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**The University of Rhode Island
Board of Trustees Annual Retreat and Meeting
Friday, June 26, 2026 · 9:00 a.m. EDT**

**The University of Rhode Island
Room 025C · The Fascitelli Center for Advanced Engineering
2 East Alumni Avenue, Kingston, RI 02881**

OFFICIAL MINUTES

1. CALL TO ORDER

Margo Cook, Board Chair

Chair Margo Cook welcomed everyone to the June 26, 2026, annual retreat and meeting of the University of Rhode Island (URI) Board of Trustees and noted that the meeting was being held in person at the Fascitelli Center for Advanced Engineering, with some board members participating remotely via Zoom. 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 Emily Diomandes conducted a roll call attendance and reported that a quorum of members was present. Chair Cook called the meeting to order at 9:17 a.m.

URI Board of Trustees members in attendance:

- Margo Cook, Chair (in person)
- Armand E. Sabitoni, Vice Chair (in person)
- David Barrett (in person)
- Maria Ducharme (in person) (arrived at 10:23 a.m.)
- Charles J. Fogarty (in person)
- Joseph Formicola (in person)
- Monica Games (in person)
- Neil Kerwin (remote)
- Matthew Lenz (in person)
- David Martirano (in person)
- Joseph Matthews (in person)
- Cortney Nicolato (in person) (left at 2:00 p.m.; then joined virtually)
- Vahid Ownjazayeri (in person)

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- Jay Placencia (in person) (left at 2:00 p.m.; then joined virtually)
- Tom Ryan (remote) (left at 11:25 a.m.)
- Marc B. Parlange, President (ex officio, non-voting) (in person)
- Michael Grey (ex officio, non-voting) (in person)
- Kristine Bovy (faculty representative, non-voting) (in person)
- Ryan Estus (student representative, non-voting) (in person) (left at 11:18 a.m.)

URI Board of Trustees members not participating:

- David Caprio
- Michael Fascitelli
- Roby Luna

URI President's Stewardship Council members in attendance:

- Sue K. Adams, Vice Provost for Academic And Faculty Initiatives (in person)
- Abby Benson, Senior Vice President, Administration and Finance (in person)
- Lauren Burgess, Executive Director, Legislative and Government Relations (in person)
- Chelsea Berry, Senior Advisor to the President and Chief of Staff (in person)
- Alyssa Boss, Vice President and General Counsel (in person)
- Gabriele Fariello, Chief Information Officer (in person)
- Becky Hill, Vice President, Human Resources (in person)
- Jeanne Hruska, Senior Advisor and Chief of Staff to the Provost and Executive Vice President (in person)
- Bethany Jenkins, Vice President for Research and Economic Development (remote)
- Dean Libutti, Associate Vice President, Enrollment Management and Student Success (in person)
- Pat Lyons, Vice President, Director of Athletics (in person)
- Matthew McDonald, Vice President, Communications and Marketing (in person)
- Steven Mello, Vice Provost for Academic Resource Management (in person)
- Dan Moos, Chief of Staff to the Vice President, Administration and Finance (in person)
- Dave Palazzetti, Interim Assistant Vice President, Facilities Group (in person)
- Ellen Reynolds, Vice President, Student Affairs (in person)
- John Stringer, Executive Director, Institutional Research (in person)
- Barbara Wolfe, Provost and Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs (in person)

URI staff members in attendance:

- Ryan Carrillo, Director, Planning and Real Estate Development (in person)
- Robin Cawley, Legal Assistant, Office of the General Counsel (in person)
- Christina DeCesare, Technician, Endpoint Support, ITS (in person)
- Emily Diomandes, Deputy Chief of Staff to the President and Board Secretary (in person)
- Dan DosSantos, Director of Compensation and Benefits (in person)
- Michael Fitzpatrick, Jr., Assistant Vice President for Human Resources (in person)
- Cate Morrison, Teaching Professor, Harrington School of Communications and President, URI/AAUP Executive Committee (in person)

Guests:

- Dino Ciccone, Director, Azure Cloud, AI Specialist, Microsoft (in person)
- Gaurav Khanna, Assistant Vice President, Research Computing, URI (in person)
- Ha Pham, Senior Principal, Tripp Umbach (in person)
- Aleksandra Przegalinska, Harvard University (in person)
- Yan Sun, Chair, Computer and Biomedical Engineering, URI (in person)
- Paul Umbach, President and Founding Partner, Tripp Umbach (in person)

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

Chair Cook asked if there were any proposed amendments to the agenda; none were presented.

