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Faculty Representative

Revaa Goyal '27
Student Representative

**The University of Rhode Island
Board of Trustees Meeting
Thursday, February 13, 2025 · 9:00 a.m. EST**

**The University of Rhode Island
Anchor Room, Robert J. Higgins Welcome Center
45 Upper College Road, Kingston, RI 02881**

OFFICIAL MINUTES

1. CALL TO ORDER

Margo Cook, Chair

Chair Margo Cook welcomed everyone to the February 13, 2025, meeting of the University of Rhode Island (URI) Board of Trustees and noted that the meeting was being held in person with Board members participating remotely via Webex. Virtual access to the meeting was available via the YouTube video platform. A recording of the meeting is available for viewing at <https://web.uri.edu/trustees/meetings/>.

Board secretary Michelle Curreri conducted a roll call attendance and reported that a quorum of members was present. Chair Cook called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m.

URI Board of Trustees members in attendance:

- Ms. Margo Cook, Chair (remote)
- Mr. Armand E. Sabitoni, Vice Chair (remote)
- Ms. Maria Ducharme (remote, arrived at 9:16 a.m.)
- Mr. Michael Fascitelli (remote)
- Mr. Joseph Formicola (remote)
- Ms. Monica Garnes (remote)
- Dr. Neil Kerwin (remote)
- Mr. Matthew Lenz (remote)
- Mr. Roby Luna (remote)
- Mr. David Martirano (remote)
- Mr. Joseph Matthews (remote)

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- Ms. Cortney Nicolato (remote)
- Mr. Vahid Ownjazayeri (remote)
- Ms. Jay Placencia (remote)
- Mr. Tom Ryan (remote)
- Honorable Robert Weygand (remote, arrived at 1:26 p.m.)
- Dr. Marc B. Parlange, President (ex officio, non-voting) (remote)
- Mr. Michael Grey (ex officio, non-voting) (remote, arrived at 10:10 a.m.)
- Mr. David Caprio (ex officio, non-voting) (remote, arrived at 10:03 a.m.)
- Dr. Kristine Bovy (faculty representative, non-voting) (remote)
- Ms. Revaa Goyal (student representative, non-voting) (remote)

URI Board of Trustees member not participating:

- Honorable Charles J. Fogarty, Jr.

URI President's Stewardship Council members in attendance:

- Ms. Abby Benson, Vice President, Administration and Finance (remote)
- Ms. Chelsea Berry, Senior Advisor to the President and Chief of Staff (remote)
- Mr. Thorr Bjorn, Director, Athletics (remote)
- Ms. Alyssa Boss, General Counsel (remote)
- Ms. Lauren Burgess, Executive Director, Legislative and Government Relations (remote)
- Mr. Gabriele Fariello, Chief Information Officer (remote)
- Ms. Becky Hill, Vice President, Human Resources (remote)
- Dr. Bethany Jenkins, Vice President, Research and Economic Development (remote)
- Dr. Dean Libutti, Associate Vice President for Enrollment Management and Student Success (remote)
- Ms. Markeisha Miner, Vice President, Community, Equity and Diversity (remote)
- Mr. John Poehlmann, Assistant Vice President, Financial Strategy and Planning (remote)
- Dr. Ellen Reynolds, Vice President for Student Affairs (remote)
- Dr. John Stringer, Executive Director, Institutional Research (remote)
- Dr. Barbara Wolfe, Provost and Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs (remote)

URI staff members in attendance:

- Ms. Tracey Angell, Assistant Vice President, Procurement and Purchasing (remote)
- Ms. Robin Cawley, Legal Assistant (in person)
- Ms. Michelle Curreri, Secretary to the Board of Trustees (in person)
- Ms. Lynn Owens, Associate Secretary to the Board of Trustees (in person)

Open Forum speakers:

- Mr. Joe Blotnick (remote)
- Mr. Anthony Burnett-Testa (remote)
- Ms. Emma Burnett-Testa (remote)
- Mr. Devin Kasparian (remote)

Chair Cook acknowledged that the University of Rhode Island occupies the traditional stomping ground of the Narragansett Nation and the Niantic People.

There were no proposed amendments to the agenda.

2. OPEN FORUM

Note: Public participants must submit an online public comment form requesting permission to speak no less than 2 hours in advance of the meeting. The online request form can be found via this [link](#).

