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Faculty Representative

Christopher Bove '23
Student Representative

**The University of Rhode Island Board of Trustees
Academic Affairs and Research Committee Meeting
Thursday, November 4, 2021 • 4:15 p.m.
University of Rhode Island
Robert J. Higgins Welcome Center, Hope Room
45 Upper College Road, Kingston, RI 02881**

OFFICIAL MINUTES

A formal roll call was taken to verify that an in-person quorum of members was present-- there was **not**; therefore no action items were completed. The agenda and previous minutes will be presented for approval at the January meeting. Chair Kerwin called the meeting to order at 4:15 p.m.

The URI Board of Trustees Academic Affairs and Research Committee members in attendance:

- Mr. Neil Kerwin, Committee Chair (in person)
- Dr. Karina Montilla Edmonds, Committee Vice Chair (remote)
- Honorable Charles J. Fogarty (in person)
- Ms. Susan Petrovas (remote)
- Dr. Mayrai Gindy, Faculty Representative (ex officio, non-voting) (in person)
- Mr. Michael McNally, Vice Chair, Board of Trustees, (ex-officio, voting) (in person)
- Dr. Marc L. Parlange, President (ex officio, non-voting) (in person)

Absent: Ms. Margo Cook (ex-officio, voting) Mr. Richard Humphrey,
Mr. Matthew Lenz

The University of Rhode Island Senior Leadership in attendance:

- Dr. Laura Beauvais, Interim Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs (in person)
- Ms. Alyssa Boss, General Counsel (in person)
- Ms. Michelle Curreri, Chief of Staff and Board Secretary (in person)
- Ms. Lil O'Rourke, President, URI Foundation and Alumni Engagement (in person)
- Dr. Peter Snyder, Vice President for Research & Economic Development (in person)

The University of Rhode Island staff members in attendance:

- Dr. Gifty Ako-Adounvo, Vice Provost of Global Initiatives (in person)
- Ms. Robin Cawley, Executive Assistant II (in person)
- Ms. Lynn Owens, Associate Secretary, URI Board of Trustees (in person)
- Ms. Ellen Reynolds, M.S., Assistant Vice President for Student Health and Wellness and Director of Health Services (in person)
- Ms. Shawn Simmons, Executive Assistant II (remote)
- Dr. Anne Veeger, Vice Provost for Academic and Faculty Initiatives (in person)

1. ACCEPTANCE OF THE AGENDA

Postponed until the January meeting.

2. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES

Postponed until the January meeting.

3. REPORT OF THE CHIEF ACADEMIC OFFICER

Interim Provost Laura Beauvais presented her report:

a. Academic Affairs Update ([Enclosure 3a](#))

Dr. Beauvais said that we are using the Academic Affairs Diversity Task Force as the steering group for efforts to build diversity across the organization at URI. We are coordinating an approach to the work before us, as laid out in the Anti-Racism Action Agenda for Change. Our initial efforts are focused on:

- Valuing and recognizing demonstrated work in anti-racism and Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) in promotion and tenure
- Improving the search process: Development of “DEI Candidate Statement and Evaluation” and guidance for searches (sent out to chairs and deans)
- Instituting annual college diversity accountability reports due at budget request
- Planning for an Anti-racism Pedagogy Symposium: led by faculty
- Executing a planning grant from Howard Hughes Medical Institute to assess inclusive teaching that dovetails with above
- Kicking off search for four new Assistant Deans in Colleges (Arts and Sciences, Health Sciences, Graduate School of Oceanography, & University College for Academic Success)
- Discussing the development of a position in the Provost’s Office to drive the DEI agenda
- Launching the URI Narragansett Undergraduate Scholarship for all enrolled

citizens of the Narragansett Indian Tribe launched this fall. This scholarship covers tuition, fees, and a small stipend. As of November 2nd, twelve undergraduates have qualified.

- A campus-wide committee on transgender inclusion was established in July. The committee's foci include curriculum development, events and programs, outreach and advocacy, education, and policies and procedures on transgender issues.
- Examining the service workloads of underrepresented faculty.
- Developing more robust mentoring networking for faculty from underrepresented groups.
- Supporting faculty development in DEI and anti-racism.
- Encouraging the development of courses specifically focused on multicultural competence both in general education program and majors.

b. Global Update ([Enclosure 3b](#))

Dr. Gifty Ako-Adounvo presented her update. She said that URI has achieved top honors in international education access through our Gilman Program. With regard to our strategic partnerships, Indonesia is a highlight – we have a new five-year Memorandum of Understanding with the Ministry of Planning, and a State of Rhode Island/URI/global partnership--State Partnership Program (SPP). The University of Rhode Island's history of cultural inclusion and diversity is amongst the best in Rhode Island. We are also funding initiatives for faculty global engagement. Cross campus collaborations are improving the supporting infrastructure.

