

Report to the
Faculty, Administration, Students, and Board of Governors
of the
University of Rhode Island
Kingston, Rhode Island

by

An Evaluation Team representing the
Commission on Institutions of Higher Education
of the
New England Association of Schools and Colleagues

Prepared after study of the institution's
self-evaluation report and a visit to
the campus, October 5-8, 1997

The members of the team:

Dr. Francis X. Archambault, Associate Dean of Education, University of Connecticut, Storrs, CT

Dr. Michael Baer, Vice President for Academic Affairs, Northeastern University, Boston, MA

Dr. Richard G. Brandenburg, Professor of Business Administration, University of Vermont, Burlington, VT

Dr. William J. Daniels, Dean of the College of Liberal Arts, Rochester Institute of Technology, Rochester, NY

Dr. William Farrell, Chancellor of the University System of New Hampshire, Durham, NH

Dr. John R. Halstead, Vice President for Student Affairs, University of Maine, Orono, ME

Dr. Karen R. Hitchcock, President of the University at Albany, State University of New York, Albany, NY--Chair

Ms. Sharon Hogan, University Librarian, University of Illinois at Chicago, Chicago, IL

Dr. James Leheny, Associate Chancellor, University of Massachusetts Amherst, Amherst, MA

Mr. Robert McFarland, Executive Assistant to the President, University at Albany, State University of New York, Albany, NY

Dr. Robert Secor, Vice Provost for Academic Affairs and Personnel, Pennsylvania State University, University Park, PA

Working with the Team:

Ms. Cynthia Ward, Associate Commissioner, Rhode Island Office of Higher Education, Providence, RI

Mr. Mohammed Y. Abu Jarad, Director General for Follow-Up and Coordination, Palestinian National Authority Ministry of Higher Education (PNAMHE)

Mr. Bassam D. Abu Rabee, Director, Office of the Comptroller, PNAMHE

Mr. Ziad Jweiles, Director General for Community Colleges, PNAMHE

Mr. Muhammed O. Khader, Director for Cultural Affairs, PNAMHE

Mr. Abdel K. Zughayer, Director General for Administrative and Financial Affairs, PNAMHE

This report represents the views of the Evaluation Team as interpreted by the Chair. Its content is based on the committee's evaluation of the institution with respect to the Commission's criteria for accreditation. It is a confidential document in which all comments are made in good faith. The report is prepared both as an educational service to the institution and to assist the Commission in making a decision about the institution's status.

COMMISSION ON INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION

NEW ENGLAND ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES

PREFACE PAGE: UNIVERSITY OF RHODE ISLAND - KINGSTON, RI

1. *HISTORY:* Year chartered or authorized 1892 Year first degrees awarded 1894

2. *TYPE OF CONTROL* (CHECK OR FILL-IN):

PUBLIC
State X
City _____
Other Specify _____

PRIVATE
Nonprofit _____
Religious group (name) _____
Other (specify) _____

3. *DEGREE LEVEL* (CHECK ALL APPROPRIATE CATEGORIES):

Associate X Baccalaureate X Master's X Professional X Doctoral X

4. *ENROLLMENT IN DEGREE PROGRAMS* (FOR FALL SEMESTER OF THE MOST CURRENT YEAR):

	<u>FULL-TIME</u>	<u>PART-TIME</u>	<u>FTE</u>
Associate	---	---	---
Baccalaureate	8069	1468	9224
Graduate	1029	1041	1840

5. *CURRENT FACULTY:*

Full-time 608 FTE* Part-time 18 FTE** FTE 626

6. *CURRENT FUND DATA FOR MOST RECENTLY COMPLETED FISCAL YEAR*
(SPECIFY YEAR) 1996-97:

<u>EXPENDITURES</u>		<u>REVENUES</u>	
Instruction	61,858,000	Tuition	73,112,000
General	135,013,000	Gov't Appropriations	64,448,000
Auxiliary Enterprises	36,829,000	Gifts/Grants/Endowment	50,982,000
Other	1,527,000	Auxiliary Enterprises	36,002,000
		Other	9,605,000
TOTAL:	235,227,000		233,149,000

7. *OFF-CAMPUS LOCATIONS:*

Total 3 In-state 3 Out-of-state _____

8. *ACCREDITATION HISTORY:*

Candidacy: None Initial Accreditation: 12/30 Last Comprehensive Eval: Fall, 1987
Last Commission Action: Fifth-year interim report accepted
Last Action Taken on: November 20, 1992

9. *OTHER CHARACTERISTICS:*

* Tenure-Track and Continuing

** 450 3-credit course sections also are covered by "per course: contract employees"

Introduction

It is important to note at the outset that everyone involved in the accreditation process from the University of Rhode Island (URI)--President Carothers and Provost Swan, indeed, all the faculty, staff, students, and administration--was candid, completely professional, and unfailingly generous with their time and knowledge in helping us to understand the University of Rhode Island of the present and the URI they envision for the future. The Evaluation Team held extensive meetings with small and large groups of faculty and students, small group meetings with administrators, and one-on-one meetings with faculty and administrators. A dinner was held at which the team met with the Chair of the Rhode Island Board of Governors (Higher Education) and the Commissioner of Higher Education, as well as with over twenty of the senior administrative and faculty leadership. Additionally, the team met with the President and the Provost, the vice presidents, the Provost's staff, the staffs of the vice presidents, a group of deans, a group of department chairs, the Graduate Council, the Council for Research, key members of the Self-Study Committee, the AAUP Executive Committee, approximately 100 students, approximately 60 faculty, approximately 30 staff members, the Faculty Senate Executive Board, and the Dean, members of the College of Continuing Education in Providence, and members of the external community at large.

The *Self-Study*, other major documents, and the extensive files made available to the Team were comprehensive, clear, and relevant; they gave an accurate and detailed picture of the recent history and current state of the University. The Team's examination of this extensive documentation before and during the site visit, its visit to the campus on October 5-8, and the Chair's preliminary visit in April form the foundation for this report that responds to the New England Association of Schools and Colleges' Standards of Accreditation. It also takes into consideration URI's 1992 fifth year report and the response to it by NEASC.

The Evaluation Team discovered that the University of Rhode Island is clearly a dynamic institution in the process of addressing forthrightly the many financial, demographic, and technologic challenges which confront all of higher education. The campus leadership, and many others within the URI community, recognize that new paradigms are now necessary. Their willingness to take on these challenging, fundamental issues demonstrates an admirable commitment to academic quality, fiscal responsibility, and being responsive to societal issues. The ambitiousness of their agenda deserves serious consideration and constructive responses from both internal and external audiences. Even as it remains committed to its basic responsibilities of "expanding" and "transmitting knowledge" as well as "fostering its application," the administration and faculty leadership of URI has recognized the need for creative approaches to meeting its other various and numerous obligations. This commitment to innovation is a major strength of the University and a distinctive asset as it continues to evolve as a major research university.

1. Mission and Purposes

The University of Rhode Island has recently revised its *Mission Statement* to reflect the changing needs of the University in the State System and to reflect the availability of resources it has as a state-assisted university. The *Mission Statement* is congruent with the mission of the Rhode Island Board of Governors and defines a distinctive set of goals for the University. The University currently has the human resources to carry out the mission it has defined. However, it needs to assess both whether it is extended beyond its long-term total resources and whether it should reallocate resources internally to support a stronger institutional infrastructure. Whether it has the fiscal ability to sustain this ambitious mission will depend upon the availability of an expanding future income derived from a combination of student tuition revenue, support from the state, and external sources, including government agencies, partnerships with industry, and fund-raising.

The mission and purposes of the University are clearly set forth in both a *Mission Statement* and in a concise *Vision Statement*. The *Mission Statement* has been widely discussed on campus, and the administration and the “attentive public” seems to be aware of it. The *Vision Statement* seems to have even greater prominence and possibly considerably more support. Both are broadly understood by the administration, but it is not clear that the *Mission Statement* is as widely understood by the faculty. It is also not clear that it is widely accepted by the administration below the level of vice presidents and their staff. It is certain that many department chairs and faculty do not accept the *Mission Statement* broadly. They do not view it as having yet provided direction to resources allocation, curricular or programmatic direction, or other activities of the campus, though some understand that to phrase requests in terms of the *Mission Statement* increases the probability of obtaining fiscal allocations. The senior administration admits that it does take time for changes in direction to occur, but that the new *Mission Statement* will impact the direction of future University activities.

There are individual mission statements for each of the Colleges, save one. Three of these are relatively new; the others are at least ten years old. With the exception of the College of Human Sciences and Services, none of the college mission statements, including the other recently revised mission statements, seem to be fully congruent with the intent of the University *Mission Statement*. The importance of a University *Mission Statement* and congruent college statements does not seem to be widely recognized as necessary. Some department chairs indicated that the development of a mission at the lowest unit level was more important than a mission for the entire institution.

URI’s Joint Education Policy Committee (JEPC) has adopted recently a policy for evaluating and re-evaluating the mission statements of all colleges. This process calls for an initial review of and, if needed, re-drafting of current college mission statements with broad

based participation by students, faculty, alumni, and others. This process will be announced during the fall term, 1997, and the initial review of each College mission statement will be completed within one year. The JEPC will review draft statements and final versions will be sent to the Faculty Senate for endorsement before adoption. The policy calls for periodic reviews to take place on a ten-year cycle preceding University re-accreditation by two years. The University is to be complimented for recognizing the need to periodically review and adjust College missions to keep them timely.

The University has met Standard One, Mission and Purposes.

Strengths:

- 1 The University of Rhode Island has a clear *Mission Statement* and a concise and clear *Vision Statement*.
2. The University has a policy to review and redraft, where necessary, college mission statements on a periodic basis.

Areas of Concern:

1. There is a lack of understanding and acceptance of the mission as stated by significant numbers in the leadership group of the University below the vice presidential level.
2. There is a lack of current college mission statements that are congruent with the University's *Mission Statement*.

Suggestion:

The University should review college/school mission statements for consistency with the University's *Mission Statement* and *Vision Statement*.

