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Thomas Ryan '75

Armand E. Sabitoni '73

**The University of Rhode Island Board of Trustees Meeting  
Friday, November 5, 2021 • 9:00 a.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 5, 2021, meeting of the University of Rhode Island (URI) Board of Trustees. At 9:03 a.m., General Counsel Alyssa Boss conducted a roll call attendance and reported that a quorum of voting members was not present in person. In the absence of a quorum, action on Agenda Items 1 and 2 was deferred until Trustees Fogarty and Ryan joined the meeting 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)
- Honorable Charles J. Fogarty, Jr. (in person, arrived at 9:21 a.m.)
- Ms. Christine M. Heenan (in person)
- Mr. Richard Humphrey (in person)
- Mr. Neil Kerwin (in person)
- Mr. Matthew D. Lenz (in person)
- Mr. David J. Martirano (in person)
- Ms. Cortney Nicolato (in person)
- Ms. Jay Placencia (in person)
- Mr. Thomas M. Ryan (in person, arrived at 9:06 a.m.)
- Mr. Armand E. Sabitoni (in person)

Absent: Mr. Roby Luna, Mr. Vahid Ownjazayeri, Ms. Susan Petrovas

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

- Mr. Christopher Bove, Student Representative (in person)
- Ms. Barbara Cottam, Chair, Board of Education (in person, arrived at 9:12 a.m.)

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

The University of Rhode Island Board of Trustee ex officio member not present:

- Mr. Tim DelGiudice, Chair, Council on Postsecondary Education

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

- Dr. Marc B. Parlange, President (in person)
- Dr. Mary Grace Almandrez, Associate Vice President and Chief Diversity Officer (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)
- Mr. Dean Libutti, Associate Vice President of Enrollment Management and Student Success (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:

- Dr. Gifty Ako-Adounvo, Vice Provost for Global Initiatives
- Ms. Lauren Burgess, Director, Legislative and Government Relations (remote)
- Ms. Robin Cawley, Executive Assistant II (in person)
- Mr. Carlos Lopez Estrada, Director, Legislative and Government Relations (in person)
- Ms. Ann Morrissey, Special Assistant to the Provost for Academic Planning (in person)
- Ms. Lynn Owens, Associate Secretary (in person)
- Mr. John Stringer, Director, Institutional Research (in person)

At 9:04 a.m., Chair Cook called on Dean Libutti to deliver a presentation on the URI Fall Enrollment Report (Agenda Item 7.a.).

## **7. DISCUSSION ITEMS**

- a. Presentation of the URI Fall Enrollment Report. [Enclosure 7.a.](#)  
- Dean Libutti, Associate Vice President, Enrollment Management and Student Success

Associate Vice President Libutti introduced his PowerPoint on the URI Fall Enrollment Report by showing headlines of news reports on declining college enrollment throughout the country. Within that context, he talked about URI's enrollment numbers for this fall, and how URI recruits. He reminded the Board that the last time he made a presentation to the Board, URI was challenged in recruiting and yielding a class when, due to the pandemic, no in-person tours for

prospective students were conducted, no in-person high school visits were made, and there were no in-person events on campus.

In terms of Fall 2021 recruitment, Associate Vice President Libutti was pleased to say that URI had a record number of applications (25,105), 1,100 more than in other years. The current full-time enrollment is 3,327. He reviewed select metrics, and noted that URI went test optional, a good pivot for the University. He reviewed Fall 2021 first year full-time student deposits in terms of current enrolled versus target enrollment for in-state, out-of-state, and regional students, noting that URI is 47 over target. Noting that 1 of 5 of URI's graduating students did not start at the University, the current enrollment of transfer students is 43 over target. Transfer students come from the Community College of Rhode Island, and from New England and the mid-Atlantic.

Associate Vice President Libutti highlighted reasons for the success of URI's recruitment efforts including the innovative creation of 260+ virtual events, remaining flexible in terms of deadlines and the test optional factor, strategic financial aid and scholarship offerings, compassionate, adaptive and relentless communication to prospective students and their families including how to write a college essay and how to apply for financial aid, increased strategy on graduate enrollment, cultivation of transfer students, and overall collaboration throughout the University in terms of recruitment efforts. Starting in May 2021, the enrollment services team held 725 tours in sixty days in compliance with CDC and state guidelines. A "Rhode to Becoming a Ram" recruitment committee was formed with one message and set of outcomes to recruit, yield and enroll students for the fall.

The University realized a 12 percent growth in new student applications for graduate school, above the target. There has been great growth in graduate programs in nursing, engineering, computer and data science, quantum computing, oceanography, and a full time MBA program.

Total Fall 2021 enrollment, including undergrads, grads, online and high school students, is 17,609. Enrollment highlights identified residency rates of 50% in-state, 50% out-of-state, 21% diversity (23.7% including international students), 815 dual/concurrent high school students, 715 students enrolled 100% online, 118 students enrolled in the "Finish What You Started" program.

