-year coach Joakim Karlsen, and first-team all-division honors.

PHOTO: MIKE SCOTT

# CELEBRATING OUR GRADUATES



## URI confers more than 4,700 degrees during three days of moving celebrations

Spring 2024 Commencement speaker Viola Davis shared the importance of “planting embers” and encouraged graduates to make others’ lives better. Davis’ keynote address was one of several memorable moments as the University conferred more than 4,700 degrees in ceremonies at the Ryan Center. Eight student speakers addressed the challenges of COVID-19 and honored their classmates’ resilience and accomplishments, while President Marc Parlange encouraged graduates to carry hope and their Rhody pride with them always.



During the 2023-24 academic year, the University of Rhode Island introduced a new fall Commencement ceremony to celebrate undergraduate and graduate students who complete degree requirements during the fall semester.

Many of the approximately 800 students who complete studies in the fall are employed or in graduate school at the time of the traditional May Commencement ceremonies and may not have the

flexibility to return to Kingston. On average, more than 90 percent of URI graduates are employed or pursuing graduate studies within six months of their URI graduation, according to a survey of recent graduates.

The well-attended and energetic new celebration introduces a new tradition and provides a more immediate opportunity for graduates and families to celebrate their achievement.

“Without this ceremony I would have had to wait another six months, and I am not sure I would have come back. It is great to be a part of it today—part of a meaningful graduation.”

—Jossue Hernandez, fall '23 graduate

PHOTOS: CATHERINE SCOTT/URI PHOTO





**Strategic Priority 3:**

# FOSTERING AN INCLUSIVE CULTURE

At URI, we are dedicated to cultivating a diverse, equitable, and inclusive community where every member's uniqueness is celebrated and valued. Our vibrant and connected community fosters a culture of excellence and generosity, rooted in the belief that inclusivity strengthens our collective achievement.

We are committed to building connections and promoting STEM education, ensuring that current and future students have access to cutting-edge opportunities. By celebrating milestones, we honor the achievements and contributions of our community members. Our

focus on honoring inclusive excellence drives us to create and implement more inclusive curricula, reflecting diverse perspectives and experiences. And we provide targeted opportunities in bioengineering and biosciences for students from underrepresented communities, paving the way for greater representation and innovation in these fields.

Through these efforts, the University is not only enriching the academic experience but also reinforcing a culture of giving back, where every individual has the support to thrive and contribute meaningfully to society.



# ENSURING COASTAL ACCESS FOR COMMUNITIES OF COLOR

“Coastal access is an important issue in Rhode Island. It’s a political matter. Fishing is meant for Rhode Islanders of all colors and backgrounds.”

—Melva Treviño Peña, assistant professor, sustainable agriculture and food systems



URI researchers are examining ways to reframe coastal fishing access in the Ocean State, particularly for marginalized ethnic and racialized communities. Led by Melva Treviño Peña, assistant professor of sustainable agriculture and food systems, the team plans to document the experiences of Rhode Island’s communities of color so their perspectives can be taken into account when it comes to decision-making regarding coastal access.

Joined by partners at the Center for Southeast Asians of Rhode Island and the Refugee Dream Center and funded through Rhode Island Sea Grant, the team also aims to understand how such communities can improve food security and overall well-being by fishing and consuming fish caught along Rhode Island’s coast. The hope is that their findings will lead to new policies geared toward reducing barriers to coastal access for all Rhode Islanders.

In the year ahead, Treviño Peña and the team will begin direct research at coastal sites across the state, working to create a better picture of who’s fishing in Rhode Island today and why—and helping to ensure their voices are heard in policy discussions and that important information is reaching them.

PHOTO: RHODE ISLAND SEA GRANT

# BUILDING CONNECTIONS AND PROMOTING STEM EDUCATION



## Fifteen URI students receive Black Scholar Awards for outstanding achievement

Fifteen University of Rhode Island students, including two graduate students, were honored for their academic and community achievements at the University's 26th annual Black Scholar Awards. Since its founding, the program has recognized hundreds of students who have made outstanding contributions to the University, state, and nation. This year's event featured the highest number of nominees and nominations.



Scientists at the University of Rhode Island College of Pharmacy are working with high school students around the state, teaching them about natural therapeutic plants and herbal medicines, while helping stimulate interest in science, technology, engineering, and math disciplines among the next generation of scholars.

