

Minutes of the December 5, 2021 Meeting of the CELS Executive Council

Call to Order: A meeting of the College of the Environment and Life Sciences Executive Council was held at 9:00AM in via Zoom. Members present were Department Chairs Becker, Chandlee, Mitkowski, Paton, Petersson, Roberts, Savage, Sheridan & Uchida; Associate Deans, Sartini, Townson, and Wilga; Faculty Secretary Rice and *ex-officio* members Palmer, Silvia and URI Foundation Representative Wilson. Dean Kirby presided.

Approval of Minutes: *It was moved by Chandlee and seconded by Roberts to approve the November 22, 2021 Minutes of the Executive Council. The minutes were approved unanimously upon amendment.*

Announcements:

Dean Kirby

1. So far the reports have been that the university is faring extremely well in terms of managing Covid-19 infections. The CELS community is congratulated for prudent practices.
2. Position requests for new faculty and staff lines are requested with eye on the 1 to 2 year strategic horizon. Department chairs are asked to submit 1/2-page descriptions to the dean's office no later than January 10. The requests are due in the Provost's Office late January or very early February.
3. In graduate studies, there will be greater institutional effort toward professional masters online programming.
4. There will be a new PhD Presidential Fellows Program, offering 2 scholarship lines to each college to run for two years each. The stated purpose of these fellowship is to serve as a jump-starter toward moving the university to being more research-centric than has been the case in a few decades with a goal of moving URI up into the R1 University rankings.
5. President Parlange was mentioning the possibility of a new life sciences building as a dedicated research building with vivarium facilities.
6. Dean Kirby introduced newly appointed Associate Dean Lisa Townson to the CELS Executive Council

Associate Dean Sartini

1. Summer course proposals are due December 13.
2. According to some faculty reports, student grades appear to be down & students in poor spirits. Building community, and supporting students in adjustment to the strained face-to-face environment is important.

Associate Dean Wilga

1. Associate Dean Wilga reiterated the institution of Presidential Research Fellowships to be used as RAs with the Grad School acting as a clearinghouse. These RAs were modeled on Brown's Fellowships allotted at 2 per college with six more additional Ras to be awarded by criteria set forth in rubrics similar to the Diversity Fellows Program. In CELS, the plan is to

to supplement the 2-years of funding with an additional year's worth of finding from college sources.

2. There appears to be general trouble with the current TA & RA distribution mode used in CELS and there is a need for reevaluation of procedures. To better recruit top grad students, RAs & TAs need to be available for use as inducements as early as February or March prior to the entering September class.
3. All of this increased focus on grad fellowships stems from a policy shift that is moving from a cost-containment budgetary model that had been in place for the last 30 years to a model based on growth of the research enterprise.
4. Improving the system of post-doctoral associates is important for building the R1 research university and discussions on this front have begun.

Meredith Silvia

1. Unit budgets have been released.
2. CELS staff will be on a combination of remote and face-to-face work for the next few weeks as the university begins to ramp down activities and people use end of year vacation time.

Judith Palmer

1. The CELS General Faculty and professional staff meeting will be held December 16th at 2pm via Webex

Old Business:

There was no old business

New Business:

There was no new business

Adjournment: *It was moved & seconded to adjourn. The meeting was adjourned at 9:45am.*

Respectfully Submitted:
Michael A. Rice, Faculty Secretary