2. Planning and Evaluation

The *Self-Study* report defines the modern era of planning as beginning in January 1992, with President Carothers challenging the University community to develop a bold plan for change. A planning committee of deans, faculty members, and students entitled the Joint Academic Steering Committee (JASC) and a Staff Steering Committee submitted reports to the president. Also, in response to the challenge from President Carothers, the Faculty Senate adopted a *Vision Statement* to guide the planning operation. The Statement called for a "new culture of learning" and discovery. President Carothers then issued a strategic plan, "Building a New Culture for Learning," with five key components: 1) a new structure for general education; 2) more clearly defined learning and performance standards for degree

programs; 3) the establishment of Partnerships coupling research and education; 4) the realignment of academic programs to achieve these ends and reduce costs; and 5) enhancement of the University's service sector.

As is to be expected, the results in these five areas are at this point uneven. The first item, for example, a plan for the restructuring of general education, after a great deal of work and effort, was tabled by the Faculty Senate—although several key concepts from that proposal, such as the requirement of two small classes in the freshman year, a writing across the curriculum requirement, and an orientation course, URI 101, have been implemented as a result of that discussion. On the other hand, the Faculty Senate agreed with the second item, that all departments should have learning and performance standards—but it is not clear that there has been much progress in implementing that understanding, or in establishing a machinery for monitoring and assessing its implementation. The establishment of partnerships has been implemented, and it would appear successfully so. At the beginning of 1998, the four new partnerships that were created will undergo a third year assessment. They will be asked to show self-sufficiency at that point, and also that they are successful in their missions, as determined by metrics for success that they will develop. The fourth area, the realignment of academic programs, may have received the most attention, with the introduction of the Program Contribution Analysis (PCA) program, and also with the announcement of four areas of academic programmatic focus for the institution. URI has stated that it also is emphasizing the Liberal Arts Core. The PCA program seems to have been developed with a great deal of care, to have been refined as it has been implemented, and to have survived some (but not all) of the initial resistance as it becomes better understood. The new focus areas have given units new ways to think of themselves and to talk about themselves, and they have energized some new programs along interdisciplinary lines. The fifth area, the service sector, is being addressed on a case by case basis.

In looking at the successes and the partial successes, a more developed planning process could aid the institution in getting from the point of vision to the point of implementation of that vision. Planning and evaluation, standard two of NEASC's eleven standards, states that planning and evaluation should be broad-based and "involve the participation of individuals and groups responsible for the achievement of institutional purposes." Although the constitution of the initial committees that fed into the administration's plans had that broad base, and the *Self-Study* identifies eight units that have conducted major planning efforts in past years, it is only recently that the central administration has directed academic units to discuss college initiatives and requests for new faculty appointments in the context of the focus areas. The Evaluation Team endorses the *Self-Study*'s observation that, "the colleges and departments involved should be consulted not only in the initial data-gathering phase, but also as the final recommendations are prepared in order to get their reactions and rebuttal data." Because such consultation and involvement have apparently not been common practice in the past, more suspicion about the value of these initiatives remains at these levels than needs to be the case. Colleges and departments

should be asked to create unit plans that would explore ways in which they might contribute, or refigure themselves to contribute, to the four areas of focus. The central strategic plan itself could aid the process by developing clearer pathways to get from vision to implementation, including some guidance for units in the development of their own plans to contribute to that effort.

The NEASC standard for planning and evaluation specifies that a measure of successful planning is not only to specify a realistic course of action to achieve goals, but also to develop verifiable means to assess achievement in reaching those goals, and to apply what it learns from such evaluation to inform its further planning. Such assessment assumptions are not well developed in relation to the five areas that President Carothers identified for attention in a new strategic plan. The exception to that statement might be the area of Partnerships, where a third year assessment to show self-sufficiency and success is indeed assumed; but the success assessment is being developed by the partnerships according to their own sense of their success at the end of the process, rather than according to expectations they set for themselves at the outset, which is the usual assumption of successful planning.

There has been a great deal of exciting new planning activity at the University of Rhode Island, as well as carefully defined and creative attempts to find new ways to deal with diminished resources and to evaluate programs in the context of diminished resources. The University is to be commended for developing a *Mission Statement* and a *Vision Statement* to give direction to the University, for defining areas of concentration as foci upon which to restructure some existing programs and for the allocating of resources and the creation of new initiatives, among the most significant of which are the four new partnerships. As a tool for restructuring and realigning that takes into account the need for cost effectiveness, PCA seems to serve the University well, and is an initiative that may well be looked to by other institutions, particularly insofar as it is seen as only one measure, to be used in conjunction with such other measures as quality, need and program centrality.

Where work still needs to be done is in the planning process, which still seems to be a rather adhoc process, with several committees feeding information in at once and new committees being formed when blockage occurs at one of the exit points. The expectations of strategic planning, which would include plans that would help to implement a vision from those affected (such as departments and colleges), as well as clear statements of goals, timetables, and procedures for assessment, seem foreign to the URI culture. But their introduction would go a long way toward helping the University achieve the significant initiatives it has put in place.

The University has met Standard Two, Planning and Evaluation.

Strengths:

1. The University has developed a useful *Mission Statement* and a clear *Vision Statement* that give direction to the University for defining areas of concentration as foci for restructuring some programs, and for allocating resources and the creation of new initiatives.
2. President Carothers' "Building a New Culture for Learning" is a sound beginning for a fully-realized strategic planning process for the University.
3. The Program Contribution Analysis (PCA) program is a powerful methodology to help reallocate resources in conjunction with other relevant information, such as program quality and centrality to mission.
4. The four areas of academic programmatic focus have energized program self-evaluation and innovation and have fostered some new programs along interdisciplinary lines.

Areas of Concern:

1. The University needs to develop an effective and broadly-supported plan to introduce a sound General Education program.
2. The University needs to initiate learning and performance standards for all departments and schools.
3. Central administration needs to continue and expand its efforts to have colleges and departments develop plans at the unit level in support of the mission and the vision statements that have been adopted by the University.
4. There is no systematic attempt in the current planning process to link goals with assessment procedures in order to measure progress towards the attainment of those goals.

Suggestions:

1. All members of the University community who will be affected by planning efforts should be involved in those efforts.
2. Colleges and departments should be asked to create unit plans that would explore ways in which they might contribute, or recast themselves to contribute, to the emphases of the four areas of focus.
3. Plans should also be developed for the next stages and assessment of the four areas themselves, as well as for the next iteration of partnerships.
4. The University's central strategic plan itself should aid the process by developing clearer pathways to get from vision to implementation, including some guidance for units, areas, and partnerships in the development of their own plans for that overall effort.
5. Planning documents at all levels should include clear statements of goals, timetables, and procedures for assessment.

3. Organization and Governance

The University of Rhode Island operates under the legal jurisdiction of the Board of Governors for Higher Education, whose authority is derived from the General Laws of the State of Rhode Island. The Commissioner of Higher Education is the chief administrative officer for higher education and performs research and administrative operations at the direction of the Board of Governors of Higher Education. The 1987 Evaluation Team noted the strained relationships and poor communications existing between the University and the State's Board and Commissioner. This year's Team found that the formal relationships and communications between the University and the Board and its new Commissioner have clearly improved and are more productive, professional, and realistic. Although some on campus, especially many faculty, believe that the Board of Governors could be more proactive in seeking resources for URI from the Legislature, the Team found that there seems to exist a growing feeling, both on and off campus, that the Board and the Commissioner are committed to supporting and advancing the institution. Indeed, recently, the Board advocated successfully for approval of a \$40.6 million bond issue that will send \$29 million to the URI campus for infrastructure and technology enhancements.

The reaction of the Evaluation Team to the administrative organization of URI, as described in the *Self-Study* and in meetings with campus administrators, was generally positive. President Carothers and Provost Swan have demonstrated a commitment to academic excellence and a creativity in responding to issues facing higher education in general, and their institution in particular. At other levels as well—among their staffs and campus administrators such as the vice presidents and vice provosts—there is a clear loyalty to the institution and to the success of their students and faculty. Similarly, the deans are people who are committed and dedicated.

One concern which several members of the Evaluation Team expressed was the large number of interim deans at the institution. This concern was not about the individuals who held the interim positions, but rather the temporary nature of their tenure. Deans provide an important level of leadership: they can provide a detailed understanding of their departments and faculty to any planning activities and, in times of assessment, they can provide specific, qualitative information to augment quantitative data. As the importance of college and school level planning is stressed elsewhere in this report, the importance of stable leadership at this level is hard to underestimate. The Visiting Team urges the President and Provost to proceed with searches as soon as possible and to seek strong individuals in national searches to fill these interim positions.

The Faculty Senate at URI is very strong and active. Created by state legislative mandate, the Senate has the power to approve the creation or closing of academic programs subject to the approval of the President and the Board of Governors. Two situations were

described in the *Self-Study* where the administration and Faculty Senate appeared to disagree over substantive issues (program suspensions and proposed General Education revisions). Neither disagreement has seriously harmed the institution—the Executive Committee of the Faculty Senate has said that the Senate will take up the issue of General Education again soon—but both incidents suggest that the dialogue between administrators and faculty could be improved.

The student government leaders who met with the Evaluation Team indicated that they were very satisfied with their access to the administration and the administration's willingness to listen to their concerns. Although there were some complaints about President Carothers' handling of alcohol policy on campus, there was general agreement within the campus community at large that he acted courageously and effectively in addressing a serious issue affecting many people's lives there.

Some professional staff on campus, in conversations with members of the Evaluation Team, expressed some concern about how their voices get heard. As one person put it, "Why do I have to go to my union when I have a problem with the way things work here? The administration could easily allow more forums for professional staff to be heard. The faculty and students both have theirs." Standard 3.9 states that "the institution periodically evaluates the effectiveness of its system of governance using the results for improvement." The *Self-Study* mentions (page 18) that "There are those on campus who believe that all constituencies are not represented in the current governance structure provided by the Faculty Senate. Several years ago, the possibility of a University Senate was raised. The matter resurfaced in the summer of 1996, during the Common Agenda meetings. Since then, a group of staff, students, and some faculty has been meeting to formulate a proposal for an inclusive governing body." The creation of such an organization could deal with issues that fall outside the responsibility of the Faculty Senate, and it would provide a forum for professional and classified staff to be heard. It could also provide students with an important learning opportunity by encouraging them to debate their issues with faculty and staff, not just among themselves, as the current structure of student government provides.

