



**Members**

Margo Cook '86, *Chair*

Michael D. Fascitelli '78

Charles Fogarty '80

Christine Heenan

Richard S. Humphrey

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

Cecilia Rouse

Thomas Ryan '75

Armand E. Sabitoni '73

**The University of Rhode Island  
Board of Trustees Meeting  
Friday, September 11, 2020 • 9:00 a.m.  
45 Upper College Rd., Kingston, RI 02881**

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

**MINUTES**

Chair Cook welcomed the members of the University of Rhode Island (URI) Board of Trustees and reminded all in-person participants of the URI COVID-19 face covering requirement in that members must wear their masks at all times during the meeting. It was acknowledged that a quorum was present, and the meeting was called to order at 9:08 a.m.

**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*

Attendees present for this hybrid meeting:

The University of Rhode Island Board of Trustees voting members:

- Ms. Margo Cook, Chair
- Dr. Karina Montilla Edmonds (remote)
- Mr. Michael Fascitelli (joined at 9:15 a.m.)
- Honorable Charles J. Fogarty
- Ms. Christine M. Heenan (remote)
- Mr. Richard S. Humphrey (remote-joined at 10:20 a.m.)
- Mr. Matthew Lenz
- Mr. Roby Luna (remote)
- Mr. David Martirano (remote)
- Mr. Michael F. McNally, Vice Chair
- Ms. Cortney Nicolato
- Mr. Vahid Ownjazayeri (remote)
- Mrs. Susan Petrovas (remote-joined at 9:39 a.m.)
- Ms. Jay Placencia
- Ms. Cecilia Rouse (remote)
- Mr. Thomas Ryan
- Mr. Armand Sabitoni (remote)

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

- Mr. Tim DelGiudice-Chair, Council on Postsecondary Education
- Ms. Barbara Cottam-Chair, Board of Education
- Mr. Christopher Bove-Student Representative
- Dr. Mayrai Gindy-Faculty Representative

The University of Rhode Island Staff

- President David M. Dooley
- Mr. Louis Saccoccio, General Counsel
- Ms. Michelle Curreri, Chief of Staff and Board Liaison
- Ms. Anne Marie Coleman, Assistant Vice President for Human Resources
- Dr. Kathy Collins, Vice President for Student Affairs
- Elizabeth Breul O'Rourke, President, URI Foundation and Alumni Engagement
- Ms. Abbi Rider, Vice President for Administration and Finance
- Mr. Thor Bjorn, Director of Athletics
- Mr. Donald DeHayes, Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs
- Mr. Karlis Kaugars, Chief Information Officer
- Dr. Peter Snyder, Vice President for Research and Economic Development

## 1. ACCEPTANCE OF THE AGENDAS

Chair Cook called for a motion that the URI Board of Trustees accept the agendas for the meetings of September 11, 2020 and August 22, 2020 (Note: A quorum was not present at the August 22 meeting and therefore, the motion was delayed until this meeting.).

On a motion duly made by Ms. Placencia and seconded by Ms. Nicolato, it was

VOTED:	THAT	The University of Rhode Island Board of Trustees accept the agenda for the meeting of September 11, 2020.
	VOTE:	14 members voted in the affirmative and 0 members voted in the negative
	YEAS:	Margo L. Cook, Karina Montilla Edmonds, Charles J. Fogarty, Christine M. Heenan, Matthew D. Lenz, Roby Luna, David J. Martirano, Michael F. McNally, Cortney Nicolato, Vahid Ownjazayeri, Jay Placencia, Cecilia Rouse, Thomas M. Ryan, and Armand E. Sabitoni
	NAYS:	0
	ABSTAINS:	0

On a motion duly made by Mr. Lenz and seconded by Mr. Martirano, it was

VOTED:	THAT	The University of Rhode Island Board of Trustees accept the agenda for the meeting of August 22, 2020.
	VOTE:	14 members voted in the affirmative and 0 members voted in the negative
	YEAS:	Margo L. Cook, Karina Montilla Edmonds, Charles J. Fogarty, Christine M. Heenan, Matthew D. Lenz, Roby Luna, David J. Martirano, Michael F. McNally, Cortney Nicolato, Vahid Ownjazayeri, Jay Placencia, Cecilia Rouse, Thomas M. Ryan, and Armand E. Sabitoni
	NAYS:	0
	ABSTAINS:	0

## 2. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES

Chair Cook asked if there was any discussion regarding the minutes of the June 25, June 26, and July 2, 2020 meetings. Ex-officio member, Mr. Bove, requested that the minutes of the July 2, 2020 meeting be amended to correct the year of expected graduation (in the meeting attendance section) for student, Caleb Hilyard to read “Caleb Hilyard ’23”. With that being noted, Chair Cook asked that the minutes for the July 2, 2020 meeting be amended and called for a motion to accept the minutes for June 25, June 26, and July 2, 2020 meetings.

On a motion duly made by Mr. Sabitoni and seconded by Mr. Ryan, it was

VOTED:	THAT	The University of Rhode Island Board of Trustees accept the minutes for the meetings of June 25, June 26, and July 2, 2020.
	VOTE:	13 members voted in the affirmative and 0 members voted in the negative
	YEAS:	Margo L. Cook, Karina Montilla Edmonds, Charles J. Fogarty, Christine M. Heenan, Matthew D. Lenz, Roby Luna, David J. Martirano, Michael F. McNally, Vahid Ownjazayeri, Jay Placencia, Cecilia Rouse, Thomas M. Ryan, and Armand E. Sabitoni
	NAYS:	0
	ABSTAINS:	Ms. Nicolato abstained as she was not present for the meetings on the above dates

### **3. REPORT OF THE CHAIR**

Chair Cook began her report by recognizing that it was the 19<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the 9/11/01 attack against the United States, and two people, who also have ties to URI, were featured in a *Providence Journal* article describing their experience during the attack. She shared her belief that our country became stronger as a result of 9/11 and that the current pandemic will have the same effect for the country as well as for URI. She further stated that URI is stronger than ever and feels it is in a good position in spite of the current situation.

