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Bethany D. Jenkins, Ph.D.
Faculty Representative

Hannah Bachert '23
Student Representative

The University of Rhode Island Board of Trustees Ad Hoc Special Sponsored Research Committee Meeting Thursday, January 26, 2023 • 9:00 a.m. EST

The University of Rhode Island
The Beagle Board Room, Alumni Center
73 Upper College Road, Kingston, RI 02881

OFFICIAL MINUTES

Committee Chair Thomas Ryan welcomed everyone to the January 26, 2023, meeting of the University of Rhode Island (URI) Board of Trustees ad hoc special Sponsored Research Committee meeting. Members participated remotely via Webex. Public access to the meeting was available via the YouTube video platform and is available at:

<https://web.uri.edu/trustees/meetings/>.

Board Secretary Michelle Curreri conducted a roll call attendance and reported that a quorum of voting members was present. Committee Chair Ryan called the meeting to order at 9:06 a.m.

Attendees present for this meeting included:

The University of Rhode Island Sponsored Research Committee members:

- Mr. Thomas Ryan, Committee Chair (voting) (remote)
- Dr. Neil Kerwin (voting) (remote)
- Dr. Bethany Jenkins (non-voting) (remote)
- Dr. Marc Parlange (ex officio, non-voting) (remote)

The URI Board of Trustees invited guest in attendance:

- Ms. Margo Cook, Chair, URI Board of Trustees (remote) (left at 9:56 a.m.)

"The University of Rhode Island occupies the traditional stomping ground of the Narragansett Nation and the Niantic People. We honor and respect the enduring and continuing relationship between the Indigenous people and this land by teaching and learning more about their history and present-day communities, and by becoming stewards of the land we, too, inhabit."

Members of the President's Leadership Council in attendance:

- Ms. Abby Benson, Senior Advisor to the President and Chief of Staff (remote)
- Ms. Alyssa Boss, General Counsel (remote)
- Dr. Peter Snyder, Vice President for Research and Economic Development (remote)
- Dr. Barbara Wolfe, Provost and Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs (remote)

The University of Rhode Island staff members in attendance:

- Ms. Patricia Correia, Executive Assistant (in person)
- Ms. Michelle Curreri, Secretary to the Board of Trustees (in person)
- Ms. Lynn Owens, Associate Secretary to the Board of Trustees (in person)

Committee Chair Ryan acknowledged that the University of Rhode Island occupies the traditional homeland of the Narragansett Nation and the Niantic People.

1. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

a. Minutes of the December 5, 2022 meeting. [Enclosure 1.a.](#)

Committee Chair Ryan called for a motion that the University of Rhode Island Board of Trustees ad hoc special Sponsored Research Committee approve the minutes of the December 5, 2022 meeting.

On a motion duly made by Thomas Ryan and seconded by Neil Kerwin, it was

VOTED:	THAT	The University of Rhode Island Board of Trustees ad hoc special Sponsored Research Committee approve the minutes of the December 5, 2022 meeting of the ad hoc special Sponsored Research Committee.
	VOTE:	2 members voted in the affirmative and 0 members voted in the negative.
	YEAS:	Thomas Ryan and Neil Kerwin
	NAYS:	0
	ABSTAINS:	0

2. DISCUSSION ITEMS

a. An overview and understanding of the Organizational Structure and Budget for all research at the University.

Committee Chair Ryan reviewed the following goals of the ad hoc special Sponsored Research Committee as outlined by President Marc Parlange.

- Detailed understanding of sponsored research awards by college, PhD student distribution by college, school, department, faculty member/advisor, funding sources, and associated overhead for that research.
- Discuss and plan for the support and resources for sponsored research. In particular, a focus on pre- and post-award support, critical seed funding for interdisciplinary research, and recommendations on best support model (i.e., centralized and distributed).
- Expand the source of sponsored research revenue, including international research collaboration and partnerships, private industry, foundation funding, and federal and state partnerships.

