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**The University of Rhode Island Board of Trustees  
University Advancement and External Affairs Committee Meeting  
Thursday, September 23, 2021, 1:30 p.m., Room 302  
Rhode Island Nursing Education Center  
350 Eddy Street, Providence, RI 02903**

**OFFICIAL MINUTES**

Committee Chair Christine Heenan acknowledged that a quorum of members was present in person and called the meeting to order at 1:30 p.m.

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

- Ms. Christine M. Heenan, Committee Chair
- Mr. Armand E. Sabitoni, Committee Vice Chair
- Ms. Cortney Nicolato
- Mr. Vahid Ownjazayeri
- Ms. Barbara Cottam, Chair, Board of Education (ex officio, non-voting)
- Mr. Tim DelGiudice, Chair, RI Council on Postsecondary Education (ex officio, non-voting)

**The URI Board of Trustees University Advancement and External Affairs Committee members not in attendance:**

- Ms. Margo Cook, Board Chair (ex officio)
- Mr. Michael McNally, Board Vice Chair (ex officio)
- Dr. Marc Parlange, President (ex officio, non-voting)

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

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

**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 URI staff members in attendance:**

- Ms. Heather Colby, Assistant Director, Brand Marketing and Advertising
- Mr. Peter Harrington, Assistant Legal Counsel
- 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 (Remote)
- Mr. Alfred J. Verrecchia '67, M.B.A. '72, Hon. '04, Board of Directors, Executive Committee Chair, URIFAE (Remote)

**1. ACCEPTANCE OF THE AGENDA**

Chair Heenan welcomed all participants, thanked guests for attending, and called for a motion to accept the agenda for the September 23, 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 September 23, 2021 meeting agenda.

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

YEAS: Christine Heenan, Cortney Nicolato, Vahid Ownjazayeri, and Armand Sabitoni.

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 0

**2. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES**

**Minutes of the April 22, 2021 Meeting [Enclosure 2.a.](#)**

Chair Heenan called for a motion to approve the minutes 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 approve the minutes of the April 22, 2021 meeting.

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

YEAS: Christine Heenan, Cortney Nicolato, Vahid Ownjazayeri, and Armand Sabitoni

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 0

### 3. 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.

URIFAE President, Lil Breul O'Rourke, reviewed important events scheduled during the month of October as follows:

- **Alumni Family Weekend** (October 1<sup>st</sup> – 3<sup>rd</sup>)
  - The Rhody vs. Stony Brook football game is sold out
  - The Class of 2020 in-person Commencement will also take place Friday, October 1<sup>st</sup> with over 800 students who plan to attend.
- **URI's Day of Giving** (Thursday, October 7<sup>th</sup>)
  - Last year, raised \$1M from 820 first-time donors; ongoing efforts this year to make sure they return, with a goal of 2,900 donors for this year, representing a ten percent increase in the number of donors.
- **Campaign Celebration** (Friday, October 22<sup>nd</sup>)
- **The David M. Dooley Sciences on the Quadrangle** (Friday, October 22<sup>nd</sup>)  
*(Note: this event is not connected to the Campaign Celebration and is a separate event to honor Former President Dooley who will be arriving from Montana to attend the dedication).*
- **Distinguished Achievement Awards** (Saturday, October 23<sup>rd</sup>)

#### a. **Update of Big Ideas. Bold Plans. The Campaign for the University of Rhode Island** [Enclosure 3.a.](#)

President Breul O'Rourke started her presentation with a reminder of the Five Pillars of the Campaign saying that:

1. **Student Access** scholarship funds support students that are spendable dollars used by Enrollment Services to keep students in school.

2. **Learning Experience** as opportunities for URI students.
3. **Faculty Leadership** currently lacks endowed chairs and funding for faculty. Chair Heenan stated that for future reference some comparative information would be useful. President Breul O'Rourke agreed with Chair Heenan saying that it is critical to faculty recruitment and that she will follow-up with comparative information.
4. **Innovative Programs** such as those at the Ryan Institute are examples of innovative and distinctive programs.
5. **Strategic Opportunities** that provide annual support that give the President and Provost funding to be flexible and more agile in supporting the University.

URIFAE President Breul O'Rourke provided an update on the University's \$250M Capital Campaign goal, stating that as of today (September 23, 2021), funds raised are at \$214.7M; and that gift types are well balanced between planned giving, outright gifts, and multi-year pledges. Campaign commitments by purpose, raised over \$14M for Rhody Now (renamed from the Annual Fund) in immediate gifts with operating gifts that are designated dollars for specific purposes; capital improvements (bricks and mortar) Additionally she reviewed the current giving trends and provided a progress report of the University's endowment, spiking from \$107M, to \$226M.

Fundraising for the Campaign continues an upward trajectory above the trend line with a run rate in the past three years of about \$30M. Committee member Mr. DelGiudace asked what happened in the first quarter of 2020 to cause a spike in giving. President Breul O'Rourke responded by saying the spike was due to the University having raised over \$80M, with over \$50M coming from only three (3) gifts.

URIFAE President Breul O'Rourke concluded her presentation entitled, [URI Foundation & Alumni Engagement](#) with an announcement of the recent recruitment of Jeffrey Cabral from Brown University, who will start in mid-October in the Foundation & Alumni Engagement (URIFAE) as the new vice president for Development. Jeff Cabral is involved in regional engagements and fundraising for the arts; is a native of Rhode Island; has worked at The New School--Parsons School of Design, and the University of Michigan.

Chair Heenan thanked URIFAE President Breul O'Rourke and asked if anyone had any questions or comments for President Breul O'Rourke. Hearing none, Chair Heenan invited Interim Executive Director for External Relations and Communications, Linda Acciaro to provide a broad overview of a few of the key communication highlights.