Associate Vice President Libutti noted the number one challenge in recruiting in-state students is the decrease in high school graduates. The younger population continues to decline. Additionally, structural factors within the state, such as the RI Promise Program, impact URI's intake of students. In past years, about 85-90 students that URI would admit and enroll ended up at the Community College of Rhode Island. This year the number was 273. The University is working with community-based organizations and the Office of the Postsecondary Commissioner to reach out to those students that graduated from high school but did not advance to college. Provost Beauvais added that URI is reaching out to the adult learning community to engage them in professional development and certificate programs.

Chair Cook asked Associate Vice President Libutti to describe the intention of the University, given the challenge of declining population and the goal to educate Rhode Island students at the state's flagship university. He responded by saying that senior leadership sets goals in

relationship to external demographics. When we look at setting enrollment targets, we look at our mix of students; we value access, we value diversity, we value quality. He noted that models are adjusted based on the times.

Associate Vice President Libutti and Board member Cottam confirmed that enrollment is down at both the Community College of Rhode Island and Rhode Island College. Associate Vice President Libutti noted that URI is working cooperatively with the Commissioner of Postsecondary Education to bring people back to Rhode Island institutions and to be part of the success of the state.

Presentation slides illustrated the percentage change in student enrollment since 2008 by race and ethnicity.

Associate Vice President Libutti described initiatives and partnerships meant to address the challenges of declining demographics and increased and new regional competition. Those partnerships include a K-12 partnership in math education, readiness meetings with the Rhode Island Department of Education to create a pipeline for middle and high school students, and efforts to retain URI's Pell Grant students. He highlighted the great efforts of his admissions team in getting URI in front of students, noted the University's successful efforts to retain students during the pandemic, and celebrated the work of the Student Success Team.

Addressing questions about the test optional provision, Associate Vice President Libutti reported that the pandemic provided an opportunity for the University to conduct a two-year pilot to do what many in the community wanted us to do – take test scores out of the application process. The pilot considered whether you can grow applications and enhance growth in certain populations if you remove the testing requirement. Findings will be considered following the Fall 2022 enrollment period. He remarked that he would like to see the test optional provision continue based on the terrific benefits URI saw especially in our first generations students and others in the application process. Board member Heenan noted that all the data she has seen shows that the biggest indicator of success is high school rigor and high school grades, and that a number of elite schools are moving away from using test scores as indicators of college success.

Chair Cook thanked Associate Vice President Libutti for the information and noted that the Board is glad he is part of the URI team.

At 9:54 a.m., General Counsel Boss conducted a roll call attendance and confirmed that a quorum of voting members was present in person. The meeting was called to order.

## **1. ACCEPTANCE OF THE AGENDA**

Chair Cook called for a motion that the University of Rhode Island Board of Trustees accept the Agenda for the meeting of November 5, 2021.

On a motion duly made by Charles Fogarty and seconded by Cortney Nicolato and Thomas Ryan, it was

VOTED:                      THAT                      The University of Rhode Island Board of Trustees accept

the agenda for the meeting of November 5, 2021.

VOTE: 14 members voted in the affirmative and 0 members voted in the negative.

YEAS: Margo Cook, Karina Montilla Edmonds, Michael Fascitelli, Charles Fogarty, Christine Heenan, Richard Humphrey, Neil Kerwin, Matthew Lenz, David Martirano, Michael McNally, Cortney Nicolato, Jay Placencia, Thomas Ryan, and Armand Sabitoni.

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 0

## 2. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES

Minutes of the September 24, 2021 Meeting [Enclosure 2.a.](#)

Chair Cook called for a motion that the University of Rhode Island Board of Trustees approve the minutes of the Board's September 24, 2021 Meeting, as set forth in Enclosure 2.a.

On a motion duly made by Jay Placencia and seconded by Neil Kerwin, it was

VOTED: THAT The University of Rhode Island Board of Trustees approve the minutes of the Board's September 24, 2021 Meeting, as set forth in Enclosure 2.a.

VOTE: 14 members voted in the affirmative and 0 members voted in the negative.

YEAS: Margo Cook, Karina Montilla Edmonds, Michael Fascitelli, Charles Fogarty, Christine Heenan, Richard Humphrey, Neil Kerwin, Matthew Lenz, David Martirano, Michael McNally, Cortney Nicolato, Jay Placencia, Thomas Ryan, and Armand Sabitoni.

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 0

## 3. OPEN FORUM

Chair Cook reported that no one signed up to speak during the Open Forum.

At 9:56 a.m., Chair Cook called on Dr. Mary Grace Almandrez to talk about the background of the URI Campus Climate Survey and the results (Agenda Item 7.b.). She noted the timeliness of

the report in order for URI to get an understanding of how people in many different stakeholder cohorts are feeling about the University.

