

Minutes of the May 6, 2022 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 9am in CBLS 435. In attendance were Advisory Council members: Robert DiFillippo, Kenneth Abrams, Kevin Killeen, Deb Imondi, Priscilla Brooks, Patrick Maguire; Skip Wilson, CELS/URI Foundation; CELS Associate Deans Lisa Townson and Cheryl Wilga, URI CELS; Judy Palmer, Executive Assistant CELS Dean; Michael Rice, CELS Faculty Secretary; John Kirby, URI CELS Dean presided.

URI-Presentations and Discussions:

President Marc Parlange

URI President Parlange gave a presentation on his memorable interactions with CELS faculty and students. He recounted his recent ribbon-cutting on the Talent Development Achievement House, fulfilling a more than two-decade university goal to establish a residence facility for TD scholars. He recounted some of his interactions with CELS faculty and students as he has been out and about, recalling his encounters with Peter Paton's wildlife & ornithology students and Brad Wetherbee and his students studying sharks. President Parlange praised CELS in its culture of very hands-on experiential education opportunities for students. President Parlange discussed his efforts to increase program funding for the university by asking for substantial increases from the state legislature, and planned \$157.5M in upgrades to the Narragansett Bay Campus out of the \$308.5M in funds appropriated to Rhode Island as part of the American Rescue Plan tied to the Biden Administration response to the pandemic, and in support of Blue Economy plans by the state. President Parlange stated that his three key presidential priorities are: Greater Student access to Higher Education via TD and other mechanisms; Greater focus on increasing Research Funding through state fund matching & more aggressively going after federal funding opportunities, and continued efforts at expanding URI's global reach, citing current efforts in Ghana, Indonesia and the Philippines as important for the university. He stated that there is a strategic planning effort underway by the university centering on these priorities.

Dean John Kirby

Dean Kirby followed up President Parlange's remarks with specific programs CELS is engaged in that fall within the president's three priority areas. He spoke about the plans for expanding the very successful CELS Coastal and Environmental Fellows Program in which undergraduate student partner with faculty and their graduate students in research, with the students learning how to present their research as posters in a professional setting and answering questions about their research with passers-by attending the research poster session. The recent hire of Dr. Lisa Hiwasaki into the Marine affairs program adds greater experience in the area of International Development. Efforts to for CELS faculty to reengage in Southeast Asian and African countries are happening as Covid-19 subsides. There is an upcoming celebration on campus of URI's 50 years of engagement with Indonesia, with several Indonesian government officials expected to attend in June. Finally, the Department of Landscape Architecture has rejoined CELS and is reforming its focus to large-scale landscape planning to address remediation of environmental damage and global resiliency in the face of environmental stressors.

News from the URI Foundation:

Skip Wilson

Skip Wilson reported that the goal for fundraising has been increased to \$300M due to the unexpected generosity of donors. So far \$232M has been raised in the current capital campaign, with \$1.7M raised for CELS in FY2022. Further gifts from donors are appreciated before June 30, to be counted in the FY2022 donation totals to keep us on track for reaching the goal. The four priorities for usage of donations to CELS are: 1) expansion of student opportunities for experiential education/research; 2)

scholarships for underrepresented students with interest in CELS majors; 3) Travel funds for students to attend professional conferences; and 4) endowed professorships.

After Skip Wilson's presentation, Bruce Zetter inquired about the status of the Paul Cohen Fund. Skip responded that there is about \$50K in the fund and it is being used by the CMB Department to fund student experiential learning opportunities.

CELS Presentation:

Four CELS undergraduate students were invited into the meeting to show their research posters and discuss their research. The students and their topics were:

- a) *Robin Fidel*, who spoke on her project on the immune system of oysters and their role in countering parasites and environmental stressors
- b) *Ellie Madigan*, a sophomore who discussed her project on the distribution of brook trout in RI waters as an indicator of environmental health
- c) *Ashley Ty*, who was working on the characterization of a protease protein from *Escherichia coli* bacteria
- d) *MacKenzie Cetta*, who was studying various forms of ground covers to enhance production in permaculture, a form of multi-crop agriculture

The students ably fielded questions about their research and these student presentations appeared to be well-received by Dean's Advisory Council members

New Business:

There was no new business.

Old Business:

There was no old business.

Adjournment:

The meeting was adjourned at 11am .

Respectfully submitted,
Michael A. Rice, CELS Faculty Secretary