The Hands-on Education and Research for Biomedical and Analytical Learning program curriculum includes a virtual lab designed by computer science students at URI. Funded by a five-year, \$1.35 million award from the National Institutes of Health, the college is designing scientific experiments and virtual reality lab simulations to familiarize students with research and modern lab settings.

The program allows high school students to conduct virtual experiments in their classrooms and science labs, investigating plants that have medicinal properties. Students can take the first steps in being able to extract molecules and test them for biological activities that may have human health benefits. Virtual experiences are then followed up with real-life experiences on URI's Kingston Campus.

PHOTOS: NOVA LEWIS, URI PHOTO

## GIVING THANKS, CELEBRATING MILESTONES

“Our faculty and staff form the fabric of our University. Whether you’ve worked here for five years or 50 years, every day you come to work is a day you improve our community.”

—URI President Marc B. Parlange



The University launched a new tradition during the spring semester—celebrating employees for milestones of service at several points of tenure. President Marc Parlange and Provost and Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs Barbara Wolfe joined employees at a special ceremony recognizing the shared contributions of staff and faculty who have been employed at URI consecutively and achieved five-year milestones.

The new program adds to the University’s lifetime service awards program. Emerging from a global pandemic, executive leaders at URI wanted to offer more opportunities to bring employees together, promote collaboration and fellowship, reward excellence, and express gratitude for commitment to URI.

**Above:** Commemorative bricks at the entrance to the Robert L. Carothers Library and Learning Commons are engraved with Lifetime Service Society member names and years of service honoring their 40 years of employment and dedication to the URI community.

PHOTO: NORA LEWIS

# HONORING INCLUSIVE EXCELLENCE



The late Earl Smith III, former associate dean in the College of Arts and Sciences.



The late Earl Smith III was honored in 2024 by students, colleagues, and friends with the University of Rhode Island’s first-ever Inclusive Excellence Lifetime Achievement Award. The award was one of 10 presented during the University’s Inclusive Excellence Awards dinner and ceremony. Before his death in March 2022, Smith served for more than 20 years as associate dean in the College of Arts and Sciences, where he promoted student engagement, retention, and success by develop-

ing and implementing initiatives to support academic advising, career development, and student well-being. This year’s honorees were selected from dozens of nominations submitted by peers from across campus for demonstrating and promoting inclusion in community leadership, academic excellence, and service at the University.

Among those honored were Jacqui Springer, for Staff/Administrative Excellence; Melva Treviño

Peña for Faculty Excellence in Research; Amanda Missimer for Faculty Excellence in Community; Hanan Mogawer for Faculty Excellence in Inclusive Teaching; Brothers On a New Direction for Undergraduate Student Organization Excellence; Megan Hughes for Undergraduate Student Academic Excellence; Cristóbal Bustos for Undergraduate Student Community Excellence; Priscilla Peña for Graduate Student Academic Excellence; and Satya

Sullivan and Lauren Zane for Graduate Student Community Excellence.

“Their commitment to making URI a place where everyone feels empowered to work, learn, and thrive is something that I hope each of us can learn from and act on in our everyday lives,” said Michelle Fontes, assistant vice president for Community, Equity and Diversity, of the honorees.

PHOTOS: MORIA LEWIS

# CREATING AND IMPLEMENTING MORE INCLUSIVE CURRICULUMS



## Nursing professor part of international panel addressing gender inequalities in cancer care

Erica Liebermann, assistant professor of nursing, is playing a key role in addressing disparities in care as part of the Lancet Commission on Women, Power, and Cancer. The commission seeks to eliminate gender inequality by fostering health systems, cancer workforces, and research ecosystems that are more inclusive and responsive to the needs of women, reducing the global burden of cancer.



Tashal Brown, assistant professor of urban education and secondary social studies, is researching the influence of anti-Blackness in U.S. education in an effort to promote comprehensive representations of Black experiences in middle and high school curriculums. Her research will explore curricula that neglect Black histories and cultures, often portraying Blackness through a lens

of trauma that harms Black students by denying their humanity, promoting deficit narratives, and distorting or prohibiting teaching Black history.