Committee Chair Ryan asked Vice President Peter Snyder to review the organization chart for the Division of Research and Economic Development (DRED). Vice President Snyder reviewed departments and centers that report to him. He reminded the committee that the organization chart does not reflect all research support across the University. Grant administrative support in the colleges is not reflected on the DRED organization chart because those positions do not report to DRED. He explained that as the senior administrative official, the centers that cross university colleges report to him. These centers are self-funded and have their own individual budgets, which are separate from the DRED budget. The State of Rhode Island provides some support for the Small Business Development Center (SBDC), but not the other centers. The committee asked why the Coastal Institute (CI) does not report to the Graduate School of Oceanography (GSO). Vice President Snyder explained the CI works across university colleges and not just with the GSO.

Vice President Snyder explained that individual deans provide support for grant personnel within their college, and grant support varies depending on the college. Each dean determines how they reinvest indirect costs and how much pre- and post-award support sits in their college. Some of the center directors have faculty appointments and tenure, though it is different for each director. Salary support for center directors is generally provided by overhead funds. A center director may still have teaching responsibilities, and, if that is the case, some funding may be provided by hard money.

The committee requested that Vice President Snyder provide a report on the funding for each center and how much the University receives from each center. Vice President Snyder explained the difference between funding sources, i.e., direct costs and indirect costs.

b. The URI Research Foundation. What is its role in the State? What is its role at the University? How is it funded?

Committee Chair Ryan explained that the role of the URI Research Foundation (URIRF) is to obtain and protect intellectual property rights and promote technology commercialization. It is the sole and exclusive agent to pursue, obtain, protect, manage, and administer all intellectual property invented, created or developed at the University of Rhode Island. The URIRF provides research programs, promotes education, enhances URI's economic development contribution, and beyond. Vice President Snyder explained that his role as the chairman of the board of the URIRF is to oversee the URIRF at a high level, including strategy. Further, he explained that though the position of chair falling to the university vice president, research and economic development VPRED role was not established in statute, it has been the practice of the URIRF to appoint prior VPREDs of the university since its inception. The reason that the VPRED is the chairman of the board is that the URIRF is managing the commercialization of technologies for the University, and the VPRED is directly responsible. As is the case at most universities, the spin off intellectual property from the faculty falls under the management of the VPRED and not the deans of individual colleges.

The committee asked about the URIRF's budget and what they provide to URI. Vice President Snyder stated the budget is comprised from various external economic development grants, and that URI provides some support for one partial salary (for a shared employee), consultants and research proposal development services. Committee Chair Ryan inquired about the agreements that the URIRF has with various companies and the royalty stream from those contracts. Vice President Snyder explained that the royalty stream is relatively small and does not cover legal costs. Typically, agreements with companies support sponsored research where there is a commercial desire and goal to the work. The URIRF supports the faculty in making those connections and nurturing them to help establish relationships with these companies and to legally manage the relationship. When the URIRF was established, the intent was to be self-supporting from royalty-stream income.

Vice President Snyder provided a report that lists the URIRF's contributions to the University. The report can be found [here](#). The URIRF supports and returns to the University in terms of sponsored research and programs paying for students, capital equipment and internships. In the past year, the URIRF received a large Department of Defense grant to set up an industry partnership and collaboration in the defense sector. Most of the grant will go to support URI faculty and students. The grants that the URIRF receives are commercial development grants, not academic grants. For example, at the request of the University, the URIRF is studying how it can assist the university's pharmaceutical development facility by assisting in rapid hiring, purchasing and executing contracts. URI does not have the faculty and staff to support non-academic grants, whereas the URIRF can provide that support.

Dr. Snyder spoke about Polaris MEP (Manufacturing Extension Partnerships), a statewide nonprofit providing competitive business environment programs to grow Rhode Island's manufacturing industry, which provides much of the revenue to the URIRF. Polaris MEP provides workforce development and consultation to manufacturers across the state to help them reorganize, reconfigure, change their product line processes, and better manage their organizations in order to be more efficient. Polaris is more outward facing and adds value to both URI and to the State of Rhode Island.

