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**The University of Rhode Island Board of Trustees
Plenary Session
Thursday, November 4, 2021 · 5:30 p.m., EDT
The University of Rhode Island
Robert J. Higgins Welcome Center, Hope Room
45 Upper College Road, Kingston, RI 02881**

OFFICIAL MINUTES

Chair Margo Cook welcomed everyone to the November 4, 2021, Plenary Session of the University of Rhode Island (URI) Board of Trustees. At 5:32 p.m., General Counsel Alyssa Boss conducted a roll call attendance and confirmed that a quorum of voting members was not present in person.

Attendees present for this meeting included:

The University of Rhode Island Board of Trustees voting members:

- Ms. Margo Cook, Chair (in person)
- Mr. Michael F. McNally, Vice Chair (in person)
- Dr. Karina Montilla Edmonds (remote)
- Mr. Michael Fascitelli (in person)
- Ms. Christine M. Heenan (in person)
- Mr. Neil Kerwin (in person)
- Mr. David J. Martirano (in person)
- Ms. Cortney Nicolato (remote)
- Ms. Susan Petrovas (remote)

Not Present: Honorable Charles J. Fogarty, Jr., Mr. Richard Humphrey, Mr. Matthew Lenz, Ms. Jay Placencia, Mr. Roby Luna, Mr. Vahid Ownjazayeri, Mr. Thomas M. Ryan, Mr. Armand Sabitoni.

The University of Rhode Island Board of Trustees ex officio members:

- Dr. Mayrai Gindy, Faculty Representative (in person)

Not Present: Mr. Christopher Bove, Ms. Barbara Cottam, Mr. Tim DelGiudice

Ex Officio Members

Tim DelGiudice, *Chair*
*R.I. Council on Postsecondary
Education*

Barbara Cottam, *Chair*
R.I. Board of Education

Mayrai Gindy
Faculty Representative

Christopher Bove '23
Student Representative

The University of Rhode Island President's Leadership Council members:

- Dr. Marc B. Parlange, President (in person)
- Dr. Laura L. Beauvais, Interim Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs (in person)
- Ms. Alyssa Boss, General Counsel (in person)
- Ms. Anne Marie Coleman, Assistant Vice President for Human Resources (in person)
- Dr. Kathy Collins, Vice President for Student Affairs (in person)
- Ms. Michelle Curreri, Chief of Staff and Board Secretary (in person)
- Dr. Karlis Kaugars, Chief Information Officer (in person)
- Ms. Lil Breul O'Rourke, President, URI Foundation and Alumni Engagement (in person)
- Ms. Abigail Rider, Vice President for Administration and Finance (in person)

The University of Rhode Island staff members:

- Ms. Robin Cawley, Executive Assistant II (in person)
- Ms. Lynn Owens, Associate Secretary (in person)

1. ACCEPTANCE OF THE AGENDA

As a quorum of Board members was not present in person, no action could be taken on this agenda item.

2. DISCUSSION ITEM

The University of Rhode Island Graduate School of Oceanography (GSO)
"Ocean Exploration to Ocean Economics – The Science of GSO"

- Dean Paula S. Bontempi, Graduate School of Oceanography ([presentation linked here](#))
- [Sarah Nickford](#) – Ph.D. Candidate
- [Mansur Ali Jisan](#) – Ph.D. Candidate

Chair Cook noted the importance of the Plenary Sessions to educate the Board on the University. She introduced Professor Paula Bontempi, Dean of the Graduate School of Oceanography (GSO), a premier oceanography school worldwide.

Dean Bontempi thanked Chair Cook for the invitation and the opportunity to speak with the Board. She introduced her presentation by saying that the University of Rhode Island Graduate School of Oceanography, Narragansett Bay Campus, directly connects ocean exploration to discovery to research, to management policy in economics, and not just economics of Rhode Island, but national and international economics. Dean Bontempi highlighted some examples:

- Trains a diverse interdisciplinary, climate-literate workforce
- Conducts research that helps blue economy partners find solutions to local and global challenges
- Is transforming our campus facilities to expose students to the spirit of innovation and entrepreneurship
- Is increasing public engagement, visibility and impact

Dean Bontempi reported that URI's GSO has over 1,000 graduates in government, academia, and the private sector, literally everywhere. GSO is focused on preparing the next generation of ocean professionals. She said that in the last five years, GSO has quadrupled the number of undergraduates they teach. She spoke of the online and degree programs offered and highlighted a new program similar to a hack-a-thon where students develop challenges, self-organize into teams, and come up with solutions to address the challenges. The students give a pitch to the faculty on what they are doing to address the challenge. Mentors will work with the students to take their projects to the next step, a pathway to potential internship and jobs.

Dean Bontempi reported that the geosciences is highly lacking in diversity. GSO is recruiting assistant deans for JEDI coordination. To that end, a Narragansett Bay campus-wide JEDI committee was formed with lots of partners on campus who are making periodic recommendations on activities and seminars focused on how to make people more aware culturally and culturally sensitive, and how to create a more hospitable climate. Front and center for Dean Bontempi is developing a climate literate workforce where students can make an impact, are globally conscious and climate sensitive.

