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**The University of Rhode Island Board of Trustees
Academic Affairs and Research Committee Meeting
Tuesday, February 10, 2026 · 12:00 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. Due to technical difficulties, virtual livestreaming of the meeting was not available. A recording of the meeting has been posted for viewing at <https://web.uri.edu/trustees/meetings/>.

Committee Chair Neil Kerwin welcomed everyone to the February 10, 2026 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 not present. He noted that two board members would be joining the meeting momentarily. He called the meeting to order at 12:05 p.m.

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

- Neil Kerwin, Committee Chair (remote)
- Charles Fogarty, Committee Vice Chair (remote) joined at 12:14 p.m.
- Maria Ducharme (remote)
- David Martirano (remote)
- Joseph Matthews (remote) joined at 12:14 p.m.
- Marc B. Parlange, President (ex officio, non-voting) (remote)
- Kristine Bovy (non-voting) (remote)

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

- Monica Garnes

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

URI President's Stewardship Council members in attendance:

- Alyssa Boss, Vice President and General Counsel (remote)
- Bethany Jenkins, Vice President for Research and Economic Development (remote)
- Lauren Jensen, Deputy General Counsel (remote)
- Kristin Johnson, Vice Provost for Global Initiatives (remote)
- Dean Libutti, Associate Vice President for Enrollment Management and Student Success (remote)
- Matthew McDonald, Vice President for Communications and Marketing (remote)
- Markeisha Miner, Vice President for Community, Equity, and Diversity (remote)
- Barbara Wolfe, Provost and Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs (remote)

URI staff members in attendance:

- Emily Diomandes, Deputy Chief of Staff and Interim Board Secretary (in person)
- Lorrie McCarty, Staff Assistant to the Provost, Office of the Provost (remote)
- 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 congratulated trustee Monica Garnes on her promotion to President of the Atlanta Division of Kroger.

Approval of the minutes was deferred until a quorum of committee members was present.

2. REPORT OF THE CHIEF ACADEMIC OFFICER [Enclosure](#)

Barbara Wolfe, Provost and Executive Vice President, Academic Affairs

Provost Wolfe reported on two brief updates: the University's reaccreditation process and the annual Academic Summit held in January. She introduced Sue Adams, Vice Provost for Academic and Faculty Initiatives, to the Committee and invited her to provide an update on these two items.

a. URI Accreditation with the New England Commission of Higher Education

Vice Provost Adams provided an overview of the accreditation process. She explained that the New England Commission for Higher Education (NECHE) recently revised its standards by reducing them from nine standards to five and significantly decreasing the number of subparagraphs required by institutions undergoing accreditation. She noted that these revisions will help streamline the University's self-study report. The official launch of the University's reaccreditation process began in January and involves a multi-pronged approach.

The first step was the distribution of an online survey inviting members of the University community to share their perspectives. The second step involved hosting in-person and virtual listening sessions to gather feedback from University stakeholders related to the standards. The next step will involve collecting data from each unit on campus regarding how they meet the standards, how they measure their effectiveness, and

their future goals. The data collected will be provided to NECHE in the form of a report ahead of its site visit in October 2027. Vice Provost Adams thanked Committee Chair Kerwin for providing his expertise to the University's accreditation steering committee.

b. 2026 URI Academic Summit

Vice Provost Adams highlighted the Academic Summit held in January 2026. The day-long event focused on cultivating resilience during times of change and included breakout sessions on topics such as academic resilience, resilience in research, supporting students, navigating grief and loss on campus, and self-care. She noted that approximately 150 faculty members participated in the event. She attributed the success of the summit in part to the keynote speaker, Dr. May Imad, Associate Professor of Biology at Connecticut College, who presented on how faculty can promote resilience through neuroregulation and the development of supportive systems for students and faculty.

Upon the arrival of Committee members Fogarty and Matthews at 12:14 p.m., a quorum was established. Chair Kerwin asked if there were any proposed amendments to the published agenda. None were presented.

1. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES

a. Minutes of the October 27, 2025, Academic Affairs and Research Committee meeting.
[Enclosure](#)

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

VOTED That the Academic Affairs and Research Committee approve the minutes of the October 27, 2025, meeting of the Committee.

VOTE: 5 members voted in the affirmative and 0 members voted in the negative.

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

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 0

3. REPORT OF THE CHIEF RESEARCH OFFICER [Enclosure](#)

Bethany Jenkins, Vice President, Research and Economic Development

a. Update on URI's Grant Portfolio and Research Activity

Vice President for Research and Economic Development Bethany Jenkins provided an update on the University's research and funding activity, focusing on the impact of recent changes in the federal landscape. She noted that the figures presented were preliminary and intended to provide a general overview rather than finalized totals.

Vice President Jenkins reported that the number of research proposals submitted in FY26 increased compared to the same time, July through December, the previous year. This comparison reflects the transition from the final part of the Biden administration in FY25 to the early months of the Trump administration in FY26.

Vice President Jenkins shared that new award numbers remain very close to those from the previous fiscal year, despite challenges from a government shutdown that slowed the release of awards from federal agencies. She also highlighted that principal investigators continue to actively spend on existing awards, helping to maintain the flow of Facilities and Administrative (F&A) cost recovery to the University. As a result, F&A revenue for FY26 is tracking very closely to FY25 levels. She concluded that, based on the available data, the University's research funding and financial position appear stable at this point in the fiscal year and credited faculty and staff efforts for sustaining this progress.

