

THE UNIVERSITY OF RHODE ISLAND

SEARCH FOR THE VICE PRESIDENT FOR STUDENT AFFAIRS The University of Rhode Island

Kingston, Rhode Island

THE SEARCH

The University of Rhode Island (URI) seeks an inspiring, collaborative, and experienced leader to serve as its next Vice President for Student Affairs (VPSA). Reporting to the President, the VPSA will lead a dynamic and complex student affairs organization through a period of growth and transformation. While ensuring excellence in student affairs and with a strong commitment to the students of URI, the VPSA will be a builder of strong connections across campus, will be an advocate for students, and a gifted administrator and colleague who will lead with trust and empathy to ensure a robust student experience that promotes connections between the academic and co-curricular aspects of the student experience. The VPSA will lead a team of student affairs professionals focused on ensuring a safe and supportive environment that is inclusive of all students, and they will work with others on campus to propose and implement solutions to promote diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging in and across URI Student Affairs.

It is an exciting time to join URI, under President Parlange's leadership, the institution is embarking on a new strategic planning process that leverages the university's recent growth with an ongoing commitment to student engagement and success. As enrollments have continued to increase, the University has improved on several key student success and enrollment metrics. Over the past decade, URI has experienced 40% growth in the number of undergraduate degrees awarded because of an increased focus on retention and the creation of a highly attractive student experience on campus. The University is in a strong financial position through careful stewardship and increased net tuition, and projects are currently underway to build a new 500-bed residential hall on campus and to redesign the Memorial Union, the hub of student activities at the University. In 2019, the Governor of Rhode Island and Rhode Island General Assembly, out of recognition of URI's status as a global research university and teaching institution, approved the establishment of a Board of Trustees to govern the University. This move highlights the trust and essential partnership between the state of Rhode Island and the University. This period of growth and energy is a terrific time for an accomplished leader in student affairs to join the community and serve as an unwavering advocate for student success, support a growing and dedicated team of student affairs professionals, and foster a diverse and inclusive environment. They will support the university-wide commitment to keep students at the center of the conversation and continue to build upon the successes related to student retention and graduation.

The position requires a leader with a strategic vision, collaborative skills, a commitment to diversity and inclusion, a thorough understanding of best practices in student affairs, student development and wellness, and expertise in managing auxiliary services. The VPSA will be first and foremost, an advocate for students but will also bring the qualities necessary to manage a large and diverse staff and a large budget in a complex financial environment.

The VPSA will serve on the presidential cabinet and will be a champion of collaboration across the cabinet. The Student Affairs has a budget of \$109 million with more than 425 employees and over 1,200 student employees. The VPSA is responsible for: Campus Recreation, Campus Stores, Center for Student Leadership Development, Counseling Center, Dean of Students, Dining Services, Housing and Residential Life, Health Services, Memorial Student Union, and Talent Development.

The University of Rhode Island has retained Isaacson, Miller, a national executive search firm to assist with this search. All confidential inquiries, referrals, and nominations should be directed to the search firm as indicated at the end of the document.

THE UNIVERSITY OF RHODE ISLAND

The University of Rhode Island sits on the traditional land of the Narragansett people, past and present, and honors with gratitude the land itself and the people who have stewarded it throughout the generations.

Founded in 1888, URI has grown and evolved throughout its 150-year history, always seeking to serve the needs of the state and the students that it serves. Originally called Rhode Island College, the Rhode Island state legislature renamed the institution the University of Rhode Island in 1951. Today, URI is the only public institution in Rhode Island that offers undergraduate, graduate, and professional students the distinctive educational opportunities of a major research university. The University has a committed and supportive faculty, with 86% of full-time faculty holding terminal degrees and with an overall student-to-faculty ratio of 16:1.

Since its inception, URI has remained a learner-centric institution and the University works to provide students with a distinctive educational experience designed to meet the challenges of an increasingly connected global community. The University's core values include nurturing development from a holistic perspective; affirming intersecting identities; fostering cultural competence through transformative learning; advancing equity, inclusion, and diversity in a global community; and modeling honesty, integrity, and social justice.

