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## The University of Rhode Island Board of Trustees Academic Affairs and Research Committee Meeting Wednesday, April 16, 2025, 1:15 p.m. EDT

The University of Rhode Island  
Beagle Board Room, The Alumni Center  
73 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 the meeting was available via the YouTube video platform and is available for viewing at

<https://web.uri.edu/trustees/meetings/>.

Committee Chair Neil Kerwin welcomed everyone to the April 16, 2025, 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 1:18 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. Monica Garnes (remote)
- Mr. Joseph Matthews (remote)
- Dr. Marc B. Parlange, President (ex officio, non-voting) (remote)
- Dr. Kristine Bovy (non-voting) (remote)

URI Board of Trustees Academic Affairs and Research Committee members not in attendance:

- Ms. Maria Ducharme
- Mr. David Martirano

## URI Board of Trustees Academic Affairs and Research Committee Meeting

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

URI President's Stewardship Council members in attendance:

- Dr. Sue Adams, Vice Provost for Academic and Faculty Initiatives (remote)
- Dr. Mark Antonucci, Vice President for Advancement, Chief Executive Officer, University of Rhode Island Foundation and Alumni Engagement (remote)
- Ms. Abby Benson, Vice President for Administration and Finance (remote)
- Ms. Chelsea Berry, Senior Advisor to the President and Chief of Staff (remote)
- Dr. Matthew Bodah, Vice Provost for Academic Personnel and Budget (remote)
- Ms. Alyssa Boss, General Counsel (remote)
- Dr. Bethany Jenkins, Vice President for Research and Economic Development (remote)
- Dr. Kristin Johnson, Vice Provost for Global Initiatives (remote)
- Dr. Dean Libutti, Associate Vice President for Enrollment Management and Student Success (remote)
- Ms. Markeisha Miner, Vice President for Community, Equity, and Diversity (remote)
- Ms. 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. Michelle Curreri, Secretary, Board of Trustees (in person)
- 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 welcomed the group and acknowledged that the University of Rhode Island occupies the traditional stomping ground of the Narragansett Nation and the Niantic People.

Committee Chair Kerwin asked if there were any proposed amendments to the published agenda. There were none.

### 1. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES

#### a. Minutes of the February 5, 2025, 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 Joseph Matthews, seconded by Charles Fogarty, and hearing no discussion, it was

VOTED          That the Academic Affairs and Research Committee approve

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the minutes of the February 5, 2025, meeting of the Committee.

VOTE: 4 members voted in the affirmative and 0 members voted in the negative.

YEAS: Charles Fogarty, Monica Garnes, Neil Kerwin, Joseph Matthews

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 0

## **2. REPORT OF THE CHIEF ACADEMIC OFFICER**

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

Provost Wolfe's presentation slides are [linked here](#).

### **a. Leadership Team for Federal Actions**

Provost Wolfe stated that President Parlange appointed this group to closely monitor the impact of federal actions on the University. The team meets multiple times per week, recommends action steps at the President's Executive Council meetings and communicates with the campus community on a weekly basis. Committee members thanked the Provost for the University's proactive efforts.

### **b. Update on Searches, Feasibility Study for a URI medical school, and Enrollment**

Provost Wolfe noted that the searches for both the University Librarian and the Dean of the College of the Environment and Life Sciences are currently in progress and likely to conclude by the end of May 2025.

Provost Wolfe shared the preliminary findings by Tripp Umbach, the firm conducting the feasibility study regarding a possible URI college of medicine. Preliminary findings show strong support and promising opportunities for the establishment of a potential medical school. Tripp Umbach's final report is expected in June.

### **c. Review progress of the University academic performance metrics**

Provost Wolfe reviewed the University's KPIs for Priority 2 of its 10-year strategic plan - enhancing student achievement. She emphasized the ongoing efforts to improve retention and close the equity gap, including tutoring services to help address the COVID-learning loss and the University's budget request to the state to help fund academic advisors.

**d. Review of academic efforts in support of student success**

Provost Wolfe highlighted ongoing efforts to support student success. Key initiatives include the reform of student advising services, the early alert system, and the launch of a summer math program aimed at addressing COVID-related learning loss.

Committee Chair Kerwin asked about retention strategies for students who struggle and those who are high achievers. Trustee Garnes asked about efforts to understand why students leave the university. Associate Vice President (AVP) Libutti noted that we are not seeing them leave for greater prestige institutions. Dr. Bovy asked about trends of Rhode Island students starting outside the state and coming back to URI. AVP Libutti said this is common, but we haven't seen an uptick. For the highest achieving students, those who leave the state often don't come back to Rhode Island. Provost Wolfe praised the work of AVP Libutti and his team in receiving the highest number of applications ever at 28,000 and noted that now we are focused on yield. In response to a question from Chair Cook, AVP Libutti spoke about the factors that went into the very successful welcome days, including leading off with words from President Parlangue and hosting a breakfast for high achieving students. There were direct results seen on welcome days with increases in deposits. Chair Cook and Committee Chair Kerwin expressed praise for where we are and efforts made to welcome the newest members of the university community.

