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**The University of Rhode Island Board of Trustees
Academic Affairs and Research Committee Meeting
Monday, June 22, 2026 · 11:00 a.m. EDT**

**The University of Rhode Island
Room 107 Green Hall
35 Campus Avenue, Kingston, RI 02881**

OFFICIAL MINUTES

Committee Chair Neil Kerwin welcomed everyone to the June 22, 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 present. He called the meeting to order at 11:01 a.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)
- Maria Ducharme (remote)
- Monica Games (remote)
- Joseph Matthews (remote)
- Marc Parlange (ex officio, non-voting) (remote)
- Kristine Bovy (non-voting) (remote)

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

- David Martirano

URI President's Stewardship Council members in attendance:

- Sue K. Adams, Vice Provost for Academic and Faculty Initiatives (remote)
- Marc Antonucci, Vice President for Advancement, URI, and CEO, URI Foundation (remote)
- Abby Benson, Vice President, Administration and Finance (remote)
- Chelsea Berry, Senior Advisor to the President and Chief of Staff (remote)
- Alyssa Boss, Vice President and General Counsel (remote)
- Bethany Jenkins, Vice President, Research and Economic Development (remote)

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- 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)
- Ellen Reynolds, Vice President, Student Affairs (remote)
- Barbara Wolfe, Provost and Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs (remote)

URI staff members in attendance:

- Emily Diomandes, Deputy Chief of Staff and 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 asked if there were any proposed amendments to the agenda. None were presented.

1. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES

a. Minutes of the April 9, 2026, 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 Maria Ducharme, and hearing no discussion, it was

VOTED THAT the Academic Affairs and Research Committee approve the minutes of the April 9, 2026, meeting of the Committee.

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

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

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 0

2. REPORT OF THE CHIEF ACADEMIC OFFICER

Barbara Wolfe, Provost and Executive Vice President, Academic Affairs

Provost Wolfe presented slides [linked here](#).

Provost Wolfe reported on the outstanding academic year. She noted that during Commencement, the University welcomed more than 4,000 new URI alumni, marking an important milestone for both our graduates and the University.

Provost Wolfe extended her sincere thanks to everyone who helped make Commencement a success. She recognized Vice Provost for Academic Faculty Initiatives Sue Adams, who stepped in on her behalf and ensured that the ceremonies proceeded seamlessly.

a. Academic Year Wrap Up

Provost Wolfe provided an update highlighting several notable faculty achievements and key academic initiatives.

Provost Wolfe recognized Dr. Daina Worcester, Clinical Assistant Professor in the College of Nursing, for receiving the prestigious Fulbright Global Challenges Teaching Award. She congratulated Alessandra Adami, Associate Professor in the College of Health Sciences, on receiving the Mid-career Research Achievement Award from the Pulmonary Rehabilitation Assembly of the American Thoracic Society. The Provost recognized Thomas Mather, Professor in the College of the Environment and Life Sciences, for his recent appearance on *The Daily Show*, where he discussed tick research and public health. She also highlighted the Graduate School of Oceanography's two-day Air-Sea Interaction Symposium, organized by Nick Pizzo, Assistant Professor of Oceanography, which honored the distinguished careers and upcoming retirements of faculty members Isaac Ginis and Tetsu Hara.

Provost Wolfe provided an update on the proposed URI medical school. She reported that Governor McKee and the Rhode Island General Assembly approved an initial \$5 million appropriation in Fiscal Year 2027 to support planning and development of the medical school, with the General Assembly expressing its intent to provide an additional \$8 million in FY 2028 and \$7 million in FY 2029. She explained that the FY27 funding will support planning activities, including a national search for a founding dean of medicine. She further noted that Tripp Umbach, the consulting firm that completed the feasibility study, will present a proposed business plan to the full Board at its upcoming meeting.

b. Accreditation Update

Provost Wolfe reported that the University's reaccreditation process remains on schedule and is progressing well. She noted that institutional data collection continues across the University and that drafting of the self-study report has begun. The draft report will be shared with the campus community in early 2027 for feedback before submission of final self-study report in August 2027. She thanked faculty, staff, and administrators for their continued engagement and contributions to the accreditation process.

c. Academic Leadership Updates

Provost Wolfe announced the appointment of two new academic leaders, both selected following competitive national searches.

Provost Wolfe reported that Pamela Swett will join the University next month as Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences. Pamela Swett currently serves as Dean of the Faculty of Humanities at McMaster University. Provost Wolfe thanked Brenton DeBoef for his leadership, service, and collaboration as interim dean over the past year.

She announced that Brian Keith will join URI in August as University Librarian. Brian Keith currently serves as Dean of the Libraries at Eastern Illinois University and previously served as Associate Dean of the Libraries at the University of Florida. Provost Wolfe thanked Rui Wang, Interim Dean of the Libraries, for his leadership and guidance during the past year.