2. ANNUAL BOARD RETREAT

a. OPENING REMARKS

Margo Cook, Board Chair

Chair Cook reported that this year, the retreat program will take a slightly different approach, beginning with a great panel on artificial intelligence (AI) moderated by Gabriele Fariello, URI's Chief Information Officer. AI is highly prevalent in our corporate and personal lives, dramatically reshaping how organizations function and altering the future of talent requirements. Following the AI panel discussion, the focus will shift to a self-reflection session led by Governance Committee Chair Courtney Nicolato, where board members will assess performance, discuss areas for growth and development, and identify current strengths to maintain.

Chair Cook noted that this self-assessment comes at an ideal time for the university during its NECHE accreditation process. Trustee Neil Kerwin has been working closely with Provost Wolfe and the team to collect governance data, and he will provide a full update on our readiness for this review. Later, during the executive session, Paul Umbach will present the latest segment of the medical school proposal, specifically focusing on the financial models and economic impacts, which will culminate in a board vote on the next stage of approval.

Before starting the panel discussion, Chair Cook recognized several board members for their recent milestones. Trustee Jay Placencia was recently appointed as the new Board Chair for United Way, highlighting the powerful, collaborative relationships forming right here within our own organization. Additionally, Vice Chair Armand Sabitoni was honored this past Tuesday by the New England Laborers' International Union of North America with a building dedication and ribbon-cutting ceremony for the Armand E. Sabitoni New England Laborers' Training Academy in Hopkinton, Massachusetts, celebrating his immense, lifelong impact on working people.

Chair Cook called on Chief Information Officer Gabriele Fariello to introduce distinguished speakers to kick off a collaborative conversation focused primarily on how AI is transforming higher education, followed by an open discussion for board member feedback.

b. PANEL DISCUSSION

Artificial Intelligence and what it means for the modern research

University

Dino Ciccone, Director, Azure Cloud, AI Specialist, Microsoft

Gabriele Fariello, Chief Information Officer, URI

Gaurav Khanna, Assistant Vice President, Research Computing, URI

Aleksandra Przegalinska, Harvard University

Yan Sun, Chair, Computer and Biomedical Engineering, URI

Panel moderator Gabriele Fariello thanked the Board of Trustees for hosting the session and encouraged an interactive discussion with questions from the board. The expert panelists were introduced from right to left as follows:

- Alexandra Przegalinska: Professor and Vice President for Innovation and AI at Kosminski University, and a Fellow at the Center for Labor and a Just Economy at Harvard Law School.
- Dino Ciccone: Director of Azure Cloud and AI Specialist at Microsoft and a proud URI alumnus, representing the private sector perspective.
- Gaurav Khanna: Assistant Vice President for Research Computing, Professor of Physics, and Director of URI's Institute for AI and Computational Research.
- Yan Sun: Professor and Chair of Electrical, Computer, and Biomedical Engineering, and Director of URI's Center for Cyber-Physical Intelligence and Security.

The panelists discussed AI-related changes in higher education, with particular emphasis on URI's growing momentum in AI research and the need for responsible AI usage in curriculum design.

Panelists discussed both the opportunities and limitations of artificial intelligence in higher education, identifying several areas they believe are either overhyped or underappreciated. They agreed that the current emphasis on large language models for text generation is often overstated. While AI can efficiently produce well-structured content, speakers noted that it is less effective at original or creative thinking and should not replace human judgment, critical thinking, or decision-making. They also challenged the notion that AI will replace faculty or fundamentally transform the traditional university, emphasizing that teaching, mentorship, and human interaction remain central to higher education.

At the same time, panelists highlighted several underappreciated applications of AI. They pointed to its potential to enhance student success through personalized career advising, curriculum planning, student mobility guidance, and other administrative and student support services that have historically been resource intensive. AI was also described as a productivity tool that can help faculty and staff better support students by providing insights into student progress and streamlining routine tasks. Speakers emphasized that successful AI adoption requires discipline-specific approaches rather than uniform policies across all academic programs. They further noted that improving AI literacy and competency among faculty and administrators is critical, as institutions vary considerably in their readiness and integration of responsible AI practices into curricula and teaching. Overall, the discussion underscored the importance of adopting AI in ways that enhance, rather than replace, the educational experience.

