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**The University of Rhode Island Board of Trustees
University Advancement and External Affairs Committee Meeting
Thursday, January 20, 2022, 4:45 p.m. EST**

**The University of Rhode Island
Robert J. Higgins Welcome Center, Anchor Room
45 Upper College Road, Kingston, RI 02881**

OFFICIAL MINUTES

Committee Chair Christine Heenan welcomed everyone and thanked guests for attending the January 20, 2022 meeting of the University of Rhode Island (URI) Board of Trustees University Advancement and External Affairs Committee. The Committee held a hybrid meeting in accordance with Governor McKee's Executive Order 22-01. Some Committee members gathered in person, and some members participated remotely. Public access to the meeting was made available via the YouTube video platform.

At 4:46 p.m., in the absence of a quorum, action on Agenda Items 1 and 2 were deferred.

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. Margo Cook, URI Board of Trustees, Chair (ex officio - voting) (in person, arrived at 4:49 p.m.)
- Ms. Barbara Cottam, Chair, Board of Education (ex officio – non-voting) (in person, arrived at 5:03 p.m.)
- Mr. Michael F. McNally, URI Board of Trustees Vice Chair (ex officio - voting) (in person)
- Ms. Cortney Nicolato (in person)
- Mr. Vahid Ownjazayeri (remote)
- Dr. Marc B. Parlange, President (ex officio – non-voting) (in person, arrived at 4:48 p.m.)

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

- Mr. Tim DelGiudice, Chair, RI Council on Postsecondary Education (ex officio – non-voting)

The University of Rhode Island President’s Leadership Council members present:

- Ms. Linda Acciaro, Interim, Executive Director for External Relations and Communications (in person)
- Ms. Alyssa Boss, General Counsel (in person)
- Ms. Lil Breul O'Rourke, President, URI Foundation & Alumni Engagement (URIFAE) (in person)

The University of Rhode Island staff members present:

- Ms. Lauren Burgess, Director, Legislative and Government Relations (in person)
- Mr. Jeffrey Cabral, Vice President for Development (in person)
- Mr. Carlos Lopez Estrada, Director, Legislative and Government Relations (in person)
- Ms. Lynn Owens, Associate Secretary (in person)
- Ms. Cheryl Trudel, Executive Assistant (remote)

Invited guests in attendance:

- Ms. Diane Chace Fannon '74, Board of Directors, Executive Committee, Vice-Chair/Marketing and Communications Chair, URIFAE (remote)
- Mr. Alfred J. Verrecchia '67, M.B.A. '72, Hon. '04, Board of Directors, Executive Committee Chair, URIFAE (in person)

At 4:46 p.m., Chair Heenan introduced and welcomed two new Directors for Legislative and Government Relations: Lauren Burgess, whose primary focus is federal relations; and Carlos Lopez Estrada, whose focus is state and local government, and community relations.

Chair Heenan called upon Ms. Burgess and Mr. Lopez Estrada to provide an overview of their backgrounds; their recent success since their arrival at the University, and to deliver their presentation.

3. DISCUSSION ITEMS

a. Government Relations Introductions and Discussion

- Carlos Lopez Estrada, Director of Legislative and Government Relations
- Lauren Broccoli Burgess, Director of Legislative and Government Relations

Mr. Lopez Estrada is an alumnus of the University and a past participant in the Talent Development program, with over twenty-years of experience in state, municipal and community relations serving as the deputy director of Administration and Senior Advisor in the City of Pawtucket. Mr. Lopez Estrada began his presentation entitled, [The University of Rhode Island - Government Relations Update](#) and informed the Committee of the dual roles that he and Ms. Burgess hold.

Ms. Burgess informed the Committee of her background as a Providence native; a graduate of Boston University; a Roger Williams University law graduate; and has served as an aide for Congressman Langevin. She has also been a registered federal lobbyist for the past ten years and has worked with both public and private universities.

Chair Heenan thanked Mr. Lopez Estrada and Ms. Burgess for their introductions and asked them to proceed with their presentation.