## 7. DISCUSSION ITEMS

- b. Presentation of the URI Campus Climate Survey ([presentation linked here](#))  
- Dr. Mary Grace Almandrez, Associate Vice President and Chief Diversity Officer  
Office of Community, Equity, and Diversity

URI Assessment of Climate for Learning, Living and Working –  
October 2021 Executive Summary [Enclosure 7.b.\(i\)](#)

URI Assessment of Climate for Learning, Living and Working –  
October 2021 Final Report [Enclosure 7.b.\(ii\)](#)

Dr. Mary Grace Almandrez reported that the University's first campus-wide climate survey was launched in March-April 2021. In September 2021, high level findings were reported to the President. On October 7, 2021, the full report was released; everyone got the report on the same day. Community presentations were made in October. The University is now engaged in action planning fora, an opportunity for students, faculty, and staff to not only impact the data but to identify short term wins, action items that URI can immediately take in order to address some of the results of the campus climate survey. She shared survey details, sample characteristics, selected high-level findings, next steps and lessons learned.

Campus climate survey collaborators included consultants Rankin & Associates, URI project leads Dean Jennifer Riley, Dr. Mary Grace Almandrez, the Campus Survey Working Group, and URI's Marketing and Communications colleagues. URI owns the data and the survey.

In terms of response rate, one in five community members completed the survey (22.4%), including 18% of students, 43% of staff and 42% of faculty. Dr. Almandrez noted that URI was limited in creating opportunities for students to complete the survey due to COVID.

Dr. Almandrez reviewed the results of respondents by position, gender identity, racial and ethnic identity, sexual identity and disability status.

Some of the major themes in the analysis include the following strengths:

- Overall comfort with climate
- URI values teaching and research
- Positive experiences with supervisors and coworkers/colleagues

Some challenges and opportunities for URI to consider:

- Those from minoritized backgrounds (e.g., gender, race, disability status) have different experiences on campus than their counterparts
- Nepotism/cronyism is observed on campus (by employees in particular)
- Employees seriously considered leaving because of low salary/pay rate and limited advancement opportunities
- Students seriously considered leaving because of lack of sense of belonging

In terms of the overall climate, 69% of respondents were very comfortable or comfortable with the overall climate. Rankin and Associates reported that in comprehensive public institutions where research and teaching are prioritized and that grant masters and doctoral degrees, that rate is 75%. Those who identified as women, Black/African/African American, trans-spectrum, queer-spectrum, those with at least one disability and low-income students felt less comfortable with the overall climate.

Student responses were reviewed:

- 66% felt they belonged at URI
- 63% felt that they had other students whom they perceived as role models
- 58% felt connected to other students
- Students felt safe and supported everywhere on campus, in classrooms and with faculty, in residence halls and with friends and in student organizations
- Undergraduate students did not feel safe and supported in athletic facilities, in the academic environment, in Greek life and on campus pathways and lots
- Graduate students did not feel safe and supported within their departments or academic homes, and on campus pathways and lots

Faculty responses included:

- 78% of tenure-line faculty felt their research was valued
- 73% of tenure-line faculty felt their teaching was valued
- 79% of non-tenure line faculty felt the process for review was clear
- 74% of non-tenure line faculty felt the process for promotion was clear

Staff responses included:

- 72% felt coworkers/colleagues gave them job/career advice when they needed it
- 73% said supervisors provided adequate support for them to manage work-life balance
- 71% said supervisors were supportive of flexible work schedules
- 69% felt they had job security

Dr. Almandrez reviewed the survey statistics on Exclusionary Conduct, where 15% of respondents indicated they had personally experienced exclusionary, intimidating, offensive, and/or hostile conduct. Ten percent of respondents reported they had experienced unwanted sexual contact/conduct while they were a member of the URI community. Most respondents did not report the unwanted sexual contact/conduct. Thirty-two percent of respondents reported that they seriously considered leaving URI (27% undergraduates, 19% graduate students) for reasons such as lack of sense of belonging, wanted to transfer, lack of social life, climate not welcoming, personal reasons. Amongst faculty, 48% of faculty respondents reported that they seriously considered leaving URI because of low salary/pay rate, increased workload, institutional support, lack of institutional resources, and 48% amongst staff due to low salary/pay rate, limited opportunities for advancement, and tension with supervisor/manager.

Board members discussed significant topics raised in the survey, including providing a safe campus environment, unwanted sexual experiences, and minorities feeling the lack of a climate of wellbeing and a sense of belonging at the University. Board member Ryan

commented that the information we learned from the survey regarding the experiences of students of color not feeling a sense of belonging was already brought to the Board's attention during the student panel this past summer. Trustees discussed the survey instrument itself including negatively framed questions, whether it addresses institutional issues or societal issues, the length of the survey, and the timing of the survey. Board member Kerwin shared information about American University's campus climate surveys, conducted every two years. He noted that concerns raised in the survey were matched with available empirical information. In a number of cases, the surveys allowed the university leaders to address a concern before it became a big issue, particularly retention. He confirmed that repeated surveys are critical, as well as matching up the survey results with actual experiences and empirical facts, and building surveys into routine data collection.

President Parlange shared his thoughts on the survey and the consultants' presentations to the University community. He noted that regular benchmarking is extremely important, as is looking at the numbers in context, and not in isolation without a full understanding of the conditions.

Vice Chair McNally stated that it is incumbent upon the Board to take action on significant topics raised in the survey, such as campus safety and security. Board members noted the importance of understanding if safety issues are perceived or real and distinguishing between physical safety and a community member's overall general treatment at an institution. Dr. Almandrez and Vice President Rider suggested that the empirical evidence found in the Affirmative Action Plan and the Clery Report be considered.

