

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

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
Thursday • July 2, 2020 • 5:00 pm
45 Upper College Rd Kingston, RI 02881**

PURSUANT TO GOVERNOR RAIMONDO'S EXECUTIVE ORDER 20-46, THIS MEETING WAS HELD VIRTUALLY USING THE WEBEX PLATFORM (BOARD MEMBERS ONLY) AND FACEBOOK LIVE (PUBLIC VIEWING).

MINUTES

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

Chair Cook welcomed the members of The University of Rhode Island (URI) Board of Trustees to this meeting and acknowledged that a quorum was present. Chair Cook called this meeting to order at 5:03 p.m.

Attendees present for this virtual meeting:

The University of Rhode Island Board of Trustees voting members:

- Ms. Margo Cook, Chair (remote)
- Dr. Karina Montilla Edmonds (remote)
- Mr. Michael D. Fascitelli (remote)
- Honorable Charles J. Fogarty (remote)
- Mr. Richard S. Humphrey (remote – joined meeting at 5:16 pm)
- Mr. Matthew D. Lenz (remote)
- Mr. David J. Martirano (remote – joined meeting at 5:05 pm)
- Mr. Michael F. McNally, Vice Chair (remote)
- Mr. Vahid Ownjazayeri (remote)
- Ms. Jay Placencia (remote)
- Ms. Cecilia Rouse (remote)
- Mr. Thomas M. Ryan (remote)
- Mr. Armand E. Sabitoni (remote)

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

- Mr. Tim DelGiudice—Chair, Council on Postsecondary Education (remote)

- Ms. Barbara Cottam—Chair, Board of Education (remote – joined meeting at 5:04 pm)
- Mr. Christopher Bove—Student Representative (remote)
- Dr. Mayrai Gindy—Faculty Representative (remote)

The University of Rhode Island Staff

- President David M. Dooley (remote)
- Mr. Louis J. Saccoccio, General Counsel (remote)
- Ms. Michelle Curreri, Chief of Staff and Board Liaison (remote)
- Anne Marie Coleman, Assistant Vice President for Human Resources (remote)
- Don DeHayes, Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs (remote)
- Kathy Collins, Vice President, Student Affairs (remote)

External Participants

- Caleb Hilyard '23, Student, University of Rhode Island (remote)
- Dr. Martha Fam, Pharm.D '93,'99,P'23, University of Rhode Island Parent (remote)
- Mary Lind '22, Student, University of Rhode Island (remote)

1. ACCEPTANCE OF THE AGENDA

Chair Cook called for a motion that the URI Board of Trustees accept the Agenda for the meeting of July 2, 2020.

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

VOTED: THAT The University of Rhode Island Board of Trustees accept the Agenda for the meeting of July 2, 2020.

VOTE: 13 members voted in the affirmative and 0 members voted in the negative.

YEAS: Margo L. Cook, Karina Montilla Edmonds, Michael D. Fascitelli, Charles J. Fogarty, Jr., Richard S. Humphrey, Matthew D. Lenz, David J. Martirano, Michael F. McNally, Vahid Ownjazayeri, Jay Placencia, Cecilia Rouse, Thomas M. Ryan, and Armand E. Sabitoni

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 0

2. OPEN FORUM

In accordance with the URI Board of Trustee bylaws, the first 20 minutes were set aside for members of the public to address the board during open forum. Three people responded to the public comment request and were allowed to speak for a maximum of three minutes or less. The Board members were informed by Chair

Cook that members listen to the presenters but do not respond or interact with them. Michelle Curreri, Chief of Staff and Board Liaison, called each presenter in the order in which they registered.

Caleb Hilyard '23 is a URI student majoring in Music Education and History. Caleb thanked the board members for the opportunity to speak during the open forum. He expressed his concerns regarding the university's reopening plans for the Fall 2020 semester, specifically the reduction of available on-and off-campus housing for in-state, upper class students. Caleb acknowledged that although it is not possible to provide housing for all students, he proposed protection for incoming freshmen and those students unable to seek housing, the ability to request a leave of absence, maintain their scholarship, and be able return to URI when it is safe to do so.

Martha Fam, Pharm.D. '93'99 P'23 thanked the board on behalf of her daughter who is a sophomore, pre-med track, honors student residing in Massachusetts (2 hours away). Dr. Fam expressed her concern that a four-hour daily commute to URI would not allow her daughter to take full advantage of campus resources and could adversely affect her grades, ability to do her work, and most importantly, her physical and mental health. In light of limited off-campus housing availability, Dr. Fam is not confident that her daughter will be able to maintain her success and reach her goals should she be forced to commute four hours each day from home.

Mary Lind '22 is a junior studying Journalism and Political Science. She thanked the Board for the opportunity to speak during the open forum. Mary respectfully asked the Board to reconsider the university's decision regarding housing for the fall semester citing reasons such as commuting expense, public transportation accessibility and safety, and the lack of and expense of off-campus housing. Mary shared that she will not be able to attend URI in the fall if she cannot live on campus, as she does not have access to public transportation or a personal vehicle.