Gaurav Khanna highlighted URI's growing momentum in AI research, citing faculty hiring, new research grants totaling \$4-5 million, and a 30-fold increase in AI compute cycles over the past two to three years. The discussion included specific examples of URI's AI-enabled research in protecting the U.S. power grid through anomaly detection and human-machine teaming, as well as a successful technology transfer leading to a startup acquired by Advanced Micro Devices, Inc. (AMD), a major American semiconductor company that designs computer processors (CPUs), graphics processors (GPUs), AI accelerators, and other computing technologies.

Prompted by board member inquiry, panelists discussed how artificial intelligence is being used to strengthen the security and resilience of critical infrastructure. Panelists explained that AI combines traditional machine learning with generative AI to detect anomalies caused by severe weather, equipment failures, or potential cyberattacks while helping human operators interpret large volumes of real-time and historical data. Rather than replacing human decision-making, AI was described as a tool that improves situational awareness by summarizing complex information, supporting faster decisions, and coordinating responses such as directing robotic inspections. The discussion also highlighted AI's role in cybersecurity, noting that it can reduce the impact of false-alert fatigue by more consistently identifying genuine threats. At the same time, panelists cautioned that AI is also enabling more sophisticated cyberattacks, including the discovery of system vulnerabilities and zero-day exploits. As a result, they emphasized that AI has become an essential defensive capability for protecting critical infrastructure against increasingly advanced AI-enabled threats.

The discussion focused on AI governance and implementation in European educational settings, particularly within a consortium spanning multiple countries including Greece, Spain, Germany, and Estonia, with a focus on university management. Aleksandra Przegalska described the project to create a synthetic Roblox-like Learning Management System where students can experience and take courses from different universities, with career advisory services as a key feature. Presenters shared research findings showing that while AI adoption among students has increased, so has skepticism about AI, leading to a paradox where students are both concerned about and using AI more frequently. The discussion also covered curriculum redesign approaches, including five pillars for addressing AI integration in engineering education: curriculum design, capstone projects with industry collaboration, student involvement in policy development, faculty development, and transparency through the use of Cipher AI marking system from A0 to A5.

Chair Cook asked how organizations can balance AI governance, including security, privacy, and cost considerations, with encouraging responsible innovation and adoption. In response, Aleksandra Przegalska explained that effective AI governance begins with a strong regulatory foundation, such as established legal and privacy frameworks, but should not rely solely on rigid rules. Instead, she emphasized that successful governance is built through ongoing collaboration among stakeholders, evidence-based research, and continuous feedback from users. Drawing on her experience leading a European university consortium, she noted that engaging faculty and students in the development and evaluation of AI applications helps identify appropriate use cases while building trust. She concluded that governance frameworks should enable beneficial AI use while discouraging applications that lack user confidence or educational value.

Responding to Fariello's prompt about effective and targeted use of AI, Dino Ciccone noted that we should focus less on whether to use AI and more on teaching when and how to use it effectively.

Industry engagement is valuable because it helps students understand real-world expectations, responsible AI use, and the core skills employers still expect humans to master. At the same time, emerging evidence suggests AI is most effective for execution and implementation, while excessive reliance during idea generation can reduce creativity and originality. Rather than adopting blanket policies to either encourage or ban AI, we need evidence-based, task-specific guidance that teaches students—and faculty—to make informed decisions about when AI should lead, when humans should lead, and how to divide work between them.

The discussion transitioned to teaching responsible AI usage in educational settings, with participants sharing experiences about incorporating AI principles into curriculum. One presenter described a classroom experiment where students were given a choice to use AI for a take-home exam, leading to important discussions about AI's role as an equalizer in education. The conversation explored the challenges of teaching effective AI usage at undergraduate versus graduate levels, with participants noting the need for more evidence-based approaches rather than polarizing extremes of complete AI adoption or banning. A specific study involving 200 startup founders was mentioned, which found that while full AI collaboration led to strong execution plans, it also resulted in less innovative ideas compared to selective AI use.

The group discussed the challenges and opportunities of integrating AI into higher education, with participants sharing their experiences and concerns about implementation speed and curriculum development. Trustee Dave Barrett highlighted the opportunity to train "laypeople" in applied AI use across different non-technical professions, incorporating responsible collaboration. Dino Ciccone commented that successful adoption requires cross-departmental collaboration and curriculum integration. Chair Cook and others expressed concerns about moving too slowly with AI adoption, emphasizing the need to embed AI knowledge into core educational principles. Trustee Tom Ryan emphasized a focus on efficiency and productivity.