Provost Wolfe noted that Sean Rogers will step down as Dean of the College of Business at the end of the month to pursue other opportunities before returning to the faculty. She stated that the University expects to announce an interim dean soon and is preparing to launch a national search for the next Dean of the College of Business.

d. Promotion and Tenure Process Review

Provost Wolfe reported on the annual promotion and tenure (P&T) recommendations, explaining that the P&T process spans more than a year, beginning each May and concluding the following June. She noted that the process is governed by the collective bargaining agreement between the Board of Trustees and the American Association of University Professors (AAUP).

She reported that tenure-track faculty are evaluated on their contributions in teaching, research, and service, and that excellence is expected in all three areas. She noted that tenure is not awarded automatically, and not all candidates seeking tenure are successful. Provost Wolfe referenced the AAUP collective bargaining agreement, which states that the tenure system requires the University to exercise “firmness in not renewing contracts of those who are not adapted by training, experience, or temperament to the institution.”

Provost Wolfe noted that P&T recommendations are reviewed through a comprehensive evaluation process that includes department chairs, where applicable, college deans, and the Office of the Provost, with final decisions issued on behalf of President Marc Parlange. She reported that faculty members who are denied promotion or tenure have the right to grieve the decision in accordance with the collective bargaining agreement.

3. REPORT OF THE CHIEF RESEARCH OFFICER

Bethany Jenkins, Vice President, Research and Economic Development

Vice President Jenkins presented slides [linked here](#).

Vice President Jenkins thanked the Committee and the Board for their continued support and collegiality as she prepares to depart URI for another role.

a. Recent Research Highlights

Vice President Jenkins noted research accomplishments, including a \$1 million National Institutes of Health (NIH) K23 Mentored Patient-Oriented Research Career Development Award received by Kara Pavone of the College of Nursing. She also recognized Vic Fay-Wolfe of the College of Arts and Sciences for securing funding to expand graduate education and workforce development in cybersecurity through a collaborative project with Northeastern University.

b. Status of Research Portfolio

Vice President Jenkins provided an overview of the University's research funding portfolio. She reported that through FY26, URI had received approximately \$118 million in external research funding, compared with approximately \$146 million at the close of FY25. She noted that while additional awards are anticipated before the close of the fiscal year, federal agencies have experienced significant delays in making funding decisions, affecting research institutions nationwide.

Vice President Jenkins reported that the University's research portfolio remains well diversified across major federal agencies. She noted that Department of Defense and Department of Health and Human Services funding has increased compared to the previous year, while funding from agencies such as the National Science Foundation and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration has declined primarily because of delays in federal award processing rather than reduced competitiveness.

Vice President Jenkins reported that external research funding is currently tracking approximately 18.7 percent below the prior year, a decline that is consistent with national trends. She noted that additional federal awards may be released later in the federal fiscal year, resulting in increased funding during the early part of FY2027.

Vice President Jenkins reported that the University continues to receive its full federally negotiated Facilities and Administrative (F&A) reimbursement rate, noting that congressional action and ongoing legal proceedings have preserved these reimbursements despite proposed federal policy changes.

Committee Chair Kerwin thanked Vice President Jenkins for her report and noted that the slowdown in federal research funding reflects a national challenge facing research universities and remains a concern. He noted that the long-term impact of reduced and delayed federal research funding remains a significant concern for higher education.

4. DISCUSSION ITEMS

a. Review enrollment management activities, outcomes, and initial enrollment projections for 2026-2027 academic year.

Barbara Wolfe, Provost and Executive Vice President, Academic Affairs

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

Presentation slides are [linked here](#).

Provost Wolfe previewed the annual enrollment management update, noting that the Committee would receive an overview of current enrollment activities, outcomes, and preliminary projections for the upcoming academic year, with additional details to be provided during Executive Session. She noted

her appreciation to Associate Vice President Dean Libutti and his team for their exceptional work in recruiting the incoming class despite an increasingly competitive environment.

Associate Vice President Libutti reported that the University received a record 29,242 undergraduate applications, an increase of approximately 1,100 applications over the previous year. He noted that this achievement comes despite ongoing demographic declines in the number of college-bound students nationally and throughout New England. He noted that growth was driven primarily by out-of-state applicants, while Rhode Island applications remained stable.

Associate Vice President Libutti highlighted record application levels in several colleges, including the College of Health Sciences, College of the Environment and Life Sciences, College of Engineering, College of Education, and College of Nursing. He noted that the College of Pharmacy experienced its strongest application cycle in six years despite national declines in pharmacy enrollment.