Chair Cook highlighted some the accomplishments the Board of Trustees has endured since its inception such as the creation of bylaws and committee charters and the commencement of committee meetings. She spoke about her envision for future meetings where day one would consist of not only committee meetings, but also education about URI via interaction with the colleges and faculty and visiting other URI campuses.

Chair Cook shared that the committee meetings held on September 10, 2020 were full of robust and important topics that will be discussed throughout this meeting. She emphasized that although URI is heavily supported by the state and legislative level, especially in bond support, she understands that the current budget issues that the state and the country are facing will ultimately trickle down to the university level. With that being said, she quoted Mr. Ryan from his Governance Committee meeting by saying, “we are public in name only” and this will require the Board to think creatively to help the University grow.

Chair Cook concluded her report by sharing that she and Vice Chair McNally took the opportunity to tour the campus shortly after reopening and saw outdoor dining and that everyone was wearing a face covering. In addition, they experienced modern technology in the classrooms which confirmed that the 10-12-year investment had paid off.

### **4. REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE CHAIRS**

#### **a. Governance Committee Report**

Chair Ryan updated the board on the committee meeting held on September 10 and reviewed the [Committee Calendar](#). He highlighted committee tasks such as board vacancy recommendations, committee composition, and the annual retreat to be held in June. He shared that URI policies, existing and new, would be reviewed at every meeting. The chair and vice chair of the Governance Committee will first discuss policies with the President and senior leadership, then with the Committee, and finally with the full Board. The policies will be passed on to risk management for oversight. The annual review of the bylaws and committee charters and the review of board member criteria will take place in June. Plans for the September meeting include the review of succession planning for University officers and the review of board and individual performance.

Chair Ryan discussed the Board Composition Matrix, which is an “inventory” of the current trustees based on their skills, experience and expertise. As a member’s term comes to an end, the Matrix will guide the committee in selecting new board members and will also indicate the types of expertise that may be missing from the Board. Vice Chair Nicolato will be taking the lead for the project, and it will be presented to the full Board in January. Chair Ryan further added that the Board should be reflective of the student population, as they are technically “customers” of the Board.

The next topic Chair Ryan shared was that of the roles and responsibilities of the Governance Committee. A document will be created which will state the roles, responsibilities, and fiduciary responsibilities of the Board. This document will include items such as philanthropic giving,

conflicts of interest, attending events, and participation and preparation in board and committee meetings. Vice Chair Nicolato and Mr. Ownjazeri will be in charge of this task.

The Committee will be compiling an information booklet for orientation and onboarding of new trustees which will give a general overview of the University in terms of budget, research, organizational structure, and how the State impacts the University.

The Governance Committee will also vet and source potential candidates to serve on the Board. Of the current trustees, four expire in 2021, eight in 2022, and five in 2023. Mr. Ryan is hopeful that the Governor will extend those terms that expire in 2021 due to the Board being a new entity. He encouraged all board members to inform Chair Cook and others of potential candidates to serve on the board.

Chair Ryan stated that the Governance Committee be up to date on the best practices in governance. This will be accomplished by learning from other institutions and from the President and the Provost, which will then be used to educate the full board at the annual retreat.

Chair Ryan shared that it will be the Governance Committee's responsibility to oversee the assessment of the board and individual trustees which consists of member evaluations and the culture of the board.

Chair Ryan gave an update regarding the presidential search process. The firm of Isaacson, Miller will be conducting the search and is the same firm that recruited President Dooley. Currently, they are gathering information about the University and interviewing President Dooley and his senior leadership team. The Presidential Search Committee, convening in October, is comprised of board members, deans, students, and faculty. The time commitment for the search committee will be two 3-hour meetings at the beginning, followed by two half-day meetings, and conclude with one-to-two-day meetings. The Advisory Committee will serve as a liaison to the Search Committee and will provide feedback from institutional members of URI, community members, and corporate members around the state and country. The feedback will consist of what they are looking for and what needs to be accomplished at URI. The Chair of the Advisory Committee will also sit on the Search Committee. The Advisory Committee is comprised of deans, faculty, community and corporate leaders. The timeline for the search will begin with background work in September and Advisory and Search Committee kick-off and town hall meetings in early October. In late October, the Board will have a profile of what was learned from leadership interviews and feedback from the Advisory Committee. The search firm will guide the Board through the process to determine what type of leader is needed and what the University needs in the next five to ten years. In November and December, candidates will be vetted, and interviews will begin and continue through January. Chair Ryan is hopeful that four to six candidates be recommended to the Board and finalists be determined by the end of February or beginning of March.

Chair Cook asked Mr. Ryan if he has received guidance from the search firm given the current pandemic situation. Mr. Ryan said it may be less costly due to limited travel, but the outreach could be more widespread due to virtual meetings. He was also told that there may be some limitations due to university leaders' hesitation to leave their institution during a crisis. The search firm is positive about the timeline and although the process is different due to the pandemic, they are confident it will produce the same result. Both Chair Cook and Mr. Ryan shared that Isaacson, Miller is the leading firm in the education field. They are familiar with the University, and one of the partners is a URI alum.

Mr. Bove asked if there would be any student representation for the Search and Advisory Committees. Mr. Ryan confirmed there would be student representation and emphasized that the search process will be "open, inclusive, and public; the candidate's names will not." When the two finalists are chosen, a broader group from the Advisory Committee and others will sign a

confidentiality agreement. The firm does not want a candidate's name exposed because if a candidate is not chosen, it will be publicly communicated via social media. In addition, adhering to candidate confidentiality will attract a higher quality pool of applicants. Chair Ryan added that the process will be open right up until the end because the Board understands shared governance in the presidential search process.

Chair Cook concurred with Mr. Ryan in regard to having a shared, open, and transparent process and believes that a candidate will not enter the search if their identity is revealed. Mr. Ryan noted that this topic may be brought forth as this was not the case during the search for President Dooley. He further explained that the three finalists did reveal to their respective institutions that they were involved in the search process.