The University has met Standard Three, Organization and Governance

Strengths:

- 1 The organization of the University of Rhode Island conforms to effective and proven national patterns. Its administrative and academic units and personnel have specific lines of responsibilities and clear performance tasks.
2. The senior leadership of the University is committed to high standards of academic excellence, institutional responsibility, and educational creativity. All levels of the administration exhibit strong institutional loyalty and a commitment to the success of URI's students and faculty.

3. URI has a strong and active Faculty Senate which engages seriously major academic issues and proposals.

Areas of Concern:

1. The University has a large number of interim deans. This condition projects an impression of unstable leadership at a crucial level of administration and instills concerns about institutional priorities among affected faculties.
2. Recent events involving program suspensions and General Education revisions seem to indicate a lack of effective communication between the central administration and the faculty and its Faculty Senate.
3. Some professional staff have a perception that their issues, concerns, and contributions are not taken seriously.

Suggestions:

1. Searches should be initiated as soon as feasible to begin to fill the interim deanships with permanent incumbents after national searches.
2. The University should explore seriously the possibility of creating an organizational forum that would include professional staff.
3. The central administration should examine its current procedures for communicating with all University constituencies and refine them as necessary.

4. Programs and Instruction

In the area of programs and instruction, the Evaluation Team found that the University of Rhode Island provides its students with a high quality curriculum of breadth, depth, and relevancy informed by dedicated and competent teaching. Today, it offers 96 undergraduate major programs in the liberal arts and sciences, in a number of professional programs, and in several areas of interdisciplinary studies. At the graduate level, URI offers 50 master's degree programs and 32 doctoral programs. A rigorous system of program review and approval is in place, with the major responsibility for the integrity of this process residing with the faculty. Over the past decade, the University has discontinued or suspended admissions to 18 undergraduate programs and 26 graduate programs; students already enrolled in these programs were allowed to finish their programs. The University awarded 1,978 baccalaureates, 496 master's degrees, and 82 doctoral degrees in 1997. All academic programs are administered by the Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs, assisted by the Vice Provost for Academic Programs and Services; a vice provost in academic affairs oversees the Graduate School.

A significant strength at URI is the high level of dedication and effectiveness of the Provost and her staff in enhancing the performance and progress of the University's academic programs. The extensive efforts of the Provost's Office staff to communicate and maintain close contact with faculty, department chairs and deans are effective and broadly appreciated. Sound procedures are in place for the annual appraisal of the performance of academic deans, and for assisting deans in developing their managerial skills. The incumbent deans, including the significant number who currently hold interim appointments, appear to be very dedicated to doing their best to manage their programs and to play a constructive role in addressing the opportunities afforded by the four focus areas.

It is clear, however, that more explicit and thoughtful linkages should be forged between the University mission, college missions, and specific objectives for undergraduate and graduate degree programs. Work should continue in this regard to formulate outcome-oriented objectives and to put in place methods for assessment of the effectiveness of evaluation at the program level. Steps to do so already have been taken for a number of programs, especially those subject to external accreditation reviews. Further efforts are needed for other programs.

As already mentioned, the Program Contribution Analysis (PCA) methodology is one useful tool for informing data-driven decisions about resource allocations among academic programs. Efforts continue to improve the PCA tool based on lessons learned from its initial application, and to communicate more effectively the meaning and consequences of results generated by the analysis to affected parties throughout the academic organization of the University. The need to adapt the PCA approach to the focus areas as well as to the individual programs of the departments and colleges is recognized. Next steps for PCA implementation should include communicating to users and affected constituencies "success stories" of how PCA has contributed to improvements and rationality in resource allocation and utilization. The time and effort of administrators and faculty should continue to concentrate on improving the limited number of "flagged" programs where there is the largest opportunity for gains in effectiveness and efficiency. Programs offered by the College of Continuing Education should also be brought within the scope of PCA coverage. The team applauds recent initiatives to establish an Ad Hoc Committee on Qualitative Program Review to develop qualitative measures to complement Program Contribution Analysis.

The PCA program has helped to increase understanding of two key issues. First, solutions to problems of reconciling aspirations and plans with resource limitations must involve faculty members, department chairpersons, and deans closest to the scene of the action. Secondly, there is a constructive tension between an institutional imperative of not trying to be all things to all people and the reality that there must be "cash cow" net contribution programs to help sustain a viable portfolio balance *vis-à-vis* high cost, distinctive and/or strong programs.

The Faculty Senate Curricular Affairs Committee has a well organized process for systematic review of proposals for new courses and programs at the undergraduate level. Steps taken to inform and provide opportunities for comment by all parts of the campus community and the imposition of a timeline for completion and report of Committee deliberations are particularly commendable. Although URI's General Education program satisfies NEASC standards 4.14, 4.15, and 4.16, the University has attempted over the years to achieve greater coherence among its "domains of learning" or "broad subject areas." The program has been under scrutiny for several years, and there is widespread agreement among most campus constituencies that the general education program needs reforming. Most recent efforts for comprehensive change produced only minor, albeit positive, changes, such as a pilot initiative in Writing Across the Curriculum (not fully implemented), increased attention to skills areas, additional collaborative interdisciplinary teaching, and additional specifically-tailored introductory courses such as Introduction to Theatre and URI 101, Traditions and Transformations, the one credit Freshman seminar.

The Faculty Senate Executive Committee recently has discussed a strategy for building on and benefiting from extensive prior efforts to make improvements in the General Education component of undergraduate education. Elements of this proposed strategy include reconstituting the membership and selecting a new chairperson for the General Education Committee of the Senate, seeking to engage the Dean and faculty of the College of Arts and Sciences from the outset, and expanding the successful writing across the curriculum sequence as a first incremental stage of General Education improvement. Subsequent attention would be given, again incrementally, to other skill areas, such as computer literacy, communication, and quantitative reasoning.

The University has been successful in significantly increasing the number of undergraduate honors students over the past several years. However, there has been a limited University response in the form of resources and faculty release time required to make an appropriate increase in the number of honors course offerings. This imbalance limits the long-term success for the recruitment and retention of high-quality undergraduate students in this desirable program. Progress can also be reported in another area affecting undergraduate education. There has been increased attention to "capstone experiences" for URI undergraduate degree programs. The University expects students to have capstone experiences and/or examinations at the conclusion of their academic programs. A review of the most recent data shows that of the 96 undergraduate major programs, only 4 have yet to identify a "capstone experience or examination".

First year undergraduate advising offered by the University College is a very significant institutional strength that greatly enhances the quality of undergraduate learning experiences and helps build an active learning culture throughout the University. Faculty go to a centrally located space on campus dedicated to advising. A staff services the office.

student records are maintained in the office, students can speak with faculty from more than one college or program, advisors are trained, and a current comprehensive Faculty Handbook is available. Clearly, it is a first-rate student-centered activity aimed at the needs of first-year students, many of whom may not be all that certain about their future college majors. Actions taken to train and update advisors, and to obtain frequent feedback from students and faculty advisors on how well the process is working, are particularly commendable. However, there is some concern that important planned computer and student/registrar information system upgrades may not be accessible to the advising operations because budgetary provisions have yet to be made that would provide necessary improvements in computer terminals and connections in University College. The Team found that this unit and its Dean are universally appreciated for their advising, mentoring, and nurturing attention to undergraduate students.

Efforts to champion the continued offering of selected high quality graduate programs in an efficient manner is a top priority of the Provost. This emphasis is responsive to concerns expressed by the Graduate Council and the Council for Research about the importance of maintaining graduate education while giving realistic recognition to the significant sources of tuition revenue generation in undergraduate programs. The Graduate School functions associated with the Office of the Provost appear to provide sound quality control procedures for auditing graduate students' programs of studies, establishing thesis committees, reviewing thesis proposals, and certifying eligibility for graduate faculty membership status. Other key initiatives include steps to decentralize graduate admissions procedures and a proposal to reinstate procedures to review graduate programs that would complement the Program Contribution Analysis in order to provide constructive, program building/improvement feedback to the University.

The four applied research partnerships that currently are in operation appear to have been selected following a thorough and thoughtful examination of a significant number of proposals. The partnership concept offers promise of advancing the overall learning and research culture and outreach goals of the University. The direct engagement of both undergraduate and graduate students with faculty members in such significant research projects is an especially valuable component of this new program. For example, a review of the Coastal Environment Partnership Fellowship Program shows that of the 27 Fellows, 17 were undergraduates engaged in interdisciplinary projects. Further, the research support staff in the Provost's office offers proposal writing assistance to individual faculty investigators in disciplines where prospects for attracting external funding are limited and difficult. These two critical efforts have had a significant impact at URI in contributing to the scholarly and research capabilities of many University faculty.

The Evaluation Team found the College of Continuing Education (CCE) in Providence to be an impressive operation. Housed in a strikingly renovated and handsome former department store, CCE serves a major population of adult learners with an effective

mix of traditional and innovative courses supported by an excellent library and modern technology. The quality of instruction is assured as the majority of CCE teaching is provided by regular URI faculty, and URI carefully monitoring course development and delivery. A fair amount of innovation developed by CCE is considered and incorporated into instruction on the Kingston campus. There is clear evidence that CCE is effective at meeting the needs and educational aspirations of adult learners.

For a major research university, URI faculty development support seems to be underfunded. Recently, the negotiated collective bargaining agreement included \$162,500 for faculty development. Although this is not all new money, the funding is acknowledged as a very positive action promoting faculty excellence. The University recognizes that, consistent with its articulated goals, it must provide and expand support for faculty to find time for generating creative ideas, initiating pilot projects, and encouraging curriculum development. The Council on Research contributes approximately \$60,000 annually for summer grants, and the Provost is committed to increase this funding by \$20,000 a year for at least the next two years. Additionally, URI offers an extensive Instructional Development Program that works closely with faculty to develop further their pedagogical skills. These developments help support the “New Culture for Learning” strategy on campus.