Panelist Yan Sun shared URI's rapid response approach, including hiring industry experts to teach special topic courses and developing an AI Machine Learning Certificate Program to quickly equip students with relevant skills. Trustee Matt Lenz spoke of Meta's CLAW system in use and integrated into all its systems.

The meeting focused on the growing importance of AI skills in the job market, with survey data showing that 90% of companies now check for AI skills during hiring, particularly in technology fields. Participants discussed adopting AI assistant platforms and productivity agents to help employees work more efficiently, although compliance and deployment challenges were noted. The discussion highlighted the need for universities to be transparent about their AI usage and to prepare students for AI-requiring careers, while acknowledging that rapid AI development makes long-term predictions difficult.

Responding to Trustee Fogarty's question about AI's impact on URI over the next five years, Gabriele Fariello emphasized that AI will significantly influence URI's operations and educational mission, and that the university's ability to adapt will depend on strategic investment, infrastructure, faculty engagement, and continued board support. While he believes URI is competitively positioned, he stressed the need for resources and institutional alignment to move forward effectively. He noted that the progress between AI models in recent months has exceeded the changes seen over previous years,

making long-term forecasting uncertain. Board members discussed with panelists how they can support the university and staff in preparing students for future AI-related jobs, with a focus on faculty hiring processes and curriculum development. URI's new AI certificate program was approved and could generate revenue, though current constraints limit its availability to only students whose majors require it. The discussion highlighted the evolving nature of AI technology, moving beyond simple large language model (LLM) interactions to more complex AI agents, and emphasized the importance of teaching students how to effectively work with and manage AI systems rather than just using them.

The panelists discussed the integration of AI in higher education, emphasizing the importance of critical thinking and establishing clear norms for AI usage. They highlighted URI's advantages in areas like ocean engineering, defense, and medical education, while acknowledging the need for additional resources and expertise. The discussion stressed the importance of setting standards and best practices for AI implementation, particularly in balancing efficiency with maintaining human judgment and critical thinking skills.

The discussion concluded by recognizing that URI is operating within a rapidly evolving AI ecosystem where adaptability and AI literacy will be essential skills for the future. Trustees emphasized the importance of sustaining the university's momentum through strategic investment, effective governance, and alignment with workforce needs. Key opportunities identified included advocating for investment in AI-related faculty, staff, and infrastructure; promoting URI's AI initiatives and accomplishments; and providing leadership with insights into industry expectations for AI skills and applications.

Gabriele Fariello's presentation generated strong interest among trustees and highlighted URI's opportunity to distinguish itself as a leader in AI education and innovation. The discussion reinforced the importance of communicating the university's existing strengths while continuing to build the capacity needed to prepare students, faculty, and staff for an AI-driven future.

Chair Cook thanked Gabriele Fariello and panelists for an excellent presentation. She noted that the thoughtful questions and engagement today reflect how important this topic is to our university. As we continue advancing our AI efforts, let's focus not only on how we can support this work, but also on establishing strong standards, protocols, and best practices that create an equitable environment for our students. Chair Cook stated that it's also clear that URI is already doing significant work in this space, and we should continue the conversation about how to better highlight and communicate those efforts across the university and beyond.

3. REPORT OF THE PRESIDENT

Marc Parlange, President

- a.** Update on the University Budget
- b.** Strategic Priority 3

President Parlange reported on activity at URI and presented [slides linked here](#). He highlighted the successful conclusion of the academic year and recognized the recent Ocean Robotics Laboratory ribbon-cutting, commencement, and other campus events. He thanked the Board for its engagement and support throughout the year.

The President discussed challenges facing higher education, including rapid advances in artificial intelligence, federal policy changes affecting international students, demographic enrollment trends, and proposed federal research funding changes. The University plans to submit formal comments on the proposed federal Office of Management and Budget actions related to research funding.

Updates were provided on major campus initiatives and capital projects, including the Fine Arts Center, Ocean Robotics Laboratory, Ocean Engineering facilities, Meade Stadium, track and field complex, new student housing, and planning for a Biomedical Sciences building. New leadership appointments were announced, including the Dean of the Faculty of Humanities and the University Librarian, and appreciation was expressed for departing Vice President Bethany Jenkins.

The President reviewed state support for the university, including funding for the integrated health sciences initiative, startup support for the medical school, capital investments, and operating appropriations. Fundraising and alumni engagement continue to show strong growth, reflecting increased philanthropic support and stakeholder engagement.

Progress toward the University's strategic goal (Priority 3) of fostering an inclusive, people-centered culture was also reviewed. Diversity metrics for students, faculty, and staff continue to improve.