Mr. Lopez Estrada informed the Committee that Governor McKee's proposed budget plan had been released to the public and provided a summary of the University's key legislative priorities, such as the opportunity to access federal dollars through the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA). Mr. Lopez Estrada stated that the University will pursue \$300M in ARPA funding requests which will be considered by the Rhode Island House ARPA Task Force. Hearings will also be held by the Senate Finance Committee, as well as recommendations from the Governor, to determine where the funds will be distributed. Mr. Lopez Estrada stressed that disbursement of the ARPA dollars will be an independent budgetary process from that of the state's regular budget process.

Ms. Burgess explained that legislation for the Federal Infrastructure Bill has earmarked \$2.5B for specific projects that will come directly to Rhode Island and that there is also money available at the national level through competition. She explained that they have been working closely with the RI Congressional Delegation who are aware of the University's top priorities, including those requests for ARPA money; noting that the requests are also for deferred maintenance projects across campuses. Ms. Burgess commented that they are positioning themselves to take full advantage of these funds, meeting with state officials, and strategizing with the University's leadership. Ms. Burgess explained that other strategic steps are being taken, including the creation of a Presidential Federal Funding Task Force and a meeting with the Rhode Island Infrastructure Bank where ARPA funding will be coming through to maximize securing funding.

Ms. Burgess explained that via the annual federal government budget process there is an opportunity for URI to access funding for key programs. She explained that last year there was congressionally directed spending that went to URI and that it is currently pending. Should that legislation pass into law, roughly \$5M would go to support projects that URI put forward in the Blue Economy and Life Sciences and that the University already has an internal process underway for the next fiscal cycle. Identifying projects to bring to the delegation will further enhance these additional requests at the state level in the Blue Economy and the Life Sciences.

Mr. Lopez Estrada reviewed a timeline for a variety of advocacy efforts and legislative activities slated for the next several months. Those include multiple visits from members of the Rhode Island Congressional Delegation; a recent visit from Senator Reed; a facilities tour with the Rhode Island Senate president; development of a federal funding request; a facilities tour scheduled with the Speaker of the Rhode Island House of Representatives in February; and the development of the University's priorities related to the Department of Defense that Ms. Burgess is pursuing with her team.

Ms. Burgess explained to the Committee the importance of a coordinated effort and that she works as a part of a team with Mr. Lopez Estrada, given the overlap of federal and state legislation in maximizing advocacy efforts. There is an important strategy being developed for a future trip to Washington, D.C. by President Parlange to meet with the Congressional Delegation and additional federal agency officials to interact and create a profile at the federal level.

Chair Heenan noted the consequential news for the University that Congressman Langevin will not seek reelection, noting that this could present both risks and opportunities that potential shifts could result in. Chair Heenan asked Ms. Burgess, “how should this group think about that?” Ms. Burgess explained the challenges and opportunities stating that it is a big loss for the University and for Rhode Island, and presents an immediate opportunity for discussions before he leaves related to projects he has championed. It is also an opportunity to create legacy with cybersecurity initiatives, high performance computing, and workforce development. Ms. Burgess stated that the challenges will be that a new person will not have the leadership role on committees that Congressman Langevin achieved.

Concluding the presentation, Mr. Lopez Estrada reiterated that the regular budget process is underway, and that the University was recently awarded funding through the Build Back Better Regional Challenge with funding coming to fruition soon.

Ms. Burgess provided a quick overview of the recent successes: the URI facilities tour with the Rhode Island State Senate President; visits with members of the Congressional Delegation and President Parlange who is in conversations related to the Blue Economy, and cybersecurity. Ms. Burgess also highlighted that URI was recently awarded the EDA Build Back Better grant that focuses on the Blue Economy in Phase 1, unlocking \$100M in which the University is leading the competition for a larger award.

Mr. Lopez Estrada spoke about the recent State of the State Address where Governor McKee mentioned the University as a leader in the Blue Economy, and the Narragansett Bay Campus (NBC), crediting URI as a critical partner in the Blue Economy.

URI Board of Trustees Vice Chair Michael McNally asked Mr. Lopez Estrada to clarify the University’s Build Back Better Regional Challenge status, stating that it was his understanding that the University made it to the next level and not that a grant was awarded.