Mr. Joe Blotnick, Mr. Anthony Burnett-Testa, Ms. Emma Burnett-Testa, and Mr. Devin Kasparian provided public comment regarding the W. Alton Jones campus, encouraging the renewed use of the Environmental Education Center. They shared their personal experiences and emphasized the significance of hands-on environmental education in fostering student learning within natural settings. Ms. Carolyn Wren also signed up to speak but did not join the meeting.

Chair Cook thanked the speakers for participating in the Open Forum. She noted that the University is exploring opportunities at the W. Alton Jones campus.

3. REPORT OF THE CHAIR

Margo Cook, Chair

a. URI Board of Trustees Five-Year Anniversary

Chair Cook announced the five-year anniversary of the URI Board of Trustees this year. She reported that the Board held its first meeting on April 17, 2020, and conducted business remotely during COVID. She highlighted the remarkable and substantial transformations that have happened at URI over the past five years. The Board conducted a comprehensive international search for the new University president, engaging the community through town hall meetings and virtual forums during the pandemic. Completing its most important responsibility, the Board hired President Parlange and met him in person at the June 2021 Board meeting following his appointment.

Chair Cook emphasized that under Marc's leadership, many factors of the University's new ten-year strategic plan are coming to fruition. She underscored the remarkable progress and efforts made to harness the University's research and economic development engines to drive the Rhode Island Blue economy, particularly in renewable energy, fisheries, aquaculture, environmental quality, marine and coastal conservation. She emphasized that these factors collectively contribute to the State of Rhode Island and accelerate and deepen URI's reputation.

Chair Cook acknowledged the collaborative efforts of RI citizens and state leaders in securing investments for improvements at the Narragansett Bay Campus and the Fine Arts building, as well as the approval of a new life sciences building through bond approval. Chair Cook commended the President, his leadership team, and the Board for building relationships with

government leaders and their efforts to secure resources for the University. These milestones reflect URI's role as an economic engine for the state and the value of our partnership. Chair Cook celebrated URI's achievement of the Wall Street Journal's ranking as the #1 public university in New England, underscoring URI's collective efforts.

Chair Cook expressed her enthusiasm for the next five years at URI, where ongoing efforts are dedicated to enhancing living facilities and social spaces on campus, as well as improving the Memorial Union. She underscored the Board's unwavering commitment to ensuring that the lives of students and faculty are enriched, and that URI graduates emerge from their experience with the best possible opportunities. This is achieved through the Board's diligent resource allocation, support for the President and his senior leadership team, and their dedication to providing an exceptional student experience.

Chair Cook thanked the members of the Board for their invaluable contributions and the significant progress made thus far. She expressed her excitement about the Board's continued support of the University.

b. URI Foundation CEO Search Update

Chair Cook reported that the Selection Committee is engaged in the process of selecting a chief executive officer (CEO) for the URI Foundation. The applicant pool has been narrowed to seven candidates, and interviews are scheduled to begin this week. The Selection Committee is expected to present a final recommendation to the URI Foundation Board of Directors. Chair Cook emphasized that URI is focused on identifying the most suitable candidate for the CEO position, as this role entails uncovering private resources and raising funds in response to evolving federal funding sources.

4. REPORT OF THE PRESIDENT

Marc Parlange, President

President Parlange's presentation slides can be found [here](#).

a. University Updates

President Parlange celebrated URI being named the number one public university in New England by the Wall Street Journal, and its overall ranking of 84 amongst the top 500 ranked universities. He announced that the University of Rhode Island has earned an R1 classification in the Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education. URI is one of only two Rhode Island universities to earn the R1 distinction. The Carnegie Classification distinction places URI among the nation's top research institutions. The designation is attributed to both research productivity and all-around excellence in research at URI. President Parlange thanked the faculty and all members of the University community who worked collaboratively to achieve this milestone.

The President recognized the Schilling family's historic gift to URI, which is now providing transformative opportunities for students interested in STEM. He celebrated two junior faculty members, Ashutosh Giri and Justin Parent, who were recently honored with Presidential Early Career Awards for Science and Engineering. He noted that URI Professor Jamie Ross's research on microplastics in the brain was featured in a recent edition of the Washington Post.