Concluding his report, President Parlange thanked everyone for a great year.

Chair Cook emphasized the significance of state action on funding and advancing a school of medicine at URI. Recognizing ongoing budget challenges, she encouraged more self-reliance in fundraising and philanthropic efforts to support the growth of the University. Vice Chair Sabitoni highlighted the state's recent enactment of P3 legislation modeled after URI's P3 for student housing.

4. DISCUSSION ITEM

- a. **2026 URI Annual Report, pursuant to R.I.G.L. § 16-32-2.1.** [Enclosure](#)
Markeisha Miner, Vice President, Community, Equity, and Diversity

Vice President Markeisha Minor presented the 2026 URI Annual Report, pursuant to R.I.G.L. § 16-32-2.1, highlighting measurable progress in the diversity of the University's student, faculty, and staff populations, as well as initiatives to strengthen recruitment, retention, and campus climate. The presentation outlined enhanced hiring practices, expanded recruitment outreach, the work of the University Diversity Council, and plans for the Inclusive Excellence Academy to support an inclusive, people-centered culture. [Presentation slides are linked here.](#)

Vice President Miner described ongoing efforts to strengthen recruitment practices by expanding outreach, enhancing job advertising strategies, tracking hiring metrics, and implementing best practices for search committees to attract broad and qualified applicant pools. She noted challenges affecting recruitment, including housing affordability and cost of living, while reporting positive momentum in attracting candidates due to the University's growing reputation. Additional initiatives include expanded professional development for hiring committees, continued climate assessment, enhanced data collection on recruitment and retention outcomes, and collaboration across campus to support inclusive excellence.

Vice President Becky Hill spoke to the expansion of network resources and outreach within the Human Resources Department. She and Vice President Miner stressed the intentional and authentic efforts across campus to cultivate a more inclusive community at URI.

Trustees emphasized the importance of sustaining recruitment and retention efforts by fostering a welcoming and inclusive environment that supports the success of all students, faculty, and staff. Discussion highlighted the value of broadening professional networks, increasing leadership representation, strengthening community connections, supporting student success—including for students with disabilities and other underserved populations—and using recruitment, retention, and campus climate data to inform continuous improvement. Trustees encouraged university leaders to take personal responsibility for expanding diverse professional networks, strengthening inclusive hiring and retention practices, and increasing representation in leadership to foster a greater sense of belonging and opportunity across the University.

The Board expressed appreciation for the University's progress and ongoing commitment to inclusive excellence.

5. EXECUTIVE SESSION

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

- a. Discussion pursuant to R.I.G.L. § 42-46-5(a)(7) regarding matters related to the question of the investment of public funds where the premature disclosure would adversely affect the public interest, specifically:**

(i) Tripp Umbach Business Plan for the University of Rhode Island School of Medicine

Marc Parlange, President

Paul Umbach, President, Tripp Umbach

(ii) Enrollment and recruitment

Barbara Wolfe, Provost and Executive Vice President, Academic Affairs

Dean Libutti, Associate Vice President for Enrollment Management and Student Success

- b. Discussion regarding President Parlange's annual self-assessment and performance review, annual performance-based incentive, and base salary, pursuant to R.I.G.L. § 42-46-5(a)(1).**

Margo Cook, Board Chair

Chair Cook called for a motion, and on a motion duly made by Charles Fogarty and seconded by Armand Sabitoni, 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)(7) for discussion regarding the Tripp Umbach Business Plan for the URI School of Medicine, and enrollment and recruitment; and,

R.I.G.L. § 42-46-5(a)(1) for discussion regarding President Parlange's annual self-assessment and performance review, annual performance-based incentive, and base salary, as referenced on the agenda.

President Parlange has been notified that discussion will take place in executive session.

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

YEAS: Dave Barrett, Margo Cook, Maria Ducharme, Charles Fogarty, Joseph Formicola, Monica Garnes, Neil Kerwin, Matthew Lenz, David Martirano, Joseph Matthews, Cortney Nicolato, Vahid Ownjazayeri, Jay Placencia, Tom Ryan, Armand Sabitoni

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 0

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

At 11:30 a.m., the Board entered executive session. Virtual public access was paused.

At 2:15 p.m., the Board returned to open session. Virtual public access resumed.

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

VOTED: That the Board seal the minutes of the June 26, 2026, executive session.

VOTE: 14 members voted in the affirmative and 0 members voted in the negative.