The University has met Standard Four: Programs and Instructions

Strengths:

1. The University offers a broad and traditional array of quality academic programs that meet the needs and expectations of its strong student body.
- 2.. The Provost and her staff have developed a productive and highly creditable relationship with academic units and faculty, chairs, and deans in order to enhance program effectiveness and instructional expertise.
3. The Program Contribution analysis methodology has proven to be a useful tool to help identify ineffective and marginal programs and to help reallocate resources to programs with either current or potential strength.
4. The University College is an outstanding student-centered asset of URI that has made a significant positive impact on the success of URI freshmen.
5. The four partnerships have involved scores of undergraduate and graduate students in important applied research projects and outreach activities.

Areas of concern:

1. The University needs to bolster its efforts to determine the effectiveness of its curriculum and to institute a comprehensive system of assessment for all its academic and professional programs.

2. Faculty and students continue to express concern that the General Education program lacks cohesion and proper attention to acquiring introductory competency in skills relevant to academic work.

Suggestions:

1. The University is encouraged to redouble its efforts to reinvigorate and enhance the General Education program.
2. The University should refine and expand its PCA program to include a review of the College of Continuing Education and the four areas of academic focus.
3. The University should develop and institute a comprehensive outcomes-based assessment program for its academic programs.

5. Faculty

Demographics: The University of Rhode Island employed 608 tenure track and continuing faculty as of August 1, 1997: 348 professors, 180 associate professors, 79 assistant professors, and one instructor. Faculty ages ranged from 26 to 74, with the average age by rank ranging from 43 for assistant professors to 56 for professors. Females accounted for approximately 28% of the overall faculty, with the percentage of women increasing in descending rank order from professor (approximately 16%), to associate professor (36%), to assistant professor (59%). Data for Fall 1996 indicate that slightly more than 2% of the faculty were African American, slightly less than 2% were Hispanic, about .3% were Native American, slightly more than 8% were Asian American, and the balance, almost 88%, were Caucasian. About 91% of the faculty hold doctorates, and those who do not are predominantly employed in areas where the Master's is the terminal degree. One faculty member holds a bachelor's degree.

The number of faculty has declined over the past four years from 664 to 608, or slightly more than 8%. The largest decline has been at the Assistant Professor level (44%), followed by a slight decline at the Associate level. The number of Full Professors has increased by approximately 4%. During this same four year period, the percentage of women faculty held steady at about 27%. Taking a longer perspective, the number of tenure track faculty has dropped from 661 to 595 from 1988 to this year, a decrease of about 10%. However, because student enrollment also shrank during this same 10 year interval, the ratio of headcount students to tenure-track faculty declined slightly. Over the last four years this ratio has remained relatively stable. During the same period the average teaching load has increased from about 6.0 credit hours per semester for faculty of all ranks in 1994 to 7.2 credit hours for Professors and Associate Professors and 6.7 for Assistant Professors.

As the above data indicate, the number of tenure track faculty has declined over the past decade, and particularly over the past four years. This change, along with the virtually total elimination of lecturers and the recent upswing in undergraduate enrollment, has resulted in increased teaching loads for many faculty. Further, increased emphasis on undergraduate education, including General Education requirements, has meant that faculty are increasingly being called on to teach more undergraduate courses in programs, sometimes at the expense of graduate programs. Nevertheless, and despite resentment and opposition to these changes in certain quarters and departments, faculty are generally dedicated to delivering quality instruction and committed to meeting the needs of students.

During the site visit some faculty suggested that shifts and increases in teaching responsibilities were having a negative impact on research and scholarly production. Other faculty, as well as some administrators, suggested that decreases in research productivity might be explained by increased numbers of faculty who are nearing retirement and whose productivity has declined; the erosion of faculty morale resulting from budget cuts and programmatic difficulties over the past decade; and the general sense that faculty are being pulled in too many directions and increasingly being asked “to do more with less”. Whatever the reasons, and acknowledging that many departments, programs, and faculty are recognized nationally for their research and scholarship, the research productivity of a number of faculty is not what would be expected from an institution aspiring to Research I status.

Scholarly productivity aside, the URI faculty are well-prepared and highly qualified for their positions and competently offer the institution’s academic programs. The University employs an open and orderly process for recruiting and appointing faculty and academic support staff, written contracts are provided that explicitly state the nature of one’s appointment, and faculty and staff are provided reasonable employment security. There is concern, however, that despite the many efforts that have been made the faculty is not as diverse as the University would like, particularly with respect to African Americans and Hispanics. Continued and renewed efforts in this area are needed. An additional concern, and one that has been noted in other sections of this report, is the need for increased involvement of all constituencies in the process of planning and shaping the University. This applies especially to the involvement of faculty and staff. Finally, Standard Five asks whether the faculty is sufficiently numerous to accomplish the institution’s mission and purpose. During the planning that occurs over the next several years, the University must determine whether with current resources it can reasonably meet its goals for undergraduate education while becoming a leading research university.

The University has met Standard Five: Faculty.

Strengths:

1. The URI faculty competently offer the University's academic programs and direct its research programs and outreach efforts. The faculty are well-prepared and qualified for their assignments. They are dedicated to the delivery of high-quality instruction, committed to meeting the needs of their students, and engaged in a significant level of university and professional service.
2. The process for recruiting and appointing faculty is open and orderly. Prospective faculty are provided a written contract that states explicitly the nature and terms of appointment.

Areas of Concern:

1. University initiatives have not yet resulted in a sufficiently diverse faculty, particularly as these efforts apply to the recruitment and retention of African Americans and Hispanics.
2. Faculty development programs need to be expanded and improved, at both the University and the school and college level.
3. Research and scholarly productivity is not uniformly strong across colleges and departments. Despite decidedly strong programs in certain areas, targeted improvements must occur if the University is to become a balanced Research I institution.

Suggestion:

The University's strategic planning process should address directly the issue of whether URI's faculty resources can support adequately its ambitious goals for undergraduate education and for graduate programs and attainment of Research I status.

6. Student Services

The *Mission Statement* of the University of Rhode Island is firmly rooted in the longstanding tradition of teaching, research, and service. To achieve this tripartite mission, the University strives to extend intellectual, cultural, and social opportunities that foster learning outside the classroom. This dedication to learning outside the classroom is explicitly stated in the institutional mission.

The Division of Student Affairs, representing a wide array of programs and services, has clearly embraced this primary mission of URI as a learning-centered institution with their long-range plan (1994) developed by a planning team and responding to President Carothers' call for "A New Culture for Learning". This three-year plan was developed to be used as a guide for allocating resources, coordinating activities, developing

professional staff, and designing and improving student programs. The Division's strategic planning model focused on the following components: 1) a review of mission and vision statements; 2) internal surveys and data; 3) external surveys and data; 4) benchmarking and site visits; 5) surveys of directors and focus groups; 6) URI retention reports; and 7) a review of Total Quality Management (TQM) and learning models.

An additional outcome of the planning initiative involved a stratified random sample of 100 Student Affairs staff members using the Campbell Organizational Survey. Priority issues identified were resources and funding; reward systems; data dissemination; collaboration and learning; and a focus on training. Eight goals emerged ranging from establishing a divisional budget process to dedication to a learning focus across all departments. The latter seemed to shift departments from a series of "silos" to a more unified Division of Student Affairs devoted to a singular purpose: fostering student learning and personal development--the first criterion within the Student Services Standard of NEASC.

Using the paradigm of moving learning to the center has afforded Student Affairs unique opportunities to support the intellectual and personal development of URI students. Further, the Division of Student Affairs has utilized the theories of Astin, Boyer, Kuh and others as well as the Wingspread and SCANS Reports to provide sound principles and values for its work. Hallmarks of the Student Affairs Division have also included an entrepreneurial spirit of auxiliary managers in Health Services, Housing, Residential and Dining Services, the Memorial Union and Bookstore with clear attention to customer service and quality improvement principles and practices.

The adoption of ACPA's (1989) ethical standards and an organizational survey and evaluation (1994) have given further direction to student services on the Kingston campus. Moreover, following two years of study and development by the Quality of Student Life Committee, URI's *"Cornerstones"* most clearly reflects the Division's commitment to ethical standards. These principles, which appear prominently in university publications, articulate expectations in the areas of academic integrity; independent choice and free expression; respect for individual rights, understanding differences, and rejecting prejudice; personal responsibility for actions; active cooperation to improve the community; respect for the environment and property; personal health and wellness; and lifelong learning, leadership, and service. As evidence of the role of student governance in the life of the university, these principles were adopted by both the Student Senate (whose leaders spoke in positive terms about the support received from administrative leadership and faculty to achieve their goals) and the Graduate Student Association (Spring 1994).

URI's commitment to adhere to both the spirit and intent of equal opportunity and diversity range from physical facilities to programmatic initiatives. First and foremost, the current construction of the Multicultural Student Center in a central location equidistant from the library and the Memorial Union and in close proximity to both the Carlotti Administration

Building and the residential halls is a visible reminder of the importance of multicultural education. Secondly, programmatic offerings, such as the sponsorship of Unity Weekend and Diversity Week have begun powerful traditions and learning opportunities. These events have involved many students in a non-confrontational/non-adversarial environment and a week-long festival celebrating diversity. Diversification of the student population is also evident in the recent doubling of federally recognized minority groups (preliminary figures from the Dean of Admissions and Financial Aid indicate that over 20% of the in-state portion of the first-year class are reported as minority students), the growth of identification of students with learning and other disabilities applicable under ADA, and close to 900 international students (450 FTE) and visiting scholars. As part of the NCAA Self-Study and Certification process, the Department of Athletics has also developed a diversity plan for assuring commitment to equity issues. Women's crew is being added as a varsity sport as well in accordance with gender equity under Title IX.

Student Quality of Life Surveys (a stratified random sample of 467 students) have led to the identification of student concerns and issues ranging from career services (#1) to alcohol (#10). Student Concern Area Surveys and the URI College Health Risk Survey by Health Education (1997) are additional examples of efforts to collect data on issues and concerns. Each department head has been charged with the responsibility for data collection (e.g., Career Services and the Counseling Center in October, 1997) as part of a research agenda set forth by the Division of Student Affairs. Data derived from regular surveys of student needs and assessments should continue to guide the future direction of student service units.