Dr. Almandrez outlined next steps and immediate actions, including presenting a report and recommendations to the President's Leadership Council in February 2022, distribution of unit-specific reports, when possible, in April 2022, a report to the community in Summer 2022 and a determination of survey frequency in Fall 2022. She reported on lessons learned: be as transparent as possible; market widely and early at all stages; facilitate group opportunities when possible; consider different wording to avoid confusion about "climate"; clarify measures to ensure confidentiality.

Chair Cook commended Dr. Almandrez for conducting the survey. She asked her to return to the Board in January to dig into the data, report on some of the conclusions drawn and an action plan around the major findings, and to tell us about your strategy on how and when you will conduct future surveys. She said the Board is asking if URI is providing the right environment to attract and retain minorities, and questions how to address physical safety issues versus personal and emotional. She concluded by saying that, as a board, it is our responsibility to hold the University accountable on the action plan based on the findings of the survey.

At 10:49 a.m., the URI Board of Trustees took a brief recess and returned to open session at 11:05 a.m.





- VOTED        THAT:     The University of Rhode Island Board of Trustees seal the minutes of the Executive Session that took place on November 5, 2021.
- VOTE:        14 members voted in the affirmative and 0 members voted in the negative.
- YEAS:        Margo Cook, Karina Montilla Edmonds, Michael Fascitelli, Charles Fogarty, Christine Heenan, Richard Humphrey, Neil Kerwin, Matthew Lenz, David Martirano, Cortney Nicolato, Michael McNally, Jay Placencia, Thomas Ryan, and Armand Sabitoni.
- NAYS:        0
- ABSTAINS: 0

At 11:51 a.m., Chair Cook called for the Board to consider the Committee reports and action items listed under Agenda Item 8, while a quorum was still in place, and deferred the Report of the Chair, the Report of the President, and the remaining Committee Reports until after the lunch break.

## **8. COMMITTEE REPORTS AND ACTION ITEMS**

### **a. Executive Committee Report**

#### **(i) Update – November 4, 2021 Committee Meeting**

Chair Cook stated that the Executive Committee met yesterday to discuss a proposal to approve a 2.5% across-the-board salary increase for all non-union, non-classified employees effective July 1, 2021. She said this is consistent with what is happening at other higher education institutions around the state. The Executive Committee voted unanimously to recommend approval to the full Board.

#### **(ii) ACTION ITEM: Approval of the 2.5% across-the-board salary increase for all non-union, non-classified employees effective July 1, 2021.**

Chair Cook called for a motion that the URI Board of Trustees approve the 2.5% across-the-board salary increase for all non-union, non-classified employees effective July 1, 2021, as recommended and presented.

On a motion duly made by Armand Sabitoni and seconded by Jay Placencia, it was

- VOTED:        THAT        The University of Rhode Island Board of Trustees approve the 2.5% across-the-board salary increase for all non-union, non-classified employees effective July 1, 2021, as recommended and presented.

VOTE: 14 members voted in the affirmative and 0 members voted in the negative.

YEAS: Margo Cook, Karina Montilla Edmonds, Michael Fascitelli, Charles Fogarty, Christine Heenan, Richard Humphrey, Neil Kerwin, Matthew Lenz, David Martirano, Michael McNally, Cortney Nicolato, Jay Placencia, Thomas Ryan and Armand Sabitoni.

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 0

b. Finance and Facilities Committee Report

(i) Update – November 4, 2021 Committee Meeting

Committee Chair Fascitelli reported that a joint meeting of the Finance and Facilities Committee and the Institutional Risk and Compliance Committee was held to consider the audited financial statements for the University of Rhode Island for Fiscal Year ending June 30, 2021. He noted that the auditors from O'Connor & Drew, P.C. provided a very clean opinion of URI's financials and were very complimentary of URI staff in terms of process and cooperation.

Vice President Rider provided a high-level summary of the Committee's review of the University's financial statements for FY 2021, (see enclosures at 8.b.(iii)). She noted that the financial statements are important documents used by rating agencies and enable URI to issue revenue bonds. She stated that the Committee discussed the differences between URI's budget and the financial statements. She highlighted the fact that, given the huge uncertainties presented over the last year, URI's financial results were excellent.

(ii) Discussion Item: Report on Approvals Under the Delegation of Authority to the President Relating to Land and Property [Enclosure 8.b.\(ii\)](#)

General Counsel Boss noted that the attached report contains a listing of approvals under the Delegation of Authority to the President Relating to Land and Property; no action is required.

(iii) ACTION ITEM: Approval of the audited financial statements for the University of Rhode Island for Fiscal Year ending June 30, 2021

- URI Financial Statements June 30, 2021 [Enclosure](#)
- Memorandum on Financial Statements for Fiscal Year 2021 [Enclosure](#)
- Presentation on Financial Statements for Fiscal Year 2021 [Enclosure](#)

Chair Fascitelli reported that the Finance and Facilities Committee voted unanimously to recommend approval to the full Board.