Ms. Placencia asked President Dooley to share his recruiting experience with Isaacson, Miller. President Dooley shared that John Isaacson headed the search when he was recruited, and to this day, they have remained good friends. He added that the final three candidates were made public at the end of the process and that he, along with the other two candidates received the freedom and comfort to be public. He shared that it was not unexpected for him, as a Provost of many years, to apply for a presidential position, as it is very common to do so. He stated that he has the utmost of confidence in the firm; they are very familiar with URI, and is sure that they will see a significant difference in the University. He noted that they have the ability to understand its needs, and listen to everyone they consult with, as well as take an active interest in speaking with student government, the search and advisory committees, and beyond that.

Dr. Karina Edmonds shared that she also had a positive experience working with Isaacson, Miller and stressed the importance of candidate confidentiality.

Mr. Sabitoni asked if a Board vote was needed to hire Isaacson, Miller. Chair Cook replied that it is not necessary and referred to Anne Marie Coleman, Assistant Vice President for Human Resources. Ms. Coleman responded that the vendor purchase order details are currently being finalized with the State Purchasing department. With no further discussion, the Governance Committee report was complete.

#### **b. Institutional Risk and Compliance Committee Report**

Chair Luna began his report of the Institutional Risk and Compliance Committee (IRCC) meeting held on September 10 with the announcement that David Martirano was selected as Vice Chair.

Chair Luna shared that Kara Larsen, AVP for Enterprise and Risk Management and Vice President Abigail Rider, gave a presentation entitled, [\*Enterprise Risk Management and Compliance Review\*](#), which provided a thorough review of the institutional risk and compliance framework and what the University would adopt to establish said framework to manage risk.

Chair Luna explained that the IRCC's responsibilities centered around four key areas: Title IX; Environmental Health and Safety; Employee Training Policies; and Cybersecurity. He stated that he is trying to get a better understanding of the goals used to measure risk and how it directly correlates with those areas. He further added that the primary goal will be to establish internal risk audit capability to proactively monitor risk.

The University's financial status was discussed and presented by the University's external auditors, O'Connor and Drew, P.C. [\*Audit for the Year Ended June 30, 2020\*](#).

Chair Luna gave a brief overview of the [\*IRCC Calendar\*](#) and invited committee members to provide further updates of the September 10 meeting.

Vice Chair Martirano commented that it was interesting to learn that the University's financials roll into the state's financials, and that there have been open discussions around how the external auditors are chosen, how the RFP process works, and how long the current auditors have been in place. There being no further discussion, the report of the IRCC was complete.

**c. Finance and Facilities Committee Report**

Chair Fascitelli gave a synopsis of the Finance and Facilities Committee Meeting held on September 10. He reported that the committee received a much greater picture of the URI financial status for fiscal year (FY) 2021 and that those figures are being finalized. He added that the budget for FY21 has been delayed and not yet received by the state due to COVID-19. More information will be available to the Board at the next meeting in October, which will include financials for fall enrollment and tuition and fees. Chair Fascitelli referred to Abigail Rider, Vice President for Finance and Administration, for a brief summary of the financials.

VP Rider reported that the external auditors were finalizing the FY20 results and that they are somewhat lower than FY19 due primarily to the refund of housing and dining fees when the University pivoted to online learning in March. Overall, the University's FY20 financial status was very similar to FY19. She added that the FY21 budget delay is because the state is waiting to see if it will receive further relief and that it will not likely take place prior to the elections. Ms. Rider believes that URI will not receive the FY21 budget until late November.

Chair Fascitelli concluded his report and opened up the meeting for questions.

Mr. Ryan asked if financial information could be available to the board on a quarterly basis once the portal is set up. Ms. Rider responded that updates are normally reported on a semi-annual basis and that the actual versus budget is "quite great" because financials follow the Government Accounting Standards Board (GASB) principles, and the budgets follow state accounting principles. She further added that the Board can be provided with a quarterly update; however, it may not be helpful to have a complete budget versus an actual budget. Ms. Rider also gave an example of the normal budget cycle as follows: For the FY22 budget, the request was formulated in July '21. It is presented to the Board for review and then sent to the State. The State sends the budget back to the University with feedback, and it is adjusted. The Governor introduces the budget in January '21 and is reviewed by the legislature, who passes it in June '21.

Mr. Fascitelli requested that the 5-year Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) be reviewed with the Board in a meeting dedicated to the financials and the CIP. Chair Cook agreed that time be preserved in the October meeting in addition to a thorough review to coincide with budget preparation review in June/July, and twice a year the Committee provide a summary to the Board.

Chair Cook recommended that committee calendars, minutes, and agendas with enclosures be available before the meeting dates and that once the BoardEffect portal is launched, that will be the place where the Board can access such material.

Mr. McNally also added that items that are not on the agenda cannot be voted on.

After no further discussion, the report of the Finance and Facilities Committee was complete.



**d. University Advancement and External Affairs Committee Report**

Chair Heenan gave a report of the University Advancement and External Affairs committee meeting held on September 10. She reported that the Committee discussed the uncertainty at the federal level in regard to further relief funding for COVID-19, the state budget uncertainty, and the decision to push back consideration of ballot initiatives into a special election in early 2021.

The Committee also discussed current reputational and public relations issues, especially the URI Memorial Union mural removal and controversial remarks made by a URI history professor in an independent capacity.

Additionally, the Committee discussed the upcoming launch of the Campaign for URI and a new initiative, Rhody Now scholarship, which was created in response to the current economic consequences of COVID-19.

URI Foundation and Alumni Engagement (URIFAE) President, Lil Breul O'Rourke, shared a presentation entitled, [\*Big Ideas. Bold Plans. The Campaign for the University Rhode Island.\*](#) Ms. O'Rourke announced that the Campaign for URI will be virtually launched on September 22 and encouraged all members to participate. She reported that in collaboration with President Dooley and the senior leadership team, the University commit \$2M for immediate deployment to University students who are facing financial challenges in an effort to keep them in school. Ms. O'Rourke shared that the URI Foundation joined in and set a \$1M goal for this effort which resulted in the establishment of the Rhody Now scholarships. She shared a few stories of how these scholarships are assisting current students and will ask the Board and alumni for their support of the Rhody Now campaign.

