



**Members**

Margo Cook '86, *Chair*

Michael D. Fascitelli '78

Charles Fogarty '80

Christine Heenan

Richard S. Humphrey

Neil Kerwin '73

Matthew Lenz '11

Roby Luna '04

David Martirano '91

Michael F. McNally '81, *Vice Chair*

Dr. Karina Montilla Edmonds '92

Cortney M. Nicolato '01

Vahid Ownjazayeri

Susan Petrovas '92

Yahaira "Jay" Placencia '01

Thomas Ryan '75

Armand E. Sabitoni '73

**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 Board of Trustees  
University Advancement and External Affairs Committee Meeting  
Thursday, April 22, 2021, 10:45 a.m.**

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

**MINUTES**

Committee Chair Christine Heenan acknowledged that a quorum was present and called the meeting to order at 10:48 a.m.

**The URI Board of Trustees University Advancement and External Affairs  
Committee voting members in attendance:**

- Ms. Christine M. Heenan, Chair
- Mr. Armand E. Sabitoni, Vice Chair
- Dr. Karina Montilla Edmonds
- Ms. Cortney Nicolato

**The URI Board of Trustees University Advancement and External Affairs  
Committee ex officio members in attendance:**

- Ms. Margo Cook, Chair, Board of Trustees
- Ms. Barbara Cottam, Chair, Board of Education (joined at 10:56 a.m.)
- Dr. Mayrai Gindy, Faculty Representative
- Dr. David M. Dooley, President

**The University of Rhode Island Senior Leadership in attendance:**

- Ms. Kelly K. Mahoney, Executive Director for External Relations and Communications
- Ms. Lil Breul O'Rourke, President, URI Foundation & Alumni Engagement (URIFAE)

**The URI staff members in attendance:**

- Ms. Kathy DiPietro, Executive Assistant, URIFAE
- Ms. Lauren Jensen, Assistant Legal Counsel
- Ms. Lynn Owens, Associate Secretary
- Ms. Cheryl Trudel, Executive Assistant, External Relations and Communications

**Invited guests in attendance:**

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

**1. WELCOME**

Chair Heenan welcomed all participants and thanked guests from the URI Foundation & Alumni Engagement for attending the meeting.

**2. ACCEPTANCE OF THE AGENDA**

Chair Heenan called for a motion to accept the agenda for the April 22, 2021 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 April 22, 2021 meeting agenda.

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

YEAS: Christine Heenan, Karina Montilla Edmonds, Cortney Nicolato, and Armand Sabitoni.

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 0

**3. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES**

Minutes of the January 14, 2021 Meeting [Enclosure 3a](#)

Chair Heenan called for a motion to approve the minutes for the January 14, 2021 meeting.

On a motion duly made by Vice Chair Sabitoni and seconded by Karina Montilla Edmonds, it was

VOTED:	THAT	The University of Rhode Island Board of Trustees University Advancement and External Affairs Committee approve the minutes of the January 14, 2021 meeting.
	VOTE:	4 members voted in the affirmative and 0 members voted in the negative.
	YEAS:	Christine Heenan, Karina Montilla Edmonds, Cortney Nicolato, and Armand Sabitoni
	NAYS:	0
	ABSTAINS:	0

#### 4. DISCUSSION ITEMS

Chair Heenan commenced with the first discussion item inviting Lil Breul O'Rourke, President, URI Foundation & Alumni Engagement (URIFAE) to start the discussions.

##### a. Update of Big Ideas. Bold Plans. The Campaign for the University of Rhode Island

URIFAE President, Lil Breul O'Rourke, provided an update on the University's \$250M capital Campaign and stated that in January the Campaign and the University's endowment both reached \$200M. Fundraising continues on an upward trajectory, with the campaign total at \$205.44M in outright and planned gifts.

President Breul O'Rourke reviewed the implementation of a regional plan to engage the University's fundraisers with alumni beyond the current college assignments, providing the opportunity to represent the entire University.

President Breul O'Rourke also noted various projects including the rebranding of the Annual Fund (to "Rhody Now"), and the Career Connect program, stating that a number of Board of Trustees members have participated in the program. Additionally, she asked Chair Heenan if she had anything that she would like to add about the Career Connect program.

Chair Heenan suggested that this is an opportunity for members of the Board of Trustees to engage with our students.