Chair Cook called for a motion that the URI Board of Trustees approve the audited financial statements for the University of Rhode Island for Fiscal Year ending June 30, 2021, as set forth in Enclosure 8.b.(iii) and as recommended and presented.

On a motion duly made by Armand Sabitoni and seconded by Thomas Ryan, it was

VOTED:            THAT            The University of Rhode Island Board of Trustees approve the audited financial statements for the University of Rhode Island for Fiscal Year ending June 30, 2021, as set forth in Enclosure 8.b.(iii) and as recommended and presented.

VOTE:            14 members voted in the affirmative and 0 members voted in the negative.

YEAS:            Margo Cook, Karina Montilla Edmonds, Michael Fascitelli, Charles Fogarty, Christine Heenan, Richard Humphrey, Neil Kerwin, Matthew Lenz, David Martirano, Michael McNally, Cortney Nicolato, Jay Placencia, Thomas Ryan and Armand Sabitoni.

NAYS:            0

ABSTAINS: 0

c. Governance Committee Report

(i) Update – November 4, 2021 Committee Meeting

Committee Chair Nicolato reported that the Governance Committee addressed the Board’s quorum issue, noting that while Board members are incredibly engaged and giving of their time, talents and treasures, the unfortunate reality is that a quorum of 13 out of 17 voting members is unrealistic for our global board. She said the Board is talking to legislators about this challenge and hoping to lower the quorum in order to continue the great work of the Board.

Committee Chair Nicolato outlined a draft structure and timeline for the URI Board member nomination, selection and renewal process. She noted that 11 of 17 board members’ terms will have expired by February 2022. She reported that more information will be shared with the Board on the structure and process following conversations with our colleagues in government. She noted that President Parlange will be considering replacements for the student and senate faculty representatives, as current members’ terms end in February.

Regarding policy review, Committee Chair Nicolato announced that, in addition to policies being reviewed by the Governance Committee, draft policies be sent to subject matter experts in the various Board committees for review and comment.

Board members discussed the structure of the Board and the appointment process, as currently defined in its enabling legislation, as well as plans to work with its governing partners on reappointments, terms, and quorum challenges.

- (ii) ACTION ITEM: Approval of an Amendment to the URI Board of Trustees' May 8, 2020, Resolution Designating The University of Rhode Island Research Foundation as the Sole and Exclusive Agent of the URI Board of Trustees for Intellectual Property. [Enclosure 8.c.\(ii\)](#)

Committee Chair Nicolato reported that the Committee voted unanimously to recommend approval of the Amendment to the full Board.

Chair Cook called for a motion that the University of Rhode Island Board of Trustees approve an Amendment to the URI Board of Trustees May 8, 2020, Resolution Designating The University of Rhode Island Research Foundation as the Sole and Exclusive Agent of the URI Board of Trustees for Intellectual Property, as set forth in Enclosure 8.c.(ii) and as recommended and presented.

On a motion duly made by Armand Sabitoni and seconded by Michael McNally, it was

VOTED: THAT The University of Rhode Island Board of Trustees approve an Amendment to the URI Board of Trustees May 8, 2020, Resolution Designating The University of Rhode Island Research Foundation as the Sole and Exclusive Agent of the URI Board of Trustees for Intellectual Property, as set forth in Enclosure 8.c.(ii) and as recommended and presented.

VOTE: 14 members voted in the affirmative and 0 members voted in the negative.

YEAS: Margo Cook, Karina Montilla Edmonds, Michael Fascitelli, Charles Fogarty, Christine Heenan, Richard Humphrey, Neil Kerwin, Matthew Lenz, David Martirano, Michael McNally, Cortney Nicolato, Jay Placencia, Thomas Ryan and Armand Sabitoni.

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 0

- (iii) ACTION ITEM: Approval of the URI Board of Trustees Policy on the Awarding of Honorary Degrees  
[Enclosure 8.c.\(iii\)](#)

The Governance Committee is responsible for reviewing and proposing policies to ensure governance reflects the highest professional standards and best practices in university governance. Committee Chair Nicolato said that this policy establishes criteria for the approving and revoking of honorary degrees. She thanked Committee member Fogarty and the Faculty Senate for their efforts to maintain consistency amongst the university handbook and the board policy. She confirmed that most of the actual process happens with faculty and staff, and it is up to the discretion of the President to bring to the Board a request for approval or revocation of honorary degrees.

Committee Chair Nicolato called for a motion that the University of Rhode Island Board of Trustees approve the URI Board of Trustees Policy on the Awarding of Honorary Degrees, as set forth in Enclosure 8.c.(iii) and as recommended and presented.

On a motion duly made by Charles Fogarty and seconded by David Martirano, it was

VOTED: THAT The University of Rhode Island Board of Trustees approve the URI Board of Trustees Policy on the Awarding of Honorary Degrees, as set forth in Enclosure 8.c.(iii) and as recommended and presented.

VOTE: 14 members voted in the affirmative and 0 members voted in the negative.