Committee Chair Kerwin asked if there were any patterns in the award structure compared to last year. Vice President Jenkins informed the Committee that she did not identify a clear pattern, either by award type or agency. She noted that award data can appear stochastic because awards often span three to five years, making it difficult to draw firm conclusions from short-term trends. She emphasized that the funding landscape is still evolving as federal agencies roll out new opportunities. She noted that one project in the Philippines, funded by USAID, was moved to the U.S. State Department. This project has since been refunded, with \$24 million added back.

Committee Chair Kerwin questioned if the \$24 million received was part of the current year award. Vice President Jenkins noted that the grant was restarted under the State Department and had come in during the last month.

Vice Chair Armand Sabitoni questioned if grants previously funded by USAID were now being funded by other federal agencies or whether this was an isolated incident. Vice President Jenkins responded that to her knowledge this was an isolated instance.

4. ACTION ITEMS

- a. **Consideration of legislation from the Graduate Council #2025-2026-03C, College of Education organizational change to create a new degree opportunity, Doctorate of Education, which has been approved by the faculty and president of the University of Rhode Island; and recommendation to the URI Board of Trustees. [Enclosure](#)**
Barbara Wolfe, Provost and Executive Vice President, Academic Affairs

Provost Wolfe presented a request for approval of a new Doctor of Education (Ed.D.) program offered by the College of Education. She explained that the program is intended for professionals whose work involves the design, delivery, or leadership of learning. The program will emphasize real-world application, enabling candidates to investigate complex challenges of practice, integrate diverse sources of evidence, and develop actionable solutions that advance equity and improve learning outcomes. Provost Wolfe noted that the program is designed as a practice-based doctorate, which is the distinguishing feature of the Ed.D. degree.

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

VOTED THAT the Committee recommend that the Board approve legislation recommended by the Faculty Senate and the President providing a new degree opportunity, Doctorate of Education, as recommended and presented in the enclosure.

VOTE: 5 members voted in the affirmative and 0 members voted in the negative.

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

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 0

b. Consideration of legislation from the Faculty Senate Curriculum & Standards Committee Report #2025-2026-02C, College of Education organizational change to create a new degree opportunity, Bachelor of Arts, Learning and Education in Action, which has been approved by the faculty and president of the University of Rhode Island; and recommendation to the URI Board of Trustees. [Enclosure](#)

Barbara Wolfe, Provost and Executive Vice President, Academic Affairs

Provost Wolfe presented a request for approval of a new undergraduate degree, a Bachelor of Arts in Learning, Education, and Action, offered by the College of Education. She explained that the program is designed as a flexible degree focused on pedagogy, learning development across varied communities and industries, and organizational learning environments. Participation in the program will help students develop essential skills and competencies for designing, evaluating, and implementing effective learning experiences for diverse communities across a wide range of settings.

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

VOTED THAT the Committee recommend that the Board approve legislation recommended by the Faculty Senate and the President providing a new undergraduate degree opportunity, Learning in Education in Action Bachelor of Arts program, as recommended and presented in the enclosure.

VOTE: 5 members voted in the affirmative and 0 members voted in the negative.

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

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 0

- c. **Consideration of the granting of tenure, effective March 1, 2026 to incoming Vice Provost and Dean of the Graduate School, Dr. Mary Elizabeth Meyerand, who has met the requirements for tenure at the University of Rhode Island, and recommendation for approval to the URI Board of Trustees.** [Enclosure](#)

Barbara Wolfe, Provost and Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs

Provost Wolfe asked the Committee to recommend to the Board the granting of tenure for Dr. Mary Elizabeth Meyerand, who has met the requirements for tenure as outlined in the University Manual and the Collective Bargaining Agreement of the University of Rhode Island Chapter of the American Association of University Professors.

Provost Wolfe noted that Dr. Meyerand will be joining the University as Vice Provost and Dean of the Graduate School starting March 8 and will hold a faculty appointment in the Department of Electrical, Computer, and Biomedical Engineering in the College of Engineering.

Dr. Meyerand most recently served as Associate Dean of the Graduate School at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Prior to that role, she served as Vice Provost for Faculty and Staff Affairs at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. She earned her Ph.D. in Biophysics from the Medical College of Wisconsin.

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 Committee recommend that the Board approve the granting of tenure, effective March 1, 2026, to incoming Vice Provost and Dean of the Graduate School, Dr. Mary Elizabeth Meyerand, who has met the requirements for tenure at the University of Rhode Island, as recommended and presented in the enclosure.

VOTE: 5 members voted in the affirmative and 0 members voted in the negative.

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

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 0

5. ADJOURN

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

URI Board of Trustees Academic Affairs and Research Committee Meeting
February 10, 2026

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

VOTED THAT the Academic Affairs and Research Committee adjourn the meeting of February 10, 2026.

VOTE: 5 members voted in the affirmative and 0 members voted in the negative.

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

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 0

The meeting was adjourned at 12:39 p.m.

OFFICIAL