In terms of research, Dean Bontempi stated that GSO has a global footprint that extends from Narragansett Bay to the Earth's poles. She said GSO looks at the ocean's function, the impacts of climate change on our ocean, sea level rise, the intensity of storms, hurricanes, and things that impact our coastlines as well as our resource economics. This year GSO completed \$50 million in federally funded research, up from \$35 million last year, and it is adding two new faculty members next year. She noted that what's holding GSO back is its aging facilities.

Dean Bontempi stressed the importance of GSO's public engagement and education programs to make ocean exploration, discoveries and research accessible and understandable to the public, and celebrated events like Science Saturdays, where thousands of K-12 students and their families came to the Bay Campus to learn about the science and education programs at URI. The Fall 2020 edition of *Aboard GSO* magazine was distributed to the Board members.

In terms of where GSO is heading, Dean Bontempi would like to see a memorandum of understanding with a number of international institutions to exchange students and faculty to give URI students more of a global view of things and to learn from each other scientifically.

The Graduate School of Oceanography is celebrating its 60th anniversary. Dean Bontempi reviewed the history of the Narragansett Bay Campus, and highlighted plans for facility improvements and program expansion. In 2018, the State of Rhode Island voters allocated \$45 million for the creation of a new ocean robotics laboratory, a new pier and a new marine operations facility. Plans for Phase II development include a new ocean frontier building, an ocean engineering education and research center to include a wave and acoustics lab, renovations to the Coastal Institute and an addition to the rock and core facility. The *Narragansett Dawn*, URI's oncoming new research vessel, is scheduled to arrive in 2024. This will be a \$125 million ship operated by the Graduate School of Oceanography in partnership with the East Coast Oceanographic Consortium partners at Woods Hole Oceanographic Institute and the University of New Hampshire.

Dean Bontempi concluded her presentation by speaking of her plans for a small boats program at the Bay Campus to increase marine and environmental studies in Rhode Island. She shared a recently

produced promotional video for the Bay Campus before introducing Ph.D. graduate students Sarah Nickford and Mansour Ali Jisan.

Sarah Nickford is a fourth year Ph.D. student working with Dr. Jaime Palter in the physical oceanography discipline. She first learned about URI's Graduate School of Oceanography in reading scientific papers during her undergraduate studies and learned about all the awesome research and field work happening at URI, particularly in Jaimie Palter's lab which is at the intersection of physical oceanography and biochemistry, the future of interdisciplinary ocean science. Since coming to URI, Sarah has had the opportunity to host physical oceanography seminars where faculty members from local institutions are invited to interact with other professionals. This interaction has helped develop a lot of her professional skills. She is the treasurer of the GSO student organization and has hosted academic and social events for students and the whole Bay Campus. Sarah noted that her favorite part of her work at GSO is going out to sea to collect data and learn new skills. She is conducting her research with Saildrone, oceangoing autonomous surface vehicles, to study the ocean's role in the global carbon budget. Autonomous vehicles are used to take samples and are particularly helpful during the winter when it is dangerous for people to be on research vessels. Sarah plans to continue her research, collecting data, going to sea, and possibly becoming a professor or working at NASA or NOAA.

Mansour Ali Jisan is an international Ph.D. graduate student from Bangladesh working with Dr. Isaac Ginis at the Graduate School of Oceanography. Dr. Ginis works very closely with the National Hurricane Center on storm prediction and fluid dynamics. Mansour stated that he is working on hurricane-ocean interactions and the rapid intensification process. His objective is to develop a three-dimensional model that will capture the surface conditions and hurricane effects during landfall. His work will influence better forecasting of storms. Mansour plans to continue his research and apply his experience to real life to make society more prepared for the impact of hurricanes.

Chair Cook asked Dean Bontempi about the challenges she sees in ensuring that Rhode Island and the world know that URI GSO is one of the world's premier academic institutions of oceanography and ocean exploration, and how URI can lead the blue economy in Rhode Island and globally.

Dean Bontempi noted that for every dollar invested at URI, there is a \$3.50 return on investment for the State of Rhode Island. If you apply that to the money invested in GSO research (\$50 million), that's a big number and a good economic return on investment. She noted that URI should spotlight its GSO graduates - where they are in the world and what they are working on - to show how URI is training the workforce of the future. Dean Bontempi stated that we need to highlight the impact we have on Rhode Island and the blue economy. She spoke about improving marketing efforts and building a communications strategy, creating a better social media presence. She said we must let the world know that we are top five in the world because of the amazing research being conducted, the reputation of the program, the talent of the faculty, the awesome students, and the location.

Chair Cook thanked Dean Bontempi and her students for their Plenary Session presentations and expressed that the Board is proud of the program and their work and will do everything it can to expand the program.

3. ADJOURN

URI Board of Trustees
November 4, 2021 Plenary Session

Chair Cook called for a motion to adjourn.

On a motion duly made by Michael McNally and seconded by Neil Kerwin, it was

VOTED: THAT The University of Rhode Island Board of Trustees adjourn the meeting.

VOTE: 8 members voted in the affirmative and 0 members
voted in the negative.

YEAS: Margo Cook, Michael Fascitelli, Christine Heenan, Neil Kerwin,
David Martirano, Michael McNally, Cortney Nicolato and Susan
Petrovas.

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 0

Karina Montilla Edmonds left the meeting at 6:07 p.m.

At 6:20 p.m., this meeting ended.