Ms. Nicolato applauded the Rhody Now effort and shared that this type of assistance would have changed her college trajectory when she was a URI student and would be happy to support the effort. Chair Cook shared that after looking at the data, was surprised to learn that even a \$1,000 to \$2,500 scholarship was enough to keep a student in school. Chair Heenan shared her hope that a story be brought to the public's attention in regard to the Board's anticipated participation in the scholarship effort.

Chair Heenan presented the [University Advancement and External Committee calendar](#) and asked if there were any questions from the board members. She also asked Vice Chair Sabitoni to explain the ballot and bond initiatives that have a September 14 deadline.

Vice Chair Sabitoni replied that the House, Senate and Governor are waiting for Congress to decide on additional state aid for Rhode Island. However, the House Senate, and Governor have agreed that the bond initiatives will not be in jeopardy now but would be part of a special passage after the general election followed by a special election in early 2021. Mr. Sabitoni also shared that the budget is currently on hold until after the election.

Chair Cook asked Ms. Heenan to summarize the committee's goals for board education. Ms. Heenan replied that the committee would like to learn about on-going research, interact with faculty, and hold conversations with the student body in order to become ambassadors for URI.

Mr. Ryan asked Ms. Heenan if the committee is working with Diane Fannon, Vice Chair and Chair of Marketing and Communications for the URIFAE Board of Trustees in regard to perception and reputation of the University. Ms. Heenan replied that there has not been committee-level coordination but that Ms. O'Rourke and Kelly Mahoney have an information flow with Ms. Fannon.



Ms. Cottam agreed with Ms. Heenan's and Mr. Ryan's goal for the Board to become well equipped, good ambassadors to the University and agreed that additional quarterly information received by the board will assist in reaching that goal.

Mr. Ryan expressed his desire for the University to become more intentional in regard to its reputation, especially in light of the recent incidents involving the murals and actions of the URI history professor. Chair Cook asked President Dooley to comment on these issues.

President Dooley explained that the Memorial Union is well over-due for substantial renovations which have been delayed due to COVID-19. He mentioned that those renovations, along with a new health and counseling service facility are on the top of the priority list in the auxiliary enterprises. Those projects are all funded by student fees and not via state funds. The murals in question are painted directly on the plastered walls being renovated, and it is not clear that there is a mechanism by which they can be preserved or removed. President Dooley also noted that the murals provide a snapshot of URI life in the 1950s and **not** that of a World War II memorial. He noted that the family of the artist was consulted and it was believed that an understanding was made. In addition, the University has been working with the art department to devise a plan to preserve the images and put them in appropriate historical context so that it is understood what they are meant to display.

President Dooley spoke about the recent incidents involving Professor Loomis who made a remark about the death of an individual who confessed to shooting a counter-protester in Portland, Oregon. Upon the arrest of that individual, he was killed by law enforcement. Professor Loomis' comment on a Twitter feed appears to assert that the killing of the first individual was morally acceptable because that individual was a fascist. President Dooley shared that the University received much feedback demanding that action be taken against the professor. He shared that the University issued a statement clearly outlining the comments as antithetical and inconsistent with URI's values and not consistent with the expectations outlined in the University Manual. He further added that legal counsel was consulted, and it was confirmed, that if a public person is speaking or sharing views as a private citizen on a public matter, that person is subject to the protection of the First Amendment of the Constitution. President Dooley encouraged the Board members to read a book entitled, *The Constitution Goes to College*, which highlights most court cases, including Supreme Court, that govern higher education institutions and what they must adhere to.

Mr. Ryan claimed that he understands the legality of this situation, but wondered how would someone from Omaha, Nebraska know that Professor Loomis is from URI? President Dooley replied that Google is a powerful tool but that one would not know that he was affiliated with URI based on the Twitter page. Ms. Heenan added that this situation is a local story and Chair Cook believed that the story was quickly picked up by Fox News. President Dooley added that the professor is an active blogger and that the linkage made to URI was done very quickly.

Mr. Ryan asked if there was a way for the University to get ahead of this story by elevating the institution's voice and get above the fray by speaking to the public about this issue. Chair Heenan shared her opinion and experiences and explained that there is an entire movement that looks to create a caricature of universities as these "bastions of the left that do not allow speech." Chair Heenan continued by stating that the University will want to defend the facts but not keep the story alive longer than it should. President Dooley added that this was not the first instance involving Professor Loomis, that it created much more attention, and the University did not receive negative impact as a result of it. Mr. Ryan pointed out that instances such as the murals

can be an opportunity to change the narrative in a way that the University would be balanced. Both President Dooley and Chair Cook acknowledged Mr. Ryan's point. Chair Cook stated that this type of dialog is what a board should have. Ms. Heenan shared her view point in that during this time right before elections, there is no room for nuance or considered conversations. She agreed with Mr. Ryan's suggestion to establish leadership within the Harrington School pertaining to First Amendment rights research. Chair Cook, Mr. Ownjazayeri, and Ms. Rouse commented and agreed with Ms. Heenan's viewpoint to communicate with a statement and move on from there. Ms. Edmonds pointed out that it may not be appropriate for the board to broach the Harrington School with a research topic and that the suggestion come from faculty. Ms. Rouse concurred with Ms. Edmonds on that statement.

Mr. Lenz learned via social media that one member of the legislature had called for an oversight hearing in regard to the Loomis instance. Mr. Lenz believes it is necessary for the University to be proactive, respond, and dissuade that from taking place.

Ms. Nicolato asked what the next steps were for the mural removal. President Dooley referred to Dr. Kathy Collins, Vice President for Student Affairs for a response. Dr. Collins explained that the Memorial Union differs from a student union in that it is a memorial that recognizes and honors the commitment of many who have dedicated and lost their lives in battle. She further stated that there is one plaque in the Union that honors World War II soldiers and that the renovation plans would recognize all wars and those URI community members who sacrificed their lives. She added that the mural has been damaged over the years, but her team is working with Dr. Ron Onorato, a URI Professor, to try and preserve parts of the 70-year mural and prevent further damage. Conversations are ongoing as to commissioning new art, possibly in a digital format, that can be showcased in multiple venues across campus.

