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*Faculty Representative*  
Christopher Bove '23  
*Student Representative*

**The University of Rhode Island Board of Trustees  
Academic Affairs, Research and Student Life Committee Meeting  
Friday, October 23, 2020 • 1:00 p.m.**

**PURSUANT TO GOVERNOR RAIMONDO'S  
EXECUTIVE ORDER, THIS MEETING WAS HELD VIRTUALLY USING  
THE WEBEX PLATFORM (BOARD ONLY) AND FACEBOOK  
LIVESTREAM (PUBLIC VIEWING)**

**MINUTES**

A formal roll call was taken verifying that a quorum was present, and Chair Rouse called the meeting to order at 1:01 p.m.

Attendees present for this virtual meeting:

The URI Board of Trustees Academic Affairs, Research and Student Life Committee voting members:

- Dr. Cecilia Rouse, Chair
- Dr. Karina Montilla Edmonds, Vice Chair
- Mr. Matthew D. Lenz
- Honorable Charles Fogarty (arrived late)

Other Board of Trustees members:

- Ms. Margo Cook, Chair of the URI Board of Trustees

The URI Board of Trustees Academic Affairs, Research and Student Life Committee ex-officio members:

- Dr. Mayrai Gindy, Faculty Representative

The University of Rhode Island Staff:

- Dr. David Dooley, President
- Ms. Michelle Curreri, Chief of Staff and Board Secretary
- Don DeHayes, Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs
- Dr. Peter Snyder, Vice President, Research and Economic Development

- Ms. Anne Marie Coleman, Assistant Vice President, Human Resource Administration
- Dr. Kathy Collins, Vice President, Student Affairs
- Mr. Thorr Bjorn, Director, Athletics
- Dr. Mary Grace Almandrez, Associate Vice President, Community, Equity, and Diversity
- Mr. Louis Saccoccio, General Counsel
- Dr. Anne Veeger, Vice Provost
- Dr. Megan Echevarria, Faculty Senate President
- Dr. Audrey Cardany, Faculty Senate, Vice President
- Dr. Brian Krueger, Associate Dean, College of Arts and Sciences
- Dr. Dean Libutti, Vice Provost
- Dr. John Stringer, Director, Institutional Research
- Mr. Peter Harrington, Assistant Legal Counsel

**1. ACCEPTANCE OF THE AGENDA**

Chair Rouse called for a motion that the URI Board of Trustees Academic Affairs, Research and Student Life Committee accept the agenda for the meeting of October 23, 2020.

On a motion duly made by Mr. Matt Lenz and seconded by Dr. Karina Montilla Edmonds it was

VOTED:	THAT	The URI Board of Trustees Academic Affairs, Research and Student Life Committee accept the Agenda for the meeting of October 23, 2020
	VOTE:	3 members voted in the affirmative and 0 members voted in the negative
	YEAS:	Karina Montilla Edmonds, Matthew Lenz, Cecilia Rouse
	NAYS:	0
	ABSTAINS:	0

**2. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES**

Chair Rouse called for a motion that the URI Board of Trustees Academic Affairs, Research and Student Life Committee approve the minutes for the meetings held September 2 and September 10, 2020. ([Enclosure 2a](#) [Enclosure 2b](#))

On a motion duly made by Mr. Matt Lenz and seconded by Dr. Karina Montilla Edmonds it was

VOTED:	THAT	The URI Board of Trustees Academic Affairs, Research and Student Life Committee approve the minutes for the meetings held September 2 and September 10, 2020.
	VOTE:	3 members voted in the affirmative and 0 members voted in the negative

YEAS: Karina Montilla Edmonds, Matthew Lenz, Cecilia Rouse

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 0

### 3. DISCUSSION ITEMS

#### a. **Campus Climate Assessment in Spring 2021**

Chair Rouse announced that the firm of Rankin and Associates has been engaged to conduct a climate survey for URI to be developed and conducted this year. The assessment will evaluate the cultural climate on campus in terms of openness, fairness, etc.

#### b. **Research Metrics for the Division of Research and Economic Development ([Enclosure 3b](#))**

Dr. Peter Snyder, Vice President for Research and Economic Development, presented updated information on current research metrics. He reviewed the quantitative information that his division collects including statistics of research productivity, both internal and to be shared with the public. Dr. Snyder noted that 2020 has presented unexpected fiscal difficulties, but that nonetheless we continue to invest in the University's STEM and non-STEM programs. Dr. Montilla Edmonds asked why the investment amount for STEM is lower than the non-STEM programs; Dr. Snyder replied that we are making a deliberate effort to invest in non-STEM faculty. Dr. Montilla Edmonds commented that she would have expected that COVID-related research would have made up the gap shown in the national figures. Dr. Snyder replied that we may well see that become the case going forward. Dr. Snyder asked for input on other areas that the Committee might like to see tracked going forward. Dr. Montilla Edmonds asked if there is tracking on the activities generated at the Ryan Center. Provost DeHayes said that several years ago there was a comprehensive economic impact on all aspects of the university and that we should consider updating that. Matt Lenz agreed that it is an area that should be widely shared. Dr. Rouse asked if there is any effort to bring out the economic achievements of the Arts and Social Sciences. Dr. Snyder replied that there are several pages in the annual report addressing those areas.