Ms. Burgess replied saying that the University received a \$500,000 planning grant, and President Parlange responded saying the University placed as one (1) of sixty (60), out of five-hundred and thirty (530) that applied, and that many states did not place at all, confirming that the University is positioned at the next \$100 million level of the Build Back Better Challenge.

Chair Heenan inquired if the College of Nursing was part of Congressman Cicilline’s district. Ms. Burgess responded “yes” and informed the Committee that in her conversation with his staff, they had discussed when the Congressman would be visiting the College of Nursing, slated for some time in early spring, to have a conversation about the healthcare shortage.

Chair Heenan reminded the Committee that the University's campuses are in both congressional districts 1 and 2. She thanked Ms. Burgess and Mr. Lopez Estrada and asked the Committee if anyone had any questions.

Hearing none, Chair Heenan conducted a roll call attendance and reported that a quorum of members was present. The meeting was called to order at 5:06 p.m. and Chair Heenan turned to action items.

1. ACCEPTANCE OF THE AGENDA

Chair Heenan called for a motion to accept the agenda for the January 20, 2022 meeting.

On a motion duly made by Vice Chair Sabitoni and seconded by Cortney Nicolato, it was

VOTED:	THAT	The University of Rhode Island Board of Trustees University Advancement and External Affairs Committee accept the agenda for the January 20, 2022 meeting.
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VOTE:	6 members voted in the affirmative and 0 members voted in the negative.
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YEAS:	Margo Cook, Christine Heenan, Michael McNally, Cortney Nicolato, Vahid Ownjazayeri, and Armand Sabitoni.
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NAYS:	0
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ABSTAINS:	0
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2. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES

Minutes of the September 23, 2021 Meeting [Enclosure 2.a.](#)

Chair Heenan called for a motion to approve the minutes for the September 23, 2021 meeting.

On a motion duly made by Vice Chair Sabitoni and seconded by Vahid Ownjazayeri, it was

VOTED:	THAT	The University of Rhode Island Board of Trustees University Advancement and External Affairs Committee approve the minutes of the September 23, 2021 meeting.
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VOTE:	6 members voted in the affirmative and 0 members voted in the negative.
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YEAS: Margo Cook, Christine Heenan, Michael McNally, Cortney Nicolato, Vahid Ownjazayeri, and Armand Sabitoni.

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 0

Chair Heenan returned to discussion items inviting Lil Breul O'Rourke, President, URI Foundation & Alumni Engagement (URIFAE), to address discussion items 3.b., 3.c., and 3.d., and pointed out the importance of endowed chairs and professorships, and the importance of understanding how they impact the reputation and selectivity of the University. She further stated that the Committee may want to bring this discussion item to the full Board.

3. DISCUSSION ITEMS

b. Campaign and Alumni Engagement Update [Enclosure 3.b.](#)

- Lil Breul O'Rourke, President, URI Foundation and Alumni Engagement

URIFAE President, Lil Breul O'Rourke thanked Chair Heenan and introduced Jeffrey Cabral, Vice President for Development, who contributed to the report. President Breul O'Rourke informed the Committee that the Women in Leadership Speaker Series will be featuring Chair Heenan who will be speaking on January 25th about her career in communications and public affairs.

President Breul O'Rourke provided an update on the University's \$250M Capital Campaign goal, stating that the \$250M Capital Campaign goal was increased to \$300M. She reviewed the Campaign's five (5) Pillars:

1. **Student Access** - scholarship funds that support students.
2. **The URI Learning Experience** - opportunities for URI students engaged in undergraduate research; J-term and studying abroad.
3. **Transformative Faculty Leadership** - endowed chair professorships.
4. **Innovative and Distinctive Programs** - such as those at the Ryan Institute for Neuroscience and other emerging programs around the Blue Economy.
5. **Strategic Opportunities** - giving University leadership the resources needed in order that the President and Provost can be flexible and more agile and able to make quick decisions; taking advantage of opportunities; raising unrestricted dollars to be directed by the leadership, deans, and the President.

URIFAE President Breul O'Rourke provided an update on the University's \$300M Capital Campaign goal, stating that as of yesterday (January 19, 2022), total funds raised are \$228.1M including planned giving, outright gifts, multi-year pledges, and deferred gifts.