After no further discussion, the University Advancement and External Affairs Committee concluded its report of the September 10 meeting.

**e. Academic Affairs, Research, and Student Life Committee Report**

Chair Rouse gave a report of the Academic Affairs, Research, and Student Life Committee meeting held on September 10, 2020. The committee recommended the approval of awarding academic degrees, diplomas, certificates, and honors for 600 students who completed their degree requirements in August. The second item recommended by the committee was the approval of awarding tenure to Sarah Feldstein Ewing, who is the inaugural James Prochaska Professor of Psychology.

The committee held a discussion with Dr. Peter Snyder and requested at the next meeting that he review the metrics used to better understand and gauge the creativity and output of the research of the faculty.

Chair Rouse discussed the possibility of the committee being split into other areas due to its large scope. The topic of new degree programs or certificates was discussed and the committee will find ways in which those programs are thoroughly vetted and considered with appropriate board oversight without slowing down the process. Chair Rouse briefly reviewed items found on the [Committee Calendar](#). She noted that the calendar is a work in progress and may be altered due to deadlines.

Chair Rouse also shared that the Committee discussed the importance of meeting with students, faculty, staff and deans to learn what is happening within the University and what work is being done.

Chair Cook agreed with Ms. Rouses' aspirations to learn as much as possible via interaction with the University community and would like to use part of the committee-meeting day to do that. This concludes the report of the Academic Affairs, Research, and Student Life Committee.

**f. Executive Committee Report**

Chair Cook reported on the Executive Committee meeting of September 10, 2020 and discussed three main categories that the committee is responsible for. The first issue was regarding emergency and/or material issues that cannot wait until the next meeting or would create a disruption to the University. The second responsibility discussed was the identification of committee overlap and where the gaps are in those committees. The third category was the role of the Compensation Subcommittee of the Executive Committee. The role of the Compensation Subcommittee is to manage the performance and evaluation of the president. The Committee will review the Faculty Senate's three-year performance evaluation of the President and present it to the full board. It was also recommended that the Executive Committee perform an annual summary of the president's performance and present that to the board. Chair Cook also noted that it is the Subcommittee's responsibility to review the president's contract to make sure that the compensation is competitive.

Chair Cook noted that the topic of labor negotiations that VP Coleman is responsible for is currently in the Finance and Facilities Committee. It was proposed that this item be moved to the Executive Committee Charter so that the Chair and Vice Chair can act quickly with regard to labor negotiations. Chair Cook concluded her report of the Executive Committee Meeting of September 10, 2020.

**5. REPORT OF THE PRESIDENT**

**a. Update on Fall Reopening**

President Dooley shared his report on the Fall campus reopening plan and shared that fall enrollment targets were met for both first year and returning students. The goal for transfer students was exceeded and the retention numbers look promising; however, final figures will not be available until October 15. He reported that the move-in went smoothly, all students were tested upon arrival, and orientation was a success. Three hundred events were planned to keep students busy and were extremely well received and effective.

President Dooley reported that he was encouraged with the test results noting that out of 4,600 students tested, 13 were positive for a .28% positivity rate.

The President made comments in regard to a social media video of a large group of students who gathered on the quad and assured that the Student Affairs team, along with other senior leadership members went on late-night patrols to monitor student activity in an effort to encourage them to refrain from congregating in large groups, to wear masks, and protect themselves.

President Dooley and Dr. Collins participated in a ride-along with the Narragansett Chief of Police on move-in day and noted the Chief's surprise of how quiet it was during that time. It appeared that students were keeping a safe distance apart but not always wearing a mask. Dr. Collins and President Dooley handed out masks and encouraged students to wear them. He stated that overall, move-in went better than expected.

**b. Report on Hotel Rental Agreements Pursuant to President’s Delegated Authority**

President Dooley turned the topic of hotel room rentals to VP Rider. Ms. Rider reported that it was necessary for the University to have a plan for students who test positive and need to isolate and for those who must quarantine due to virus exposure. The University entered into three short-term agreements with three local hotels to provide small, private rooms with bathrooms for those students. There are 281 rooms in the hotels with a potential occupancy of up to 474 depending on who is isolating, quarantining or living on campus but not on it. A rate of \$65 per night was negotiated for the period up to Thanksgiving. VP Rider added that a renewal is an option should it be necessary to do so for the second semester.

Dr. Montilla Edmonds commented about the recent national media attention based around students who are not receiving proper treatment when quarantining and asked if URI had experienced that type of feedback from students. Ms. Rider referred this question to Dr. Collins.

Dr. Collins reported that in addition to the quality of the hotel rooms, the food being delivered to those students is outstanding and was told that there were too many snacks and drinks, which in her opinion, is a good problem to have. Dr. Collins reported that freshman students were worried about their mental health issues caused by quarantine requirements and ensured the board that support is available to those students virtually. She added that the Athletics Department allowed the sports teams “outdoor time” and commended Erin Earle and her team who coordinated orientation week for all eight colleges.

Mr. Fascitelli asked if the 14-day quarantine time frame should be shortened based on recent research. Dr. Collins stated that the University follows the guidelines of the RI Department of Health and currently that is still being adhered to.

Mr. Bove, as the Board’s student representative, commended President Dooley and Dr. Collins for doing a “magnificent” job and is very impressed with the reopening of campus. URI took a terrible situation and made it the absolute best that it could be.

Mr. Fogarty asked about the status of testing development within the University. President Dooley stated that this is proceeding, and the University is working with the companies involved to transfer the technology to the URI labs and are working on replicating the results that the faculty found in their work. President Dooley and the University are optimistic and hopeful that it will be successful as it would dramatically increase the testing ability throughout the fall semester and going forward into the spring.

Ms. Placencia asked about the health status of the 13 students who tested positive. Dr. Collins replied that Health Services does an incredible job with follow up for those students. She also added that if it was safe, some students, if local or close to the University, were allowed to return home to isolate and quarantine and that there were no serious issues with them.