YEAS: Dave Barrett, Margo Cook, Maria Ducharme, Charles Fogarty, Joseph Formicola, Monica Garnes, Neil Kerwin, Matthew Lenz, David Martirano, Joseph Matthews, Cortney Nicolato, Vahid Ownjazayeri, Jay Placencia, Armand Sabitoni

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 0

6. LUNCH BREAK - BOARD RETREAT ACTIVITIES

a. Board Self-Assessment and Feedback

Margo Cook, Board Chair

Cortney Nicolato, Governance Committee Chair

During the lunch break, the trustees engaged in an informal discussion around self-assessment of the Board's practices and effectiveness. They acknowledged the strong partnership between the Board, President Parlange, and the University's leadership. Trustees also emphasized the importance of sound governance in providing strategic oversight and guidance to university leadership, and in fostering public confidence in the State's flagship research university.

7. ACTION ITEMS

a. Proposed Vote to Authorize Next Steps on Establishing a Public Medical School at the University of Rhode Island [Enclosure](#)

Margo Cook, Board Chair

Chair Cook read into the record the proposed motion authorizing next steps on establishing a public medical school at URI, noting the addition of one clause in paragraph 2, "...including but not limited to the following". The revised proposed vote is [linked here](#).

Chair Cook called for a motion, and on a motion duly made by Charles Fogarty and seconded by Matthew Lenz, and hearing no discussion on the motion, it was

VOTED: That the Board approve next steps on establishing a public medical school at the University of Rhode Island, as presented in the enclosure including the additional clause.

VOTE: 14 members voted in the affirmative and 0 members voted in the negative.

YEAS: Dave Barrett, Margo Cook, Maria Ducharme, Charles Fogarty, Joseph Formicola, Monica Garnes, Neil Kerwin, Matthew Lenz, David Martirano, Joseph Matthews, Cortney Nicolato, Vahid Ownjazayeri, Jay Placencia, Armand Sabitoni

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 0

b. Consideration of the Approval of the Memorandum of Understanding between the University of Rhode Island and the University of Rhode Island Foundation.

Abby Benson, Senior Vice President, Administration and Finance

Senior Vice President Abby Benson reviewed a proposed one-year extension of the existing Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the University and the URI Foundation. She noted that the agreement's terms remain substantially unchanged, with updates including the Foundation's name, revisions to ex-officio Board membership, clarifying language regarding student records, and a requirement for the Foundation's Investment Committee to provide regular reports to the Board of Trustees. Financial contributions from the University to the Foundation remain unchanged.

Senior Vice President Benson also noted that the MOU did not undergo Finance and Facilities Committee review because revisions were still being finalized.

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

VOTED: That the Board approve the Memorandum of Understanding between the University of Rhode Island and the University of Rhode Island Foundation, as recommended and presented, and that the Board Chair, President, and Vice President of Administration and Finance are each individually authorized, for and on behalf of the University and the Board of Trustees, to execute the Memorandum of Understanding.

VOTE: 14 members voted in the affirmative and 0 members voted in the negative.

YEAS: Dave Barrett, Margo Cook, Maria Ducharme, Charles Fogarty, Joseph Formicola, Monica Garnes, Neil Kerwin, Matthew Lenz, David Martirano, Joseph Matthews, Cortney Nicolato, Vahid Ownjazayeri, Jay Placencia, Armand Sabitoni

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 0

8. REPORTS OF THE COMMITTEE CHAIRS AND ACTION ITEMS

a. Executive Committee/Compensation Subcommittee Report

- (i) Update – June 15, 2026, Committee Meeting
Margo Cook, Board Chair

Chair Cook reported that the Executive Committee and its Compensation Subcommittee met on June 15, 2026 to consider the President's performance review, annual performance-based incentive, and base salary. She reported that Vice President Hill provided an overview of URI's compensation strategy.

- (ii) ACTION: Consideration of the Compensation Subcommittee recommendation to approve an annual performance-based incentive to President Parlange for Fiscal Year ending June 30, 2026.

Margo Cook, Board Chair

Chair Cook reported that the Compensation Subcommittee considered this item on June 15th and voted to recommend to the Chair an annual performance-based incentive for contract year ending June 30, 2026. She reported that the full Board discussed this item today in executive session

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

VOTED: That the Board approve an annual performance-based incentive to President Parlange for Fiscal Year ending June 30, 2026, as discussed in executive session.

VOTE: 14 members voted in the affirmative and 0 members voted in the negative.