President Breul O'Rourke also reviewed Campaign commitments by purpose with efforts on building on the University's endowment. Fundraising for the Campaign continues an upward trajectory, at "slightly above the trend line." President Breul O'Rourke concluded her presentation asking if anyone had any questions.

Ms. Margo Cook, Chair, URI Board of Trustees, asked President Breul O'Rourke if gifts were going to the causes where they are needed. President Breul O'Rourke responded that because it is about donor intent, interest, and passion, matching with URI needs is a challenge. While scholarships are doing well, faculty support is lacking. Efforts are aimed at doing much more to support faculty to increase support for Ph.D. students, which is critical to the President's goal and to elevate the University's research profile.

c. Day of Giving Report

- Lil Breul O'Rourke, President, URI Foundation and Alumni Engagement

President Breul O'Rourke asked Mr. Cabral to present on URI's Day of Giving. Mr. Cabral stated that the marketing campaign for URI's Day of Giving was very successful and presented a few data points:

- Almost \$1.5M raised compared to \$1.1M the prior year.
- Over 1,000 new donors in a twenty-four-hour period with a goal of making certain they return as donors.
- 600 parent donors.
- \$534,000 of the \$1.5M raised went directly to RhodyNow funds.

Committee member Nicolato asked Mr. Cabral if there were any key themes that he could attribute to the 1,000 new donors. Mr. Cabral responded that young alumni and athletics lead the way this year, with a realized increase of gifts up from \$350,000 last year, to over \$664,000 this year. Chair Heenan pointed out that young alumni provide an opportunity for participation that is a key metric with first time donors in building relationships over time.

d. Discussion of the Importance of Funding Endowed Chairs and Professorships

- Lil Breul O'Rourke, President, URI Foundation and Alumni Engagement

President Breul O'Rourke stated that the endowment has gone from \$106M in 2016 to approximately \$230M. The University benefits from a committed and talented investment committee that stewards the funds.

Committee member Nicolato asked President Breul O'Rourke, "What is the goal?" President Breul O'Rourke responded by providing an example of the University of Connecticut's endowment as being doubled or even tripled to that of URI, while URI's endowment is not as small as that of the University of Maine. Chair Heenan explained that they are measured in two ways: total endowment, and endowment per student and provided examples. Chair Heenan suggested that the Committee look at and discuss, at a future meeting, the data from peer institutions and aspirational peers. Chair Heenan also highlighted that the University has doubled the endowment in five years, and that this growth is rare for a university to achieve.

Mr. Cabral added that the vast majority of the deferred \$84M in gifts will go towards the endowment funds, which will lead to significant growth over the next ten years. Adding that the endowed faculty professorships and chairs are crucial to retaining top talent across the University, there are only a handful of endowed faculty positions and endowed chairs (at URI). Some of them are endowed at significantly lower levels than what is really required to support positions in their entirety. He stressed the importance of creating an endowed fund for a faculty position or a chair that is large enough that the interest not only helps to grow the endowment fund, but it covers the entire salary of a faculty member. While there has been lots of emphasis around capital projects which are extremely important, he stressed focusing on putting emphasis behind endowment as a top priority. He reminded the Committee that faculty endowments have no shelf life, that they live on in perpetuity—a position will exist forever.

President Parlange stressed the importance of the decisions regarding the faculty we hire and everything that follows from those decisions and, as a result, that it is a big deal to be in a position to have an endowed professorship.

Mr. Cabral stated that the University has about \$7.8M in endowed funds directed to faculty positions, with a gap of approximately \$4M to fully endow these positions. Faculty holding endowed chairs are typically compensated at a higher level.

Board of Trustees Chair Margo Cook asked Mr. Cabral what the range for an endowed position would be and how many positions would be ideal. Mr. Cabral responded that the President would be best to answer what would be most ideal for each college, stating that due to tenure, it would change over time. He and President Breul O'Rourke discussed ranges generally.

Chair Heenan stated that a startup package that is absent of an endowed chair or professorship would be taxing on the university. She stressed the importance for the Board to understand and be able to speak knowledgeably with each other and with donors about a competitive area that would help URI recruit into endowed positions.