#### c. **Presentation of the URI Fall Enrollment Report ([Enclosure 3c](#))**

Chair Rouse asked Provost Don DeHayes to present the URI Fall Enrollment Report with the help of Vice Provost Dean Libutti and Director of Institutional Research John Stringer. Annually on October 15<sup>th</sup>, official data on enrollment is sent to the State of Rhode Island and shared nationally in the Common Data Set; the Committee is seeing it before it goes public. The key numbers show that the total headcount for the URI fall semester is 17,671 up slightly from last year. Across the country we are seeing declines in enrollment related to COVID and a demographic decline in the number of high school graduates, especially in New England and the northeast. Despite such declines, our undergraduate enrollment has grown, as has graduate enrollment, peaking in 2016, 2017, 2018. The decline in the last two years is actually a reporting artifact related to dual and concurrent enrollment of high school students who may choose to

take a college level course at their high school. URI has moved several of these classes from fall to spring semester so they are not counted in this fall report. Chair Rouse asked why URI's enrollment is staying somewhat stable. Provost DeHayes replied that URI's reputation has grown and improved over the last 10 years and we have substantially increased our recruitment efforts and experiential learning opportunities, which are attractive to students. We think it is reputation-driven, but it is difficult to predict what will happen going forward.

Dean Libutti said that today's Providence Business News has a story saying that all Rhode Island postsecondary schools are seeing lower enrollment except for URI. We worked hard to build our pool of applicants and to watch the trends. Summer "melt" was at a record level, but we were still ahead. One in five of our graduates come as transfers, so we work hard on recruiting them from the state, region and out of state. We came into this year prepared to compete for students nationally and internationally. Faculty helped with outreach and it was very much a concerted team effort. He continued the presentation with additional statistics on enrollment.

It was also noted that URI had a very successful summer session and very high summer graduation rate. Provost DeHayes stated there was some speculation that the large number is related to the last spring semester where some students received an unsatisfactory grade that did not count against them, and then came back to amend it over the summer. In addition, because this was the first summer session with 100% virtual delivery, it may have created more opportunities for students to take classes while working. Chair Rouse asked the Committee if there was further discussion. Upon hearing no further questions, Chair Rouse moved to the next agenda item.

**d. Overview of the Faculty Senate Process for the Development and Review of Proposed New Programs/Majors ([Enclosure 3d](#))**

Chair Rouse stated that this item is part of the ongoing discussion about the Board approval process for new major and other academic restructuring and also when the Board might have input on new programs. Provost DeHayes introduced Faculty Senate President Megan Echevarria and Vice President Audrey Cardany to give an overview of the faculty senate process for reviewing and approving new programs. The goal is that we have agility and speed in responding to student demands for new curricula. Dr. Cardany presented a curriculum process flowchart and provided additional narrative. Chair Rouse asked at what point in the process are the financial implications considered. The reply was that program proposals must include a financial report from the university budget office.

Mr. Lenz asked if we reevaluate existing programs to see how and if they still fit with the needs of students. Dr. Echevarria replied that we do, and the Provost also reevaluates programs regularly. Chair Rouse then asked if we ever abolish programs. Dr. Echevarria answered yes, we have options to either redesign a program or fully terminate it. Chair Rouse concluded by saying that this was a very helpful overview.

e. **Possible Models for Board and Faculty Senate Consideration with regard to Committee Approval of New Programs ([Enclosure 3e](#))**

Provost DeHayes began the conversation about possible models by citing the newly approved bylaws of the board, which designate the board's responsibility to approve and terminate programs that are brought forward to them through the proper procedures. We have three possible new models to discuss, with the stated purpose of enabling efficient shared governance and ensuring an effective academic review process. Model 1 is the Bylaws Approval Process, Model 2 is the Early Alert Process, and Model 3 is the Additional Informational Matters Process. (Details of each process can be found in Enclosure 3e.) Provost DeHayes stated that our recommendation to the Committee is for some form of Model 1 be accepted, as it aligns most closely with the Board's bylaws.

Chair Rouse called for questions and discussion. Mr. Lenz began by saying they appreciate the opportunity to have details about new majors and minors. He stated that he would like for the Committee to get the proposals a bit earlier to provide for more time for due diligence. Provost DeHayes confirmed that the "early alert" component would provide this notice. How this would interact with the Committee schedule is still to be determined.