YEAS: Dave Barrett, Margo Cook, Maria Ducharme, Charles Fogarty, Joseph Formicola, Monica Garnes, Neil Kerwin, Matthew Lenz, David Martirano, Joseph Matthews, Cortney Nicolato, Vahid Ownjazayeri, Jay Placencia, Armand Sabitoni

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 0

- (iii) ACTION: Consideration of the Compensation Subcommittee recommendation to approve an increase to President Parlange's base salary.

Margo Cook, Board Chair

Chair Cook reported that the Compensation Subcommittee also considered the base salary item and voted to recommend to the Chair an increase to President Parlange's base salary. She reported that the full Board discussed this item today in executive session.

Chair Cook called for a motion, and on a motion duly made by David Barrett and seconded by Maria Ducharme, and hearing no discussion on the motion, it was

VOTED: That the Board approve an increase to President Parlange's base Salary, as discussed in executive session.

VOTE: 14 members voted in the affirmative and 0 members voted in the negative.

YEAS: Dave Barrett, Margo Cook, Maria Ducharme, Charles Fogarty, Joseph Formicola, Monica Garnes, Neil Kerwin, Matthew Lenz, David Martirano, Joseph Matthews, Cortney Nicolato, Vahid Ownjazayeri, Jay Placencia, Armand Sabitoni

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 0

b. Finance and Facilities Committee Report

- (i) Update – June 15, 2026 Committee Meeting
Vahid Ownjazayeri, Committee Chair

Committee Chair Vahid Ownjazayeri reported that the Finance and Facilities Committee met on June 15, 2026 to consider the Capital Improvement Plan for FY2028-2032, along with five contracts in excess of \$5 million, as listed under the Omnibus Vote.

- (ii) ACTION ITEM: Consideration of the Finance and Facilities Committee recommendation to approve the Capital Improvement Plan FY2028-2032 [Enclosure](#)
Abby Benson, Senior Vice President, Administration and Finance

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

VOTED: That the Board approve the University of Rhode Island Capital Improvement Plan for FY2028-2032.

VOTE: 14 members voted in the affirmative and 0 members voted in the negative.

YEAS: Dave Barrett, Margo Cook, Maria Ducharme, Charles Fogarty, Joseph Formicola, Monica Garnes, Neil Kerwin, Matthew Lenz, David Martirano, Joseph Matthews, Cortney Nicolato, Vahid Ownjazayeri, Jay Placencia, Armand Sabitoni

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 0

c. Institutional Risk and Compliance Committee Report

- (i) Update – June 16, 2026, Committee Meeting
Roby Luna, Committee Chair

Committee Vice Chair Matthew Lenz reported that the Institutional Risk and Compliance Committee met on June 16, 2026, and received updates on the 2026 external audit plan, annual cybersecurity initiatives, and ADA compliance planning. The committee reviewed the external audit scope, including financial statements, internal controls, federal program compliance, upcoming accounting standards, and evolving federal student aid and grant policies. Members also received an annual cybersecurity update highlighting enhancements to identity and email security, phishing prevention, third-party risk management, incident response, expanded multi-factor authentication, secure research environments, independent security testing, and development of a unified IT policy and disaster recovery plan, along with discussion of artificial intelligence, federal research security requirements, and vendor risks. The committee also reviewed a multi-year plan to achieve Department of Justice ADA compliance by the April 2027 deadline, including cross-functional coordination, accessibility resources and evaluation tools, and integration of accessibility requirements into vendor reviews. No action items were presented for committee consideration.

d. Academic Affairs and Research Committee Report

- (i) Update – June 22, 2026, Committee Meeting
Neil Kerwin, Committee Chair

Committee Chair Neil Kerwin reported that the Academic Affairs and Research Committee met on June 22, 2026, and received updates on the university's accreditation process, leadership changes in Academic Affairs, and the faculty promotion and tenure review process. The Committee also reviewed the university's research portfolio and discussed proposed federal changes to grant administration that could significantly affect federally funded research. The Committee recommended Board approval of agenda items 9.h. through 9.l. under the omnibus agenda.

Vice President Bethany Jenkins provided an overview of proposed revisions from the White House Office of Management and Budget (OMB) that could significantly impact the administration of federal grants and federally funded research. Released on May 29, 2026, the 412-page proposal includes more than 120 changes to the Uniform Guidance governing federal financial assistance. Vice President Jenkins noted that the proposal represents a substantial shift in federal grant policy and raises concerns regarding research autonomy, regulatory oversight, and institutional operations.