**3. REPORT OF THE CHIEF RESEARCH OFFICER**

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

Vice President Jenkins discussed the challenges within the current research environment, including federal grant terminations. While URI's faculty and research community maintain a high submission rate, the federal slowdown is anticipated to impact grant award outcomes. Vice President Jenkins provided an update on terminations, agency actions to cap Facilities and Administrative (F&A) rates, and court injunctions. She described what F&A funding supports and the impacts to the research landscape.

Vice President Jenkins provided an update on metrics of success and strategic planning for the URI Research Foundation. She noted that URI is preparing for its upcoming research awards ceremony to highlight outstanding researchers. Partnering with the Research Foundation, URI will recognize patent holders and celebrate the IP expertise. Vice President Jenkins reported that URI leadership continues to look at the strategic alignment of the Research Foundation and its statutory mission to be the home of URI's innovation and intellectual property.

Committee Chair Kerwin praised the University's calm and deliberative approach to federal developments.

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#### 4. DISCUSSION ITEMS

- a. **Annual Review of the Academic Affairs and Research Committee Charter.** [Enclosure](#)

*Dr. Neil Kerwin, Committee Chair*

- b. **Annual Review of the Academic Affairs and Research Committee Calendar.** [Enclosure](#)

*Dr. Neil Kerwin, Committee Chair*

Committee Chair Kerwin reported that both the committee charter and calendar have been reviewed. No changes were identified. He opened it up to the Committee to discuss any possible changes. None were offered. He noted the procedure that would be followed to move changes forward to approval if any had been offered.

#### 5. EXECUTIVE SESSION

- a. **Discussion regarding a matter 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. § 42-465(a)(7); specifically,**

- **Research support from partner organizations.**

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

- b. **Discussion regarding potential litigation, pursuant to R.I.G.L. § 42-46-5(a)(2), and 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).**

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

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

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

VOTED

That the Committee convene into executive session pursuant to R.I.G.L. § 42-46-5(a)(7) for discussion regarding a matter 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,

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

VOTE:

4 members voted in the affirmative and 0 members voted in the negative.

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YEAS: Charles Fogarty, Monica Garnes, Neil Kerwin, Joseph Matthews

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 0

2:03 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.

2:21 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 Charles Fogarty and seconded by Monica Garnes, 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 April 16, 2025.

VOTE: 4 members voted in the affirmative and 0 members voted in the negative.

YEAS: Charles Fogarty, Monica Garnes, Neil Kerwin, Joseph Matthews

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 0

## 6. ACTION ITEMS

### **a. Approval of the awarding of a posthumous academic degree at Spring Commencement 2025, and recommendation to the URI Board of Trustees. [Enclosure](#)**

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

Provost Wolfe requested the Committee's approval to award a posthumous academic degree to Mr. Nicholas D'Antilio, a former student of the College of the Environment and Life Sciences who passed away while enrolled at URI.

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

VOTED THAT the Committee recommend that the Board approve the awarding of a posthumous academic degree at Spring Commencement 2025 to Mr. Nicholas D'Antilio, College of the Environment and Life Sciences, as recommended in the enclosure.

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VOTE: 4 members voted in the affirmative and 0 members voted in the negative.

YEAS: Charles Fogarty, Monica Garnes, Neil Kerwin, Joseph Matthews

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 0

- b. 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 Spring 2025 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 for Academic Affairs*

Provost Wolfe informed the Committee that URI will confer 2,664 undergraduate degrees, 480 graduate degrees, and 133 certificates in May 2025.

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

VOTED THAT the Committee recommend that the Board approve 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 Spring 2025 term and who are approved by the faculty of the University of Rhode Island, as recommended and presented in the enclosure.

VOTE: 4 members voted in the affirmative and 0 members voted in the negative.

YEAS: Charles Fogarty, Monica Garnes, Neil Kerwin, Joseph Matthews

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 0

## 7. ADJOURN

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

On a motion duly made by Charles Fogarty and seconded by Joseph Matthews, and hearing no discussion, it was

VOTED THAT the Academic Affairs and Research Committee adjourn the meeting of April 16, 2025.

URI Board of Trustees Academic Affairs and Research Committee Meeting

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VOTE: 4 members voted in the affirmative and 0 members voted in the negative.

YEAS: Charles Fogarty, Monica Garnes, Neil Kerwin, Joseph Matthews

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 0

The meeting was adjourned at 2:36 p.m.

**The next URI Board of Trustees Academic Affairs and Research Committee meeting is scheduled for June 17, 2025.**

OFFICIAL