President Parlange highlighted improvements happening at the Fine Arts Center, renewal of the Athletics Complex, and revitalization of the Narragansett Bay Campus. URI is attracting companies to the state to work collaboratively at URI, supporting early-stage ventures in ocean engineering, oceanography, and environmental life sciences.

The President thanked Board members for participating in the Fall 2024 Commencement last December. He encouraged the trustees to participate in the three-day Spring Commencement ceremonies planned for May 16-18. He announced that this year's URI Day at the State House on April 1 will celebrate the graduates of the Talent Development Program at URI and will showcase all that URI has to offer and its impact on the state.

President Parlange discussed the University's government relations work at the state and federal levels. He noted URI's continuing efforts to build closer relationships with the local community, including the Narragansett and South Kingstown Town Councils. He noted that the Provost is leading a team focused on navigating the new administration's federal actions including assessing executive orders and their impacts on the University community. A webpage has been created for easy access to information. URI is in regular communication with other universities, state leaders, and local and national councils that support higher education.

President Parlange reported that work is well underway to explore a public medical school in Rhode Island. The RI State Senate Medical School Study Commission has held three public hearings to address healthcare needs in the state and improving health outcomes. A feasibility study is underway, and a report is expected in June 2025.

b. Budget Updates

The President's budget slides included a review of the University's FY2026 State Appropriation Request compared to the Governor's recommended budget, URI's Strategic Initiatives request compared to the Governor's recommended funding level, and RICAP funding requests including asset protection, Americans with Disabilities Act infrastructure improvements, and mechanical, electrical, and plumbing improvements to academic buildings. Board members discussed the state's cost of living contractual obligation and its impact on the University's budget.

The President noted that he looks forward to working with the Senate and the House as budget discussions advance during this legislative session.

c. Strategic Plan KPIs

President Parlange presented data related to Priority 2 of Focus URI - "Enhance Student Achievement". He spoke about the academic enhancement center and its work to meet the needs

of all students. The President noted that the FY2026 budget request includes funding for tutoring services, academic advisors, and student success facilities. He spoke about the good work going on across the University, including URI Summer Pell Completion grants for summer programs to advance student credit completion and time to degree goals, a math boot camp for incoming students, an early alert program to identify students in need, and the Hayden Foundation grant program providing emergency financial aid grants for students in need.

The President celebrated the success of its championship-caliber athletic programs and efforts to double the number of teams winning championships over a ten-year period. He reviewed slides illustrating degree completion data and graduation and retention rates, and the undergraduate graduation equity gap, and work being done to reach target goals.

Board members discussed the University's efforts to attract and support incoming Ph.D. scholars. They also discussed the Pell and non-Pell graduation rates, barriers to degree completion including tough financial times and the need for more resources, and efforts to implement strategies for improvement.

5. EXECUTIVE SESSION

The Board may seek to enter into executive session for the following items:

- a. **Discussion regarding potential litigation, pursuant to R.I.G.L. § 42-46-5(a)(2), and matters related to the question of the investment of public funds where the premature disclosure would adversely affect the public interest, pursuant to R.I.G.L. § 42-46-5(a)(7).**
Barbara Wolfe, Provost and Executive Vice President, Academic Affairs
Bethany Jenkins, Vice President, Research and Economic Development
- b. **Discussion regarding a matter related to the question of the investment of public funds where the premature disclosure would adversely affect the public interest, pursuant to R.I.G.L. § 42-46-5 (a)(7), specifically, Proprietary enrollment model discussion.**
Abby Benson, Vice President, Administration and Finance
- c. **Discussion pertaining to collective bargaining or litigation, or work sessions pertaining to collective bargaining or litigation, pursuant to R.I.G.L. § 42-46-5(a)(2), and matters related to the question of the investment of public funds where the premature disclosure would adversely affect the public interest, pursuant to R.I.G.L. § 42-46-5(a)(7).**
Becky Hill, Vice President, Human Resources

Chair Cook called for a motion, and on a motion duly made by Armand Sabitoni and seconded by Tom Ryan, and hearing no discussion on the motion, it was

VOTED: That the URI Board of Trustees convene into executive session pursuant to:

R.I.G.L. § 42-46-5(a)(2) for discussion regarding potential litigation and R.I.G.L. § 42-46-5(a)(7) for matters related to the question of the investment of public funds where the premature disclosure would adversely affect the public interest; and,

R.I.G.L. § 42-46-5(a)(7) for discussion of a matter related to the question of the investment of public funds where the premature disclosure would adversely affect the public interest; specifically, proprietary enrollment model, and,

R.I.G.L. § 42-46-5(a)(2) and R.I.G.L. § 42-46-5(a)(7) for discussion pertaining to collective bargaining or litigation, or work sessions pertaining to collective bargaining or litigation, and matters related to the question of the investment of public funds where the premature disclosure would adversely affect the public interest.