The Vice President highlighted several areas of concern, including potential political review of grants prior to award, expanded authority to suspend or terminate funded projects, restrictions on the use of federal funds related to diversity, equity, and inclusion activities, limitations on international research collaborations, and restrictions on allowable expenses such as publications and conference participation. She reported that URI is coordinating with national higher education organizations and peer institutions to develop a response to the proposed changes.

The Board discussed the importance of industry engagement in the public comment process, particularly given the role of university research in economic development, innovation, and workforce development. Vice President Jenkins committed to sharing a summary of the proposed changes, URI's institutional response, and guidance for board members and external partners who wish to submit comments before the July 13 deadline.

9. 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 April 24, 2026, Board Meeting. [Enclosure](#)

Finance and Facilities Committee recommended action:

- b. Acceptance of the Report on Approvals under the Delegation of Authority to the President Relating to Land and Property [Enclosure](#)
- c. Approval of a Contract in Excess of \$5 Million: Advertising and Marketing Services: One Sixty Over Ninety, LLC (160/90) [Enclosure](#)
- d. Approval of a Contract in Excess of \$5 Million: Chiller Preventative Maintenance and HVAC Repairs [Enclosure](#)
- e. Approval of a Contract in Excess of \$5 Million: Owner's Program Management Services for Asset Protection Program: LiRo Program and Construction Management [Enclosure](#)
- f. Approval of a Contract in Excess of \$5 Million: Dining Services - Food and paper supply services: Performance Food Group, Inc. [Enclosure](#)
- g. Approval of a Contract in Excess of \$5 Million: Underground Utilities Maintenance and Repair/Utility System Service Contract (Time and Materials) [Enclosure](#)

Academic Affairs and Research Committee recommended action:

- h. Approval of the annual granting of tenure, effective July 1, 2026 to University of Rhode Island faculty members, who have met the requirements for tenure at the University of Rhode Island. [Enclosure](#)
- i. Approval of the granting of tenure, effective July 26, 2026 to incoming Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences, Pamela E. Swett, Ph.D., who has met the requirements for tenure at the University of Rhode Island. [Enclosure](#)

- j. Approval of the granting of tenure, effective August 9, 2026, to incoming University Librarian, Brian W. Keith, who has met the requirements for tenure at the University of Rhode Island. [Enclosure](#)
- k. Approval of legislation from the Faculty Senate Curriculum & Standards Committee Report #2025-2026-07C, College of Arts and Sciences organizational change to create a new degree opportunity, Bachelor of Arts in Film which has been approved by the faculty and president of the University of Rhode Island. [Enclosure](#)
- l. Approval of legislation from the Faculty Senate Curriculum & Standards Committee Report #2025-2026-07C, College of Environment and Life Sciences organizational change to create a new degree opportunity, Bachelor of Arts in Sustainable Food Systems which has been approved by the faculty and president of the University of Rhode Island. [Enclosure](#)

Compensation Subcommittee recommended action:

- m. Approval of amendments to the Compensation Subcommittee Calendar. [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 questions or would like to discuss, oppose, or remove from the Omnibus Vote to be voted on individually.

Hearing none, Chair Cook called for an omnibus motion, and on a motion duly made by Matthew Lenz and seconded by Jay Placencia, and hearing no discussion on the motion, it was

VOTED: That the Board approve agenda action items 9.a.-9.m. as recommended and presented.

VOTE: 14 members voted in the affirmative and 0 members voted in the negative.

YEAS: Dave Barrett, Margo Cook, Maria Ducharme, Charles Fogarty, Joseph Formicola, Monica Garnes, Neil Kerwin, Matthew Lenz, David Martirano, Joseph Matthews, Cortney Nicolato, Vahid Ownjazayeri, Jay Placencia, Armand Sabitoni

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 0

10. ADJOURN

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

VOTED: That the Board adjourn its annual retreat and meeting.

VOTE: 14 members voted in the affirmative and 0 members voted in the

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negative.

YEAS: Dave Barrett, Margo Cook, Maria Ducharme, Charles Fogarty,
Joseph Formicola, Monica Garnes, Neil Kerwin, Matthew Lenz,
David Martirano, Joseph Matthews, Cortney Nicolato, Vahid
Ownjazayeri, Jay Placencia, Armand Sabitoni

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 0

At 2:40 p.m., this meeting ended.

The next URI Board of Trustees Meeting is scheduled for Friday, September 25, 2026.