February 13, 2019

Members of the URI Community,

Since the start of the semester, the Student Senate Executive board has made it a goal to push for legislative change in the state of Rhode Island’s state holiday Columbus Day to Indigenous Peoples’ Day. This topic has been one Senate has been focusing on more than three years.

In the spring of 2016 it was brought to Student Senate’s attention that Indigenous People who attend and work at the University did not feel adequately listened to in our community. This included their vocalization of how hurtful the celebration of Columbus Day is, not only at the University of Rhode Island, but in Rhode Island. Throughout the following year, Student Senate connected with various outlets on campus and polled the students to see where the students on campus stood on changing Columbus Day to Indigenous Peoples’ Day on the upcoming academic calendars and syllabi.

When we released the poll there were 117 responses submitted. Of those 67.5% said they would support the name change from Columbus Day to Indigenous Peoples’ Day on URI Academic Calendars.

Due to the support we received on the poll, in the fall of 2017 a resolution in Student Senate and Faculty Senate was passed to change Columbus Day to Indigenous Peoples’ Day on any upcoming academic calendars. However, the resolution passed by Faculty Senate was vetoed by President Dooley. The University of Rhode Island is a state school, therefore all holidays on the academic calendars must be in line with the state holidays. A list of these holidays are available on the Secretary of State’s website.

Our Student Senate firmly believes that making sure all students feel welcome and represented at URI is a top priority for this university and our body. For that reason, one of our main goals to speaking to state legislators about getting a state holiday change.

In order to gauge students’ opinions there will a referendum question during our elections Thursday February 14 and Friday February 15 asking for your opinion on whether you support any future action by Student Senate in regards to our efforts to work with state legislators to accomplish one of our long standing goal.

Another one of our goals, is to better educate our student body about Indigenous Peoples’ Day and why there has been vocalization against Columbus Day. To do so, we have found some resources we feel will help us educate one another and listed them below. Please feel free to take a look at any number of these resources or others you may find before casting your referendum vote.

The University of Rhode Island Student Senate
Resources:

**Indigenous Peoples’ Day: Rethinking American History**

**Columbus Day-Indigenous Peoples Day Fast Facts**
https://www.cnn.com/2013/06/14/us/columbus-day-fast-facts/index.html

**Columbus Day and Indigenous People’s Day: A Short History**
https://nonprofitquarterly.org/2018/10/08/columbus-day-indigenous-peoples-day-history/

**Recognizing Indigenous Peoples Day**
http://blog.nativepartnership.org/recognizing-indigenous-peoples-day/

**The Tribes of Rhode Island**
http://omp.gso.uri.edu/ompweb/doee/history/nativeam/na2.htm