The University of Rhode Island's main campus is in the historic village of Kingston, Rhode Island. Recognized on the National Register of Historic Places, the location is an idyllic place for students to thrive, located close to the ocean and 30 miles south of Providence. The main campus is 1,200 acres and is comprised of historically significant buildings and contemporary architecture. Two additional campuses provide additional opportunities for academic exploration; the Narragansett Bay Campus houses the Graduate School of Oceanography while the Providence Campus caters to adult and non-traditional students with a variety of degree and certificate programs.

Leadership

On August 1, 2021, Marc Parlange became the 12th President of the University of Rhode Island. Recognized internationally for his expertise in environmental fluid mechanics, Parlange's wide-ranging research in hydrology and climate change addresses several important issues, such as heat transfer in cities, energy dynamics in hurricanes, and water resource challenges in remote communities. Born in Rhode Island and with leadership experience on the international level, President Parlange will continue the transformation of URI into a leading teaching and research institution. Prior to his appointment at the University of Rhode Island, Dr. Parlange served as the Senior Vice President and Provost at Monash University in Australia.

Since his appointment, President Parlange has worked with the Vice Presidents and other cabinet members to develop a new strategic plan. This new plan will be a singular university-wide initiative that will create a closely integrated set of goals and strategies to guide the next chapter in the story of URI. The new VPSA will serve as an important advocate for students in the plan and will work with their team to implement goals and strategies that align with the plan following its adoption.

Laura L. Beauvais is the Interim Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs. Dr. Beauvais is a Professor of Management at the URI College of Business and an adjunct faculty member of the Schmidt Labor Research Center. She received her Ph.D. degree in Industrial/Organizational Psychology from the University of Tennessee in 1987. She has taught at the undergraduate, MBA, and doctoral levels. Her recent research has explored the study of ethics education within business schools. In the past, her published research included the study of how employees manage work, family, and other non-work roles; self-concept-based motivation; union and organizational commitment; and organizational culture and change. From 2009-2019, she was Vice Provost for Faculty Affairs, where she served as liaison between faculty and the Office of the Provost in curricular issues, faculty development, online learning, student learning outcomes assessment, online learning, and international programs.

Academic Programs

The University of Rhode Island is comprised of nine colleges and schools: the College of Arts and Sciences, the College of Business, the Alan Shawn Feinstein College of Education and Professional Studies, the College of Engineering, the College of Environmental and Life Sciences, the College of Health Sciences, the College of Nursing, the College of Pharmacy, and the Graduate School of Oceanography.

The University offers a wide range of degrees. The most popular of URI's 97 undergraduate majors include psychology, kinesiology, nursing, communication studies, business, biological sciences, computer science, mechanical engineering, health studies, criminology and criminal justice, and human development and family studies. The University confers master's degrees in 66 programs and has a master's student population of 1177 students and has 34 PhD programs enrolling 1361

students. There has been an interest in and focus on expanding the offerings of the graduate programs and the master's programs to make use of the university's online learning technology.

For more information about academic programs, visit: <https://www.uri.edu/academics/>

The Student Body and Student Experience

The University of Rhode Island currently enrolls over 17,600 students, including over 14,000 undergraduates, 2,700 graduate students, and 1,200 certificate or non-degree seeking students. It serves Rhode Island but also continually draws talented students from out of state. After Rhode Island, the top states represented in the student body include Massachusetts, Connecticut, New Jersey, and New York.

The University of Rhode Island serves hardworking and ambitious students. In the 2021-2022 academic year, URI received over 25,000 applications and admitted roughly 70% of applicants. Applications have increased steadily over the years despite increasing challenges for enrollment caused by the population decline in Rhode Island and the Northeastern United States more broadly. These application increases coincide with increases in student diversity, selectivity, and academic quality. There has been a significant increase in the Talent Development program, which recruits and serves Rhode Island high school graduates from historically underrepresented backgrounds, and that cohort now represents 10% of the student body.

The total student population of URI for all degree programs is 70% White, 9.71% Hispanic or Latino, 5% Black or African American, 3.38% Asian, 2.8% Multiracial, 0.153% American Indian or Alaskan Native, and 0.068% Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander. Within the undergraduate community, 23% of students self-identify as people of color, 1 in 3 full-time first-year students are the first in their family to go to college, and the students represent 48 states and 76 countries. Last year, more than \$104 million in financial aid was awarded by URI and approximately 90% of students receive financial aid.

