

Minutes of the December 11, 2019 Meeting of the CELS Advisory Council

Call to Order: A meeting of the College of the Environment and Life Sciences Advisory Council was held at 10:00am via Webex video conferencing due to the Covid-19 pandemic. In attendance were Advisory Council members: Priscilla Brooks, Robert DiFilippo, Jonathan Feinstein, Fran Ingersoll; Fraser Lang, Rand LeBouvier, Patrick McGuire, Perry Raso, Norman Tashash, and Bruce Zetter; URI or URI Foundation faculty/staff in attendance were: Lil O'Rourke, URI Foundation; Skip Wilson, CELS/URI Foundation; Becky Sartini, URI CELS; Cheryl Wilga, URI CELS; Deborah Sheely, URI CELS; Michael Rice, URI CELS Faculty Secretary; John Kirby, URI CELS Dean presided.

URI Foundation Presentations and Discussion:

Lil O'Rourke

URI Foundation President O'Rourke gave an overview of URI Fundraising efforts that included contributions by the Annual Fund, Major Gifts and Bequests. She discussed the progress of the ongoing capital campaign that is currently ahead of its fundraising timeline due to a couple of major donations. She discussed efforts to work with the Student Alumni Association to build a culture of philanthropy among recent graduates. There was discussion of allowing students to retain their email addresses at URI as a means to maintain connection to the university after graduation.

Skip Wilson mentioned the recent 'URI Day of Giving' and reported that it was highly successful within CELS.

URI-CELS Presentations and Discussion:

Dean John Kirby

Dean Kirby noted that despite the Covid-19 pandemic, it's been a fairly good year in CELS. He announced the two new assistant professors joining the college: Patrick Baur, FAVS and Lisa Hiwasaki, MAF and that five new lecturers joined the college along with visiting professor Whitley Saumweber who is joining MAF. He mentioned that despite all the difficulties, student enrollment numbers are up in the college. The college is beginning to engage in a number of graduate certificate programs, primarily targeting enrollments by international students. He mentioned that a new research building to be shared among URI colleges is in the preliminary planning stages that is likely to occupy the open space directly east of the CBLS building.

Associate Dean Sartini

Associate Dean Sartini provided an overview of CELS instructional efforts beginning with the emergency all-online transition beginning in spring 2020 with an extended spring break. She discussed the development of online asynchronous courses, online synchronous courses, blended/hybrid courses, and how face-to-face courses and field labs were being taught within CDC-RIDOH guidelines, and how the Center for the Advancement of Teaching and Learning has been a major resource in promoting a smooth transition. The Faculty Senate has allowed for alternative grading options to accommodate student needs. Surveys of students are underway to determine which efforts are working and those that are not. She concluded with a description of

Community efforts to address problems of reduced food security among some students and efforts to cushion the economic blow to students with lost part-time employment opportunities. Discussion ensued. Some of the changes in the instructional paradigm may be made permanent, because some students are expressing a preference for some of the hybrid and online class options.

Discussion of CELS Advisory Council Constitution and the Role of the Council:

Skip Wilson

Skip Wilson discussed the draft Constitution of the Advisory Council that was drafted by members of the the Constitution Subcommittee that consisted of Kenneth Abrams, Fran Ingersoll, Kevin Killeen, Rand LeBouvier, and Norman Tashash. There was general consensus that the draft was adequate, and the Constitution was adopted by the body by acclamation.

General Discussion:

Norman Tashash

General discussion led by Norman Tashash ensued about URI's rankings in the US News and World Report and in other outlets. Communication is part of the answer requiring coordinated outreach efforts across campus. Building reputation takes focused effort and time.

Adjournment: *The meeting was adjourned at 11:30am.*

Respectfully Submitted:
Michael A. Rice, Faculty Secretary