Brown is one of 25 applicants—from over 240 nationally—to be awarded a prestigious and highly competitive National Academy of Education Spencer Postdoctoral Fellowship for her project. As part of

the project, she is collaborating with Black educators from Rhode Island’s urban middle and high schools to collect and analyze data through a critical race theory lens, to formulate interventions for educational environments where Black histories, cultures, and literacies are affirmed and valued.

PHOTOS: MOIRA LEWIS, SUBMITTED PHOTO

# ATTRACTING UNDERREPRESENTED STUDENTS TO THE BIOSCIENCES



Students in the first cohort of the Enhancing Science, Technology, EnginEering, and Math Educational Diversity (ESTEEMED) program.

The URI Enhancing Science, Technology, EnginEering, and Math Educational Diversity program, led by associate professor Samantha Meenach, was established in fall 2023 and aims to help students from underrepresented groups pursue studies in undergraduate bioengineering and bioscience research programs and eventually apply to graduate school in these disciplines. Meenach is the Victor Baxt Endowed Professor in chemical engineering and holds a dual appointment in pharmacy.

The program is an initiative of the National Institutes of Health and is funded through a four-year NIH grant. The goal is to enroll up to 10 URI students each year. Scholars participate in the program through their first two years at URI, which include a summer bridge program, academic-year training and research activities, and early exposure to biomedical research. Students will advance through increasingly sophisticated activities to provide them with a chance

to engage in mentored bioengineering and biomedical research, develop and hone technical skills, and fully realize their scientific identity. Together with numerous community-building activities, the program will instill in students a sense of personal belonging and engagement within the STEM community and promote participation toward advanced degree programs.



PHOTOS: NORA LEWIS, SUBMITTED PHOTO



**Strategic Priority 4:**

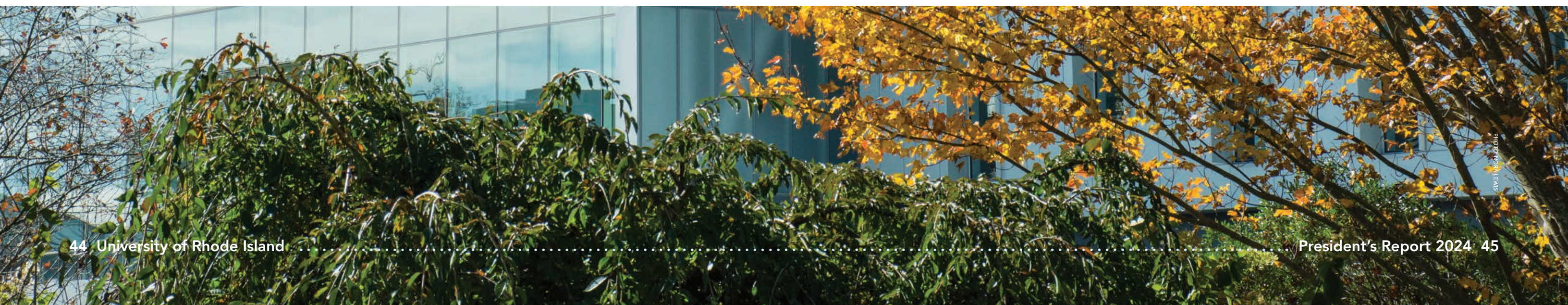
# POWERING THE UNIVERSITY OF THE FUTURE

Our commitment to long-term success drives us to invest in and implement cutting-edge administrative and financial practices that will transform URI into a high-performing, fiscally sound, and agile institution.

By rewarding innovation and collaboration, we cultivate an environment where creative solutions and teamwork are recognized and encouraged. Our focus on building success extends beyond our campuses, through partnerships and alumni engagement that encourages philanthropic support to advance our mis-

sion. Leading by example in energy resources, we are pioneering sustainable practices that reflect our dedication to environmental stewardship and operational efficiency. Our commitment to fostering resilience and preparedness ensures that URI is well-equipped to adapt to future challenges and seize new opportunities.

These initiatives are integral to developing the physical facilities and infrastructure necessary to support our ambitious vision, positioning URI as a model of excellence and sustainability in higher education.





# REWARDING INNOVATION AND COLLABORATION

**Below:** Innovation and inclusivity was the focus of the inaugural Inclusive Innovation Conference hosted on URI's Kingston Campus by the College of Business and Tribe Academy in June. The event convened about 200 of the region's corporate, startup, nonprofit, and education innovators to discuss how to build a more inclusive future.