#### **b. Communications update**

Ms. Acciaro stated that supporting the Presidential transition has been a high priority, and audiences have shown a high interest in getting to know President Parlange. The "Meet URI's Next President" piece was the number one, year-to-date, Homepage Story 2021.

With the use of a presentation entitled, [Communications and Marketing Update](#), Ms. Acciaro reviewed key feature events such as the upcoming Greater Providence Chamber of Commerce; and the Economic Outlook Forum, where President Parlange will be featured in an interview with Chamber President Laurie

White on September 30<sup>th</sup>. Ms. Acciardo also noted the RV Endeavor send-off event and the College of Nursing's 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary as additional media opportunities.

Mr. Acciardo stated that COVID-19 communications efforts are ongoing with recent changes as the community adjusts to universal masking indoors; proof of vaccination agreements with non-classified staff, faculty union; and most recently, proof of vaccination guidelines

Additionally, Ms. Acciardo stated that the Honors Colloquium will focus its 58th annual lecture series on "Sustaining our Shores" which was planned to coincide with the United Nations "Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development."

Ms. Acciardo concluded her presentation with a mention that URI's newsletters are maintaining an above-average open rate with percentages up from 26 percent up to 31 percent. Ms. Acciardo further stated that URI's media coverage had a total of 15,965 media mentions since January; an advertising equivalency of \$30.54M, which is slightly up from last year, with 40 percent of the share in voice (for Rhode Island media); Brown University at approximately 20 percent; Rhode Island College at ten percent, and Providence College at eight (8) percent. Ms. Acciardo invited Assistant Director for Brand Marketing and Advertising, Ms. Heather Colby to present the 2021-2022 recruitment and branding campaign.

**c. Fall undergraduate recruitment campaign**

Ms. Colby covered the objectives of the campaign, creative messaging from the past three campaigns, markets, assets, and placement. She noted that the marketing department makes the logo and the brand come alive for prospective students, parents, and influencers; however, without showing students the experience, they only know us as a logo.

Ms. Colby also stressed the impact of the new branding, storytelling, and cinematic style that has been incredibly successful over the past three years. This new style supports the experience and shows the students all URI has to offer.

The creativity has supported increases in click-thru rates, video completion rates, and the direct funnel to the admission "connect with us" button that takes prospective students to Slate, the customer relations management tool. Engagement with this button is up year after year due to the optimization of creative assets on various platforms. Ms. Colby concluded her portion of the presentation by saying that they are now running Spanish television in all markets.

Chair Heenan thanked Ms. Colby and asked if anyone had any questions or comments. Mr. DelGiudice asked all the staff presenters collectively (Ms. Colby, Ms. Acciardo, and URIFAE President, Lil Breul O'Rourke), how interns engaged? Both Ms. Acciardo and URIFAE President, Lil Breul O'Rourke stated that they employ undergraduate and graduate students, and Ms. Colby stated that students are engaged via TikTok.

**d. Communications protocol for the URI Board of Trustees**

Chair Heenan stated that at the last full Board meeting it was discussed that communications protocol was needed to inform Board members in a timely manner on important topics and areas of urgency related to crisis news, health and safety, legislative, major developments, etc. Chair Heenan stated that one way to communicate without violating meeting laws is sharing one-way communication which would serve to render a fair and safe way to communicate as a preliminary optional tool. Ms. Nicolato expressed her desire to be informed on proposed legislative matters. URIFAE President, Lil Breul O'Rourke stated that they are working on posting alumni events to the BoardEffect portal.

Ms. Acciardo outlined the discussion as follows: in the interest of transparency and keeping the members of the URI Board of Trustees informed of developments at the University, protocol for notifying Trustees regarding matters that are brought into the public domain will be notified by External Relations and Communications through email to the Board Chair, the Vice Chair, and the Chair of the Advancement and External Affairs Committee (and/or appropriate committee chair).

The Board Chair will determine if the message warrants sending to the full Board of Trustees, and if so, the message is sent by External Relations and Communications to the Trustees on behalf of the Chair.

The protocol is not intended to replace any current reporting to the Board of Trustees or updates requested of the University or its various units.

Communications will not be highly designed but simple, one-way communication to notify in a timely way.

In the event of breaking news or a time-sensitive matter, External Relations and Communications will send the notification to the entire Board and copy the Chair.

**Notifications will be made in the following categories:**

- Campus Crisis/Controversial News Events
- Health & Safety – COVID-19 communications
- President Parlange/University media coverage senior leadership
- Legislative matters that make the press
- Good news stories to share -- will forward links to select social posts, so the Board of Trustees members may share and amplify the message.

The Board of Trustees Advancement and External Affairs Committee will reassess at the end of the academic year.

Mr. DelGiudice commented that he strongly suggests that Board members utilize the URI email address that has been assigned to them for all University-related emails; with the Freedom of Information

Requests, this is vital to avoid an extremely arduous process of having to search ones' professional, corporate, and/or personal email should an information request be tied to an email other than the URI assigned email address.

#### 4. ADJOURN

Chair Heenan called for a motion to adjourn the September 23, 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 adjourn the meeting of September 23, 2021.
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VOTE:	4 members voted in the affirmative and 0 members voted in the negative.
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YEAS:	Christine Heenan, Cortney Nicolato, Vahid Ownjazayeri, and Armand Sabitoni.
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NAYS:	0
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ABSTAINS:	0
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#### UPCOMING MEETING

**The next URI Board of Trustees University Advancement and External Affairs Committee meeting is scheduled for November 4, 2021.**