Associate Vice President Libutti reported that the University expects to enroll approximately 3,200 first-year students from across the United States and abroad. He noted that approximately 30 percent of the class represents students from diverse backgrounds, more than 25 percent are first-generation college students, and one-third are entering with college credits earned while in high school. He highlighted the continued success in attracting students through several scholarship programs, including the Talent Development Program, Schilling Scholars, Cook-Cohen Scholars, Ryan Scholars, and Verrecchia Scholars.

Associate Vice President Libutti reported that, as of the date of the presentation, the University had received 3,348 student deposits. He noted that the College of Engineering had achieved a record number of first-year deposits, reflecting continued growth and student interest in its academic programs. He noted that summer melt, as with each year, would impact the final number come September.

Committee Chair Kerwin asked if there were any areas of concern. Associate Vice President Libutti noted that the University continues to monitor enrollment in Arts and Sciences, where several disciplines are experiencing national declines, and application trends in certain geographic markets.

Committee Vice Chair Fogarty asked how the University compares with peer institutions in the Northeast. Associate Vice President Libutti responded that while comparative enrollment data are still being compiled, early indications suggest that URI is outperforming many peer institutions in application growth and continues to distinguish itself in a challenging regional enrollment environment.

b. 2026 URI Annual Report, pursuant to R.I.G.L. § 16-32-2.1. Efforts and progress related to students, staff, and faculty recruitment and retention at URI. [Enclosure](#)
Markeisha Miner, Vice President, Community, Equity, and Diversity

Vice President Miner presented the University's annual update on community, equity, diversity, and inclusion initiatives, noting that a more detailed discussion would be held during the full Board meeting. Her report ([linked here](#)) highlighted progress in advancing Focus URI Strategic Priority 3 through efforts to cultivate an inclusive, people-centered campus culture, strengthen assessment practices, and compliance with annual state reporting requirements.

Vice President Miner reported that the University has reinvigorated the University Diversity Council with representation from students, faculty, staff, and affiliated organizations to strengthen collaboration on inclusive excellence initiatives. She also highlighted the ongoing work of the University's four community centers: the Center for Military and Veteran Education, the Gender and Sexuality Center, the Multicultural Center, and the Women's Center.

Vice President Miner reviewed results from the University's annual SNAP Climate Survey, noting that 77 percent of respondents indicated they had found a community at URI where they feel they belong. She reported that the survey will continue to be administered annually to monitor campus climate and measure progress over time.

Vice President Miner stated the report summarized trends in faculty, student, and staff composition, noting continued progress in increasing representation across multiple demographic groups. She highlighted that approximately 30 percent of the incoming class identifies as first-generation college students, more than 3,500 students receive Pell Grants, over 2,500 students are registered with Disability Access and Inclusion services, and more than 500 students are affiliated with the military. She also recognized the University's recent national and state honors, including designation as a Military Friendly Gold School and recognition by the Diversity and Inclusion Professionals of Rhode Island for organizational leadership.

Vice President Miner outlined priorities for the coming academic year, including increasing participation in the campus climate survey, expanding recognition of inclusive teaching, research, and leadership, and launching the Inclusive Excellence Academy to provide professional development opportunities for faculty, staff, and students.

Committee Chair Kerwin commended the report and asked how the University's climate survey results compared with peer institutions. Vice President Miner responded that the University's report compares favorably with peer institutions and that increasing survey participation to 25–30 percent of the campus community remains a goal.

Trustee Garnes asked about efforts to recruit and retain a diverse faculty and staff. Vice President Miner noted new initiatives in organizational development, training for search committees, and the development of the Inclusive Excellence Academy.

5. ACTION ITEMS

- a. **Consideration of the annual granting of tenure for University of Rhode Island faculty members, effective July 1, 2026; and recommendation to the URI Board of Trustees.** [Enclosure](#)
Barbara Wolfe, Provost and Executive Vice President, Academic Affairs

Provost Wolfe reported that the University is requesting the Committee's recommendation of tenure for sixteen faculty members who have successfully completed the University's promotion and tenure review process and six newly appointed faculty members.

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 the annual granting of tenure, effective July 1, 2026, for designated faculty members who have met the requirements for tenure at the University, as presented in the enclosure.

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

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

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 0

- b. Consideration 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; and recommendation to the URI Board of Trustees.** [Enclosure](#)
Barbara Wolfe, Provost and Executive Vice President, Academic Affairs

Provost Wolfe requested that the Committee recommend the granting of tenure for Pamela Swett, the incoming Dean of Arts and Sciences. She noted that Dr. Swett is currently employed at McMaster University, where she serves as the Dean of the Faculty of Humanities. She previously served as an Associate Dean and Chair of the Department of History at McMaster and earned the rank of full professor in 2015.

Provost Wolfe reported that the tenure-track faculty in the Department of History voted unanimously to recommend Pamela Swett for tenure in the rank of full professor.