Chair Cook asked Provost DeHayes to comment about the faculty adaptation since the campus reopened. The Provost shared that the faculty are doing as well as expected and is pleased overall. He reported that approximately one half of classes are either face-to-face or blended and one half are online. Provost DeHayes is confident that as the semester continues as it has, faculty will become more comfortable and confident in the delivery of their classes.

Mr. Humphrey asked President Dooley about the cost to the University in terms of campus reopening. President Dooley shared that approximately \$800,000 was spent on equipping classes that hadn’t been updated prior to COVID-19; \$1M in parking improvement due to an increased

amount of commuting students; as well as money to provide additional training and workshops for faculty. President Dooley replied that he estimates the aggregate cost of approximately \$3 to \$4 million in investments to prepare for opening, which does not include the hotel contracts. He emphasized that the investments are long-lasting for the University to create a “24/7 learning environment” which has been a long-time goal of the University. President Dooley also added that additional funds were made available to those students that were displaced and not able to live on campus.

Provost DeHayes pointed out that the direct-cost figure is closer to \$4M. He added that half of the Federal Cares Act funding (approximately \$11M) went directly to students (\$5.5M) and the other half targeted by the federal government (\$5.5M) to fund upgrades or changes the University needed to make the shift to online delivery.

Ms. Rider added that the University has expenses that are reimbursable from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), which are a direct response to COVID-19.

Mr. Bove asked about the metrics that will decide if the University must return to online-only class delivery. President Dooley replied that the two principle metrics will be the occupancy rate for the 500 isolation/quarantine beds and the number of positive cases on campus. Those numbers will be monitored and will determine if the University needs to pivot to an online-only platform.

Mr. Lenz asked President Dooley if the Providence campus reopened. President Dooley replied that the Providence campus has opened and is doing well. Provost DeHayes pointed out that the Providence campus has also opened as a “remote study site” for those local students living at home who may have wifi challenges or who have crowded homes in which they are not able to study properly or privately.

Mr. Fascitelli inquired as to the number of students currently living on campus. Dr. Collins replied that there are approximately 3,800 students living on campus in addition to 500 living in Greek life housing.

Chair Cook inquired about the status of the student athletes living on campus. Thorr Bjorn, Director of Athletics, replied that all fall sports have been rescheduled for the spring semester and winter sports remain on target, but noted that it is subject to change. He reported that the coaches are doing an amazing job with athlete engagement and providing them with up-to-date information and protocols as they are received. Athletes will be tested prior to move in and practice will begin on September 21, adhering to all health and NCAA protocols.

With no further questions or comments, the meeting moved to the discussion and approval of action items.

## **6. ACTION ITEMS**

### **a. Approval of Awarding Tenure to Sarah Feldstein Ewing, James Prochaska Professor of Psychology**

[Enclosure 6a](#)

[Enclosure 6a\(i\)](#)

[Enclosure 6a\(ii\)](#)

[Enclosure 6a\(iii\)](#)

Chair Cook called for a motion that the University of Rhode Island Board of Trustees approve the awarding of tenure to Sarah Feldstein Ewing, James Prochaska Professor of Psychology who has met the requirements for tenure at the University of Rhode Island as recommended and presented.

On a motion duly made by Ms. Rouse and seconded by Ms. Heenan it was,

VOTED: THAT The University of Rhode Island Board of Trustees approve the awarding of tenure to Sarah Feldstein Ewing, James Prochaska Professor of Psychology who has met the requirements for tenure at the University of Rhode Island as recommended and approved.

VOTE: 16 members voted in the affirmative and 0 members voted in the negative.

YEAS: Margo L. Cook, Karina Montilla Edmonds, Michael Fascitelli, Charles Fogarty, Christine Heenan, Matthew Lenz, Roby Luna, David Martirano, Michael McNally, Cortney Nicolato, Vahid Ownjayazeri, Susan Petrovas, Jay Placencia, Cecilia Rouse, Thomas Ryan, and Armand Sabitoni.

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 0

ABSENT: Richard Humphrey

**b. Awarding of academic degrees, diplomas, certificates, and honors [Enclosure 6b](#)**

Chair Cook called for a motion that the University of Rhode Island Board of Trustees approve the awarding of academic degrees, diplomas, certificates, and honors to be conferred by the president for those students who completed their academic requirements by the conclusion of the Summer 2020 session as set forth in Enclosure 6b and as recommended and presented.

On a motion duly made by Mr. Fogarty and seconded by Ms. Placencia, it was

VOTED: THAT The University of Rhode Island Board of Trustees approve the awarding of academic degrees, diplomas, certificates, and honors to be conferred by the president for those students who completed their academic requirements by the conclusion of the Summer 2020 session as set forth in Enclosure 6b and as recommended and presented.

VOTE: 17 members voted in the affirmative and 0 members voted in the negative.

YEAS: Margo L. Cook, Karina Montilla Edmonds, Michael Fascitelli, Charles Fogarty, Christine Heenan, Richard Humphrey, Matthew Lenz, Roby Luna, David Martirano, Michael McNally, Cortney Nicolato, Vahid Ownjayazeri, Susan

Petrovas, Jay Placencia, Cecilia Rouse, Thomas Ryan and Armand Sabitoni.

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 0

**c. Consideration and approval of Tuition Waiver for Zachary Theisen**

Assistant Vice President, Anne Marie Coleman provided information regarding the Tuition Waiver consideration and approval. It is customary in most higher education settings to provide full time employees and dependents a tuition waiver while attending the University. Eligibility requirements are set forth in the University policy or in the collective bargaining agreement. The request for a waiver as seen in [Enclosure 6c](#) was made by President Dooley for the son of Tom Theisen who was employed in the IT department for eleven years. Tom was diagnosed with terminal cancer and continued to work on key technology issues for the University. During that time, his son, Zachary, was applying to the University and worked with Vice Provost Dean Libutti in Enrollment Services to complete the process. Tom passed away prior to Zachary's official acceptance to the University. Ms. Coleman referred to the collective bargaining language found in [Enclosure 6c\(i\)](#) and noted that Zachary would have been eligible for the tuition waiver under his father's collective bargaining agreement had he received his official acceptance letter prior to his father's passing. The president is requesting an exemption to this policy because the application process was started but was in the transition stage. Ms. Coleman reported that Zachary has enrolled and is currently on campus.

