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**The University of Rhode Island Board of Trustees
Academic Affairs and Research Committee Meeting
Tuesday, October 22, 2024 · 2:00 p.m. EDT**

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

OFFICIAL MINUTES

The University of Rhode Island Board of Trustees Academic Affairs and Research Committee meeting was held in person, with Committee members participating remotely. Virtual public access to meeting was available via the YouTube video platform and is available for viewing at <https://web.uri.edu/trustees/meetings/>.

Committee Chair Kerwin welcomed everyone to the October 22, 2024, meeting of the URI Board of Trustees Academic Affairs and Research Committee. He conducted a roll call attendance and determined that a quorum of members was present. He called the meeting to order at 2:04 p.m.

The URI Board of Trustees Academic Affairs and Research Committee members in attendance:

- Dr. Neil Kerwin, Committee Chair (remote)
- Honorable Charles Fogarty, Committee Vice Chair (remote)
- Ms. Maria Ducharme (remote)
- Ms. Monica Garnes (remote)
- Mr. David Martirano (remote)
- Mr. Joseph Matthews (remote)
- Dr. Kristine Bovy (non-voting) (remote)
- Dr. Marc B. Parlange, President (ex officio, non-voting) (remote)

URI Board of Trustees Chair Margo Cook and Vice Chair Armand Sabitoni participated remotely.

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Invited Guests:

- Dr. Ted Walls, Faculty Senate, President (in person)
- Dr. Travis Williams, Faculty Senate, Vice President (in person)

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)
- Ms. Alyssa Boss, General Counsel (remote)
- Dr. Bethany Jenkins, Vice President for Research and Economic Development (remote)
- Dr. Dean Libutti, Associate Vice President for Enrollment Management and Student Success (remote)
- Dr. Barbara Wolfe, Provost and Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs (remote)

URI staff members in attendance:

- Ms. Michelle Curreri, Secretary, Board of Trustees (in person)
- Ms. Lauren Jensen, Deputy General Counsel (remote)
- Ms. Lorrie McCarty, Staff Assistant to the Provost, Office of the Provost (remote)
- Ms. Lynn Owens, Associate Secretary, Board of Trustees (in person)

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

Committee Chair Kerwin welcomed Dr. Kristine Bovy to the Committee.

Committee Chair Kerwin called for a motion to amend the agenda to include a discussion of proposed amendments to the Committee Calendar. On a motion duly made by Joseph Matthews, seconded by David Martirano, and hearing no discussion, it was

VOTED That the Committee approve an amendment to the agenda to add a discussion of proposed amendments to the Committee Calendar.

VOTE: 6 members voted in the affirmative and 0 members voted in the negative.

YEAS: Maria Ducharme, Charles Fogarty, Monica Garnes, Neil Kerwin, David Martirano, Joseph Matthews

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 0

This agenda discussion item took place at the end of the meeting.

1. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES

a. Minutes of the September 16, 2024, Academic Affairs and Research Committee Meeting

[Enclosure](#)

Dr. Neil Kerwin, Committee Chair

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

- VOTED That the Academic Affairs and Research Committee approve the minutes of the September 16, 2024, meeting of the Committee.
- VOTE: 5 members voted in the affirmative and 0 members voted in the negative.
- YEAS: Charles Fogarty, Monica Garnes, Neil Kerwin, David Martirano, Joseph Matthews
- NAYS: 0
- ABSTAINS: Maria Ducharme abstained from voting as she did not attend the September 16th meeting.

2. REPORT OF THE CHIEF ACADEMIC OFFICER

Dr. Barbara Wolfe, Provost and Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs

The Chief Academic Officer's presentation slides can be found [here](#).

a. Update on Searches

Provost and Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs Barbara Wolfe updated the Committee on two administrative searches underway; the University Librarian and Dean of the College of Environment and Life Sciences. The search firm Perrett Laver is supporting both searches, which are expected to conclude by the end of the academic year.

b. Update on Fall Enrollment Report

The Provost introduced the enrollment update by noting that URI has a Fall 2024 enrollment of 17,352 Students, and then turned to Dean Libutti, Associate Vice President of Enrollment Management and Student Success. Dr. Libutti noted there were record high undergraduate applications this year. Undergraduate enrollment was challenged by FAFSA fallout. The University saw growth in graduate programs, especially online and in-person master's programs.

Responding to trustee inquiry, Dr. Libutti offered to provide via email an overview of enrollment over time for each college.

Dr. Libutti noted that mental health and wellness is the number one issue for incoming students. The University is addressing wellness, mental health concerns, academic readiness, and a sense of belonging through new initiatives and programs beginning on day one.