The University launched an initiative to transition to a new budget model, modernizing from the existing incremental model. The initiative is designed to ensure the long-term financial sustainability of URI by aligning resources and decision-making authority, establishing incentives for operational efficiency, and diversifying revenue streams. The new model will better inform resource allocation and position URI to

fulfill its teaching, research, and service missions as one of the nation's leading public flagship universities.

Development and implementation of the new model is rooted in five principles: rewarding innovation, entrepreneurship, collaboration, and a "one university" mindset; providing transparency, clarity, and predictability; building an environment of inclusive excellence; fostering responsibility and accountability; and incen-

tivizing increased academic quality, aligning core competencies, and avoiding redundant offerings, or offerings that are misaligned with areas of expertise.

The multiyear initiative is guided by several committees including representatives from across the University and has engaged the URI community in dialogue through a series of town halls and other collaborations.

# BUILDING SUCCESS, GARNERING OVERWHELMING SUPPORT



## URI opens new Soloviev Basketball Practice Facility

With appropriate fanfare—and even an impromptu game of HORSE between Gov. Dan McKee and President Marc Parlange—URI officially opened the Soloviev Basketball Practice Facility during a ribbon-cutting ceremony in fall 2023.



The new Fine Arts Center, will feature a new theater lobby, modern acting classrooms, technical areas for digital art and media, recording studios, improved acoustics, and more public space and natural light.

The University of Rhode Island surpassed its elevated campaign goal of \$300 million ahead of its official end date of June 30, 2024. Conducted by the URI Foundation & Alumni Engagement, *Big Ideas. Bold Plans. The Campaign for the University of Rhode Island*, a comprehensive effort to advance the University through philanthropic gifts, was publicly launched in 2020 with an initial goal of \$250 million. More than 34,000 individuals, including alumni, family, friends, faculty, staff, corporations,

and foundations contributed in large and small amounts to reach the goal. “The tremendous success of this campaign is proof of what we can do when we work together,” says URI President Marc Parlange. “The University of Rhode Island’s students, faculty, and staff are exceptionally hard-working, talented, and innovative, and thanks to this effort, we can provide them with what they need to make a difference here on campus, in our community, and around the world.”

The campaign set historic marks in terms of overall participation as well as transformative individual gifts. URI raised more than \$71 million for financial aid, brought in cutting-edge scientific equipment, built and renovated classrooms and labs for enhanced teaching and learning, upgraded athletics facilities, expanded experiential learning opportunities for students to launch their careers, and more. Over the course of the campaign, the University also saw its global profile rise while receiving substan-

tial investment from the state through increased allocations in the budget. In the same time frame, URI received voter approval for two state bonds, one that supports renovations to the Fine Arts Center and one for improvements to the Narragansett Bay Campus. While the achievements of the campaign elevate URI to a new tier among flagship public research universities, it also lays the foundation for continued growth and improvement.

RENDERING BY KMM ARCHITECTS

# LEADING BY EXAMPLE



## R.I. leaders express support for 'Rhode Island's university' at URI Day at the State House

Amid chants of "Rhody, Rhody, Rhody," URI Day at the State House provided elected leaders a firsthand look at the University's statewide impact. Around the State House rotunda in March, dozens of URI students, faculty and staff showcased the work of the state's flagship research institution. "The University of Rhode Island is our state's greatest asset," proclaimed Secretary of State Gregg Amore.



The University was recently recognized by Rhode Island Gov. Dan McKee and the Rhode Island Office of Energy Resources at the seventh annual Lead by Example Energy Awards. URI was recognized for its outstanding renewable energy and energy efficiency achievements, including its solar carport.

Constructed at the University's Plains Road South commuter parking lot at the base of campus, the solar

carport is one of the largest in Rhode Island and the only one of its kind on a college campus in the state. In addition to providing 1.8 million kilowatt hours of energy each year—the equivalent electrical use of 255 homes annually—it also provides students with covered parking, while its solar arrays offset the emissions for the 308 vehicles that can be parked in the lot year-round.

In addition to the carport, the University was also recognized for its long-running Energy Fellows Program, as well as efficiency projects at the Narragansett Bay Campus. URI's Energy Fellows Program, now in its 17th year, received the first "special honor" in its unique category to recognize its contributions to building the clean energy workforce in Rhode Island.