Dr. Snyder also spoke about 401 Tech Bridge. The focus for 401 Tech Bridge is to partner with the Navy and with local manufacturers to research and develop novel composite technologies for a variety of commercial uses. Funding support is provided to a range of URI faculty and researchers in some of the colleges, as well as funding to purchase equipment. URI's role as a land grant university, and part of the land grant mission, is to give back to the community. For example, some of the URIRF staff teaches entrepreneurship business courses pro bono in the College of Business to undergraduate and graduate students. The URIRF's venture capital partner is also very involved in the teaching program in the College of Business and mentoring capstone projects.

The committee requested that Vice President Snyder provide them with a list of the intellectual property and licenses.

c. Review of Sponsored Research.

The committee initiated a conversation concerning the unevenness of research support. They would like a better understanding of the grants that individual faculty have, how much time they attribute to each grant, and how many PhD students have graduate research assistantships and are paid by these grants. Vice President Snyder stated there is a report that lists the indirects¹ coming into each of the colleges, which shows there is little rise in the indirects over time because of the mix of grants that the University brings in. In terms of the grant mix, deans need to assist with the types of grants that faculty apply for. The effective rate, which is the average rate of the combined grants brought into the University, has been unchanged for a long time. This is due to the fact that although URI brings in a lot of federal grants, the University also receives many state grants and state contracts that provide little to no indirects, as well as foundation grants that often times do not allow any indirects.

It was noted there is a big difference in size of faculty amongst colleges and the student body that they service. For example, the Graduate School of Oceanography (GSO) faculty does not teach undergraduate courses and have much more time to engage in research than faculty in the College of Arts and Sciences. Grant support varies greatly between colleges as compared to the GSO, and there is research potential that is not realized due to the lack of sufficient grant administration support. Dr. Snyder provided an analysis that he and his staff completed, showing that the university DRED and college-level grant support functions are understaffed by a headcount of 16 full time employees.

Committee members agreed that the ability to identify untapped potential is critical to move the research dollars up at URI and increase the Carnegie ranking. An increase in the number of PhD students and post-doctoral students will also help to increase the University's ranking.

d. Discussion on an Aspirational Goal for Research Funding by year 2030.

¹ Indirects are a portion of the grant awards in addition to the direct costs that are provided to URI for the support of research infrastructure.

This item was deferred to a future meeting.

- e. Identify our peer set of institutions regarding Sponsored Research including aspirational peers.**

This item was not discussed.

- f. Agree on agenda items for the next two meetings.**

It was agreed that the following three items will be discussed at the next meeting.

1. Review the Hanover report and the National Organization of Research Development Professionals (NORDP) report.
2. Seed funding.
3. Discuss ideas to enhance the capacity of existing faculty to do more research.

Dr. Bethany Jenkins suggested that at future meetings it would be helpful to hear from the deans to discuss their support for incentives for faculty to fund students and post-doctoral students, and to clarify how much of the indirect funds that go back to the colleges are supporting research.

3. ADJOURN

Committee Chair Ryan called for a motion that the University of Rhode Island Board of Trustees ad hoc special Sponsored Research Committee adjourn the meeting of January 26, 2023.

On a motion duly made by Neil Kerwin and seconded by Thomas Ryan, it was

VOTED: THAT The University of Rhode Island Board of Trustees ad hoc special Sponsored Research Committee adjourn the meeting of January 26, 2023.

VOTE: 2 members voted in the affirmative and 0 members voted in the negative.

YEAS: Neil Kerwin, Thomas Ryan

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 0

The meeting adjourned at 10:41 a.m.

The next meeting of the ad hoc special Sponsored Research Committee Meeting is scheduled for February 17, 2023.