

Members

Margo Cook '86, *Chair*

Michael D. Fascitelli '78

Charles Fogarty '80

Joe Formicola '69

Richard S. Humphrey

Neil Kerwin, Ph.D. '73

Matthew Lenz '11

Roby Luna '04

Cortney M. Nicolato '01

Vahid Ownjazayeri

Yahaira "Jay" Placencia '01

Thomas Ryan '75

Armand E. Sabitoni '73

Robert A. Weygand '71, '76, M.A. '09, M.P.A. '10

Ex Officio Members

Marc B. Parlange, Ph.D., P.Eng.
President

Chair
R.I. Board of Education

David Caprio, *Chair*
R.I. Council on Postsecondary Education

Melissa Sutherland, Ph.D., FAAN
Faculty Representative

Revaa Goyal '27
Student Representative

**The University of Rhode Island
Board of Trustees Meeting and Annual Retreat
Thursday, June 29, 2023 · 9:00 a.m. EDT**

**The University of Rhode Island
Brookside Residence Hall
West Alumni Road, Kingston, RI 02881**

OFFICIAL MINUTES

1. CALL TO ORDER

Chair Margo Cook welcomed everyone to the June 29, 2023, meeting and annual retreat of the University of Rhode Island (URI) Board of Trustees and noted that the meeting was being held in person with some board members participating remotely. Virtual access to the meeting was available via the YouTube video platform and is available for viewing at <https://web.uri.edu/trustees/meetings/>.

Board secretary Michelle Curreri conducted a roll call attendance and reported that a quorum of members was present. Chair Cook called the meeting to order at 9:35 a.m.

The URI Board of Trustees members in attendance:

- Ms. Margo Cook, Chair (in person)
- Ms. Maria Ducharme (in person)
- Mr. Michael Fascitelli (in person)
- Honorable Charles J. Fogarty, Jr. (in person)
- Mr. Joseph Formicola (in person)
- Ms. Monica Garnes (in person)
- Dr. Neil Kerwin (remote)
- Mr. Matthew Lenz (in person)
- Mr. Roby Luna (in person)
- Mr. Joseph Matthews (in person)
- Ms. Cortney Nicolato (in person)
- Mr. Vahid Ownjazayeri (in person)
- Ms. Jay Placencia (in person)

URI Board of Trustees Meeting and Annual Retreat
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- Mr. Thomas Ryan (remote)
- Mr. Armand Sabitoni (in person)
- Honorable Robert A. Weygand (in person)
- Dr. Marc B. Parlange, President (ex officio, non-voting) (in person)
- Mr. David Caprio (ex officio, non-voting) (in person)
- Dr. Melissa Sutherland (non-voting) (in person)
- Ms. Revaa Goyal (non-voting) (remote)

URI Board of Trustees member not participating:

- Mr. Richard Humphrey

URI President's Leadership Council members in attendance:

- Ms. Abby Benson, Interim Vice President, Administration and Finance (in person)
- Ms. Chelsea Berry, Interim Senior Advisor to the President and Chief of Staff (in person)
- Mr. Thor Bjorn, Director, Athletics (in person)
- Ms. Alyssa Boss, General Counsel (in person)
- Dr. Bethany Jenkins, Interim Vice President, Research and Economic Development (in person)
- Mr. Matthew McDonald, Vice President, Communications and Marketing (in person)
- Ms. Elizabeth Breul O'Rourke, President, URI Foundation and Alumni Engagement (in person)
- Dr. Ellen Reynolds, Vice President for Student Affairs (in person)
- Dr. Sean Rogers, Dean, College of Business, Alfred J. Verrecchia-Hasbro Inc. Leadership Chair in Business, and former Chief Diversity Officer (in person)
- Dr. Barbara Wolfe, Provost and Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs (in person)

URI staff members in attendance:

- Ms. Robin Cawley, Legal Assistant (in person)
- Ms. Michelle Curreri, Secretary to the Board of Trustees (in person)
- Ms. Lauren Burgess, Director, Legislative and Government Relations (in person)
- Mr. Carlos Lopez Estrada, Director, Legislative and Government Relations (in person)
- Mr. Ryan Carrillo, Director, Planning & Real Estate Development (in person)
- Dr. Anthony Marchese, Dean, College of Engineering (in person)
- Dr. Bahram Nassersharif, Faculty Senate President (in person)
- Katie LeBlanc, Student Assistant, Board of Trustees (in person)
- Ms. Michelle Fontes, Assistant Vice President, Community, Equity, and Diversity (in person)
- Ms. Lynn Owens, Associate Secretary to the Board of Trustees (in person)
- Dr. Jen Riley, Dean, College of Arts and Sciences (in person)