VOTE: 15 members voted in the affirmative and 0 members voted in the negative.

YEAS: Margo Cook, Maria Ducharme, Michael Fascitelli, Joseph Formicola, Neil Kerwin, Monica Garnes, Matthew Lenz, Roby Luna, David Martirano, Joseph Matthews, Cortney Nicolato, Vahid Ownjazayeri, Jay Placencia, Armand Sabitoni, Tom Ryan

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 0

All those participating remotely confirmed that no other person was present or able to hear the discussion at the remote locations.

At 10:12 a.m., the Board entered executive session. Virtual public access was paused.

At 11:58 a.m., the Board returned to open session. Virtual public access resumed.

Chair Cook called for a motion, and on a motion duly made by Cortney Nicolato and seconded by Monica Garnes, and hearing no discussion on the motion, it was

VOTED: That the Board seal the minutes of the February 13, 2025, executive session.

VOTE: 15 members voted in the affirmative and 0 members voted in the negative.

YEAS: Margo Cook, Maria Ducharme, Michael Fascitelli, Joseph Formicola, Monica Garnes, Neil Kerwin, Matt Lenz, Roby Luna, David Martirano, Joseph Matthews, Cortney Nicolato, Vahid Ownjazayeri, Jay Placencia, Armand Sabitoni, Tom Ryan

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 0

The Board recessed for lunch from 12:00 p.m. until 12:45 p.m.

Jay Placencia left the meeting at 12:06 p.m.

6. REPORTS OF THE COMMITTEE CHAIRS AND ACTION ITEMS

a. Ad hoc special Real Estate Committee Report

- (i) Update – December 10, 2024, ad hoc special Real Estate Committee Meeting
Michael Fascitelli, Committee Chair

Committee Chair Michael Fascitelli reported on activity at the December 10, 2024, ad hoc special Real Estate Committee meeting. He stated that the Committee reviewed progress being made on the University's student housing project. Vice President Abby Benson added that URI is working closely with Gilbane Development, URI's P3 partner, during the feasibility stage of the project.

Committee Chair Fascitelli informed the Board that a Request for Proposals (RFP) for a new hotel/mixed use development for a "third place" on Upper College Road (on URI property) has been publicly advertised. It is listed on URI's Purchasing website. He stressed the need to expedite this project while maintaining compliance with state regulations.

Committee Chair Fascitelli reported that the Committee reviewed a high-level presentation on the results of the discovery and analysis phase of the Comprehensive Campus Plan (CCP) being conducted by Sasaki, including findings related to housing challenges, campus community and third spaces, classroom and academic support, research and clinical programs, campus landscapes, mobility and intercampus connectivity, and space utilization. A report will be shared with the Board when ready. Board Chair Cook commended Vice President Benson on the progress of this effort.

Committee Chair Fascitelli stressed that the student housing project and the "third place" project are proceeding in parallel, as the need for both projects is high.

b. Finance and Facilities Committee Report

- (i) Update – February 3, 2025, Finance and Facilities Committee Meeting
Vahid Ownjazayeri, Committee Chair

Committee Chair Vahid Ownjazayeri reported on the February 3, 2025, Finance and Facilities Committee meeting. The Committee reviewed the Governor's recommended

budget for FY2026 and the annual report to bondholders. The Committee had a robust discussion on the proposed tuition and fee rates. Vice President Benson reported to the Committee on changes related to the Santilli revocable easement agreement, approvals under the Delegation of Authority to the President, and a disclosure of action taken in executive session regarding a contract with Workday for enterprise resource planning software.

