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**The University of Rhode Island Board of Trustees  
University Advancement and External Affairs Committee Meeting  
Tuesday, September 20, 2022 · 2:30 p.m. EDT**

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

**UNOFFICIAL MINUTES**

Committee Chair Christine Heenan welcomed everyone and thanked guests for attending the September 20, 2022, meeting of the University Advancement and External Affairs Committee of the University of Rhode Island Board of Trustees.

At 2:33 p.m. Chair Heenan took a roll call and acknowledged that a quorum of members was present and called the meeting to order.

The meeting was held in person, with Committee members participating remotely. A recording of the meeting is available at <https://web.uri.edu/trustees/meetings/>.

The University of Rhode Island Board of Trustees University Advancement and External Affairs Committee members present:

Ms. Christine M. Heenan, Committee Chair (remote)  
Mr. Armand E. Sabitoni, Committee Vice Chair (remote)  
Ms. Cortney Nicolato (remote)  
Mr. Michael F. McNally, URI Board of Trustees Vice Chair (ex officio, voting) (remote)  
Dr. Marc B. Parlange, President (ex officio, non-voting) (remote)

The University of Rhode Island Board of Trustees University Advancement and External Affairs Committee members not present:

Ms. Barbara Cottam, Chair, Board of Education (ex officio, non-voting)  
Mr. Vahid Ownjazayeri  
Ms. Margo Cook, URI Board of Trustees Chair (ex officio, voting)  
Mr. David Caprio, Chair, R.I. Council on Postsecondary Education (ex officio, non-voting)

*"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."*



NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 0

## 2. DISCUSSION ITEMS

### a. Introduction: Matthew McDonald, Vice President for Communications and Marketing

Chair Heenan introduced Vice President Matthew McDonald, recently appointed at the University of Rhode Island (URI) as vice president for communications and marketing. Vice President McDonald has held previous leadership positions at the University of Miami and Northeastern University, where he is known as an industry leader. Chair Heenan invited Vice President McDonald to say a few words to the Committee about his role and his first month at the University. Vice President McDonald stated that he received a warm welcome from the University community and has been working aggressively on high-priority projects. Vice President McDonald expressed his gratitude for the welcome and counsel he has received and is eager to work with the Committee and the broader University community to advance and build the University's reputation and brand.

Chair Heenan thanked Vice President McDonald stating that communications, storying telling, and branding are priorities for the University.

Chair Heenan then invited Ms. Lil Breul O'Rourke, President, URIFAE, and Jeff Cabral, vice president for development, URIFAE to present on Discussion item 2.b.

### b. Update: Big Ideas. Bold Plans. The Campaign for the University of Rhode Island, and Presidential Introduction Events

Ms. Lil Breul O'Rourke, president of URIFAE provided an overview of a presentation titled, "[URIFAE Campaign Update](#)" and reported on the progress of the campaign, which has raised gifts totaling \$238.4M toward the \$300M goal as of September 20, 2022. Campaign commitments by purpose have raised more than \$95M in gifts toward the endowment; \$17.8M raised in RhodyNow gifts (that are immediately available for spending); and more than \$168M raised from alumni, with a focus on reaching \$250M by the end of the year.

Mr. Jeff Cabral, vice president for development for URIFAE, stated that they expect to raise approximately \$32M in gifts from 233 active proposals with gifts coming from corporate, foundation, and individual donors. Presidential engagement events totaled 73, where President Parlange engaged with alumni, parents, and friends from around the country; with 61 visit briefings prepared for the President. Upcoming engagement events will take place in locations across the country, including San Francisco, Los Angeles, Orange County, San Diego, New York, Boston, Florida and a trip to Indonesia in January.

Vice President Cabral also reported on the upcoming, "URI Day of Giving," with \$350K currently in challenge matches, and an additional \$95K in early gifts coming from donors who want their gift to count toward the "Day of Giving." A total of \$500K has been raised and will go toward the \$1.5M goal, set for the October 6, 2022, event.

In concluding his presentation, Vice President Cabral stated that they are seeking 100% participation from the Board of Trustees and advisory councils, adding that gifts may be made by visiting the URIFAE website.

Ms. Nicolato asked if cryptocurrency is accepted. President O'Rourke responded saying that they have done the necessary research and are ready to accept cryptocurrency gifts.

Ms. Nicolato also asked what members of the Board of Trustees could do to ensure fundraising success for the upcoming, "Day of Giving" event. President O'Rourke thanked Ms. Nicolato for her offer of assistance and stated that matches and challenge grants are great options as well as encouraging friends and family to give while emphasizing that participation is equally as important as gifts.