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

VOTED THAT the Committee recommend that the Board approve the granting of tenure, effective July 26, 2026, to Pamela E. Swett, Ph.D., who has met the requirements for tenure at the University of Rhode Island, as presented in the enclosure.

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

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

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 0

c. Consideration of the granting of tenure, effective August 9, 2026, to incoming University Librarian, Brian W. Keith, MLIS, who has met the requirements for tenure at 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 requested that the Committee grant tenure to Brian Keith, incoming University Librarian. She noted that Brian Keith currently serves as Dean of the Library at Eastern Illinois University, where he holds tenure. Prior to that, he served as Associate Dean of the Libraries at the University of Florida. She noted that he has a Master of Library and Information Science, a terminal degree in discipline, as well as a Master of Business Administration.

Provost Wolfe reported that the tenure-track faculty in the University Libraries voted unanimously to recommend that Brian Keith be granted tenure at the rank of Professor.

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

VOTED THAT the Committee recommend that the Board approve the granting of tenure, effective August 9, 2026, to Brian W. Keith, MLIS, who has met the requirements for tenure at the University of Rhode Island, as presented in the enclosure.

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

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

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 0

d. Consideration to approve 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; and recommendation to the URI Board of Trustees. [Enclosure](#)

Barbara Wolfe, Provost and Executive Vice President, Academic Affairs

Provost Wolfe stated that the Bachelor of Arts in Film is an intensive, experiential program that combines advanced creative practice with the critical and historical study of film and media. She reported that the graduates will be well prepared for careers in a wide range of fields, including independent filmmaking, animation and media design, the film and television industries, as well as advertising, marketing, public relations, and media criticism.

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 recommend that the Board approve legislation recommended by the Faculty Senate and the President providing a new degree opportunity, Bachelor of Arts in Film, as presented in the enclosure.

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

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

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 0

- e. **Consideration to approve 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; and recommendation to the URI Board of Trustees.** [Enclosure](#)

Barbara Wolfe, Provost and Executive Vice President, Academic Affairs

Provost Wolfe reported that the Bachelor of Arts in Sustainable Food Systems is a new in-person degree program offered by the College of the Environment and Life Sciences. She noted that the program will provide students with the interdisciplinary knowledge and practical skills needed to advance sustainable, equitable, and resilient food systems at the local, regional, and global levels. She explained that the graduates will be well prepared for careers in the rapidly growing field of sustainable food systems or to pursue graduate study and research focused on addressing the challenges of ensuring access to safe, nutritious, and affordable food for a growing global population.

Committee Chair Kerwin called for a motion, and on a motion duly made by Charles Fogarty and seconded by Maria Ducharme, 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, Bachelor of Arts in Sustainable Food Systems, as presented in the enclosure.

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

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

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 0

6. EXECUTIVE SESSION

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

- a. **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); specifically,**
 - (i) **Promotion and Tenure**
Barbara Wolfe, Provost and Executive Vice President, Academic Affairs
- b. **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 public interest, pursuant to R.I.G.L. § 42-46-5(a)(7); specifically,**
 - (i) **Enrollment and recruitment**
Barbara Wolfe, Provost and Executive Vice President, Academic Affairs
Dean Libutti, Associate Vice President for Enrollment Management and Student Success
 - (ii) **Updates on URI research funding process**
Bethany Jenkins, Vice President, Research and Economic Development
 - (iii) **Office of Management and Budget (OMB) proposed regulations amending federal grant making guidance and impact to URI**
Bethany Jenkins, Vice President, Research and Economic Development
 - (iv) **Research support from partner organizations**
Bethany Jenkins, Vice President, Research and Economic Development

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

VOTED THAT the Committee convene into executive session pursuant to R.I.G.L. § 42-46-5(a)(2) and (a)(7) for discussion of promotion and tenure, enrollment and recruitment, updates on URI research funding, federal grant making guidance, and research support from partner organizations, as listed on the agenda.

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

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

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 0

11:59 a.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.

12:46 p.m., the Academic Affairs and Research Committee returned to Open Session. Virtual public access resumed.

Committee Vice Chair Charles Fogarty left the meeting following the Executive Session.

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 Academic Affairs and Research Committee seal the minutes of the Executive Session that took place on June 22, 2026.

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

YEAS: Maria Ducharme, Monica Garnes, Neil Kerwin, Joseph Matthews

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 0

7. ADJOURN

Committee Chair Kerwin called for a motion to adjourn.

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

VOTED THAT the Academic Affairs and Research Committee adjourn the meeting of June 22, 2026.

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

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

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 0

URI Board of Trustees Academic Affairs and Research Committee Meeting
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The meeting was adjourned at 12:50 p.m.

The next URI Board of Trustees Academic Affairs and Research Committee meeting is scheduled for September 16, 2026.