3. EXECUTIVE SESSION

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

(i) Research support from partner organizations

Dr. Bethany Jenkins, Vice President, Research and Economic Development

(ii) Enrollment and recruitment

Dr. Barbara Wolfe, Provost and Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs

Committee Chair Kerwin called for a motion, and on a motion duly made by Joseph Matthews, seconded by Charles Fogarty, and hearing no discussion, it was

VOTED That the Academic Affairs and Research Committee convene into executive session R.I.G.L. § 42-46-5(a)(7) for discussion regarding matters related to the question of the investment of public funds, which includes any investment plan or matter related thereto, where the premature disclosure would adversely affect the public interest; specifically, research support from partner organizations, and enrollment and recruitment.

VOTE: 6 members voted in the affirmative and 0 members voted in the negative.

YEAS: Maria Ducharme, Charles Fogarty, Monica Garnes, Neil Kerwin, David Martirano, Joseph Matthews

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 0

2:37 p.m., upon confirmation from remote participants that no other persons were present or able to hear the executive session, the Academic Affairs and Research Committee convened into Executive Session. Virtual public access was paused.

3:24 p.m., the Academic Affairs and Research Committee returned to Open Session. Virtual public access resumed.

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

VOTED That the Academic Affairs and Research Committee seal the minutes of the Executive Session that took place on October 22, 2024.

VOTE: 6 members voted in the affirmative and 0 members voted in the negative.

YEAS: Maria Ducharme, Charles Fogarty, Monica Garnes, Neil Kerwin, David Martirano, Joseph Matthews

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 0

5. ACTION ITEMS

- a. **Approval of the awarding of undergraduate and graduate degrees, diplomas, certificates, and honors to be conferred by the President to the candidates who will have completed their requirements at the conclusion of the Fall 2024 term and who are approved by the faculty of the University of Rhode Island, and recommendation to the URI Board of Trustees.** [Enclosure](#)
Dr. Barbara Wolfe, Provost and Executive Vice President, Academic Affairs

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

VOTED That the Academic Affairs and Research Committee recommend that the URI Board of Trustees approve the awarding of undergraduate and graduate degrees, diplomas, certificates, and honors to be conferred by the President to the candidates who have completed their requirements at the conclusion of the Fall 2024 term and who are approved by the faculty of the University of Rhode Island, as recommended and presented in the enclosure.

VOTE: 6 members voted in the affirmative and 0 members voted in the negative.

YEAS: Maria Ducharme, Charles Fogarty, Monica Garnes, Neil Kerwin, David Martirano, Joseph Matthews

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 0

b. Approval of the awarding of honorary degrees for Commencement 2025, and recommendation to the URI Board of Trustees.

Dr. Barbara Wolfe, Provost and Executive Vice President, Academic Affairs

Prior to the meeting, Committee members received via email a confidential memo regarding the awarding of honorary degrees.

Committee Chair Kerwin called for a motion, and on a motion duly made by Maria Ducharme, seconded by Joseph Matthews, and hearing no discussion, it was

VOTED That the Academic Affairs and Research Committee recommend that the URI Board of Trustees approve the awarding of Honorary Degrees to the recipients proposed by the Office of the President and Nominating Committee.

VOTE: 6 members voted in the affirmative and 0 members voted in the negative.

YEAS: Maria Ducharme, Charles Fogarty, Monica Garnes, Neil Kerwin, David Martirano, Joseph Matthews

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 0

DISCUSSION ITEM ADDED TO THE AGENDA BY COMMITTEE VOTE

Chair Kerwin reviewed the proposed amendments to the Academic Affairs and Research Committee Calendar. The Provost explained that some items that were normally reviewed at the February meeting could be moved to the April meeting. Proposed amendments to the Committee Calendar can be found [here](#).

Action to approve the proposed amendments to the Committee Calendar is planned for the November 8, 2024 Board meeting.

6. ADJOURN

Committee Chair Kerwin called for a motion to adjourn the meeting.

On a motion duly made by Monica Garnes, and seconded by Maria Ducharme, it was

VOTED: That the URI Board of Trustees Academic Affairs and Research Committee adjourn the meeting of October 22, 2024

VOTE: 6 members voted in the affirmative and 0 members voted in the negative.

YEAS: Maria Ducharme, Charles Fogarty, Monica Garnes, Neil Kerwin, David

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Martirano, Joseph Matthews

NAYS: 0

ABSTAIN: 0

The meeting was adjourned at 3:32 p.m.

The next Academic Affairs and Research Committee meeting is tentatively scheduled for February 2025.

Official