- (ii) DISCUSSION ITEM: Approvals under the Delegation of Authority to the President Relating to Land and Property [Enclosure](#)
Abby Benson, Vice President, Administration and Finance

Vice President Benson reported that URI executed a business accelerator license agreement between East Stroudsburg University of Pennsylvania and URI to continue a spotted Lanternfly research partnership, an initiative funded by a USDA grant.

- (iii) ACTION ITEM: Approval of FY2026 Tuition and Mandatory Fees Rates [Enclosure](#)
Abby Benson, Vice President, Administration and Finance

Vice President Benson reported that the Committee had a robust discussion about proposed tuition and fee rates for Fiscal Year 2026. She stated that the Committee agreed with the proposed tuition increase of 3.5% for in-state and out-of-state students. She said that, based on analysis by URI administration, this tuition increase optimizes resources coming into the University to offset critical operations while keeping education accessible and limiting potential enrollment declines. Vice President Benson added that the Committee also supported the proposal of administration and mandatory fees increases resulting in a 0.7 % overall increase, with modest increases to the Fitness and Wellness Center fee and the Memorial Union fee. More information can be found in the enclosure.

Vice President Benson reported that the Committee also reviewed housing and dining rates, which are auxiliary functions at the University and must be self-supporting. URI administration proposed and the Committee supported a 3 % increase for housing and dining this year, reflecting a housing rate increase of 2 % and an increase of 4.7% for the dining rate due to rising food prices. She reported that the Finance and Facilities Committee voted unanimously to recommend that the Board approve the proposed tuition and fee rates as presented.

Thomas Ryan asked about increases last year and assumptions made in the state budget submission, to which Vice President Benson responded. There was discussion of competition from other states and impacts if there were cuts to what was submitted in the state budget.

Committee Chair Ownjazayeri called for a motion, and on a motion duly made by Armand Sabitoni and seconded by Joseph Formicola, and hearing no discussion on the motion, it was

VOTED: That the Board approve a tuition increase of 3.5% for in-state students and 3.5% for out-of-state students and increase Fee Rates, as presented in the enclosure, representing a 0.7% increase in total

fees, for FY2026.

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

YEAS: Margo Cook, Maria Ducharme, Michael Fascitelli, Joseph Formicola, Monica Garnes, Neil Kerwin, Roby Luna, David Martirano, Joseph Matthews, Cortney Nicolato, Vahid Ownjazayeri, Armand Sabitoni, Tom Ryan

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 0

Matthew Lenz was off camera for the vote.

- (iv) ACTION ITEM: Approval of Contracts in Excess of \$5 Million, specifically; change order to contract with Katie Schibler & Associates. [Enclosure](#)
Abby Benson, Vice President, Administration and Finance

Vice President Benson reported that the Board approved an initial increase to this contract last year. At this time, URI is seeking a short-term extension of the contract while the Request for Proposals process is finalized to identify a new firm to support the University's broad marketing campaigns.

Committee Chair Ownjazayeri confirmed that the Committee recommended that the Board approve this change order to the contract with Katie Schibler & Associates. *Note: The initial recommendation memo presented to the Finance and Facilities Committee on February 3 contained information for both the Katie Schibler & Associates proposed contract change order and the First Transit, Inc. proposed contract change order and called for one motion. Because the Committee deferred action on the First Transit, Inc. contract, two separate recommendation memos were prepared for this Board meeting. The facts contained in the Katie Schibler & Associates enclosure are the same facts as those presented to the Committee on February 3.*

Committee Chair Ownjazayeri called for a motion, and on a motion duly made by Neil Kerwin and seconded by Mike Fascitelli, and hearing no discussion on the motion, it was

VOTED: THAT the Board approve the purchase of Services from Katie Schibler & Associates, as presented on substantially the terms in the enclosed document, and that any authorized signatory (as defined in the Policy on Approval and Execution of Contracts and Other Binding Documents) be authorized to negotiate the terms of any documents relating to such transaction on substantially the terms in the enclosed document, with any such changes and additional terms as are deemed necessary or appropriate by the authorized signatory.

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

YEAS: Margo Cook, Maria Ducharme, Michael Fascitelli, Joseph Formicola, Monica Garnes, Neil Kerwin, Roby Luna, David Martirano, Joseph Matthews, Cortney Nicolato, Vahid Ownjazayeri, Armand Sabitoni, Tom Ryan

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 0

Matthew Lenz was off camera for the vote.