3. DISCUSSION ITEM

a) Discussion of The University of Rhode Island Fall 2020 Reopening Plan

Chair Cook informed the Board members that President Dooley, Don DeHayes, and Kathy Collins would discuss the Fall 2020 Reopening Plan. She encouraged the board members to ask questions to get a better understanding of how the university came to its decisions.

President Dooley acknowledged that this is a challenging and unprecedented time for both URI and higher education. He shared that the financial impact would be substantial with an anticipated \$8M revenue loss (not including possible losses due to a decline in retaining current students); \$7M plus in COVID-19 related costs; \$8M incurred for housing and dining refunds for the Spring 2020 semester; and a projected \$17M loss of revenue in housing and residential life for 2021. President Dooley stated that the project of examining the Fall 2020 options was a collaborative effort among many throughout the university including senior leadership, healthcare leadership, emergency response team, student affairs, deans and university faculty, budget office, ITS, and the Office of Advancement of Teaching and Learning.

Don DeHayes, Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs, gave a presentation entitled [Scenario Planning](#).

Dr. Kathy Collins, Vice President for Student Affairs, thanked those who participated in the open forum and addressed the board in regard to the decision-making process for campus housing in Fall 2020.

Dr. Collins shared that her team in Housing and Residential Life (HRL) worked closely with the Rhode Island Department of Health (RIDOH), followed CDC guidelines, and reviewed benchmarked data from the Association of College and University Housing Officers – International. The research found that a majority of colleges and universities around the country will be operating at 60 to 70% occupancy while local/nearby schools such as Salve Regina and Southern Connecticut State University will be at 80%. Other universities such as Brown and RISD will be housing first-year students only and almost all higher education institutions are giving priority to those students. Dr. Collins cited national research tells us the many reasons why first-year students should live on campus including but not limited to higher GPAs, shorter time to degree completion, and greater student engagement.

Dr. Collins explained that the decision-making process was based on health and safety, equity, occupancy, building design, and retention. In terms of safety, and retention, 200 hotel rooms and 200 on-campus rooms have been secured for purposes of quarantine and isolation. In regard to the additional 4,400 beds available, three housing scenarios were reviewed--design occupancy (how many students can fit in a given room), all singles, and hybrid (combination of double and single rooms). The hybrid method was chosen for those 4,400 beds. Dr. Collins stated this decision was made in an effort to reduce the number of students that will be impacted by the virus and to avoid sending students home as was the case in the spring semester. Of the 4,400 beds, 3,100 will be assigned to first-year students; the remaining 1,300 will be assigned to returning out-of-state students and those students who go through an appeal process evaluated by the university's ANCHOR team consisting of faculty and staff. She further explained that the ANCHOR team will be assessing the appeals in terms of high-risk students, those with ADA accommodations, safety for the LGBTQIA community, and personal issues such as homelessness and food insecurity.

Dr. Collins reported that for those displaced students, a Transition Assistance Grant (TAG) of \$1,500 will be awarded along with a 50-plan meal pass and free parking in the Fall. She added that URI is currently the only institution offering such assistance. Additionally, every student's housing deposit was refunded.

Chair Cook opened the floor to the Board for questions and comments.

Mr. Ryan congratulated President Dooley and the entire team for having the courage and leadership to provide a thoughtful, workable, and safe plan for URI. Mr. Ryan asked if the university was exploring other hotel options in the surrounding area, and, has the university considered using private bus companies to provide transportation to and from URI.

Dr. Collins replied that HRL continues to work with local hotels and is pursuing further conversations regarding student housing. In terms of contracting a hotel to provide a room for a student, the university would charge a student the highest housing rate approved. If the hotel rate is higher than the approved rate, HRL would be responsible for the difference.

Mr. Ryan inquired about whether a student who is successfully placed in an off-campus location, such as a hotel, be eligible for the TAG.

Dr. Collins replied that students who are placed in a hotel would not receive the TAG and would be considered to have on-campus housing.

In regard to public transportation and busing, Dr. Collins reported that HRL and VP Rider are working with RIPTA to provide transportation hubs, and that additional parking would be added at Wickford Junction train station and Schneider Electric.

President Dooley supplemented the discussion regarding busing and public transportation and reported that the university has a contract for the on-campus shuttle. He stated that VP Collins and VP Rider are in discussions with that vendor to negotiate URI-only routes and establish centralized locations that allow buses to go directly to and from campus.

Mr. Bove acknowledged that currently there are more appeals from displaced students than there are rooms. He inquired about how decisions are being made to determine who or what issues preside over the other, and, what is the university going to do for those who are displaced and need to be on campus.

Dr. Collins confirmed that as of the start of the July 2nd meeting, 350 appeals had been received and acknowledged that, unfortunately, there will not be enough rooms to accommodate every appeal. She assured Mr. Bove that as rooms become available due to either a student choosing to commute or live off campus, that those who submitted an appeal will be considered.