YEAS: Margo Cook, Karina Montilla Edmonds, Michael Fascitelli, Charles Fogarty, Christine Heenan, Richard Humphrey, Neil Kerwin, Matthew Lenz, David Martirano, Michael McNally, Cortney Nicolato, Jay Placencia, Thomas Ryan and Armand Sabitoni.

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 0

- (iv) ACTION ITEM: Approval of the URI Board of Trustees Policy on Ethics and Conflict of Interest  
[Enclosure 8.c.\(iv\)](#)

General Counsel Boss noted that there are three policies related to conflict of interest and ethics. One is specifically about the code of ethics, which addresses the general conflict of interest and applies to all state employees. The second relates to conflict of interest in research and is primarily directed at compliance with federal laws, and the

third policy is specific to Rhode Island's Public-Private Partnership Act. She confirmed that all three policies are consistent with federal and state laws.

Committee Chair Nicolato called for a motion that the University of Rhode Island Board of Trustees approve the URI Board of Trustees Policy on Ethics and Conflict of Interest, as set forth in Enclosure 8.c.(iv) and as recommended and presented.

On a motion duly made by Armand Sabitoni and seconded by Jay Placencia, it was

VOTED: THAT The University of Rhode Island Board of Trustees approve the URI Board of Trustees Policy on Ethics and Conflict of Interest, as set forth in Enclosure 8.c.(iv) and as recommended and presented.

VOTE: 14 members voted in the affirmative and 0 members voted in the negative.

YEAS: Margo Cook, Karina Montilla Edmonds, Michael Fascitelli, Charles Fogarty, Christine Heenan, Richard Humphrey, Neil Kerwin, Matthew Lenz, David Martirano, Michael McNally, Cortney Nicolato, Jay Placencia, Thomas Ryan and Armand Sabitoni.

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 0

- (v) ACTION ITEM: Approval of the URI Board of Trustees Policy on Conflict of Interest in Research  
[Enclosure 8.c.\(v\)](#)

Committee Chair Nicolato called for a motion that the University of Rhode Island Board of Trustees approve the URI Board of Trustees Policy on Conflict of Interest in Research, as set forth in Enclosure 8.c.(v) and as recommended and presented.

On a motion duly made by Neil Kerwin and seconded by Matthew Lenz, it was

VOTED: THAT The University of Rhode Island Board of Trustees approve the URI Board of Trustees Policy on Conflict of Interest in Research, as set forth in Enclosure 8.c.(v) and as recommended and presented.

VOTE: 14 members voted in the affirmative and 0 members voted in the negative.

YEAS: Margo Cook, Karina Montilla Edmonds, Michael Fascitelli,

Charles Fogarty, Christine Heenan, Richard Humphrey, Neil Kerwin, Matthew Lenz, David Martirano, Michael McNally, Cortney Nicolato, Jay Placencia, Thomas Ryan and Armand Sabitoni.

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 0

- (vi) ACTION ITEM: Approval of the URI Board of Trustees Policy on Public-Private Partnerships in Research and Development  
[Enclosure 8.c.\(vi\)](#)

Committee Chair Nicolato called for a motion that the University of Rhode Island Board of Trustees approve the URI Board of Trustees Policy on Public-Private Partnerships in Research and Development, as set forth in Enclosure 8.c.(vi) and as recommended and presented.

On a motion duly made by Thomas Ryan and seconded by Charles Fogarty, it was

VOTED: THAT The University of Rhode Island Board of Trustees approve the URI Board of Trustees Policy on Public-Private Partnerships in Research and Development, as set forth in Enclosure 8.c.(vi) and as recommended and presented.

VOTE: 14 members voted in the affirmative and 0 members voted in the negative.

YEAS: Margo Cook, Karina Montilla Edmonds, Michael Fascitelli, Charles Fogarty, Christine Heenan, Richard Humphrey, Neil Kerwin, Matthew Lenz, David Martirano, Michael McNally, Cortney Nicolato, Jay Placencia, Thomas Ryan and Armand Sabitoni.

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 0

- (vii) ACTION ITEM: Approval of the URI Board of Trustees Policy on Intellectual Property  
[Enclosure 8.c.\(vii\)](#)

Committee Chair Nicolato called for a motion that the University of Rhode Island Board of Trustees approve the URI Board of Trustees Policy on Intellectual Property, as set forth in Enclosure 8.c.(vii) and as recommended and presented.



On a motion duly made by Thomas Ryan and seconded by Michael Fascitelli, it was

VOTED: THAT The University of Rhode Island Board of Trustees approve the URI Board of Trustees Policy on Intellectual Property, as set forth in Enclosure 8.c.(vii) and as recommended and presented.

VOTE: 14 members voted in the affirmative and 0 members voted in the negative.

YEAS: Margo Cook, Karina Montilla Edmonds, Michael Fascitelli, Charles Fogarty, Christine Heenan, Richard Humphrey, Neil Kerwin, Matthew Lenz, David Martirano, Michael McNally, Cortney Nicolato, Jay Placencia, Thomas Ryan and Armand Sabitoni.