In addition to the multicultural initiatives cited above and the highly touted Centennial Scholarships to enhance the academic profile of URI students, there has emerged a "signature program" that creates a special niche for URI and its student services division. As discussed above, University College, not a part of Student Affairs, creates opportunities for collaboration--particularly under the URI 101 course. University College provides a unique environment for all new students--those with majors and those undeclared--to join the university community and be greeted with caring advisors. This is clearly a "selling point" for recruiting and retaining students and is used as such by admissions personnel. In addition, University College was seen to have a special role assisting in innumerable ways in the adjustment to collegiate life. Summer programs, parent programs and transfer student orientation as well as a network of tutorial and support services were cited as instrumental in the academic and personal development of URI students. During a rather heated open forum focusing on a variety of student issues from technology to Greek life, one particularly articulate student prevailed with a voice of reason and compassion. He spoke eloquently and passionately about the personal care and attention he had received from University College personnel. The linkage of Academic Affairs and Student Affairs in URI 101--despite some faculty detractors--offers excellent opportunities for Student Affairs staff to actively participate in classroom learning and to teach lifeskills such as career development and global understanding.

The quality of physical space does much to encourage--or detract from--opportunities for student learning and personal development. A number of examples are cited in the concluding commendations and recommendations section below. The leadership within Housing, Residential Life and Dining Services is keenly aware of the need for new and improved residential space, particularly since the last major housing complex was built in 1971. To its credit, the department--like many departments in Student Affairs--has been actively engaged in a planning process and there is an excellent opportunity to build a residential village responsive to the contemporary housing needs of today's students. Financial support and the authority to commence building are critical to URI's future.

Additional elements of the NEASC Standard for Student Services--ranging from student aid policies to the confidentiality of student records and respect for student governance, rights and responsibilities--have been adequately addressed through the *Self-Study*, the *Bulletin* and other documents on file, and by the testimonies of students during the accreditation visit.

The University has met Standard Six: Student Services.

Strengths:

1. The Division of Student Affairs has clearly embraced the learning-centered mission of the University. In fact, its three-year, "long-range" plan was developed in response to the President's call for "A New Culture for Learning."
2. This movement to a learner-centered paradigm has also been accompanied by the development and wide promulgation of URI's "Cornerstones"--a clear set of principles, ethical standards, and expectations for students. Clarity of purpose and widespread distribution of these principles are distinctive features of Student Affairs.
3. A series of quality of life, student satisfaction, and areas of concern surveys has led to the prioritization of ten high-concern target areas rated according to overall importance and individual concerns. These rankings have led to positive actions (e.g., career services) and a blueprint for future priorities and resource allocations. The collection of these data also reflects a commitment to being responsive to student needs and concern.
4. A number of "signature programs"--some old, some new--emerged as opportunities to invest resources related to desired outcomes in students.
5. To support learning outside of the classroom, the Department of Housing and Residential Life has increased the implementation of theme houses (e.g., Honors, German, Engineering).
6. Positive examples of investment in the physical plant and student environments include: the "The Ram's Den" food court in the Memorial Union renovation; the \$1.5 million modernization of Student Health Services through creative financing of bonds and foundation support; the centrally-located Multicultural Student Center presently being built; and a combination of state-of-art recreational facilities in Mackal Fieldhouse and well-maintained athletic and aquatic space in Keaney Gymnasium and Tootell Center. These attractive

environments make the case even more pressing for major changes in the residential and dining options offered to students by reinvesting auxiliary reserves and securing capital financing.

Areas of Concern:

1. There is a critical need for both new and renovated student residential space that deserves immediate attention. The last major housing complex was built in 1971. The Office of Housing and Residential Life has been actively engaged in a planning process, and there is an excellent opportunity to build a residential village responsive to the contemporary housing needs of today's students. Financial support and the authority to commence building are critical to URI's future.
2. In both the *Self-Study* document and during conversations with students and administrators, the issue of the complexity of student fees repeatedly surfaced.
- 3.. Both the President and the Division of Student Affairs are to be commended for taking the high moral ground and a courageous stand on alcohol and substance abuse, and for coupling it with the building of a new culture for learning. However, testimony during open meetings indicates that there is dissonance between the stated goals and policies and the behaviors and expectations of some students

Suggestions:

1. The Team urges administrative leaders and faculty to articulate clearly the learner-centered goals so that they can be understood and adopted by students as responsible members of the university community. To build a true learning culture, we suggest that URI implement the comprehensive proposal calling for a substantial investment in renovations and new construction to transform and create quality residential environments responsive to student needs. This initiative should assist the institution in student recruitment, encourage some students living "down-the-line" to return to campus, and develop a stronger sense of community.
2. The Evaluation Team endorses current efforts of a campus task force and the Board of Governors to simplify and clarify the fee structure in ways that are easily understood by students. This should engender trust through the disclosure of fees and support the University's efforts to maintain high ethical standards and integrity.
3. URI is to be encouraged to continue its forthright stance regarding the serious issue of alcohol abuse as part of its learning mission--even in this period of transition, which one person vividly characterized as "a party school in recovery".

7. Library and Information Resources

Responding to two 1993 campus studies which evaluated libraries, computers, networking and communications, the Central Administration created an umbrella position to coordinate the various components which support information resources needed by the URI constituencies and campuses. The position of Vice-Provost for Information Services and Dean of University Libraries should provide both an overall sense of direction and leadership for the campus and more even and consistent services. In addition, the focus of the campus community on this vital support area resulted in a \$29 million bond issue to upgrade networking, software and equipment. With money in hand, centralized planning has already moved the campus forward in this area.

The university libraries are composed of the Main Library at the Kingston Campus, the Pell Marine Sciences Library, and the College of Continuing Education Library. The Main Library at the Kingston Campus was expanded with a new addition in 1993 and now has plentiful seating, growth space for collections, and flexible space for group study, teaching labs and computer labs. Lack of collection space at the Pell Library is being addressed, but may require off-site storage until a permanent solution is reached. Professional library staff possess, at the minimum, masters' degrees from ALA accredited institutions. Students and faculty alike praised the library staff for their helpfulness and range of services. The library is a member of HELIN Library System, an integrated library system shared with five other academic institutions. In addition, the library is a participant in NELINET and OCLC. Membership in these organizations expands access to library resources for all URI faculty and students. In addition to the shared catalogue, the library offers a variety of online indexes, abstracts and full-text options. In sum, URI is fortunate to have a well run library which meets traditional faculty and student expectations and which has begun to move toward a digital future.

However, the fiscal challenge facing all academic libraries is also facing URI: 1) rising serial costs, 2) demand for access to on-line resources and 3) investment in and maintenance of a technology infrastructure. The current environment demands continuation of the print collections and services that have grown up to support the present information climate of higher education while also beginning to build and manage an entirely new electronic climate. It is clear that careful priority setting and investment strategies must be addressed by the URI campus community in conjunction with the new Vice Provost and library staff if the print and on-line resources are going to continue to serve the teaching and research missions of the university, and if the services offered are going to respond to initiatives such as learner-centered instruction and the digital data directions of the Graduate School of Oceanography.

The integration and reorganization of the Academic Computing Center, the Administrative Computing Center and the Audio Visual Department has resulted in a new set of units and services. The \$29 million bond money will begin to address the difficulties in restricted campus bandwidth, uneven or lack of access in buildings and dormitories, lack of equipment and outdated labs. It will allow replacement of software with the year 2000 problem, help address security issues and support increased multi-media services. It will raise and even out the basic technological infrastructure on the Kingston Campus. It will not address the need to invest in the leading edge technology required by researchers at the GSO Campus, nor will it solve the asynchronous learning expectations of distance learning or continuing education. To make effective use of the \$29 million, the campus community needs to be involved in the priority setting with respect to wiring, training and evolution of software. Goals were set before the bond issue, but these need to be tested against the current user and the user technological environments. Faculty development programs for new technologies such as the innovative fellowships initiative need to be expanded. Courses and workshops must be offered at multiple skill levels (beginning to advanced) for the next several years. And finally, fiscal strategic planning must begin now for replacement and upgrade of all infrastructure components purchased with the one-time bond money.

The campus values network and computer technology as a natural and necessary support for education in the same way that library services and collections are valued. Currently there are no fees which regulate usage and which also would inhibit educational use.

The University has met Standard Seven: Library and Information Resources.

Strengths:

1. The institution has a well run library which meets traditional faculty and student expectations.
2. The university community recognized the need for a basic technological upgrade and united in an effort to obtain resources through a bond issue.
3. The reorganization of information providers under one umbrella position should provide consistent leadership.

Areas of Concern:

1. There has been little programmatic response by the library and information resource organizations to new institutional initiatives such as learner-centered instruction, the research partnerships or the four focus areas. This is a particularly glaring gap in library planning.
2. To date leadership has not been forthcoming from the library and information resource organizations to aid the campus community in understanding the enormous ramifications that

networked information will have for the traditional, print-oriented scholarly communication process.

Suggestions:

1. Assessment of library expenditures measured against current undergraduate/graduate and research needs should be undertaken. Planning for information resources to meet future teaching and research needs should reflect academic priorities.
2. Attention to the people side of technology initiatives through training and faculty and staff development will maximize effectiveness and support academic priorities such as learner-centered instruction.
3. Specific timetables and links to academic goals should be established for expenditure of the \$29 million for technology infrastructure.
4. Planning should begin now for a replacement and upgrade strategy for the network, hardware and software purchased with the one-time \$29 million technology bond money.
5. The library and information resource organizations need to form more partnerships with departments or units (such as the partnership with GSO) to begin building the URI Digital Library of tomorrow.