Guest Speaker:

- Michael L. Ledford, J.D., President of Lewis-Burke Associates, LLC (in person)

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

2. REPORT OF THE CHAIR

a. Welcome New Members

Chair Cook welcomed the newest members of the URI Board of Trustees, Maria Ducharme, Joe Formicola, Monica Garnes, Joseph Matthews, Robert Weygand, Melissa Sutherland and Revaa Goyal. She thanked former board members, Vice Chair Michael McNally, Karina Montilla Edmonds, Christine Heenan, David Martirano and Susan Petrovas, who served the Board well.

b. Committee Membership Update [Enclosure](#)

The recently updated Committee Roster was displayed on the screen. Board members have been advised of their committee assignments. Chair Cook explained the structure of the committee membership, noting that all committee chairs serve on the Executive Committee and the Compensation Subcommittee of the Board. She asked Mike Fascitelli to also serve on the Compensation Subcommittee as he previously served as a committee chair.

c. ACTION ITEM: Nomination and Election of the Vice Chair of the URI Board of Trustees

Chair Cook nominated Armand Sabitoni to serve as vice chair of the URI Board of Trustees, noting his understanding of state operations, his leadership skills, and his commitment to the University of Rhode Island.

Chair Cook asked if there were any other nominations or discussion on her nomination. Hearing no other nominations or discussion, she called for a motion that Armand Sabitoni be elected to serve as vice chair of the URI Board of Trustees.

On a motion duly made by Charles Fogarty and seconded by Jay Placencia, it was

VOTED: THAT The URI Board of Trustees elect Armand Sabitoni to serve as vice chair of the URI Board of Trustees.

VOTE: 16 members voted in the affirmative and 0 members voted in the negative.

YEAS: Margo Cook, Maria Ducharme, Michael Fascitelli, Charles Fogarty, Joe Formicola, Monica Garnes, Neil Kerwin, Matthew Lenz, Roby Luna, Joseph Matthews, Cortney Nicolato, Vahid Ownjazayeri, Jay Placencia, Thomas Ryan, Armand Sabitoni, Robert Weygand.

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 0

Vice Chair Sabitoni thanked his fellow board members for their support and confidence in him.

3. REPORTS OF THE COMMITTEE CHAIRS

a. Executive Committee/Compensation Subcommittee Report

- (i) Update – June 29, 2023, Joint Meeting of the Executive Committee and the Compensation Subcommittee.

Chair Cook reported that the committees discussed the President's performance review and his employment contract. She outlined the annual review process, part of the Presidential Performance Review Policy. She noted that last year President Parlange completed an annual self-assessment, which formed performance goals for 2022-2023. President Parlange was then assessed in relation to those goals. The annual performance review process continued as President Parlange developed the University's Strategic Plan and metrics to measure success.

Chair Cook outlined next steps, stating that the President will again conduct his annual self-assessment, reflecting on the established performance goals and how the Strategic Plan is going. At the September Executive Committee meeting, the President's self-assessment and metrics will be reviewed.

Chair Cook stated that the Presidential Performance Review Policy dictates that a comprehensive review be conducted nine months before the end of the President's employment contract. She noted that a comprehensive review committee, likely made up of members of the Executive Committee, will do a version of a 360-degree performance review, interviewing students, faculty, and staff. She understands that the Faculty Senate conducts its own comprehensive performance review of the President. The Board's comprehensive review process will be further defined over the summer.

- (ii) ACTION ITEM: Approval of an amendment to the employment contract with President Parlange.

Chair Cook deferred action on this item to the September meetings. She noted that there are a few items in the President's employment contract that carried over from the former President's contract that require more thought and discussion over the summer.

- (ii) ACTION ITEM: Approval of a 2.5% across-the-board salary increase for all non-union, non-classified employees, effective July 1, 2023.

Chair Cook called for a motion that the URI Board of Trustees approve a 2.5% across-the-board salary increase for all non-union, non-classified employees, effective July 1, 2023.

