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Cortney M. Nicolato '01

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Susan Petrovas '92

Yahaira "Jay" Placencia '01

Cecilia Rouse

Thomas Ryan '75

Armand E. Sabitoni '73

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*R.I. Council on Postsecondary  
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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  
Wednesday, August 26, 2020 • 5:00 p.m.**

**PURSUANT TO GOVERNOR RAIMONDO'S  
EXECUTIVE ORDER 20-63, THIS MEETING WAS HELD VIRTUALLY  
USING THE WEBEX PLATFORM (BOARD ONLY) AND FACEBOOK  
LIVESTREAM (PUBLIC VIEWING).**

**APPROVED MINUTES**

Chair Heenan welcomed the members of the University of Rhode Island (URI) Board of Trustees University Advancement and External Affairs Committee and acknowledged that a quorum was present. Chair Heenan called the meeting to order at 5:01 p.m.

Chair Heenan thanked everyone and expressed her high hopes for the Committee as they work on behalf of the University in the months and years ahead.

Attendees present for this virtual meeting:

The University of Rhode Island Board of Trustees voting members:

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

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

- Ms. Barbara Cottam, Chair, Board of Education
- Ms. Mayrai Gindy—Faculty Representative

The University of Rhode Island staff members:

- Ms. Michelle Curreri, Chief of Staff, and University Liaison
- Ms. Kelly K. Mahoney, Executive Director for External Relations and Communications, and University Liaison
- Ms. Lil O'Rourke, President, URI Foundation and Alumni Engagement, and University Liaison
- Ms. Cheryl Trudel, Executive Assistant, External Relations and Communications

## 1. ACCEPTANCE OF THE AGENDA

Chair Heenan called for a motion to accept the agenda for the August 26, 2020 meeting.

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

VOTED: THAT The University of Rhode Island Board of Trustees University Advancement and External Affairs Committee accept the agenda for the meeting of August 26, 2020.

VOTE: Chair Heenan noted that a vote calling for acceptance of the agenda was not necessary.

## 2. INTRODUCTION OF COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Chair Heenan asked each committee member to share a brief bio with their professional background. All members provided this information in turn to the Committee. Chair Heenan thanked the Committee for their introductions and moved on to Item No. 3a--University Advancement and External Affairs Committee Charter.

## 3. DISCUSSION ITEMS

### a. University Advancement and External Affairs Committee Charter and overall role of the Committee as set forth in [Enclosure 3a](#)

Ms. Curreri was asked to read the purpose of the Charter:

The purpose of this committee is to provide oversight of University initiatives, programs and resources intended to enhance public understanding and appreciation of the University and to foster positive engagement from local to the global arena. The committee is responsible for oversight of the University's Academic Strategic Plan

Chair Heenan interjected, asking Ms. Curreri for the charge to be corrected and amended in other documents as well, stating that the aforementioned is not the responsibility of the Committee. Ms. Curreri agreed, saying that she had been made aware; and that the intention of reading this particular part of the Charter was to bring it to the Committee's attention in order that the discussion of correction would take place.

Ms. Curreri continued reading the Charter as follows:

This committee supports the University's efforts to advance its reputation for the quality and distinctiveness of its programs, liaise with the URI Foundation to amplify the University's fundraising efforts and stay informed of the University's advocacy efforts before governmental and other public bodies. The Committee provides oversight of the goals, plans and strategies of the University's marketing and communications program for internal and external audiences. The Committee periodically assesses

and reports to the Board on the University's standing and relationship with its public audiences, including academia, government and the global community.

The Committee serves as a sounding board on University public relations and marketing activities and initiatives.

The Committee partners with the URI Foundation and Alumni Engagement on advancing URI through fundraising. The Committee will receive periodic updates on progress towards fundraising and campaign goals.

The Committee will review and assist the University on government relations efforts especially related to state financial support.”

Chair Heenan thanked Ms. Curreri and introduced Kelly Mahoney and Lil O'Rourke, University Liaisons, who carry the work of leadership forward on a day-to-day basis; respectively, leading the University in the areas of Communications and External Affairs and University Foundation and Alumni Engagement (URIFAE). Chair Heenan asked Ms. Mahoney to provide a recap of her overall charge and commitment of her department. She also asked Ms. O'Rourke to provide an overview of the URIFAE, its structure, the launch of the URIFAE Campaign in August, and where the Campaign is projected to take the University.

Ms. Mahoney stated that she is a proud URI graduate and is happy to be serving her alma mater. She highlighted key areas of her responsibilities, including oversight for the marketing and communications work for the University; government relations and public affairs, with this year being “a year unlike any other;” crisis communications; oversight for the URI Magazine; and publications and creative services for the University, as well as web design for the entire University.

Ms. Mahoney also stated that she would lend any support and share updates, as needed, that are related to the government relations work that falls within her purview.

Chair Heenan then turned to Ms. O'Rourke to talk about the URIFAE and the Campaign.

Ms. O'Rourke thanked everyone for serving on the Committee and said that the URIFAE is a separate 501C3, that exists solely for the purpose of advancing the University with a separate governing board chaired by Mr. Alfred Verrecchia. The staff of approximately seventy-four (74) people covers all of the broad university advancement programs in areas such as alumni engagement; corporate and foundation relations; fundraising; the Annual Fund; major gifts. The URIFAE is also responsible for engagement of alumni, friends, corporations and foundations, and engaging and soliciting parents of current students. Ms. O'Rourke further explained that the University is currently in the public phase of a \$250M capital campaign, **Big Ideas, Bold Plans** which was launched via an insertion in the July issue of the URI Magazine along with a new website. The virtual launch of the Campaign will take place via video on September 22nd.