Additionally, projects at the Narragansett Bay Campus have reduced annual campus carbon emissions by 665 metric tons, equivalent to the annual gas consumption of 158 automobiles or the energy usage of 87 single-family homes.

PHOTO: URI PHOTO CATHERINE SCOTT

# FOSTERING RESILIENCE AND PREPAREDNESS



URI is the first higher education institution in the state to have a comprehensive hazard mitigation plan approved by the Federal Emergency Management Agency and the state of Rhode Island. The plan, which helps to prepare for natural disasters like floods, winter storms, hurricanes and other threats, was made possible through a grant from the Rhode Island Emergency Management Agency and FEMA.

URI's plan prioritizes threats from storms, including floods, damaging winds, and storm surge, while placing threats from tornadoes and earthquakes at a lower priority. The 97-page plan provides guidelines for short-term and long-term actions, which will reduce the actual or potential loss of life or property from natural hazards.

**“FEMA is very excited about our plan being completed, because the agency can use it as a model for other higher education institutions across the country.”**

—Sam Adams, URI's director of emergency management

PHOTO: CATHERINE SCOTT



## FINANCIALS

The University of Rhode Island’s financial outlook is strong and continues to improve, underscoring our deep commitment to ongoing operational excellence and financial sustainability.

In fiscal year 2024, the University’s total assets increased by \$37.7 million, or 3.1%. This positive momentum is a result of both robust operational performance and the generosity of our donors, whose support pushed our comprehensive campaign—*Big Ideas. Bold Plans. The Campaign for the University of Rhode Island*—past its \$300 million goal ahead of schedule. These outcomes are a realization of the priorities in our strategic plan, Focus URI, and particularly our focus on transforming the institution into a high-performing, fiscally responsible, and agile university.

Total revenues increased by \$44.8 million, or 6.7%, continuing a multiyear trend, and driven by robust enrollment and a significant increase in state operating support. Tuition and mandatory fee revenue increased by \$19 million, or 5%, attributed primarily to a modest tuition increase. The University’s general state appropriation increased by \$14.1 million, or 16%, over the prior fiscal year, representing a significantly increased investment in the University by the state of Rhode Island. Federal, state, and local grants and contracts increased by \$6 million, or 5%, representing our renewed effort to grow the University’s research enterprise. Total liabilities decreased by \$8.2 million, or 1.5%. These improvements highlight our financial health and operational efficiency, providing a strong foundation that enables continued progress on our strategic vision for the future—a vision that broadens our impact, enhances student achievement, fosters an inclusive culture, and powers the university of the future.

