


## MEMORANDUM

Date: May 23, 2005

To: Dr. G. Faye Boudreaux-Bartels  
Chair, Faculty Senate

From: Robert L. Carothers   
President

Subject: Statement regarding University policy on use of non-varsity athletic fields

I have received the Resolution of the Senate marked 04-05-5, referenced above. Since this matter is, as described, a "statement," it not easily supported or not supported, as written. As H.L. Mencken wrote many years ago, "For every complex question, there is a simple answer. And it is wrong."

As Senator Manteiga knows, I am sympathetic to his plea. The University exists to serve all the people of Rhode Island, and its buildings and grounds are open to the community, subject to appropriate restrictions related to health, safety, security and preservation of these assets. Reasonable restrictions, for example, prohibit the use of Kingston or Narragansett Bay classroom buildings and laboratories without receiving proper approvals of the intended use and without coordination with University activities. Similarly, the public is generally free to walk the University fields and forests at the Alton Jones Campus provided that persons wishing to do so notify the campus director of their intent and that they respect the rules for the use of associated facilities. Just who constitutes the "URI community" referenced in the Resolution is not clear, but these rules apply equally to administrators, faculty, staff, students, alumni and members of the larger Rhode Island community. Nonetheless, I believe that where there are doubts about the appropriate use of facilities and grounds by these groups or by individuals within the groups, the scale should tip towards openness and accessibility.

The question addressed in this resolution relates to the kind of reasonable access and related coordination of activities on the Kingston Campus. It focuses on certain tracts of land generally identified as appropriate for outdoor recreational use. Those tracts are only loosely identified, and while there appears to be policy developed for their use within the Recreation staff, those policies have not been reviewed in the full context of land use at URI. I have never seen them. I will ask Vice Presidents Dougan and Weygand to identify the land in question and develop written policies specific to the use of that land for my review and approval.