8. Physical Resources

The University can be proud of its investment in physical facilities. Many new buildings have been added to the campus over the last eleven years, and the grounds are attractive and well-maintained. URI has also made many wise decisions from a financial and management point-of-view with respect to its physical resources. The University Property Office maintains a building space inventory database with associated floor plans. (See Self-Study, p. 80.) This is a wonderful resource that many campuses do not have. It is extremely useful in space planning and is worth the investment. The University has replaced its old heating plant through a public/private investment that leases back the facility to URI on a twenty-year basis. After that the University owns the facility. By entering into this lease-back arrangement, URI is able to proportion its capital investment over a long period of time, avoiding the challenge of a front-end capital investment. Given the current repair and renovation demands of the institution, this is a very practical choice. It frees up capital resources for other pressing needs without foregoing the costs and burdens of maintaining an aging facility. Instead of investing capital resources in major component systems, URI has committed itself to the total rehabilitation of facilities needing extensive renovation. This makes good sense. While major component renovations may appear to offer the opportunity of spreading repair and renovation resources, it is usually the most expensive R&R strategy in the long run. With limited capital resources, URI has done well to adopt a total rehabilitation practice for major renovations.

In addition to the above strategies, the University is enjoying the benefit of the State's \$40.6 million investment in telecommunications infrastructure. While the University's share of this State commitment (\$29 million) will certainly not meet all of its outstanding technology needs, particularly in the academic area, it goes a long way in advancing URI's technological capabilities for the future. The University and the State deserve congratulations on this forward step.

The principal problem that URI must meet in the years ahead is the problem of deferred maintenance. Funds for repairs (or "renewals and replacements," as URI calls them) have all too often had to balance deficits in other accounts. Repair expenditures have remained at about the same level (\$2.7 million) for the past three years. (See Self-Study, pp. A93, A32.) The University has about \$40 million in deferred maintenance. With over 30 percent of the University's buildings and related infrastructure built prior to 1958, it is of critical importance that the State and URI invest appropriately in the protection of campus facilities. One of the bright spots in this picture is the Asset Protection Planning Process, initiated 20 years ago. The purpose of this process is to preserve the condition and function of State institutional facilities. Annual funding levels have increased substantially over the last decade. The University received \$3.6 million this year to help meet R&R needs, for example. What is important is that URI has in place an on-going plan with set goals to meet this need, and that this plan is consistently implemented on an annual basis. The Administration pointed out that with \$3.6 million from the Asset Protection Plan, \$200,000 to \$400,000 in operating expenditures, and \$1.5 million from the auxiliary enterprises, URI would be close to investing 1.5 percent of its facility replacement costs in repair and renovation. That would be a respectable R&R goal. It is not certain, however, that the Asset Protection Plan or University priorities insure implementation of this goal on a regular annual basis.

On a long-range basis, it is also important that URI have in place a campus master plan. Such a master plan must include a realistic assessment of the housing needs of students and a thoughtful response that will provide contemporary housing responsive to the needs of today's students. A broad spectrum of University faculty and administration, led by the President, is currently pursuing the development of a comprehensive master plan for the Kingston Campus. That is welcome news, since the last overall master plan predates the 1970's. These initial efforts are quite focused, however. (See Self-Study, p. 83.) It is important at some point that URI pursue a truly comprehensive campus planning effort that looks beyond special areas of need.

In its efforts to address capital concerns on the campus, the University must also comply with a State oversight process. All plans and specifications for University construction and major renovation projects are subject to prior review and approval by the Rhode Island State Building Commission. It was of concern to the Evaluation Team to learn

that such a review process can take up to a year for completion. While oversight of this nature may be legitimate, such a lengthy process is costly both on the administrative level and in terms of the inflationary impact on contracts. It would be worthwhile for the University and the Board to determine if this process could be streamlined.

The University has met Standard Eight: Physical Resources.

Strengths:

1. The University has built many new facilities in the past ten years.
2. The University maintains a valuable building space inventory database.
3. The University will receive \$29 million from the State Telecommunications Bill to meet infrastructure needs in this area.
4. The University negotiated a replacement of the old heating plant through private/public partnership for this leased-backed facility.
5. The University has adopted a strategy of total rehabilitation of facilities in need of major renovation.

Areas of Concern:

1. The University has a serious problem in deferred maintenance that requires a long-term plan of action and regular, continued investment.
2. The University needs to develop a comprehensive campus master plan.

Suggestion:

URI should develop a comprehensive campus master plan for facilities that includes attention to the problem of deferred maintenance and to the complex issues surrounding the campus technology infrastructure and needs.

9. Financial Resources

Although the University of Rhode Island has very limited fund balances and reserves, its administration has responded to this lack of fiscal flexibility with some good management tools and strategies. URI's recent losses in net tuition signal a new challenge, however, that requires more than careful budget management. Before expanding on these important themes, this report provides some comments on the University's method of financial reporting.

The financial staff at the University was most helpful in informing the Evaluation Team about the fiscal status of URI. The format of the University's financial statements is not as revealing, however. URI's financial statements should follow the generally accepted principles of GASB for Colleges and Universities. The University's current fiscal statements reflect its status as an integral part of state government, but it is also important that they conform to the reporting format of most public universities today. The trend for the past several years is for universities to provide an "entity-wide" focus to inform readers of their financial statements as completely and as concisely as possible about their fiscal status. A reader of such statements should be aware, not only of URI's general expenditures, but also of its functional expense allocations (instruction, research, public service, academic support, operations and maintenance of plant, etc.).

The Controller shared the Team's concerns about URI's financial report format and indicated that in the future the University might issue more than one report. The Team hopes that this is not necessary. Ideally the institution should be able to publish one official financial report that conforms to GASB's generally accepted principles for colleges and universities.

Of equal concern was the qualified Independent Auditors' Report of September 27, 1996. That report indicated that the scope of the audit "did not include audit procedures with respect to the existence and valuation of the general fixed assets account group." The Report then goes on to say: "We are therefore not in a position to, and do not express an opinion on the general fixed assets group." This is a serious qualification. The University must have in place a system that renders its \$281 million in general fixed assets auditable. The Committee understands that the University has plans to address this issue in the near future. It is critical that URI does so.

URI appears to be in tight financial circumstances. Deficits and low fund balances seem to be the norm. There are no significant fund balances or "rainy day" reserves, it appears, to give the University the financial flexibility it would need to respond to a fiscal crisis. Added to this is a complex and slow oversight process on the state level that still further constrains fiscal reaction.

Deficits: The general educational fund showed a deficit of revenues under expenditures of \$981,849 in the 1994 audited financial statements, a surplus of \$2,151,334 in 1995, and a slight deficit (\$13,360) in 1996. The Controller assured the Evaluation Team that there was a planned use of reserves in 1994 that accounted for much of the deficit, but the variability from year-to-year testifies to the tightness of URI's financial circumstances. Two auxiliary operations have on-going deficits: the Bookstore and W. Alton Jones Campus. The most serious of these is the W. Alton Jones Campus, a conference center with camp facilities. In July 1990, the Campus was moved from the unrestricted budget (where it was subsidized) to the auxiliary enterprise budget. The plan was for the Campus to become

self-supporting within five years. Operating revenues have come closer to operating expenses (\$140,000), but the facility has not achieved its goal of becoming self-sufficient. It has accumulated a \$2,407,946 deficit fund balance. Because its increasingly negative fund balance was preventing the other auxiliary enterprises from utilizing their fund balances, the W. Alton Jones Campus was moved to the status of a "proprietary fund enterprise" in 1996. This does not solve the basic problem, however. URI must devise and implement a realistic plan to eliminate systematically this deficit or to write it off in appropriate fashion.

Accounts Receivable: The accounts receivable balance for over 90 days has increased dramatically from 1995 to 1996. This growth stemmed, not from an increase in student receivables, but rather from financially front-ending research activity. While these "unbilled receivables" in sponsored research will be covered presumably by external funds, they enhance the University's cash flow problem, affecting financial flexibility in a negative way.

Indirect Cost Recovery: URI has negotiated with the Federal Government a respectable indirect-cost-recovery rate (49.2 percent). Unfortunately the application of this rate is limited, requiring the University to bear a substantial burden of the indirect costs that externally-funded projects generate. In the Combined Statement of Revenues, Expenditures, and Changes in Fund Balances for the Year Ended June 30, 1996, for example, Sponsored Program Expense amounted to \$36,969,198, while indirect cost revenue equaled only \$2,599,937. (See Self-Study Report, pp. A93-A94.) That would represent only a 7 percent return. True indirect cost rates often far exceed the negotiated rate. (According to the Controller, for example, the URI research vessel Endeavor has an actual indirect cost-rate of 50 percent, but it returns only 18 percent on its projects.) Considering that the negotiated rates are not broadly applied, URI must absorb these overhead expenditures. This cost burden needs to be kept in mind in any planning efforts to expand the University's research mission.

Capital Projects and Repair Expenditures: These funds are discussed more fully under "Physical Resources," but like so many URI accounts they are quite limited, considering the size of the campus. The Capital projects fund balance was only \$299,925 on 6/30/96. (See Self Study, p. A93.) This is extremely low for a physical plant with a replacement value of approximately \$400 million. Similarly, repair expenditures of \$2.7 million per annum are not sufficient for a campus of this scope. Hidden deficits in the form of deferred maintenance may be expanding.

Endowment: A key resource for any academic institution today. In the case of URI, however, this resource is maintained by a fully independent foundation with its own board. While the URI Foundation clearly exists to serve the University, and while it takes its fund-raising priorities from the University President, its assets are not under the control of URI. There is a very positive side to the University's fund-raising picture, however, which will be highlighted later on.

The financial staff and the other administrative officers in the University are skilled and resourceful in coping with these limited fund balances and other fiscal constraints. They have achieved some major gains in responding to tight financial circumstances. Nonetheless, the limitations in reserves and fund balances make it difficult for the University to implement long-term plans. They require expensive insurance policies with low deductibles to avoid unmanageable crises. Finally, they require serious discipline in the use of internal borrowing.

For that reason the Evaluation Team was concerned with the *Self-Study's* report that "URI had no policy with respect to interfund borrowing." It is important that the University have a written policy that prevents unplanned repayments and avoids long-term debt obligations. The Team is pleased that URI plans to have formal policies in place by November, 1997.