Ms. Placencia made a motion to approve the tuition waiver, followed by a second motion from Mr. Sabitoni. Ms. Heenan commented that this issue speaks volumes about URI in its values and for not letting something like this fall through the cracks.

Mr. Bove asked if a change to this rule be made so that if this situation were to happen again, that it would not have to go before the Board for approval. Chair Cook agreed with Mr. Bove and requested that the policy be reviewed. Ms. Coleman replied that it is possible for the policy to be reviewed. Chair Cook recommended that the tuition waiver policy be something that is reviewed in a future Governance Committee meeting.

Chair Cook called for a formal motion that the University Board of Trustees approve the tuition waiver for Zachary Theisen as recommended and presented.

On a motion duly made by Ms. Placencia and seconded by Mr. Sabitoni, it was

VOTED: THAT The University of Rhode Island Board of Trustees approve the tuition waiver for Zachary Theisen as recommended and presented.

VOTE: 17 members voted in the affirmative and 0 members voted in the negative.

YEAS: Margo L. Cook, Karina Montilla Edmonds, Michael Fascitelli, Charles Fogarty, Christine Heenan, Richard Humphrey, Matthew Lenz, Roby Luna, David Martirano, Michael McNally, Cortney Nicolato, Vahid Ownjazyeri, Susan



Petrovas, Jay Placencia, Cecilia Rouse, Thomas Ryan and Armand Sabitoni.

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 0

**d. Approval of Policy on Sexual Misconduct [Enclosure 6d](#)**

Vice President Rider provided context on the Sexual Conduct Policy. She explained that prior to this year, Title IX regulations were not issued by the Department of Education (DOE). The DOE passed regulations in an effort to address the perceived lack of due process in sexual misconduct hearings under Title IX. The University worked with the national law firm of Husch Blackwell to form the policy and procedures that comply with the regulations. This policy was provisionally adopted by senior leadership prior to the August 14 mandated deadline pending approval from the Board.

Ms. Rider highlighted the changes to the policy:

- Actual knowledge of the reporter., i.e., the person reporting an incident to the Title IX Coordinator
- Change of Locus
- The role of the Title IX Coordinator being mandatory vs. optional
- Mandatory response hearings
- Formal complaint requirements
- Specific medical records procedures
- Criteria for the appeal process

Mr. Lenz commended Ms. Rider for her universal approach to the policy, specifically relating to off-campus incidents.

Mr. DelGiudice shared that the Postsecondary Council, in collaboration with Rhode Island College, consulted with the same outside consultants and law firm, and approved an “almost identical” policy.

Chair Cook asked Ms. Rider what her concerns were with the new regulations. Ms. Rider replied that in the new regulations there is a “decider” who acts as a judge to determine the relevancy of the evidence and if the cross examination is/is not permissible. In response to this, the University intends to contract with an experienced, local, trial attorney who can advise in regard to evidence and cross examination.

Chair Cook inquired if the regulations are for public universities only. Ms. Rider and Attorney Saccoccio confirmed that the regulations are imposed on all higher education institutions.

Mr. Lenz asked if the Attorney General’s office could assist in the judicial process in the “decider” role. Attorney Saccoccio replied that it is doubtful that they would get involved. Mr. DelGiudice added that feedback from various attorney general offices indicated that they are opposed to the changes to the regulations.

President Dooley noted that due to the large amount of time involved in student conduct matters of such, the idea to contract with an experienced attorney would be acceptable.

Attorney Saccoccio noted that the impact of new regulations could affect the willingness of women to step forward knowing they will be subject to cross examination by the chosen attorney. Prior to the new regulations, the accused party's attorney acted as an advisor and was prohibited from cross examining the victim. The new regulations would allow the cross examination.

Ms. Rider added that communication and training for first-year students on the prevention of sexual misconduct/harassment is widely available via many platforms. Mr. Bove asked if first-year students would be trained on the new regulations in the URI 101 classes. Ms. Rider replied that the training provided in URI 101 classes has been updated to reflect the new regulations.

Mr. Lenz inquired if the University had a relationship with Day One. Ms. Rider was not aware of a relationship; however, the University has a wide range of services available to help students.

Ms. Placencia asked if upper class students were made aware of the new regulations. Ms. Rider stated that those students had been notified and, although not mandatory, they have been strongly advised to attend the training.

Chair Cook added for the record that after a robust discussion, the Board has no choice but to approve the policy.

Chair Cook called for a motion that the University of Rhode Island Board of Trustees approve the Policy on Sexual Misconduct as set forth and presented in Enclosure 6d.

On a motion duly made by Mr. Ryan and seconded by Dr. Montilla Edmonds, it was

VOTED:	THAT	The University of Rhode Island Board of Trustees approve the Policy on Sexual Misconduct set forth and presented in Enclosure 6d.
	VOTE:	17 members voted in the affirmative and 0 members voted in the negative.
	YEAS:	Margo L. Cook, Karina Montilla Edmonds, Michael Fascitelli, Charles Fogarty, Christine Heenan, Richard Humphrey, Matthew Lenz, Roby Luna, David Martirano, Michael McNally, Cortney Nicolato, Vahid Ownjayazeri, Susan Petrovas, Jay Placencia, Cecilia Rouse, Thomas Ryan and Armand Sabitoni.
	NAYS:	0
	ABSTAINS:	0

**e. Approval of Resolution Delegating Authority Over User Agency Contracts to the Managerial Group at The University of Rhode Island [Enclosure 6e](#)**

Chair Cook referred to President Dooley for an explanation of the Resolution set forth in Enclosure 6e. The Resolution is necessary due to Gina McCarthy's inability to serve on the Board and to appoint Cortney Nicolato in her place. The Resolution provides exemption clearances for Board Members and prevents them from going through the Department of Defense and FBI clearance process.

Chair Cook called for a motion that the University of Rhode Island Board of Trustees approve the Resolution Delegating Authority Over User Agency Contracts to the Managerial Group at The University of Rhode Island set forth and presented in represented in Enclosure 6e.