There are more than [150 active student organizations](#) at the University of Rhode Island from pre-professional, recreational, performing arts, Greek organizations, and civic-minded groups. The URI student senate, a group of elected undergraduate students, works closely with leaders across the student affairs division to create bridges between students and the administration and to ensure that there is student participation in the overall policy and decision-making process at the University.

For more information about campus life at URI, visit: <https://www.uri.edu/campus-life/>

STUDENT AFFAIRS AT THE UNIVERSITY OF RHODE ISLAND

The mission of Student Affairs at the University of Rhode Island is to create inclusive and shared learning experiences that ignite a lifelong pursuit of knowledge, equity, justice, and well-being in every student. URI Student Affairs strives to anchor students in a diverse and welcoming campus community that supports the development of independent thinkers and global citizens who inspire hope for the future. The Vice President for Student Affairs will lead the Division's vision of being a nationally recognized student-focused team committed to student access, success, lifelong learning, leadership, inclusion, and innovation.

Student Affairs advances the academic mission of URI by providing innovative programs, holistic support, and community engagement facilities for all 18,318 undergraduate, graduate, and professional students. Examples include hosting more than 8,000 programs annually in the Memorial Union, offering a robust intramural sports program with over 15,000 participants, and serving over 8,500 meals daily. At present more than 5,600 undergraduate students live on campus and Student Affairs is actively seeking expanded and renovated on-campus housing opportunities for undergraduate and graduate students. In addition to first-time and full-time undergraduate students, Student Affairs serves graduate and professional students and continues to expand resources and programs for adult learners and veteran students.

Currently, under the leadership of [Ellen Reynolds](#), Interim Vice President for Student Affairs, the 425 full-time and 1,200 student employee colleagues that comprise Student Affairs continue to carry on an action-oriented legacy of an unwavering commitment to students and their well-being. A deep commitment to students and shared success in Student Affairs is actualized by broad and sustained collaboration. This team of resilient leaders overcame myriad obstacles to continue supporting students during the COVID-19 pandemic and continues to support students as the institution evolves its post-pandemic operations.

URI has steadily improved retention and graduation rates, utilizing a data-driven approach to identify and break down the barriers to student success through the implementation of a student-centered academic plan. This has included the review of the core curriculum and graduation requirements, close partnership between curricular and co-curricular divisions, and increased focus on academic advising and career planning.

The collective practice of Student Affairs has been informed by its current [strategic plan](#) and sustained assessment efforts grounded in student success, health and wellness, and inclusion and respect. Starting in 2016, all Student Affairs units began a comprehensive program review process with the goal of providing insights into each department's operations, strengths and opportunities for growth, and strategic vision. These assessment efforts were recently bolstered with a campus climate analysis. Assessment practices, and utilizing data to inform decisions and direction, will continue as Student Affairs transitions to a broader university-wide strategic plan.

THE ROLE

Reporting directly to the President, the Vice President for Student Affairs will serve as the primary champion for the University of Rhode Island student community. The VPSA will lead and provide strategic direction, policy development, and administrative oversight to the Division of Student Affairs. The VPSA and student affairs leadership team will build strong relationships across the University and represent the interests of a diverse student body to foster a positive balance between the academic and co-curricular experiences of students. The VPSA will work to fulfill the student affairs priorities within the University-wide strategic plan while honoring the needs and wishes of the student body. The VPSA is the most prominent advocate for students at URI and will represent Student Affairs both internally and externally and will work with other members of the senior leadership team to enhance student learning and academic success.

Overseeing an operating, personnel, and capital budget of \$109 million, the VPSA will directly supervise the Associate Vice President for Student Affairs and Student Success, the Assistant Vice President, Division of Student Affairs and Director of Housing and Residential Life, the Executive Assistant for Student Affairs, the Director of Campus Recreation, the Director of Memorial Union, the Director of Dining Services, the Director of Talent Development, the Dean of Students, and the Director of Health Services. Through these direct reports, the VPSA will provide leadership across Student Affairs and oversee the development of 425 professional staff members and more than 1,200 student staff members at both the graduate and undergraduate levels.

OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES FOR THE VICE PRESIDENT FOR STUDENT AFFAIRS

The next VPSA will arrive at URI at a time of tremendous opportunity to have a transformational impact by leading innovation in student affairs administration and student support practice. The VPSA will also build on existing institutional momentum and contribute to strategic objectives for an increasingly diverse, and firmly supported, staff and student campus community. To achieve the University's strategic objectives, the VPSA will be expected to address the following opportunities and challenges:

Leverage assessment data into action-oriented advocacy and strategic decision-making

The VPSA will leverage the existing Student Affairs strategic plan and ensure alignment with the emerging university strategic plan that will further enhance URI's commitment to an engaged student experience. The VPSA will review previously conducted research and assessment on Student Affairs departments and the campus climate in order to establish systems of accountability and recognition that promote the continuous evaluation and improvement of institutional goals. Doing so will require using data-driven metrics to measure success, disseminate information, and implement strategic change. This includes the establishment of appropriate metrics for assessing goals over time and implementing tangible action items in a timely fashion. The VPSA and their team will carry out aspects of the university-wide strategic plan and develop annual priorities for wellness, equity and inclusion, and service delivery initiatives in the student experience by

planning collaboratively with each department head to support and sustain a campus culture of excellence and inclusiveness.

Foster a strengthened commitment to student success, wellness, and inclusion

The VPSA will work with partners across campus in enhancing resources and programmatic experiences for an increasingly diverse student body as well as responding to the social and wellness-related needs of current and incoming students. As the URI undergraduate and graduate student communities continue to diversify in a variety of ways including but not limited to race, gender, and socio-economic status, and increasingly include adult and veteran learners, the VPSA will lead the efforts of Student Affairs to support all students and model pathways for expanded student involvement and satisfaction. Addressing these student needs while incorporating equity, diversity, and inclusion into the inner workings of administrative practices and programs of the division will be paramount.

Of particular importance to Student Affairs and the URI community is student well-being, particularly mental health. The VPSA should have a body of work and expertise in the areas of enhancing student well-being through resources, education and training, proactive intervention, and crisis response. This leader will work with campus partners to create innovative ways to support students in ways that align with URI's values and aspirations. The VPSA will also ensure that the division's staff is well-prepared and positioned to meet the needs of URI's students at this moment and in the future.

Promote and empower collaboration across administrative units and academic affairs

The Vice President will be a student advocate with a visible presence on campus, and thus must be an expert in matters of college student life and student development as well as the complexities of a publicly funded higher education institution, particularly a state flagship university. The VPSA will be a leader both on and off campus and serve as a key partner for various administrative and academic units. The VPSA is also an advisor to the President on matters related to the student experience and will be a collaborative, innovative, and thoughtful member of the President's Leadership Team.

The VPSA will also be charged with a high level of direct and visible involvement with fellow administrators, faculty, staff, students, parents, and other family members of students, alumni, and local and state leaders. The Vice President will center the needs of the student body and their collective voice in decision-making and advocating on their behalf.

Provide effective organizational and resource management

The VPSA will be a leader with a multidimensional understanding of issues students and student affairs staff face in higher education. The VPSA will model and inspire innovation within their organization as well as demonstrate results-driven decision-making to address challenges and promote growth. The VPSA will lead the ongoing appraisal of current programs and services, facilities, revenue sources, and organizational structures and processes within Student Affairs. In

establishing their vision for URI Student Affairs, the Vice President will pay particular attention to advocating for appropriately funded personnel and programmatic resources, the renovations and expansion of student-serving infrastructure and spaces such as residence halls and the Memorial Student Union, and will implement sustainable budgetary practices, including an entrepreneurial approach to revenue generation that mitigates the cost of attendance burdens on students. The Vice President will expertly lead auxiliary services, particularly through anticipated capital improvement projects and diversified revenue-generating endeavors such as researching and potentially establishing public-private housing partnerships. The VPSA will manage business operations for Student Affairs and will need to be a responsible steward of resources who is creative, yet judicious.