The University deserves praise for some of the strategies and resources it has brought to bear on its financial needs. The Team reports the following as especially noteworthy:

1. Adoption of "Program Contribution Analysis as a Tool for Resource Allocation": PCA is an analytical tool, developed within the University, that enables the Administration to evaluate the unrestricted costs and revenues associated with each academic program. PCA does not incorporate grants and gifts nor the amount of research revenue generated by each program into the analysis, but these data are included in the supplemental information. As a result of the first year's study, 44 programs were suspended. Perhaps as important, an additional number of programs were "flagged" for further analysis. PCA has received national attention as a method of fiscal analysis in academia, and it is functioning as an important instrument in the reallocation of URI's own limited resources. The University should be commended, not only for developing this tool, but also for using it in a careful and systematic way to cope with its financial constraints.
2. URI's Newly Acquired Freedom to Control some Aspects of Purchasing: Ten years ago the State insisted on time-consuming bidding procedures for amounts as low as \$50 at the University. Thanks to enlightened legislation in 1989 and 1996-97, URI is now allowed to do all the bidding for auxiliaries, enterprise funds, and sponsored research. URI also has special delegated authority to bid on certain commodities regardless of the source of funds. Generally everything else above the level of \$2,500 that employs unrestricted funds must be sent to the State for processing. These changes represent a significant improvement over what once existed on the URI campus. It is hoped that the State will continue and extend these practices.
3. Reduction of Administrative Expenses through the Work of the Financial Structure Team: In 1992 the President appointed the above-mentioned team, giving them the charge "to consolidate financial functions and streamline processes to promote increased efficiency

and personnel savings." Given the rising costs URI has had to cope with in recent years, this was a much needed move. While it is not yet certain what the ultimate savings will be from the Team's recommendations, it is clear the University needs to reduce as well as to reallocate expenditures. URI did well to focus on greater efficiency and personnel savings as part of the answer to its fiscal constraints.

4. Successful Completion of a \$60 million Capital Campaign: The University deserves special congratulations on its recently concluded capital campaign. While the URI Foundation is responsible for holding and investing endowment and capital funds, the Development Office within the University conducted this five-year campaign. Its successful completion will permit the University to meet some critical facility needs. In addition, this new chapter in URI's philanthropic history also provides a solid base for further development activity. Equally encouraging is the growth in URI's annual fund. While the University still has a limited endowment (\$30 million) for an institution of its size and scope, a significant effort is underway to make certain that private giving plays the important role it should play in URI's future.

5. Upgrading of the Financial Record System: The Financial Record System (FRS) was upgraded in November of 1996 to provide an expanded technical capacity and a variety of enhancements. This improved what was historically a well-organized, computer-based financial information database for management. The investment was a laudatory one, considering the importance of such a tool in achieving good fiscal control and decision-making. The University also deserves praise for placing priority on the need to increase internal audit capacity, especially for the auxiliary enterprise units. With these units now totaling \$36 million in business activities, they will benefit greatly from the presence of a dedicated internal audit function.

Because of these and other steps the University of Rhode Island has been able to cope with rising costs that exceed revenues. Combined with a freeze on hiring and the restricted use of operating, capital, and deans' overhead funds, the University's careful financial management -- exemplified in the achievements mentioned above -- has been able to balance its budgets in FY 96 and FY 97. At the same time URI is facing a financial challenge that goes beyond low fund balances. This challenge will necessitate more than careful financial management. It will require some major decisions about tuition increases, student financial aid, the level of state support, and URI's budget expenditures, including salary increases. To understand the full nature of the problem, it is important to focus attention on URI's losses in net tuition.

Net tuition is the gross tuition revenue received by the University, less the amount it invests in student financial aid. In FY 96 and 97 net tuition declined from what it had been in the previous year. (See Self-Study, p. A1.)

	<u>FY 1994</u>	<u>FY 1995</u>	<u>FY 1996</u>	<u>FY 1997</u>
Tuition & Fees	\$69,470	\$72,674	\$73,342	\$73,112
Scholarship and Fellowship	<u>(15,994)</u>	<u>(18,593)</u>	<u>(20,273)</u>	<u>(21,084)</u>
Net Tuition	\$53,476	\$54,081	\$53,069	\$52,028

Since FY 95 the decline exceeds two million. Over the past four years it amounts to \$1.4 million, and that is not taking into account inflation. It is clear that URI's contribution to financial aid is rising at a faster rate than the return in tuition dollars. For the past two years it is going up at the rate of about one million per year. What is most dangerous about these losses is the pattern or trend.

At the same time expenditures continue to increase. Much of this is directly tied to increases in personnel compensation. It is essential, given URI's limited fund balances, that the University maintain a balance among its tuition revenues, increases in financial aid, escalation in other expenditures, and its share of state appropriation. This will require more than the usual safeguards in budget management. To maintain an appropriate balance among tuition revenues, financial aid, operating expenditures, and state appropriation, the University, the Board, and in the end the State Government must reach a consensus on changes in each of these four items. All concerned must have an appreciation and an understanding of the dynamic tradeoff between these four fiscal categories.

It is no longer possible for URI or the Board to think of tuition hikes, salary increases, financial aid, or appropriation requests in isolation. While URI financial managers have always had to balance such items, major decision makers at the University, Board, and State level must also be consciously aware of how an alteration in one is likely to affect the direction of the others. This will require greater involvement of major decision makers in shaping the overall budget of the institution on an annual basis.

It is also important that long-term strategic planning be closely tied to this annual budgeting function. While long-term plans must look beyond an immediate perspective, they also need to reflect trends in these annual budget decisions. Otherwise long-term planning becomes divorced from fiscal reality and commits the institution to goals that may not be possible.

The Evaluation Team believes that URI has the financial managers in place who understand the needs and constraints of the University. What is important is that this perspective is linked in a dynamic way with the other decision-making roles in the institution, especially with respect to planning. If this is done, the Committee is convinced that URI can match its fiscal resources with its mission needs.

The University has met Standard Nine: Financial Resources.

Strengths:

1. The University has adopted the "Program Contribution Analysis" as a valuable tool for resource allocation.
2. The newly acquired freedom to control some aspects of purchasing and to retain savings is a major benefit to URI.
3. The University has benefited from the reduction of administrative expenses through the work of the Financial Structure Team.
4. The University has successfully completed a \$60 million Capital Campaign.
5. The University has completed an important upgrading of the Financial Record System (FRS).

Areas of Concern:

1. The University needs to adopt a financial statement format that follows GASB generally accepted accounting principles for colleges and universities.
2. The University needs to address the deficits and low fund balances that give URI little flexibility to respond to fiscal crises.
3. The University needs to address the decline in net tuition, resulting from a significant growth in financial aid.

Suggestion:

The University needs to work immediately towards ameliorating the above three concerns that have serious potential to hinder URI in achieving its ambitious and laudable goals.

10. Public Disclosure

The University of Rhode Island has a comprehensive publications program that encompasses all aspects of university life, including course and program offerings (the traditional college bulletin), mission, objectives, requirements and policies related to academic achievement, description of the campuses, facilities and student body, lists of personnel (governing board, administration and faculty with rank affiliation, status and degrees), and appropriate wording about its current accreditation status. With a few exceptions (noted below), the information provided is complete, accurate, and clear. The communication, publications and marketing efforts of the University as a whole rest with the Division of University Advancement, the Office of Admissions and the Athletics Department. Coordination among these units has resulted in a streamlined, focused, and consistent approach to communication. The University Publications Office is responsible for

production of much of the institution-wide communication and provides editorial oversight and review that ensures timeliness, accuracy, and clarity. The institution has a freedom of information process that is shared by the Department of Communications and legal counsel. The Department of Communications is the clearinghouse for calls and requests for information about the University as an institution.

Recently the publication of the *Bulletin* of the University was changed from a one-year to a two-year printing cycle; simultaneously a copy of the bulletin was put on-line. Even though the web-version of the *Bulletin* was intended to be the authoritative, updated version, the outdated, printed version continues to be in high demand. Since it does not contain the new *Mission* or *Vision Statement*, does not list new faculty, and since it lists courses which are not currently available, continued reliance on the old printed version is problematic. In addition, frequent requests for off-prints or copies have led to far less savings than originally estimated. The decision has now been made to return to a yearly printing cycle. Although a web-based version of the *Bulletin* will still be available, the strategy of having it be the sole, current authoritative version was not the best option. This series of decisions should be reviewed in two or three years when networked information is more ubiquitous.

The review of courses for currency is a slow process at URI. A request to review the process will be forwarded to the Faculty Senate in 1997-1998. The goal should be that courses will not be listed as current if they are not taught for two consecutive years and will not be taught in the third consecutive year.

Centralized management and editorial oversight of university publications has eroded over the last few years. As desktop printing became more prevalent and the Office of Publications became more focused on the expanding areas of the capital campaign, The Alumni Association and The URI Foundation, there was a migration of publications into colleges, departments and other university units. Although the Office of Communications has offered standard policies for use of the logo, colors, headers, etc., not all units adhere to the policies. In addition, the recent emergence of web-based information has opened up yet another decentralized avenue of communications. The gradual decentralization of the "publication" process leads to questions of consistency, timeliness and accuracy. A systematic review process which assures consistency, accuracy, clarity and timeliness across all units needs to be devised.

The University has met Standard Ten: Public Disclosure.

Strengths:

1. The collaboration of Athletics, Advancement and Admissions to coordinate a strategic direction for marketing of the institution is innovative.

2. The External Communications Advisory Council composed of alumni and external constituents (with media or public relations background) is a useful tool for advice and feedback on institutional marketing.
3. Recognition of the internet as a communications vehicle for recruiting, development and alumni relations is timely.

Areas of Concern:

1. While materials produced by the University Publications Office are reviewed for complete, accurate and clear information, there is an absence of a systematic review process for material produced by individual departments, colleges or administrative offices.
2. Although standard policies for use of the logo, headers, color, etc. have been adopted, not all units adhere to these policies. A “significant” difference in approach leads to confusion by customers as to the status of a particular unit and its relationship to URI.