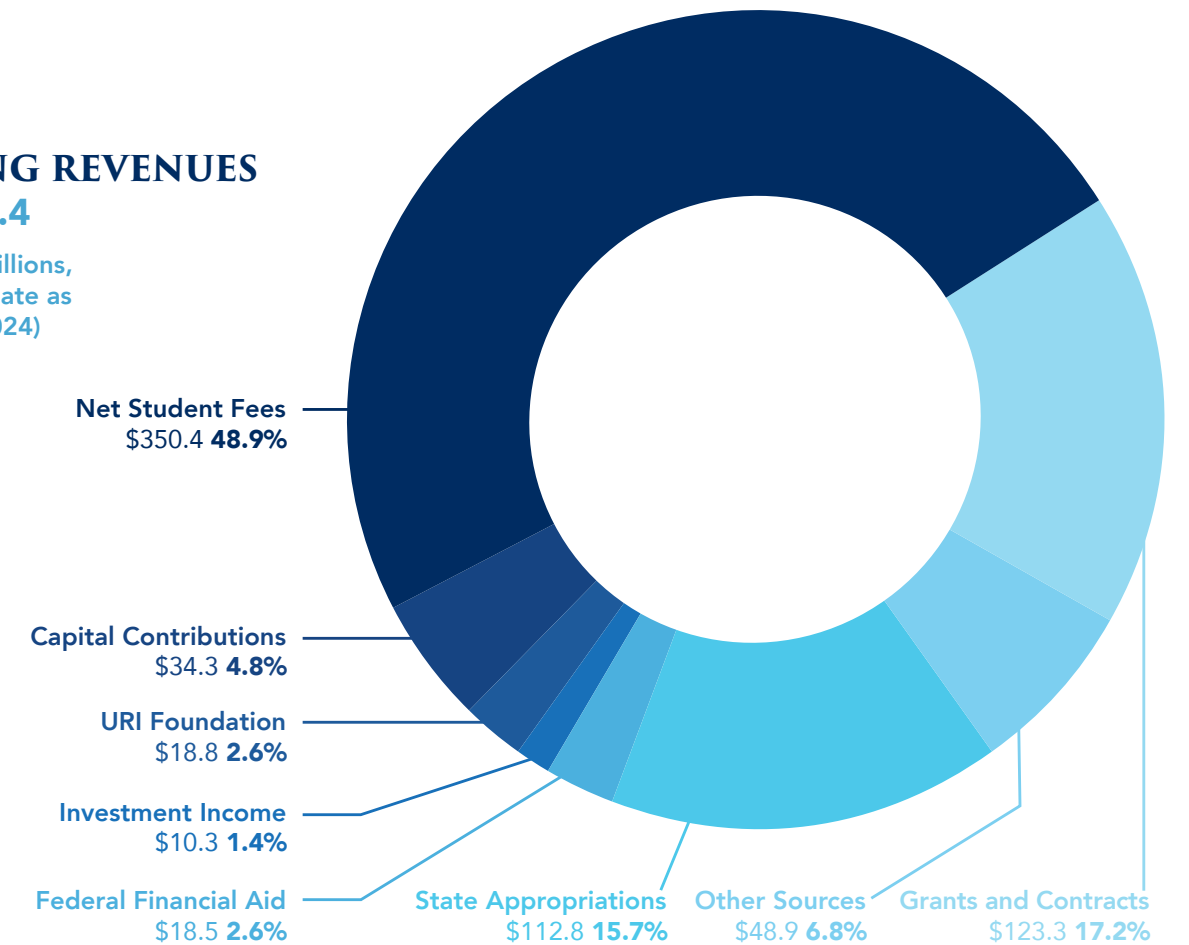
The growth in total assets, combined with increased revenues and reduced liabilities, strengthens our ability to achieve long-term objectives and accelerate URI’s exciting forward trajectory.

PHOTO: MIKE COHEA

## OPERATING REVENUES

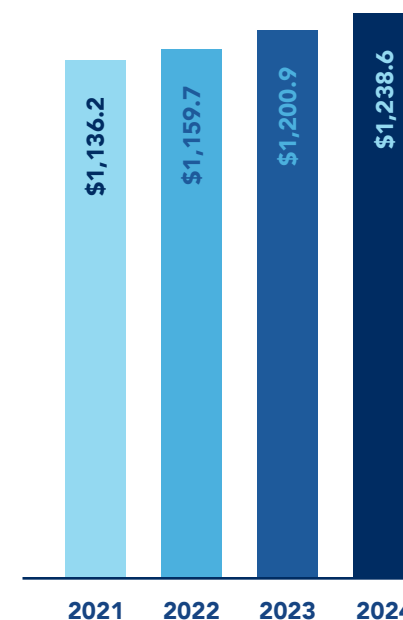
**Total: \$717.4**

(All Figures in Millions, Unaudited Estimate as of August 21, 2024)

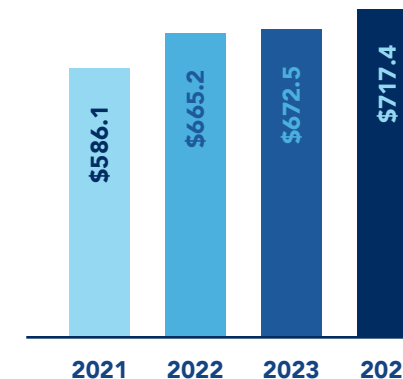


## TOTAL ASSETS

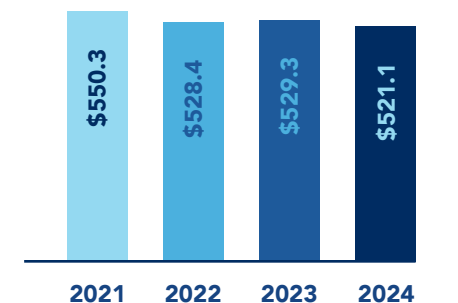
(All Figures in Millions)



## TOTAL REVENUES



## TOTAL LIABILITIES



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