On a motion duly made by Matthew Lenz and seconded by Armand Sabitoni, it was

VOTED:	THAT	The URI Board of Trustees approve a 2.5% across-the-board salary increase for all non-union, non-classified employees, effective July 1, 2023.
	VOTE:	16 members voted in the affirmative and 0 members voted in the negative.
	YEAS:	Margo Cook, Maria Ducharme, Michael Fascitelli, Charles Fogarty, Joe Formicola, Monica Garnes, Neil Kerwin, Matthew Lenz, Roby Luna, Joseph Matthews, Cortney Nicolato, Vahid Ownjazayeri, Jay Placencia, Thomas Ryan, Armand Sabitoni, Robert Weygand
	NAYS:	0
	ABSTAINS:	0

b. Academic Affairs and Research Committee Report

- (i) Update – June 15, 2023, and June 28, 2023, Committee Meetings

Committee Chair Kerwin welcomed the new members of the Board and the Academic Affairs and Research Committee. He noted that the Committee met twice in June and heard from the Chief Academic Officer and the Chief Research Officer. Provost Wolfe provided to the Board a brief overview of academic affairs at the University, including enrollment, promotion and tenure review, and academic program changes. Her presentation can be found [here](#). Chair Kerwin noted that in addition to the action items listed below, the Committee reviewed and recommends through the omnibus vote the approval of amendments to the Committee's charter and calendar.

- (ii) ACTION ITEM: Approval of the granting of tenure for University of Rhode Island faculty members, effective July 1, 2023. [Enclosure 3.b.\(ii\)](#)

Committee Chair Kerwin called for a motion that the URI Board of Trustees approve the granting of tenure, effective July 1, 2023, to the designated faculty members who have met the requirements for tenure at the University of Rhode Island, as recommended and presented in the Enclosure 3.b.(ii).

On a motion duly made by Charles Fogarty and seconded by Jay Placencia, it was

VOTED: THAT The URI Board of Trustees approve the granting of tenure, effective July 1, 2023, to the designated faculty members who have met the requirements for tenure at the University of Rhode Island, as recommended and presented in the Enclosure 3.b.(ii).

VOTE: 16 members voted in the affirmative and 0 members voted in the negative.

YEAS: Margo Cook, Maria Ducharme, Michael Fascitelli, Charles Fogarty, Joe Formicola, Monica Garnes, Neil Kerwin, Matthew Lenz, Roby Luna, Joseph Matthews, Cortney Nicolato, Vahid Ownjazayeri, Jay Placencia, Thomas Ryan, Armand Sabitoni, Robert Weygand

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 0

(iii) ACTION ITEM: Approval of legislation recommended by the Faculty Senate and the President. [Enclosure 3.b.\(iii\)](#)

- Closure of the URI Joint PhD in Education
- New Master's Degree in Environmental Management
- New Master's Degree in Professional Science
- New Master's Degree in Health Outcomes and Data Analytics
- New Master's Degree in Professional Studies
- New Bachelor of Science Degree in Environmental Education

Committee Chair Kerwin called for a motion that the URI Board of Trustees approve legislation recommended by the Faculty Senate and the President, as recommended and presented in Enclosure 3.b.(iii), specifically:

- Closure of the URI Joint PhD in Education
- New Master's Degree in Environmental Management
- New Master's Degree in Professional Science
- New Master's Degree in Health Outcomes and Data Analytics

- New Master's Degree in Professional Studies
- New Bachelor of Science Degree in Environmental Education

On a motion duly made by Cortney Nicolato and seconded by Matthew Lenz, it was

VOTED: THAT The URI Board of Trustees approve legislation recommended by the Faculty Senate and the President, as recommended and presented in Enclosure 3.b.(iii), specifically:

- Closure of the URI Joint PhD in Education
- New Master's Degree in Environmental Management
- New Master's Degree in Professional Science
- New Master's Degree in Health Outcomes and Data Analytics
- New Master's Degree in Professional Studies

VOTE: 16 members voted in the affirmative and 0 members voted in the negative.

YEAS: Margo Cook, Maria Ducharme, Michael Fascitelli, Charles Fogarty, Joe Formicola, Monica Garnes, Neil Kerwin, Matthew Lenz, Roby Luna, Joseph Matthews, Cortney Nicolato, Vahid Ownjazayeri, Jay Placencia, Thomas Ryan, Armand Sabitoni, Robert Weygand

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 0

(iv) ACTION ITEM: Approval of legislation recommended by the Faculty Senate and the President: [Enclosure 3.b.\(iv\)](#)

- Organizational Change: Alan Shawn Feinstein College of Education and Professional Studies to be renamed the Alan Shawn Feinstein College of Education. Proposal will dissolve the school of professional studies.