President Breul O'Rourke concluded her presentation entitled, [URI Foundation & Alumni Engagement](#) with a brief overview of the plans to introduce President Dooley's successor, Dr. Marc B. Parlange, who was recently named as the 12<sup>th</sup> President of the University of Rhode Island (URI), to the University community with one-on-one meetings and large alumni events across the country.

Chair Heenan congratulated President Breul O'Rourke for reaching an important milestone in the Campaign fundraising goal.

Committee member Karina Montilla Edmonds expressed her desire to host an alumni event on the West Coast to help introduce the University's newly appointed president.

Committee member Cortney Nicolato asked President Breul O'Rourke if she could use some support. President Breul O'Rourke responded that there is a concern with the "pipeline" of alums who have not yet been solicited or who have not yet made a gift to the Campaign. She reviewed some of the challenges related to past fundraising history; the current inability to fundraise face-to-face due to the pandemic and the loss of time as a result; she further explained that her plan is to exceed the \$250M goal, while also stating that this would not be without challenges.

Chair Heenan noted the timing of bringing on a new president and the pandemic waning as positives that will prop up fundraising efforts.

#### **b. Media and Marketing Update**

Chair Heenan invited Executive Director, External Relations and Communications, Kelly Mahoney to provide a few of the key highlights of the University's media and marketing plan. Ms. Mahoney, with the use of a presentation entitled, [Media and Marketing Update](#), reviewed the regional and national media coverage placements (to include key feature stories, research coverage, the saliva-based Covid-19 test which the University will be submitting an application for FDA emergency use, potentially benefiting a global effort in developing countries); social media campaigns; high engagement social media posts; COVID-related posts; Instagram and Twitter highlights; social following status; goals of rankings campaign; and peer score improvement tactics).

Chair Heenan thanked Ms. Mahoney for covering the information related to marketing around the University's reputation and asked the Committee if anyone had any questions or comments for Ms. Mahoney.

Committee Member Mayrai Gindy asked Ms. Mahoney how social media engagement is measured. Ms. Mahoney stated that some unit of action is needed via "clicks." In order to be counted as engagement, certain actions are needed, such as when something is "liked," or if a "click" leads to a website, or if a tweet is retweeted.

Dr. Gindy asked Ms. Mahoney if she was satisfied with the current way in which the University's media and marketing strategies are handled. Ms. Mahoney said that there is always room for improvement and that LinkedIn is on the horizon as the next platform to be explored and utilized much more; saying that pursuing LinkedIn as another marketing strategy is an opportunity to further engage alumni and professional networks to help President Breul O'Rourke and her team to be successful. Ms. Mahoney also stated that the Committee will see growth and utilization of Snapchat as students are active on this platform, as well as possibly TikTok; while saying that TikTok is a bit more complicated as it demands high-quality video, etc.

Chair Heenan added that audio media is also another area that is experiencing explosive growth in podcasts in places like Clubhouse and suggested that an opportunity to have a conversation with the University's new president around engineering on Clubhouse as something for the Committee to think about.

Committee members inquired about the current student affinity groups. Ms. Mahoney explained that while this is an area of opportunity, groups are formed organically, by various colleges, and while some

are managed strategically, others may develop as a result of orientation, etc., but resource constraints prevent the ability to strategically manage these groups.

Questions related to rankings were also asked about what other universities send to URI, and if Ms. Mahoney has been impressed with what other institutions do (as a way to increase their own rankings). Ms. Mahoney stated that President Dooley and the Provost shared examples with her team and the digital newsletter is modeled on some of those best practices. Ms. Mahoney further stated that she would send a copy of the digital newsletter to the Committee. It was recommended that the digital newsletter also contain a short video to further Chair Heenan's point of podcasts as another marketing tool. Ms. Mahoney agreed that this was great feedback.

### **c. Government Relations and Legislative Progress**

Chair Heenan invited Ms. Mahoney to provide an update on government relations and the legislative progress.

Ms. Mahoney provided an overview of the FY2022 state budget process and the recent hearings related to capital projects including the University's Kushner authorization for Health/Counseling Center and the Memorial Union projects. Ms. Mahoney stated that they are awaiting the schedule for the full budget hearings in both the House and Senate on the overall URI budget, projected to take place sometime in early May. The General Assembly would then approve the budget at the end of the session, sometime in late June. Ms. Mahoney also shared that the Governor has increased appropriations for the University, which includes new investment in asset protection funding for the University's capital resources.