Chair Rouse asked if the early alert is considered "informational" would the Faculty Senate be open to input from the Committee at that stage. Dr. Echevarria replied that input at that stage could create difficulties, as the program will be on its way to the Faculty Senate for approval. Chair Rouse said that there should be some scope to express concerns. Dr. Echevarria said that the Committee can certainly reject a proposal, but hopefully won't need to if good communication has been maintained. Chair Rouse stated again that there should be a mechanism for board feedback. Dr. Cardany stated that we would not want to "flip the process." Dr. Echevarria said that we want to maintain the integrity of the process. Ms. Gindy asked what would happen if the Committee expressed concerns – what would the scenario be? Ms. Echevarria said that the comments would come back to the Faculty Senate, and then to the proposer to respond and make changes. Mr. Lenz gave the example of a proposal that did not fit with the University's mission. Dr. Cardany said that the Board's input is crucial as it will provide a "fail safe" and improvement to the process. The "early alert" will provide a little bit more time to respond. Chair Rouse agreed, but expressed that it should be possible for the committee and Board to provide input before a new major has been approved by the faculty senate and signed by the university's president. Margo Cook said that this is an important discussion, there has to be early enough in the process to give feedback and reaction, without causing tension. She stressed the importance of having the committee well-informed before it gets to the President's desk. President Dooley agreed that he appreciates the discussion and shared his feeling that we would want the process to go to the Committee before the president, particularly because the proceedings are public – so any issues should be resolved in advance and that whatever process we agree upon, it should include a chance for the board to review and comment before going to the President. Dr. Echevarria noted that the "early alert" part of the 2<sup>nd</sup> proposal does provide that time, even it is an "informational" item, it can be thoroughly discussed by the Committee.

Chair Rouse asked Provost DeHayes if items such as these should be on the agenda as “discussion” items rather than as “informational” items typically are for discussion and certainly “informational” items are not meant to preclude discussion. He said that we don’t want to add another layer of review to the process, so as not to inhibit the agility for us to be responsive to market needs for new majors. The sequencing is a delicate matter that we need to keep in mind. Ms. Cook noted that the Committee can always meet and it does not have to be at the times of the full Board of Trustees meetings. Dr. Echevarria confirmed that the process is very robust. Chair Rouse thanked the group for this discussion and hopes that the need will be rare. She and Provost DeHayes will work out the language to confirm the process, and that the process can be amended if needed. Dr. Montilla Edmonds noted that the Committee does not wish to micromanage the process as long as the Committee has time to give input. Dr. Echevarria confirmed that no one considers the board a “rubber stamp” and also appreciates that they don’t want to micromanage.

**4. ACTION ITEMS**

Chair Rouse moved to the first action item. Provost DeHayes introduced College of Arts and Sciences Associate Dean Brian Krueger to discuss the advancement of the listed programs to department status.

- a. Recommendation and approval to advance Africana Studies and Gender and Women’s Studies from “Program” to “Departmental” status. Note: Organizational change approved by Faculty Senate on 9/17/20 and by President Dooley.**

[Enclosure 4a](#)

On a motion duly made by Dr. Karina Montilla Edmonds and seconded by Mr. Matt Lenz it was

VOTED:	THAT	The URI Board of Trustees Academic Affairs, Research and Student Life Committee approve the recommendation to advance Africana Studies and Gender and Women’s Studies from “Program” to “Departmental” status
	VOTE:	4 members voted in the affirmative and 0 members voted in the negative
	YEAS:	Karina Montilla Edmonds, Charles Fogarty, Matthew Lenz, Cecilia Rouse
	NAYS:	0
	ABSTAINS:	0

- b. Approval of Awarding Tenure to Dr. Gaurav Khanna, Professor of Physics, College of Arts and Sciences [Enclosure 4b](#)**

Provost DeHayes told the committee that an international search for URI’s first director of Research Computing had been conducted, resulting in the choice of Dr. Gaurav Khanna. He comes to us from the University of Massachusetts and he will start this January at URI.

On a motion duly made by Dr. Karina Montilla Edmonds and seconded by Hon. Charles Fogarty it was

VOTED: THAT The URI Board of Trustees Academic Affairs, Research and Student Life Committee approve the awarding of tenure for Dr. Gaurav Khanna.

VOTE: 4 members voted in the affirmative and 0 members voted in the negative

YEAS: Karina Montilla Edmonds, Charles Fogarty, Matthew Lenz, Cecilia Rouse

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 0

## 5. ADJOURN

Chair Rouse thanked the Committee and called for a motion to adjourn the meeting of October 23, 2020. On a motion duly made by Dr. Karina Montilla Edmonds and seconded by Matthew Lenz it was

VOTED: THAT The URI Board of Trustees Academic Affairs, Research and Student Life Committee adjourn the meeting of October 23, 2020

VOTE: 4 members voted in the affirmative and 0 members voted in the negative.

YEAS: Karina Montilla Edmonds, Charles Fogarty  
Matthew Lenz, Cecilia Rouse

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 0

The meeting adjourned at 2:35 p.m.

The next URI Board of Trustees Academic Affairs, Research, and Student Life Committee meeting is scheduled for January 14, 2021.