Mr. Bove asked what action the university is taking, in terms of merit scholarships, should a student take a leave of absence due to displacement.

Provost DeHayes addressed Mr. Bove's concerns by stating that there are options, although not as desirable, for those students. Those options include taking a fully online course load while living at home, thereby saving money, until it is safe for all to return to campus. The Provost also emphasized the importance for students to stay connected to URI, as current circumstances have placed limits on travel and meaningful employment, and that taking a leave of absence may not be the best option for students.

Mr. Humphrey shared that, as a board member, he is delighted and has total confidence in President Dooley and his team.

Mr. McNally concurred with Mr. Humphrey and is pleased with the diligent, sound, and thoughtful process in which decisions were made. Mr. McNally inquired about COVID-19 testing strategies.

President Dooley addressed this topic by sharing that the university is evaluating and pursuing options for testing based on current CDC guidelines for higher education. The strategy that is being pursued will include aggressive testing at the beginning of the semester and continued testing throughout the semester for anyone with the slightest virus symptoms or for anyone who has had contact with an infected person. The university is working to grow the capacity for testing done in-house versus contracting with a third party, which has proven to be very expensive. The university will also work closely with the Rhode Island Department of Health in regard to contact tracing to quickly identify those people who are exposed to an infected person. Another strategy in the classroom setting is to have assigned seating to assist in identifying, notifying, and testing those within a 6-foot radius of the infected person.

Mr. DelGiudice commended President Dooley and his team and is personally affected with the difficult decisions higher education has been forced to make, as his daughter is a student at another institution facing similar circumstances. Mr. DelGiudice asked if the university is in contact with off-campus landlords in an attempt to catalog locally to provide more resources for students.

Dr. Collins responded that the Commuter Affairs website has an extensive off-campus housing search engine that includes a roommate-matching feature, and HRL continues to work with local landlords and the Narragansett community. She also shared that the Narragansett Town Council is currently moving to change the zoning that would limit the number of students to three who can reside together.

Chair Cook asked Dr. Collins to explain the process of seeking the viewpoints and prospective, particularly from students, in regard to housing capacity and who would be affected.

Dr. Collins replied that the capacity decisions were a collaboration between HRL and Health Services, with little student input. She stated that the reason for this was due to the timeliness and sensitivity of the issues. HRL made their decisions earlier than other institutions in order to give students 1) more information; 2) allow more time to find suitable housing; and 3) allow HRL more time to reassign rooms to those who will be living on campus.

Ms. Gindy addressed Provost DeHayes in regard to the request for faculty to submit their preference for delivering courses, i.e., fully on-line, or face-to-face, and asked if a student, presumably with no health risks, would have the option to complete a face-to-face class fully online.

Provost DeHayes shared that flexibility was essential in the decision-making process. After receiving feedback from faculty, it was apparent that a single modality of teaching would not work for all classes. He shared that synchronous technology has been and will continue to be installed in classrooms that are face-to-face. The technology would allow those students who choose to take it online, the ability to fully participate in the same manner as those physically in the classroom. The classrooms that currently have this technology are being used as a testing site to perfect the pedagogy.

Ms. Gindy asked if the technology will be used in lab classes.

Provost DeHayes responded that the technology will be installed in generally-assigned classrooms and most departmentally-controlled classrooms. He expects that most of the departmental classrooms in the engineering building will have this technology with the exception of under-utilized and/or small classrooms.

Mr. Bove addressed the board and gave his opinion on the quality of on-line classes versus in-person classes. He personally felt that they were not the same and that he was doing “busy work” and not necessarily learning. He questioned what the university is doing to ensure students receive a quality education while progressing their degree.

Provost DeHayes shared that the university has award-winning faculty who are nationally recognized for their online teaching performance, and that many students provided feedback for the well-designed and delivered classes they received. He also noted that faculty have invested many hours educating themselves with new technology to create a rich learning environment.

Chair Cook commended the university for converting to a fully online modality in eight days. She agreed that the decisions made were difficult and also sympathized with students. She acknowledged the students and parent who spoke during the open forum and thanked the university for providing a strong experience for the URI community.

4. ADJOURN

Chair Cook called for a motion that the URI Board of Trustees adjourn the meeting of July 2, 2020.

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

VOTED: THAT The University of Rhode Island Board of Trustees
adjourn the meeting of July 2, 2020.

VOTE: 11 members voted in the affirmative and 0 members voted in the
negative. Mr. Fogarty left the meeting at 5:54 pm; Mr. Humphrey
left the meeting at 6:18 pm.

YEAS: Margo L. Cook, Karina Montilla Edmonds, Michael D. Fascitelli,
Matthew D. Lenz, David J. Martirano, Michael F. McNally, Vahid
Ownjazayeri, Jay Placencia, Cecilia Rouse, Thomas M. Ryan, and
Armand E. Sabitoni

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 0

The meeting adjourned at 6:35 p.m.

UPCOMING MEETING

The next University of Rhode Island Board of Trustees meeting is scheduled for September 10-11, 2020 at 9:00 am.