- (v) ACTION ITEM: Approval of Contracts in Excess of \$5 Million, specifically; change order to contract with First Transit, Inc. [Enclosure](#)
Abby Benson, Vice President, Administration and Finance

Vice President Benson reported that the Finance and Facilities Committee deferred action on this proposed contract extension for campus shuttle services, asking for more information on prior use and annual costs. *Note: Additional information has been provided in the enclosure, including expense history. The value of the proposed change order has been adjusted since presented to the Committee on February 3.*

Vice President Benson stated that First Transit operates nine shuttles that service four routes Monday through Friday between 7:30 a.m. and 7:30 p.m. URI monitors the service and ridership regularly and makes adjustments accordingly. Increased costs over the past years are reflective of added hours and fuel costs. Following an internal review, URI administration has adjusted its initial recommendation for this time and materials contract. Based on current usage, we anticipate needing an additional \$1.65M to be added to the current Purchase Order value of \$9.6M. The proposed increase does not materially change the contract and is based on anticipated increased usage and fuel consumption.

Committee members confirmed that the additional information provided satisfies their inquiry about annual expenses.

Committee Chair Ownjazayeri called for a motion, and on a motion duly made by Armand Sabitoni and seconded by Joseph Matthews and David Martirano, and hearing no discussion on the motion, it was

VOTED: That the Board approve the purchase of Services from First Transit, Inc., as presented on substantially the terms in the enclosed document, and that any authorized signatory (as defined in the Policy on Approval and Execution of Contracts and Other Binding Documents) be authorized to negotiate the terms of any documents relating to such transaction on substantially the terms in the enclosed document, with any such changes and additional

terms as are deemed necessary or appropriate by the authorized signatory.

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

YEAS: Margo Cook, Maria Ducharme, Michael Fascitelli, Joseph Formicola, Monica Garnes, Neil Kerwin, Roby Luna, David Martirano, Joseph Matthews, Cortney Nicolato, Vahid Ownjazayeri, Armand Sabitoni, Tom Ryan

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 0

Matthew Lenz was off camera for the vote.

c. Institutional Risk and Compliance Committee Report

- (i) Update – February 4, 2025, Institutional Risk and Compliance Committee Meeting
Roby Luna, Committee Chair

Committee Chair Roby Luna reported on the February 4, 2025, Institutional Risk and Compliance Committee (IRCC) meeting. He stated that the Committee reviewed the University's Affirmative Action Plan (AAP) that was filed with the state in January. The Committee heard a brief update on the recent revocation of federal executive order 11246, which established affirmative action programs. The University is still required to submit an affirmative action plan to the state per Rhode Island general law.

Committee Chair Luna reported that the Committee reviewed the current landscape on federal compliance, including the increasing number of federal regulations and policies impacting research activities at the University. The Committee received an update on a National Science Foundation audit for incurred costs by the EPSCOR program. URI has successfully responded and reduced the amount being refunded to the National Science Foundation and is seeking reimbursement from a sub-awardee.

Concluding his report, Committee Chair Luna stated that the Committee heard a presentation from URI's external auditors (CLA) regarding the recent single audit and review of NCAA agreed upon procedures. CLA audited the research and development cluster programs and provided an unmodified opinion on the single audit. CLA additionally had no concerns of note regarding the NCAA report.

Matt Lenz left the meeting at 1:13 p.m.

d. Academic Affairs and Research Committee Report

(i) Update – February 5, 2025, Academic Affairs and Research Committee Meeting
Neil Kerwin, Committee Chair

Committee Chair Neil Kerwin reported on the February 5, 2025, Academic Affairs and Research Committee meeting. He noted that Committee members voted unanimously to recommend that the Board approve the action items 7.b. – 7.e. as listed in the omnibus vote. Committee Chair Kerwin asked Provost Wolfe and Vice President Jenkins to provide a recap of information shared during the Committee meeting.

Provost Wolfe reported three major searches at URI: the University Librarian, the Dean of the College of Environment and Life Sciences, and the Vice Provost for Academic and Faculty Initiatives. She also discussed the work of the special legislative commission studying Rhode Island's healthcare workforce, including education, retaining primary care physicians, and establishing a state medical school at URI. A feasibility study has launched, including financial, economic, social, and healthcare impact analysis and preliminary budget and funding requirements. The Board will be informed as the study progresses.