Chair Heenan thanked President O'Rourke and Vice President Cabral and invited Mr. Carlos Lopez Estrada and Ms. Lauren Burgess, directors of legislative and government relations, to present on Discussion item 2.c.

**c. Update: Legislative and Government Relations**

Mr. Carlos Lopez Estrada and Ms. Lauren Burgess, directors of legislative and government relations, reviewed a presentation titled, "**URI Government Relations Update**" and highlighted the legislative team's progress, accomplishments, and activities from June through September. Updates included achievements, such as \$140M in Rhode Island Capital Plan Fund (RICAP); legislation that passed to allow remote attendance for Board of Trustees members during their meetings; increased purchasing power; as well as holding legislation related to the Hope Scholarship for further study.

A strategic plan for 2023 legislative matters was formulated and an internal Per- and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances (PFAS) contaminant strategic working group was formed to curtail the high cost of mitigation that will be required because of the passing of new PFAS legislation, which will require municipalities across the state, including the University, to reduce PFAS levels.

Additionally, Mr. Lopez Estrada informed the Committee of a detailed document that contains the legislative initiatives and provides an in-depth review of those details available for review.

Mr. Lopez Estrada provided updates that included securing a \$100M bond for the renovation of existing facilities and the construction of new facilities on the Narragansett Bay Campus (NBC); \$37M in the Rhode Island Capital Plan (RICAP) Fund (which is also for the NBC); with total dollars received from RICAP (for the year), at \$140M for repair and maintenance of facilities at the NBC.

Chair Heenan thanked Mr. Lopez Estrada and invited Ms. Burgess to provide the Committee with comments on the "Vote Yes on 1" bond campaign.

The bond received positive attention in an article by the Boston Globe that included Senator Whitehouse and President Parlange.

President Parlange also spoke at the recent Greater Providence Chamber of Commerce (GPCC) Gubernatorial Candidate Forum where the University was the presenting sponsor for the event with 400 industry participants. The GPCC Board of Directors also voted to endorse the University's bond

referendum. The campaign committee is working with consultants Pannone Lopes Devereaux & O'Gara LLC and New Harbor Group on the bond and are expecting more exposure at the upcoming Governor's Cup football game.

Ms. Burgess expressed the need to educate Rhode Islanders as the University's bond is in competition with another statewide bond referendum.

Vice President McDonald stated that collateral materials will be widely distributed as next month approaches and that aggressive marketing strategies and efforts are well underway to promote the bond.

The discussion returned to Mr. Lopez Estrada who provided an update on some of the initiatives in place related to the Blue Economy. Mr. Lopez Estrada informed the Committee as to the EDA Build Back Better Regional Challenge Award that, unfortunately, the University was not successful in securing. The University's Research Foundation has initiated outreach to the Department of Commerce and other federal agencies, while also looking at alternative federal funding sources to fund University projects.

A recent press conference with Senator Reed and Representative Langevin related to a \$1M award for ocean plastics research provided an opportunity to provide the senator and representative with information related to the projects that were not funded with the intention to solicit other funding sources.

President Parlange commented that should the Hope Scholarship go forward in the future, it is vital that the University of Rhode Island be included. Additionally, he stated that the University is a leading global driver of emerging research related to PFAS and the effects on the immune system while also noting that new state regulations around PFAS levels in groundwater, drinking water, and surface waters will require mitigation measures by many communities across the state, including URI. President Parlange also emphasized the importance of the bond campaign.

Chair Heenan thanked President Parlange for his additional comments and asked Committee members if anyone had any further questions or comments.

Mr. McNally expressed his view that the financial support coming from the State in comparison to other states is not successful. He encouraged Committee members and meeting attendees to try to get more help financially for the University; while also saying that with the help and efforts of Mr. Lopez Estrada and Ms. Burgess, he is sure that will happen.

**d. Next Steps: University Advancement and External Affairs Committee**

Chair Heenan informed the Committee that, with a focus on research excellence, the University Advancement and External Affairs (UAEA) Committee will be deferred to allow Committee leadership and liaisons, along with members of the Committee, to serve the Board in other capacities and that the University will benefit from the good work of the URIFAE communications committee. Future reports regarding communications, fundraising and alumni relations, and government relations will be made directly to the full Board rather than through Committee reporting. The deferment of the Committee is designed to elevate and increase the focus needed to maximize collaboration efforts for the University's broader brand discussions and to elevate fundraising and development for the Campaign. Chair Heenan