Additionally, Ms. Mahoney provided an overview of the URI legislative requests that have been put forth as follows:

- Board membership updates (H5889, S716) (*decreases the quorum requirement for the Board from thirteen (13) to ten (10); standardizes the terms of appointment to three (3) years for all members; the Governor would nominate all of the Board members, and the Senate would provide advice and consent*)
- Open Meetings-virtual meetings (H5887, S715) (*to be able to hold open virtual meetings as is currently being done, without executive order by the Governor*)
- Small purchasing modernization (H5888, S700) (*increase threshold required for bidding*)
- Electrical licensure updates (S745) (*determines the type of projects that in-house electricians can work on*)
- Police non-emergency mutual aid (H5815, S717) (*provide insurance companies with authorization to cover police activity that is of a non-emergency nature such as Commencement, etc.*)

Vice Chair Sabitoni asked Ms. Mahoney who the supporters are for the bills. Ms. Mahoney stated that in the Senate, Senator Sosnowski has introduced the bills; and in the House, Representative Fogarty has introduced the bills.

Chair Heenan transitioned to address the news that Ms. Mahoney has accepted a position and will be leaving the University. Chair Heenan further commended Ms. Mahoney's legacy and thanked her on behalf of the Committee and the Board of Trustees for her stewardship, saying that she has done so much for the Board and the University; for her supreme competency and expertise and her way of helping bring

that expertise to the Board and Committee. Additionally, on behalf of the University, Chair Heenan expressed that appreciation for Ms. Mahoney, stating that she is also a delight to work with.

Ms. Mahoney provided an overview of her new professional opportunity stating that she will be joining the private sector with an international portfolio and that she will have a new skill set and experiences, and that this is an important opportunity for her, which is also, “bitter/sweet.”

Ms. Mahoney further explained that as an alum of the University she has both enjoyed helping to set up the Board of Trustees and engage in conversations; she anticipates getting calls whenever necessary and is invested in the success of the University, for a lifetime.

Additionally, she expressed that she hoped to be able to continue to be engaged in new and different ways on behalf of the University and thanked the Committee for their support and collaboration as, “wonderful.”

URI Board of Trustees Chair Cook, and several Committee members expressed their gratitude to Ms. Mahoney for her service and dedication to the University and offered their congratulations.

**d. Presidential Transition Updates**

Chair Heenan provided the Committee with an update on the success of the announcement of newly appointed URI President, Dr. Marc B. Parlange, and reviewed the various marketing strategies and media coverage that were implemented surrounding his appointment and the announcement to the general public.

URIFAE President Lil Breul O’Rourke reiterated that the URIFAE will be launching several events to engage alumni in the opportunities around the appointment of the new president.

Board of Trustees Chair Cook further commented that there are a number of opportunities that are coming together via the President’s Transition Committee that will be used to display who Dr. Parlange is; who and what the University is about; and the accomplishments by President Dooley over his tenure, along with what the new president will focus on for the University’s future.

**e. Annual Review of the University Advancement and External Affairs Committee Charter Enclosure 4e**

Chair Heenan stated that she believes the Charter captures the Committee’s intent and goals and invited Committee members to comment and/or make recommendations.

Ms. Nicolato stated that there is a desire amongst the Governance Committee members to have a deeper interaction with the University Advancement and External Affairs Committee; while Dr. Gindy noted minor language and edits are needed to better capture and group like-ideas together. Chair Heenan agreed with Dr. Gindy’s recommendation and stated that they could schedule a separate call offline to further discuss.

URI Board of Trustees Chair Cook stated that during the Board of Trustees’ upcoming June meeting, there will be an in-depth discussion to review the charter regarding the balance of responsibilities, opportunities, that remits are right, and grammatically accurate, etc.

Chair Heenan suggested that, in addition to the Board of Trustees' June meeting, a discussion occur during the upcoming Governance Committee meeting; and that along with chatting with Dr. Gindy offline, she is also available to any Committee members who may want to discuss further.

## 5. ADJOURN

Chair Heenan called for a motion to adjourn the April 22, 2021 meeting.

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

VOTED THAT The University of Rhode Island Board of Trustees University Advancement and External Affairs Committee adjourn the meeting of April 22, 2021.

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

YEAS: Christine Heenan, Karina Montilla Edmonds, Cortney Nicolato, and Armand Sabitoni.

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 0

## UPCOMING MEETING

**The next URI Board of Trustees University Advancement and External Affairs Committee meeting is scheduled for June 24, 2021.**