President Parlange furthered the discussion by providing an overview of his perspective saying that it is rare to have enough funds to be able to pay for endowed chairs and professorship salaries; noting that the cost is higher than the range discussed, which is used to support labs. He also commented that it makes a significant difference in the quality of a professor's life to be able to have the funding for the professorship because it allows them to explore new ideas, tackle new problems, diversify their portfolio, and be able to take advantage of opportunities as they arise. It is especially important for the University to be able to provide this for the faculty.

President Parlange also noted the importance and success of some of the college deans in the STEM faculties area that are connecting with businesses and industries to support equipment purchases where funding is immediately needed.

President Parlange also remarked in agreement with Mr. Cabral's earlier assessment of the cost of endowed chairs and professorships and the importance of being able to reinvest funds that can then be used by the professors. He noted this as a game changer for faculty, allowing them to make visits, recruit students of high caliber, and recruit these students immediately.

Chair Heenan thanked everyone and asked if anyone had any questions or comments. Hearing none, Chair Heenan invited Interim Executive Director for External Relations and Communications, Linda Acciardo to provide a brief update related to key issues surrounding press scrutiny, social media activities, and the Board's meeting on January 21, 2022, where they will respond to President Parlange's recommendations regarding the Honorary Degree Committee.

e. Media and Institutional Reputation

- Linda Acciardo, Interim Director, External Relations and Communications

Ms. Acciardo referred the Committee to the Board's agenda and the expected vote to revoke URI Honorary Degrees from Lieutenant General Flynn and Mayor Rudy Giuliani. She informed the Committee that External Relations and Communications have a prepared response to the media. She informed the Committee that if anyone has any concerns with any media inquiries, that they can always contact her; or to refer any inquiries to her office.

Chair Heenan thanked Ms. Acciardo and asked if anyone had any questions or comments for Ms. Acciardo, Ms. Burgess, and/or Mr. Lopez Estrada.

President Parlange took the opportunity to express his appreciation and gratitude to Ms. Burgess and Mr. Lopez Estrada for the work they have accomplished to date. He also stated that the past semester has been very productive with time well spent dedicated to meetings with legislators, business partners, and community members.

President Parlange highlighted key aspects of the Governor's recent speech related to the Build Back Better Challenge, reminding the Committee that this was something that involved several key partnerships, including URI's vice president for research, several faculty and staff members, and students from across the University community. President Parlange also stated the importance of the Governor's comments on topics such as SmartBay aquaculture and the Narragansett Bay Campus are all highly important areas for the future of the University.

President Parlange completed his comments and thanked URIFAE President Breul O'Rourke and her team on the success of URI's Day of Giving.

Chair Heenan informed the President that prior to his arrival, the Committee discussed opportunities for the University to be more visible and thanked President Parlange for leading that effort, expressing her gratitude for being a highly engaged and visible champion and leader of the University. Through the use of his social media platforms, he has engaged students and the broader URI community.

President Parlange thanked Chair Heenan for her comments and expressed his confidence in the Board of Trustees as a great team.

Chair Heenan asked the Committee if anyone had any additional comments or questions. Board of Education Chair Barbara Cottam stated that it is of note that the University's advertising for recruitment has been "really good" saying that people have been talking about it.

President Parlange commented that URI student enrollment numbers are better than last year; and with last year being the best year to date. He expressed the significance of this, saying that only one quarter of the universities in the United States have seen this increase because of the demographic shifts, especially in the Northeast, making the University an attractor to Rhode Island.

4. ADJOURN

Chair Heenan thanked everyone and called for a motion to adjourn the January 20, 2022 meeting.

On a motion duly made by Vice Chair Sabitoni and seconded by Cortney Nicolato, it was

VOTED THAT The University of Rhode Island Board of Trustees University Advancement and External Affairs Committee adjourn the meeting of January 20, 2022.

VOTE: 6 members voted in the affirmative and 0 members voted in the negative.

YEAS: Margo Cook, Christine Heenan, Michael McNally, Cortney Nicolato, Vahid Ownjazayeri, and Arman Sabitoni.

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 0

The meeting adjourned at 5:39 p.m.

UPCOMING MEETING

The next URI Board of Trustees University Advancement and External Affairs Committee meeting is scheduled for April 21, 2022.