Recruit and develop a team of dedicated professionals

The VPSA will serve as a champion and consummate supporter of the staff and student employees across the division. Through accessible and supportive leadership, clear purpose, creativity, and transparency, the VPSA will lead and develop a talented multi-generational team of professionals. As an experienced supervisor, this individual will bring a deep understanding of the national landscape of student affairs practices. The Vice President will inspire and motivate both their direct reports and their teams and will foster a culture of collaborative support, best practices, data-driven decision-making, and excellence. This leader will work with the staff to bolster current programs and promote the influence of Student Affairs in URI's community.

The Vice President must model and insist on inclusive supervisory and collegial practices that foster equity and attract the most talented and diverse colleagues to URI's Student Affairs team. Additionally, the Vice President will bring strong organizational development skills and proven accomplishments in building and managing talented teams, particularly through considerable institutional leadership changes and the continued adjustments of college life and student affairs work prompted by the COVID-19 pandemic.

PROFESSIONAL AND PERSONAL QUALIFICATIONS

The University of Rhode Island seeks an experienced administrator to support the University's mission to support students and strive for excellence. An advanced degree is required, along with a minimum of seven years of progressive administrative and leadership experience related to student affairs. A doctorate or other terminal degree is preferred.

While no one person will embody all the following, the successful VPSA candidate will bring many of the following professional qualifications, skills, experiences, and personal qualities.

- Proven skills as a senior manager and supervisor, with demonstrated ability to mentor and support staff and provide successful oversight of people, budget, and space, a track record for fiscal and budgetary development, as well as a commitment to clarity and accountability.
- Wisdom, judgment, and demonstrated experience with decision-making aligned with established strategic plans and values; the capacity to make and stand by difficult decisions,

always mindful of the need for fairness, consistency, and the potential impact of each decision on individuals and the broader community.

- Demonstrated experience in assessment, evaluation, and development of student affairs programs, services, and facilities.
- Sophisticated interpersonal skills; a firm, but fair, approach to the resolution of conflict; a commitment to consult and collaborate extensively, balanced by a willingness to act decisively when consensus is elusive; energy, agility, creativity, grace, and a sense of humor.
- An effective communicator in written and verbal mediums with the ability to celebrate and promote the university to a diverse range of audiences, both within and outside higher education.
- A deep understanding of the educational value of a diverse community; a demonstrated track record of advancing the diversity of traditionally underrepresented populations and enhancing inclusiveness; an ability to bring groups and individuals to common ground across lines of difference, including race, class, socio-economic status, sexual orientation, gender identity, and ability.
- A long-standing commitment to the needs of students from a variety of backgrounds and an understanding of the resources necessary to provide a campus experience that supports their intellectual growth, physical and mental health, and cultural traditions.
- A spirit of intellect and a commitment to engage collaboratively with faculty and staff members and to respond effectively to their needs and concerns.
- Sincere engagement with students and the campus community; a strong, visible presence and active participation in a range of campus activities; the ability to engage with students in a variety of settings using current technology and modes of interaction.
- Proven ability to implement and manage through fair and consistent policies and procedures, as well as address crises with equanimity, discretion, and a sense of responsibility and respect for students, families, alumni, and the institution.
- A strong understanding of the power and impact of the alumni network in supporting in the support of current students; dedication to supporting strategies that will prepare current students to be engaged alumni after graduation.
- The ability to thrive in a public institution with well-developed political and diplomatic skills, adept at externally representing the institution's missions and goals.
- A powerful affinity for, and commitment to, the mission and values of a public institution within a public university system.

TO APPLY

The University of Rhode Island has retained Isaacson, Miller to assist in this search. Please direct all inquiries, nominations, referrals, and applications in strict confidence to:

Pamela Pezzoli, Partner
Haley Burrowes, Senior Associate
Ivan Ceballos, Senior Associate
Melissa Barravecchio, Search Coordinator
Isaacson, Miller

<https://www.imsearch.com/search-detail/8587>

Electronic submission of application materials is strongly preferred.

It is the policy of the University of Rhode Island not to discriminate on the basis of race, sex, religion, age, color, creed, national origin, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, citizenship status, genetic information, marital status, aids/HIV and domestic abuse victim, homelessness or discriminate against disabled and Vietnam era veterans in the recruitment, admission or treatment of students, the recruitment, hiring or treatment of faculty and staff, and in the operation of its activities and programs, as specified by State and Federal Laws.