Committee Chair Kerwin called for a motion that the URI Board of Trustees approve legislation recommended by the Faculty Senate and the President, as recommended and presented in Enclosure 3.b.(iv), specifically, dissolving the school of professional studies and renaming the Alan Shawn Feinstein College of

Education and Professional Studies to the Alan Shawn Feinstein College of Education.

On a motion duly made by Charles Fogarty and seconded by Jay Placencia, it was

VOTED: THAT The URI Board of Trustees approve legislation recommended by the Faculty Senate and the President, as recommended and presented in Enclosure 3.b.(iv), specifically, dissolving the school of professional studies and renaming the Alan Shawn Feinstein College of Education and Professional Studies to the Alan Shawn Feinstein College of Education.

VOTE: 16 members voted in the affirmative and 0 members voted in the negative.

YEAS: Margo Cook, Maria Ducharme, Michael Fascitelli, Charles Fogarty, Joe Formicola, Monica Garnes, Neil Kerwin, Matthew Lenz, Roby Luna, Joseph Matthews, Cortney Nicolato, Vahid Ownjazayeri, Jay Placencia, Thomas Ryan, Armand Sabitoni, Robert Weygand

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 0

c. Finance and Facilities Committee Report

(i) Update – June 20, 2023, Committee Meeting

Committee Chair Vahid Ownjazayeri reported on activity at the June 20, 2023, Committee meeting. He noted that in addition to the items listed below, the Committee reviewed and recommends through the omnibus vote the approval of amendments to the Committee's charter and calendar. He added that he looks forward to working with the three new committee members.

(ii) DISCUSSION ITEM: Approvals Under the Delegation of Authority to the President Relating to Land and Property [Enclosure 3.c.\(ii\)](#)

Director Ryan Carrillo reviewed the one approval that the President made since the last Board meeting under the Board's Delegation of Authority to the President to approve certain transactions related to land and property, an addendum to a lease agreement with South County Donuts, Inc. for rental of retail space in Memorial Union and the Center for Biotechnology and Life Sciences.

- (iii) ACTION ITEM: Approval of the University of Rhode Island Capital Improvement Plan FY2025-2029 [Enclosure 3.c.\(iii\)](#)

Interim Vice President Abby Benson provided a high-level review of the University's proposed Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) for FY2025-FY2029, making note of projects with modified budgets, scopes or schedules, as listed in the enclosure. No new projects have been added from last year's approved FY2024-FY2028 CIP.

Board members discussed alternate funding opportunities for important capital improvement projects. With the pending completion of a master housing study – a comprehensive review of URI's facilities, and the development of a new master plan, the University is focused on allocating and prioritizing resources effectively. Committee Chair Ownjazayeri mentioned funding available through the RI Infrastructure Bank and suggested that the Finance and Facilities Committee discuss public private partnership funding at an upcoming meeting.

Committee Chair Ownjazayeri called for a motion that the URI Board of Trustees approve the University of Rhode Island Capital Improvement Plan for FY2025-2029, as recommended and presented in Enclosure 3.c.(iii).

On a motion duly made by Armand Sabitoni and seconded by Robert Weygand, it was

VOTED: THAT The URI Board of Trustees approve the University of Rhode Island Capital Improvement Plan for FY2025-2029, as recommended and presented in Enclosure 3.c.(iii).

VOTE: 16 members voted in the affirmative and 0 members voted in the negative.

YEAS: Margo Cook, Maria Ducharme, Michael Fascitelli, Charles Fogarty, Joe Formicola, Monica Garnes, Neil Kerwin, Matthew Lenz, Roby Luna, Joseph Matthews, Cortney Nicolato, Vahid Ownjazayeri, Jay Placencia, Thomas Ryan, Armand Sabitoni, Robert Weygand

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 0

d. Governance Committee Report

(i) Update – June 13, 2023, Committee Meeting

Committee Chair Cortney Nicolato reported on activity at the June 13, 2023, Governance Committee meeting. She welcomed the new board members and congratulated those trustees who were reappointed. She noted that the committee charter and calendar were reviewed, along with the President's assignment of university liaisons to each committee. Action on those items will be considered in the omnibus vote following the committee reports. Committee Chair Nicolato reported that the Governance Committee is identifying conflict disclosure language to be added to Board documents, beyond the financial disclosure annual statement filed with the Rhode Island Ethics Commission, to ensure that the Board continues to be the most transparent public entity possible. More information will be presented as the language is developed.