The Provost reported that the graduate school recently underwent an external review. URI is reviewing the final report and recommendation.

Provost Wolfe also noted that URI is excited about the record number of applications to the University, with a 300 % increase in FAFSA applications and a 10% increase in graduate school applications.

Vice President Bethany Jenkins highlighted the University's research achievements. In the last two years, the University's award portfolio increased by 39% to \$146M, significantly higher than previous years. The Research Division is on track to meet its KPIs in terms of the growth reflected in research expenditures. Mid-year in FY2025, URI identified \$1.2M in funding for indirect costs supporting research staffing and laboratory infrastructure.

The Vice President noted that these all-time highs align with URI's prestigious new designation as a R1 research university. She expressed her pride in the faculty, investigators, and early career staff. She celebrated the Ocean Exploration Cooperative Institute's deep-sea research and exploration, which brings in research dollars from the NOAA Ocean Exploration grant portfolio.

e. Governance Committee Report

(i) Update – February 5, 2025, Governance Committee Meeting
Cortney Nicolato, Committee Chair

Committee Chair Cortney Nicolato reported on the February 5, 2025, Governance Committee meeting. She confirmed that Committee members voted unanimously to recommend that the Board approve action item 7.f. listed in the omnibus vote, rescinding

the Board of Trustees' July 1, 2024 approval of the University's Policy on Nondiscrimination and Sexual Misconduct.

Committee Chair Nicolato stated that the Committee discussed the reappointment of trustees whose terms expire this year. A letter listing their names was sent to the Governor for his consideration. The Committee discussed plans for the annual URI Board of Trustees retreat scheduled for June 27th. Committee Chair Nicolato encouraged the trustees to complete the annual self-assessment survey that was distributed earlier this week.

(ii) ACTION ITEM: Approval of the University of Rhode Island Board of Trustees *Regulations Regarding Use of University Property* [Enclosure](#)
Abby Benson, Vice President, Administration and Finance

Vice President Benson reported that the draft regulation was brought to the Board at the November meeting and posted publicly for feedback. The University received about 473 comments on the draft, with community interest primarily around how the draft could potentially limit academic freedom and freedom of expression and protesting. URI created an ad hoc task force with representatives from the Faculty Senate, the Student Senate, the Graduate Student Association, and a number of staff to work through all comments and to make improvements to the regulations.

Vice President Benson highlighted the improvements made, including:

- Clarified text to make sure we were consistent and precise in our language.
- Addressed concerns regarding protections for the right of free speech and assembly.
- Included explicit references to the University Manual and Student Handbook and tried to provide clarification on the distinction between enforcement of the regulation and discipline.
- Ensured that the regulations use legally defensible and clear language, especially language that had been defined by a legal precedent in the past.
- Emphasized the activity neutral intent of the regulations.
- Addressed concerns about leafletting and litter. There was concern about language around sign posting and banners that people felt could limit their free speech. Added clarifying language about postings that would permanently deface or damage university property.
- Added detail around amplified sound and that the University's Department of Public Safety would put together procedures regarding acceptable decibel levels.
- Clarified language around after-hours access for buildings. There was some concern that, as initially drafted, faculty and students could not get into buildings after hours. Updates were made to clarify that any bona fide use of university property by a university faculty, staff or student was acceptable after hours.

- Clarified language around bicycles, skateboards, and similar conveyances making sure that it was clear that URI appreciates the use of those vehicles specifically around sustainability and mobility concerns.

Vice President Benson confirmed that the enclosure contains the final version of the proposed regulation. The Governance Committee voted to recommend approval to the full Board.

Committee Chair Nicolato called for a motion, and on a motion duly made by Monica Garnes and seconded by Neil Kerwin, and hearing no discussion on the motion, it was

VOTED: That the Board approve the University of Rhode Island Board of Trustees *Regulations Regarding Use of University Property* as presented.

VOTE: 11 members voted in the affirmative and 0 members voted in the negative.

YEAS: Margo Cook, Michael Fascitelli, Joseph Formicola, Monica Garnes, Neil Kerwin, David Martirano, Joseph Matthews, Cortney Nicolato, Vahid Ownjazayeri, Armand Sabitoni, Tom Ryan

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 0

Maria Ducharme and Roby Luna were off camera for the vote.