Suggestions:

1. The URI and its related institutional home pages lack a systematic review process for consistency, accuracy and timeliness. A process to rationalize the goals, purposes and consistency of URI homepages should also address the larger issue of review of individual college, department or administrative unit print publications.
2. An enterprise-wide budget of expenditures for all publications/ communications should be constructed so that the total institutional investment in marketing/public relations/recruiting/alumni relations can be evaluated against other institutional priorities. An overall assessment of effectiveness will not be possible without such a planning document.
3. Mechanisms must be streamlined to assure currency of course listings in the bulletins.

11. Integrity

The University of Rhode Island exhibits to its campus constituencies and in its interactions with those outside the institution a high degree of institutional integrity. A commitment to integrity informs all its campus and external activities and responsibilities from admissions, academic and financial operations, information in publications and governance, to the allocation of resources. This commitment to integrity is also a hallmark of its *Mission Statement* and *Vision Statement*. URI strives for high quality in its academic programs, research endeavors, and outreach service agenda. Shared, active governance with faculty and student constituencies is visible and taken seriously on campus. Academic freedom and freedom of expression are vibrant characteristics and are exercised by all institutional parties. There seems to exist a considerable sharing of opinion and information

within the decision-making (planning and budgeting) process. Information provided to URI's internal and external audiences appears to be accurate, timely, and comprehensive. It has a document-rich environment and an extensive structure of committees and boards to monitor campus policies governing all aspects of institutional activity and integrity.

Two University organizations possess great potential to enhance aspects of integrity on campus. First, the John Hazen White Sr. Center for Ethics and Public Service has the valuable mission "to promote discourse, education and scholarship on ethical issues and the character of public life." It serves both internal and external audiences, including state officials. Secondly, the University has created the Professional Development, Leadership, and Organization Training Program to help employees in developing and improving skills "to support uncompromising integrity." In about two years, more than 1,400 employees have been involved in this program that seeks to enhance not only personal integrity and growth but also professional skills and competency.

In preparing for this NEASC evaluation, the University identified several areas where it will strive for improvement in institutional integrity. Academic dishonesty remains a blemish on the excellent undergraduate program at URI and needs to be addressed in a more forthright and consistent manner. There is evidence that tension and poor relationships between some supervisors and their classified and non-classified employees exist in the area of employee evaluation. This is an issue wherein the intervention of the Professional Development, Leadership, and Organization Training Program might prove helpful. The University recognizes that its communications about tuition and fees, to both internal and external audiences, could be clearer. For example, students and faculty have questioned how fee revenues are spent and if any restrictions dictate their use. The *Self-Study* document indicates that a 1997 fall study committee will examine the URI's tuition and fee structure with a charge to suggest ways to "simplify the fee structure" and to produce an unambiguous rationale for all student fees.

The University has met Standard Eleven: Integrity.

Strengths:

1. The University of Rhode Island displays a strong commitment to integrity in all areas relating to its internal and external audiences.
2. URI has developed a strong infrastructure of many relevant committees and a strong library of relevant documents to bolster its efforts to create "a new culture for learning with uncompromising integrity".
3. The University has identified a set of integrity issues and a set of plans to address them.

Areas of Concern:

1. The inconsistent efforts to ameliorate the presence of undergraduate academic dishonesty calls for serious attention and action from student, faculty, and administrative leadership.
2. The tension and unease surrounding the issue of employee evaluations among classified and non-classified staffs and their supervisors detracts from the effectiveness and efficiency of the University.
3. The climate of ambiguity, complexity, and distrust that characterizes URI's tuition and fee structure is harmful to its well-earned reputation for quality and integrity.

Suggestion:

The University should pursue vigorously the agendas it has identified in the *Self-Study* in order to to remedy the concerns expressed about employee evaluations, the tuition/fee structure, and to introduce more consistency in its response to undergraduate academic dishonesty.

Summary

The University of Rhode Island embodies visibly and broadly many of the characteristics of excellence that clearly identify an institution of quality and achievement. It is well-endowed with a bright and engaged student body, a competent, hard-working, and loyal faculty and staff, an experienced and engaged mid-level administrative team, and a visionary and bold senior leadership. URI is guided by well-defined, ambitious, and appropriate goals that are clearly expressed in the recently approved *Mission Statement* and *Vision Statement*. These documents give direction to the University at a time of changing societal expectations and needs. The Evaluation Team also finds that the critical characteristic of institutional integrity is a hallmark of the institution's aspirations, activities, and documents.

The University of Rhode Island, as do all institutions of higher education, finds itself in a much more challenging and competitive environment than existed at the time of the 1987 NEASC evaluation. Nevertheless, the Team believes that the institution is a stronger institution than it was then since it has developed a much more realistic and informed understanding of its external environment and its own strengths and weaknesses. This belief is reinforced by the dynamic leadership exhibited by the President and the senior officers he has assembled since 1992 and their ability to respond to the new environment of higher education. Although, as this report delineates, a number of significant challenges remain, confidence in the future of URI is strong; and there are many creative and positive

developments, as noted throughout this report, over the past five years that portend well for the future progress of the institution.

The Evaluation Team has selected a number of areas where the University of Rhode Island shows outstanding strength. The Team also cites a number of concerns, although it must be noted that they are less conspicuous and numerous than the University's strengths. Additionally, the team has generated a list of suggestions which URI may wish to consider for discussion, relevancy, and action as it plans its future development.

Major Strengths:

1. The administrative and faculty leadership has recognized the need for creative approaches to meeting its various obligations. This commitment to innovation is a major strength of URI.
2. A hard working and well-prepared faculty provides a high quality curriculum, at both the undergraduate and graduate levels, to a strong and engaged student body.
3. The Provost and her staff are a major factor in the continuing enrichment of the academic environment.
4. The University College staff and Dean are universally praised for their exceptionally successful work in student advising and mentoring, and for their personal interest in students.
5. The University has improved its planning activities with the adoption of the new *Mission Statement* and the *Vision Statement*, "Building a New Culture for Learning," the Program Contribution Analysis methodology, the partnerships program, and the four areas of academic focus.
6. The Division of Student Affairs, having clearly embraced the learning-centered mission of the University, is doing an excellent job of serving URI's students. Its strong, customer-driven philosophy enjoys widespread student support, and its staff is rated by students as accessible and competent.
7. URI offers a strong program of traditional and innovative instruction to adult learners at its College of Continuing Education (CCE) in Providence. The majority of the CCE instruction is provided by regular URI faculty, and CCE courses are monitored by the main campus. CCE also provides excellent library and modern technology support to its students and faculty.

Additional Strengths:

1. The University is effectively committed to its basic responsibilities of expanding and transmitting knowledge as well as fostering its application.
2. The University has just completed an ambitious, 60 million dollar Capital Campaign.
3. URI has developed a strategy for the rehabilitation of its facilities.

- 4.. URI has benefited from the reduction of administrative expenses through the work of the Financial Structure Team and from an important upgrading of the Financial Records System.
- 5.. URI has created an innovative collaboration of the offices of Athletics, Advancement, and Admissions to coordinate a strategic plan for marketing the University.
- 6.. The University exhibits a strong commitment to integrity in its relationships to its internal and external audiences, and has instituted two initiatives to promote and enhance that commitment: the John Hazen White Sr. Center for Ethics and Public Service and the Professional Development, Leadership, and Organization Training Program.

Major Areas of Concern:

1. The need for URI to improve its planning and evaluation processes has been highlighted in a number of prior reviews. While the Team is pleased to note that the University has made some progress in its planning and evaluation activities since 1992, URI needs to move beyond goal setting and establish an organized, comprehensive strategic approach to planning that involves all affected campus constituencies.
2. All planning must accurately reflect financial resources. A key question which must be addressed by URI in its planning processes is whether it has the financial resources to sustain its stated mission.
3. The University should adopt a financial statement format that follows GASB generally accepted accounting principles for higher education and should address: 1. the problem of deficits and low fund balances that curtails its ability to respond to fiscal crisis and 2. the decline in net tuition.
4. The University lacks a cohesive and broadly-supported General Education program.

Additional Areas of Concern:

- 1.. The University currently has a significant number of interim deans. The Team's concern is not with those individuals holding interim appointments, but rather with the temporary and ambiguous nature of their responsibilities and authority; the importance of stable and decisive leadership at this critical level is difficult to underestimate.
2. Library and information resource units at URI have made little programmatic response to the President's "Building a New Culture for Learning" themes.
3. The University to date is lacking leadership to aid campus constituencies in understanding the critical ramifications that networked information will have for the conventional, print-oriented, scholarly communication process.
4. Challenges that continue to engage the Division of Student Affairs are the long overdue need to rehabilitate the residence halls, and the existing tension between continued alcohol abuse and the University's commitment to a stronger student learning culture.

Major Suggestions:

1. Heeding President Carothers' "Building a New Culture for Learning," all affected constituencies of the University should be involved in the development of a comprehensive strategic planning process.
2. The University is urged to move forward with its efforts to define a strong and coherent General Education program that has broad campus confidence and commitment.
3. The University needs to develop a comprehensive facilities master plan that considers the problem of deferred maintenance and the complex issues involving the campus' infrastructure and technology needs.
4. Because of the complex and volatile mix of tuition revenues, investment in student aid, and limited state support, the University should develop and implement annually with the Board of Governors and the Commissioner of Higher Education a plan of action that balances URI's share of the state appropriations, its budgetary commitment to student financial assistance, its other budgetary expenditures for the year, and its increases in tuition and fees. In this plan, the University's mission and its long-range planning and evaluation efforts must be consistent with the resources that these annual plans are able to provide.

Additional Suggestions:

1. URI should focus more closely on the assessment of educational outcomes by developing learning objectives and evaluation of their performance.
2. Within the context of its teaching and learning mission, the University is encouraged to pursue its strong stance concerning the serious issue of alcohol abuse.
3. The University needs to develop specific timetables and links to academic goals in order to optimize the expenditure of the \$29 million for technology infrastructure.
4. The Team encourages the University to address the concerns expressed in the *Self-Study* and by the Evaluation Team regarding employee evaluations, the tuition/fee structure, and undergraduate academic dishonesty.