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 0

(viii) ACTION ITEM: Approval of the URI Board of Trustees Policy on University Trademarks and Licensing  
[Enclosure 8.c.\(viii\)](#)

Committee Chair Nicolato called for a motion that the University of Rhode Island Board of Trustees approve the URI Board of Trustees Policy on University Trademarks and Licensing, as set forth in Enclosure 8.c.(viii) and as recommended and presented.

On a motion duly made by Armand Sabitoni and seconded by David Martirano and Michael Fascitelli, it was

VOTED: THAT The University of Rhode Island Board of Trustees approve the URI Board of Trustees Policy on University Trademarks and Licensing, as set forth in Enclosure 8.c.(viii) and as recommended and presented.

VOTE: 14 members voted in the affirmative and 0 members voted in the negative.

YEAS: Margo Cook, Karina Montilla Edmonds, Michael Fascitelli, Charles Fogarty, Christine Heenan, Richard Humphrey, Neil Kerwin, Matthew Lenz, David Martirano, Michael McNally, Cortney Nicolato, Jay Placencia, Thomas Ryan and Armand Sabitoni.

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 0

Following action taken, the Board recessed for lunch at 12:00 p.m. Richard Humphrey left the meeting at 12:00 p.m.

The Board resumed its meeting at 12:25 p.m.

## 8. COMMITTEE REPORTS

### d. Institutional Risk and Compliance Committee Report

#### (i) Update – November 4, 2021 Committee Meeting

The Institutional Risk and Compliance Committee met jointly with the Finance and Facilities Committee to consider the audited financial statements for the University of Rhode Island for Fiscal Year ending June 30, 2021, prepared by the auditing firm O'Connor & Drew, P.C.

### e. University Advancement and External Affairs Committee Report

#### (i) Update – November 4, 2021 Committee Meeting

The University Advancement and External Affairs Committee meeting scheduled for November 4, 2021, was rescheduled to January 20, 2022.

Committee Chair Christine Heenan introduced two new colleagues in the government and legislative affairs area; Lauren Burgess will handle federal relations and Carlos Lopez Estrada will handle state, local and community relations. She noted that they will assist in leveraging, for the benefit of the state, the dollars that we anticipate will flow into the state, how URI can be an accelerator of those funds for economic development and other purposes.

Committee Chair Heenan thanked URI Foundation President Lil Breul O'Rourke and her stewardship team for the success of the campaign and the increase in the campaign goal.

### f. Academic Affairs and Research Committee Report

#### (i) Update – November 4, 2021 Committee Meeting

Committee Chair Neil Kerwin said the Committee heard a report from Interim Provost Laura Beauvais, focused primarily on the work that the University has going on in diversity and inclusion initiatives. Committee members were reminded that URI has had a task force in place for thirteen years to oversee these initiatives.

The Committee heard an update from Dr. Gifty Ako-Adounvo, Vice Provost for Global Initiatives, who indicated that URI is now one of the top institutions in the United States for the very prestigious Benjamin A. Gilman International Scholarship Program, offering scholarships to undergraduate students to study abroad.

Committee Chair Kerwin noted that the University is beginning to see more increases in faculty travel grants. URI is preparing for work on the overall University Strategic Plan, and work continues with academic planning, embedded with the overall University planning effort. Committee Chair Kerwin mentioned the very successful quantum computing conference held at URI last month.

Christine Heenan left the meeting at 12:56 p.m.

## **5. REPORT OF THE CHAIR**

### **a. Chair Update on Board Activities**

Chair Cook introduced Carlos Lopez Estrada, Director of Legislative and Government Relations. She discussed the amazing confluence of extraordinary events happening right now, including the arrival of URI's new president, three significant projects at URI that she thinks will change the future of the state, and the once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to access federal funds through the American Rescue Plan Act and the infrastructure bill. She asked Director Lopez Estrada to speak to the Board about the role that URI can play in the state's investment in the blue economy.

Government Relations Director Carlos Lopez Estrada provided an overview of key funding priorities for URI that are designed to build upon existing strengths and position URI for ongoing success in consequential research, recruiting and supporting students, and contributing to the economic vitality of Rhode Island. These include vital investments in the Narragansett Bay Campus to ensure that we can maintain a leadership role in research, education and engagement focused on ocean health, climate change, coastal resiliency and the Blue Economy; a Life Sciences research facility that will provide the essential laboratory space to support cutting-edge discovery in areas ranging from cancer to Alzheimer's disease; and in facilities to support student academic success (Student Success Center) and a one-stop Student Health and Counseling Center.

Director Lopez Estrada introduced the campaign "The Future of RI is Blue" and noted the many ways URI is involved in Rhode Island's blue economy. He spoke of the Narragansett Bay Campus and the Graduate School of Oceanography (GSO), a nationally ranked graduate program involved in incredible research opportunities and projects critical to the future of the blue economy. URI is asking for \$157 million in American Rescue Plan Act funds to improve aging buildings at the Bay Campus, an investment in continuing critical research.

Board members suggested that the acquisition of American Rescue Plan Act funds for improvements at the Bay Campus would reduce the need for further general obligation bond funding. Vice President Rider noted that if federal funding is used, the taxpayers will save over \$100 million in bond payments over the life of a loan.