On a motion duly made by Ms. Nicolato and seconded by Mr. Lenz, it was

VOTED: THAT: The University of Rhode Island Board of Trustees approve the Resolution Delegating Authority Over User Agency Contracts to the Managerial Group at The University of Rhode Island set forth and as presented in Enclosure 6e.

VOTE: 17 members voted in the affirmative and 0 members voted in the negative.

YEAS: Margo L. Cook, Karina Montilla Edmonds, Michael Fascitelli, Charles Fogarty, Christine Heenan, Richard Humphrey, Matthew Lenz, Roby Luna, David Martirano, Michael McNally, Cortney Nicolato, Vahid Ownjayazeri, Susan Petrovas, Jay Placencia, Cecilia Rouse, Thomas Ryan and Armand Sabitoni.

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 0

**f. Approval of the URI Board of Trustees 2021 Meeting Schedule. [Enclosure 6f](#)**

Chair Cook called for a motion of the University of Rhode Island Board of Trustees to approve the URI Board of Trustees 2021 Meeting Schedule set forth and presented in Enclosure 6f.

A motion was made and seconded by Mr. Sabitoni and Ms. Nicolato respectively. However, discussion regarding the calendar followed the motion. Mr. Fascitelli questioned the necessity of having a meeting in both September and October. Ms. Rider explained that in a normal year, the Board would review the budget request before it is presented to the state in September. The financials are not generally available for Board approval until mid-October. Additionally, University events such as Family/Alumni weekend and the Distinguished Achievement Awards are scheduled in October. Chair Cook added that for 2020, the legislator's budget responsibilities were pushed out to October, but are normally addressed in September.

Mr. DelGiudice was asked to share how the Postsecondary Council handles this situation. Mr. DelGiudice replied that the Council meets monthly, the budgets are required in September and submitted to the state in October, and the Governor submits her budget in January.

Attorney Saccoccio noted that although the Board calendar, by law, must be submitted by the beginning of the year, the Board is allowed to have a meeting at any time so long as it's filed within a 48-hour time period of that meeting.

Mr. Ryan asked Attorney Saccoccio if any of the budget and financial approvals could be accomplished via a unanimous written consent, in which Attorney Saccoccio replied that it could not.

Mr. DelGiudice emphasized that the budget for the following fiscal year has to be done in September, but to validate the auditor's results for the year that you are concluding, it has to be done in October. He further added that although this is not statutory, but is required to fit into the state schedule cadence.

Provost DeHayes advocated for a September meeting due to the budget approval and the awarding of degrees for summer graduates. He proposed that a November meeting be scheduled which could include the awarding of degrees for December graduates as well as other items that may influence the Governor's budget that comes out in January.

Mr. Ryan and others concurred that an early November meeting would allow the Board to focus on many items and would justify the request to eliminate a meeting in both September and October.

With no further discussion in regard to the proposed 2021 Meeting Schedule, Chair Cook again called for a motion that the University of Rhode Island Board of Trustees approve the URI Board of Trustees 2021 Meeting Schedule set forth and presented in Enclosure 6f.

On a motion duly made by Mr. Sabitoni and seconded by Ms. Nicolato, it was

VOTED: THAT: The University of Rhode Island Board of Trustees approve the URI Board of Trustees 2021 Meeting Schedule set forth and presented in Enclosure 6f.

VOTE: 15 members voted in the affirmative and 0 members voted in the negative.

YEAS: Margo L. Cook, Karina Montilla Edmonds, Michael Fascitelli, Charles Fogarty, Matthew Lenz, Roby Luna, David Martirano, Michael McNally, Cortney Nicolato, Vahid Ownjayazeri, Susan Petrovas, Jay Placencia, Cecilia Rouse, Thomas Ryan and Armand Sabitoni.

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 0

ABSENT: Christine Heenan, Richard Humphrey

**g. Appointment of Board Secretary to the URI Board of Trustees [Enclosure 6g](#)**

President Dooley explained the need and critical function to a board to have an individual who is the principal liaison between the trustees and the University, which is the Board Secretary. Chair Cook added that Michelle Curreri has been a tremendous resource to the Board and is doing a great job in her role as liaison.

Chair Cook called for a motion that the University of Rhode Island Board of Trustees for the appointment of Michelle Curreri as Board Secretary to the URI Board of Trustees set forth and presented in Enclosure 6g.

On a motion duly made by Mr. Lenz and seconded by Mr. Martirano, it was

VOTED: THAT: The University of Rhode Island Board of Trustees approve the appointment of Michelle Curreri as Board Secretary to the URI Board of Trustees set forth and presented in Enclosure 6g.

VOTE: 16 members voted in the affirmative and 0 members voted in the negative.

YEAS: Margo L. Cook, Karina Montilla Edmonds, Michael Fascitelli, Charles Fogarty, Matthew Lenz, Roby Luna, David Martirano, Michael McNally, Cortney Nicolato, Vahid Ownjayazeri, Susan Petrovas, Jay Placencia, Cecilia Rouse, Thomas Ryan and Armand Sabitoni.

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 0

ABSENT: Christine Heenan

**7. ADJOURN**

Chair Cook called for a motion that the University of Rhode Island Board of Trustees adjourn the meeting of September 11, 2020.

On a motion duly made by Ms. Placencia and seconded by Ms. Nicolato, it was

VOTED: THAT: The University of Rhode Island Board of Trustees adjourn the meeting of September 11, 2020.

VOTE: 16 members voted in the affirmative and 0 members voted in the negative.

YEAS: Margo L. Cook, Karina Montilla Edmonds, Michael Fascitelli, Charles Fogarty, Matthew Lenz, Roby Luna, David Martirano, Michael McNally, Cortney Nicolato, Vahid Ownjayazeri, Susan Petrovas, Jay Placencia, Cecilia Rouse, Thomas Ryan and Armand Sabitoni.

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 0

ABSENT: Christine Heenan

The URI Board of Trustees meeting of September 11, 2020 adjourned at 2:45 p.m.

**The next meeting of the URI Board of Trustees is scheduled for October 24, 2020.**