Interim Provost Beauvais announced that Vice Provost Gifty Ako-Adounvo will be leaving URI in December; she thanked her for being the inaugural Vice Provost for Global Initiatives.

Chair Neil Kerwin asked about the numbers of students participating in our international programs before the pandemic and now. Dr. Ako-Adounvo said that before the pandemic we sent about 800 students abroad in various programs. During the 2020 shutdown we recalled all students studying in other countries. Now that restrictions are loosening, our students want very much to get back to traveling, and she feels that within two years, if restrictions allow, we should be back to pre-pandemic rates of participation.

Dr. Mayrai Gindy asked for a couple of things that we need to do to continue building strength in this area. Dr. Ako-Adounvo replied that we need to make it clear to students that there is room for them to participate in global programs. We need to continue to focus on building collaborations and shared positions. She sees tremendous potential for URI in the years ahead.

Dr. Parlange thanked Dr. Ako-Adounvo for her service on behalf of the University community.

c. COVID Update ([Enclosure 3c](#))

Vice Provost Anne Veeger presented. She explained that the goal is to provide regular updates on COVID positivity rates and vaccination rates on campus. We have updated the campus events policy regarding COVID and updated the COVID tracker on the main website which provides daily updates on key variables.

Additionally:

- Vaccination was required for Faculty and Non-Classified Staff as of 10/15/21.
- Alignment with vaccination requirement for federal contractors has been included, which means that all employees will need to be vaccinated by December 8, 2021.
- Positive cases among those with an approved medical/religious vaccination exemption have been notably higher than those for vaccinated individuals.
- Carefully watching social events and encouraging students to commit to safety measures.

Questions followed. Charles Fogarty asked if there is a chance that masks will not be needed in the classroom by next spring? Dr. Beauvais replied that it is not likely due to President Biden's Executive Order for federal contractors which requires masking by all. Chair Kerwin asked what additional steps would we take if cases go up? Dr. Veeger replied that we would consult with our healthcare professionals.

d. JCAP Update

Dr. Beauvais presented an update on the work of the Joint Committee for Academic Planning (JCAP). She said that the committee is currently focused on the following:

- A subgroup of JCAP is outlining a university-wide process to revisit the URI Mission statement.
- Guiding the development of our New England Commission of Higher Education (NECHE) interim report.

- JCAP will engage with University-wide Plan Steering Committee as determined by President Parlange.

e. Campus Events

Dr. Beauvais mentioned the following campus events as recent highlights:

- Quantum Computing Conference (Oct. 18-20)
- Distinguished Achievement Awards on Oct. 23
- Honors Colloquium: Sustaining our Shores – series continues into December

f. Issues on the Horizon

Dr. Beauvais shared some upcoming initiatives and tasks facing Academic Affairs:

- Update to URI’s “Cornerstone Values”
- Honorary degree nominations for May 2022
- Addressing climate survey findings

Questions and comments followed. Dr. Karina Montilla Edmonds commented that the Quantum program was excellent, but noted that it is a program that is not very diverse, so we need to work on that.

Dr. Beauvais noted that an enrollment update will be presented at the meeting of the full board tomorrow.

4. ADJOURN

Chair Kerwin thanked the Committee and called for a motion to adjourn the meeting of November 4, 2021.

On a motion duly made by Charles Fogarty and seconded by Karina Montilla Edmonds, it was:

VOTED:	THAT	The URI Board of Trustees Academic Affairs and Research Committee adjourn the meeting of November 4, 2021.
	VOTE:	5 members voted in the affirmative and 0 members voted in the negative.
	YEAS:	Karina Montilla Edmonds, Charles Fogarty, Neil Kerwin, Michael McNally, and Susan Petrovas

URI Board of Trustees
Academic Affairs and Research Committee Meeting
November 4, 2021

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 0

The meeting adjourned at 5:15 p.m.

The next URI Board of Trustees Academic Affairs and Research Committee meeting is scheduled for January 20, 2022.