Ms. O'Rourke also stated that the Campaign is going well with \$176M raised so far toward a goal of \$250M. In addition to fundraising, the URIFAE manages the University's endowment, which is currently at \$170M, and growing quickly.

Chair Heenan thanked Ms. O'Rourke and stated that the overview provided by Ms. O'Rourke was very helpful for the Committee, along with the members of the University's Senior Leadership Team who will regularly report to the Committee to give guidance to and seek guidance from, in doing the Committee's work. Additionally, Chair Heenan asked if there were any questions related to the Committee's Charter, of her as chair, of each other as Committee members, of Ms. Mahoney, or of Ms. O'Rourke. Hearing none, Chair Heenan moved on to the discussion regarding the University Advancement and External Affairs calendar.

**b. University Advancement and External Affairs Committee Calendar as set forth in Enclosure 3b**

Chair Heenan explained that the draft calendar set forth in the meeting agenda was designed with the purpose of having Committee meetings held in advance of the overall Board of Trustees meetings in order to report back to the Board with discussions, deliberations, and guidance from Committee meetings. Chair Heenan asked Committee members to read enclosure 3b, and asked if there were any questions related to forthcoming meetings. Hearing none, Chair Heenan stated that she would like to use the remaining time to return to Ms. Mahoney's earlier comments.

Chair Heenan asked Ms. Mahoney to refer back to her earlier comment about this year as being "a year unlike any other," concurring this year has been extraordinarily challenging for state budgets everywhere, with universities being challenged by the unforeseen circumstances of bringing students back to campus, testing students regularly, and resulting in some policy and immunity implications.

Ms. Mahoney stated that normally at this time of year, members of the General Assembly would not be in session. However, in addition to dealing with the crisis, members are also campaigning for reelection, making their schedules extremely challenging. Earlier this summer (when the Board met), the hope was that the state budget process would have continued through the month of August and would have been nearly complete at this stage. However, given the ever-changing conditions of the United States economy and the global economy, those plans are continually being adapted. The General Assembly, as of right now, plans to return after the primary election to continue the budget deliberations.

Hearings in both the House and Senate Finance Committees have been held as recently as last week, where President Dooley testified before the Senate Finance Committee. The agenda and testimony specifically focused on the ballot questions that are proposed in the Governor's budget for this upcoming election cycle.

Ms. Mahoney further explained that there are two ballot questions that are supportive of the University's projects: 1) the completion of the Fine Arts Center; and 2) the development of the new Center for Ocean Innovation. The President testified on both projects and took questions

from committee members. The schedule for ballot questions still remains an open question as the ballots have to be printed fairly soon for the general election in November. Additionally, given those that are in the military, there are many elements that have to go out much earlier than November; thus, there continues to be discussion about the timing of the ballot questions and how quickly those can move forward.

Until there is an enacted state budget, it is not normally known what those final questions are given that the state is in an unprecedented time. Conversations and meetings take place on a regular basis with the leadership of the House and Senate, who are well aware of the University's priorities--not just related to the ballot questions, but also related to the University's state appropriation.

Ms. Mahoney further assured the Committee that advocating continues. However, until there is a better understanding of any additional federal relief, the state is trying to limit the University's spending; at least in this current fiscal year, to that of last year's spending levels. Ms. Mahoney reiterated that advocating continues, particularly as it relates specifically to immunity from liability. Ms. Mahoney further informed the Committee that a legislative initiative was discussed with the Board of Trustees at a recent Board meeting, adding that legislation has been drafted and shared. The hope was that it would be incorporated into the final budget that is enacted by the General Assembly. However, it is not known when that will take place as there are efforts at the federal level to have similar language passed by Congress, which is very unpredictable. Ms. Mahoney again stated that advocating at both the state and federal level for that immunity will continue.

Ms. Nicolato asked Ms. Mahoney for the total amount of the two bond questions that the University is proposing. Ms. Mahoney responded that both of the University's questions are part of an overall higher education bond question with two URI projects: 1) the Fine Arts Center portion is \$57.3M; and 2) the Center for Ocean Innovation is \$10M. Ms. Nicolato asked for clarification on the dollar amount for the Fine Arts Center, and Ms. Mahoney reiterated that amount at \$57.3M.

Chair Heenan thanked Ms. Mahoney and asked Vice Chair Mr. Sabitoni if he had any questions or comments before adjournment.

Mr. Sabitoni expressed his appreciation for Ms. Mahoney's overview of the General Assembly's current work noting his confidence giving all of the challenges expressed, while highlighting the need to continue to reiterate the importance of the bonds.

For her closing comments, Chair Heenan noted her experience working in and around universities for two decades, commenting that universities have unique occasions to reintroduce themselves to important constituencies and revitalize or lift a brand through a capital campaign, anniversaries, or victory laps with outgoing or incoming leaders. Chair Heenan pointed out that URI is currently positioned with two of the three opportunities that are in site over the next

eighteen months, and the importance of the Committee and its ability to help Ms. O'Rourke, Ms. Mahoney, and their teams. Additionally, Chair Heenan stated that she is looking forward to working with everyone on the Committee in concert with Ms. Mahoney and Ms. O'Rourke to make the most of those opportunities as they move forward.

#### **4. ADJOURN**

Chair Heenan called for a motion to adjourn the meeting of August 26, 2020

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

VOTED:	THAT	The University of Rhode Island Board of Trustees University Advancement and External Affairs Committee adjourn the meeting of August 26, 2020.
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VOTE:	The motion passed unanimously, and the meeting adjourned at 5:23 p.m.
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The next URI Board of Trustees University Advancement and External Affairs Committee meeting is scheduled for September 10, 2020 at 4:00 p.m.