The University is also asking for federal funding in the amount of \$63.5 million for the Life Science building to bring in modern equipment in the life sciences field and allow URI to expand neuroscience technology, biological research, and expand into animal research. A new facility

will allow our researchers to explore new funding, new research, and new revenue streams to the University.

The University is asking for an \$87.5 million investment for Health and Wellness improvements. The pandemic has shown that URI's Health and Counseling Center is not adequate to deal with the pandemic and the resulting increase in demand for mental health services. URI is seeking \$40 million for improvements to the Center. URI is also asking for \$47.5 million for improvements to the Student Success Center which provides wraparound services to students, particularly first-generation college students, whose health issues directly affect their success.

Discussion continued about the timing of URI's request, and the sense of urgency in submitting proposals for funding. Board members were supportive of the proposal to fund growth at the University and agreed that the blue economy is the future of the state. It will be important to show that the investment will increase jobs, grow the economy, highlight GSO as one of the top five oceanographic institutions with a global impact, and improve the wellbeing of our students.

The Board urged the University administration to advance this work with key elected officials, and to promote greater awareness of the importance of these projects to the URI community and the public more generally. Chair Cook reported that the University will come back to the Board with a plan for a public campaign to encourage investment in the University; URI can lead the state in growth.

Concluding her report, Chair Cook suggested a special meeting in February where the Board can serve as a sounding board for the President in review of work on the University's Strategic Plan. She noted that more information will be shared as plans are developed.

## **6. REPORT OF THE PRESIDENT**

### **a. One University: Engaged Decision Making, Organization and Strategic Planning**

President Parlange began his report by expressing his gratitude to the Board of Trustees and senior leadership for their patience and commitment to working with him during the early months of his tenure as president. He reported that since the start of the semester, he and his wife have sought to get to as many exhibits, performances, athletic games, lectures and conferences as possible, and to visit and learn about the consequential work in our colleges, centers, departments and institutes. He reported that they will continue this energizing and inspiring engagement throughout the year.

President Parlange shared with the Board the good work of the COVID-19 Task Force, which has driven implementation efforts, and the COVID-19 Advisory Group, which – informed by the Task Force – recommends new or modified policies. He highlighted the unified response of the University community and commitment of #Rhodytogether that has generally stemmed the spread of COVID-19 and enabled us to be together in person this semester. He noted that we know this has been a challenging period and offered sincere thanks to all for the continued commitment to individual and community health.

The President shared deliberate efforts to involve faculty and academic leadership in University planning, policy development and administration through a newly formed Stewardship Council, and through revisions to the membership of other presidential committees. The University will follow this model as it moves forward with strategic planning in the coming months, creating a representative steering committee that will, over the next year, engage the extended University community in crafting an aspirational vision for URI and a plan to achieve that vision over the next decade. He noted that URI will do this as One University, across colleges and divisions, while cultivating an environment that values diversity, inclusion, scholarship, service and ingenuity.

He reported that the University's planning efforts will help us consider how to enhance our role and impact – here in the state of Rhode Island, as well as nationally and internationally. Central to this will be reaffirming our commitments to accessible and affordable education, increasing sponsored research awards and activity, and becoming a more engaged partner locally and globally.

As presented by Director Lopez Estrada, URI is working with elected officials at the state and federal levels to secure funding through opportunities such as the federal American Rescue Plan Act and the Build Back Better Framework, to fund critical investments essential to progress in the statewide blue economy and workforce development, and by competing successfully for sponsored research funds. He noted that an investment in URI is an investment in Rhode Island.

The President celebrated the signing of the Student Success Act on October 18, 2021.

President Parlange spoke of the people and culture at URI, acknowledging a sense of community, a sense of belonging, a sense of everyone being able to succeed - everything that goes into what we call equity, diversity and inclusion. He spoke of building the University's reputation internationally, exploring sibling relationships with other universities focused on the blue economy.

Board members discussed with the President the continued pursuit of Innovation Campus funding aimed at commercializing academic research at URI to create new products, businesses and jobs, funding in competitive research grants, access to Build Back Better Framework funding, and marketing URI as the state's flagship university. They expressed the urgency of creating a plan to access available once-in-a-lifetime federal funds.

Chair Cook thanked the President for his report and offered the Board's assistance with the strategic plan.

## **9. ADJOURN**

Chair Cook called for a motion to adjourn.

On a motion duly made by Cortney Nicolato and seconded by Jay Placencia, it was

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

URI Board of Trustees  
November 5, 2021 Meeting

VOTE: 12 members voted in the affirmative and 0 members  
voted in the negative.

YEAS: Margo Cook, Karina Montilla Edmonds, Michael Fascitelli,  
Charles Fogarty, Neil Kerwin, Matthew Lenz, David Martirano,  
Michael McNally, Cortney Nicolato, Jay Placencia, Thomas Ryan and  
Armand Sabitoni.

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 0

Christine Heenan and Richard Humphrey left the meeting prior to the vote.

At 2:20 p.m., this meeting ended.

**The next URI Board of Trustees Meeting is scheduled for January 21, 2022.**