Prior to considering the Omnibus Vote, Chair Cook asked President Parlange to speak about today's gathering in the Memorial Union to celebrate the news that URI has achieved R1 designation in the latest Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education. The designation recognizes universities with the most advanced research activity and impact – placing URI among the top-tier research institutions in the nation.

President Parlange acknowledged the hard work and efforts of all URI faculty, leadership, staff, and students who worked so hard to achieve this strategic goal. He stressed that Ph.D. students are the life blood of research universities. He recognized and thanked the Governor, state representatives and senators that attended the event. The President stated that it was a Rhode Island celebration and it is just part of the great momentum at the University of Road Island.

The President noted that during the event, Vice President Jenkins spoke about the great research work being done at URI. Provost Wolfe spoke about all the people who contributed to achieving the R1 status, and Dean DeBoef spoke about the many graduate students from around the world who played a role in this achievement. He thanked members of his leadership team for organizing the event.

7. OMNIBUS VOTE ON COMMITTEE-RELATED ACTION ITEMS AND APPROVAL OF MINUTES

ACTION: Approval of the actions described below, as recommended by the referenced committees and presented in the referenced enclosures where applicable:

Approval of Minutes:

- a. Approval of the Minutes of the November 8, 2024, Board Meeting. [Enclosure](#)

Academic Affairs and Research Committee recommended action:

- b. Approval of legislation recommended by the Faculty Senate and the President for a College of Education organizational change to create a new degree opportunity, Master of Arts, Educational Leadership & Policy. [Enclosure](#)
- c. Approval of legislation recommended by the Faculty Senate and the President for a College of Business organizational change to create a new degree opportunity, Bachelor of Arts, Business Studies Program. [Enclosure](#)
- d. Approval of legislation recommended by the Faculty Senate and the President for a College of Health Sciences organizational change to create a new degree opportunity, Master of Public Health Program. [Enclosure](#)
- e. Approval of legislation recommended by the Faculty Senate and the President for a College of **Business Health Sciences** organizational change to create a new degree opportunity, Master of Science in Management (MSM). [Enclosure](#) *Note: The Master of Science in Management (MSM) degree opportunity is part of the College of Business. The meeting agenda incorrectly listed the College of Health Sciences.*

Governance Committee recommended action:

- f. Approval related to the URI Board of Trustees Policy on Nondiscrimination and Sexual Misconduct [Enclosure](#)

Before proceeding with an Omnibus Vote to approve the past meeting's minutes and the committee-recommended action items, Chair Cook asked if there were any action items listed in the Omnibus Vote for which any member had any questions or would like to discuss, oppose or remove from the Omnibus Vote to be voted on individually.

Hearing none, Chair Cook called for a motion, and on a motion duly made by Cortney Nicolato and seconded by Tom Ryan, and hearing no discussion on the motion, it was

VOTED: That the Board approve agenda action items 7.a. through 7.f. as recommended and presented.

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

YEAS: Margo Cook, Michael Fascitelli, Joseph Formicola, Monica Garnes, Neil Kerwin, Roby Luna, David Martirano, Joseph Matthews, Cortney Nicolato, Vahid Ownjazayeri, Armand Sabitoni, Tom Ryan, Robert Weygand

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 0

Maria Ducharme was off camera during the vote.

Chair Cook encouraged the trustees to participate in URI Day on April 1 and the Spring Commencement in May. More information will be shared with the trustees.

8. ADJOURN

Chair Cook called for a motion, and on a motion duly made by Joseph Matthews and seconded by David Martirano, and hearing no discussion on the motion, it was

VOTED: That the Board adjourn the meeting.

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

YEAS: Margo Cook, Michael Fascitelli, Joseph Formicola, Monica Garnes, Neil Kerwin, Roby Luna, David Martirano, Joseph Matthews, Cortney Nicolato, Vahid Ownjazayeri, Armand Sabitoni, Tom Ryan, Robert Weygand

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 0

Maria Ducharme was off camera during the vote.

At 1:32 p.m., the meeting was adjourned.

The next URI Board of Trustees Meeting is scheduled for Friday, April 25, 2025.