e. Institutional Risk and Compliance Committee Report

(i) Update – June 26, 2023, Committee Meeting

Committee Chair Roby Luna reported on activity at the June 26, 2023, Committee meeting. The Committee discussed cybersecurity in executive session. Committee Chair Luna noted that the University continues to make significant strides in securing the security posture of the institution. Vice President Abby Benson stated that the external auditor reviewed the annual audit process with the Committee, and the completed external audit will be presented to the Board at an upcoming meeting. She noted that the Committee reviewed the University's plans to address anticipated amendments to Title IX, federal regulations that ensure that federally funded education programs and activities are free from all forms of sex discrimination. Committee Chair Luna stated that proposed amendments to the Committee's charter and calendar were reviewed and approved unanimously.

(ii) ACTION ITEM: Approval of a Request for an Exemption, from Ethics Code Section 1.2(h), submitted by URI employee Azure Cygler, and of the related Conflict of Interest Management Plan, under the Public-Private Partnership Act and the URI Policy on Public Private Partnership in Research and Development. [Enclosure 3.e.\(ii\)](#)

Interim Vice President Bethany Jenkins provided a high-level overview of this agenda item.

Committee Chair Luna called for a motion that the URI Board of Trustees approve the (enclosed) Request for an Exemption, from Ethics Code Section 1.2(h), submitted by URI employee Azure Cygler, and of the related (enclosed)

Conflict of Interest Management Plan, under the Public-Private Partnership Act and the URI Policy on Public Private Partnership in Research and Development, as recommended and presented in Enclosure 3(e)(ii).

In response to Trustee Kerwin's question about the possible delegation of the Board's approval authority over these matters, General Counsel Boss stated that the prescriptive process is mandated by regulations and policy, but she will confirm there is no possibility of the Board delegating its approval authority.

On a motion duly made by Jay Placencia and seconded by Matthew Lenz, it was

VOTED: THAT The URI Board of Trustees approve the (enclosed) Request for an Exemption, from Ethics Code Section 1.2(h), submitted by URI employee Azure Cygler, and of the related (enclosed) Conflict of Interest Management Plan, under the Public-Private Partnership Act and the URI Policy on Public Private Partnership in Research and Development, as recommended and presented in Enclosure 3.e.(ii).

VOTE: 16 members voted in the affirmative and 0 members voted in the negative.

YEAS: Margo Cook, Maria Ducharme, Michael Fascitelli, Charles Fogarty, Joe Formicola, Monica Garnes, Neil Kerwin, Matthew Lenz, Roby Luna, Joseph Matthews, Cortney Nicolato, Vahid Ownjazayeri, Jay Placencia, Thomas Ryan, Armand Sabitoni, Robert Weygand

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 0

f. Student Life and Athletics Committee Report

(i) Update – June 27, 2023, Committee Meeting

Committee Vice Chair Jay Placencia reported on activity at the June 27, 2023, Committee meeting. She noted that the Committee reviewed and approved calendar and charter changes to be taken up during the omnibus vote. She stated that Athletics Director Bjorn provided a year-end review of metrics and key performance indicators, including academic progress of student athletes, compliance with applicable regulations, and success in team and individual competition. Vice President Reynolds provided to the Committee a year-end review of student life goals and key performance indicators, including

engagement, satisfaction, and academic progress as appropriate to department mission.

Committee Vice Chair Placencia noted that student-athletes Stephen Cirella, Trinity Smith, and Kennique Bonner-Steward presented with Athletics Director Bjorn and Julia Al-Amir presented with Vice President Reynolds.

Director Bjorn provided a high-level overview of the presentation made to the Committee (executive summary and presentation can be found [here](#)). He thanked all those that played a role in funding the Athletics facilities improvements.

Vice President Reynolds provided a high-level overview of the presentation made to the Committee (executive summary and presentation can be found [here](#)).

4. 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:

- a. Approval of amendments to the Executive Committee and Compensation Subcommittee Charters and its Calendar. [Enclosure 4.a.](#)

Not considered in the omnibus vote. Held for consideration at the September Board meeting.

- b. Approval of amendments to the Academic Affairs and Research Committee Charter and Calendar. [Enclosure 4.b.](#)
- c. Approval of amendments to the Finance and Facilities Committee Charter and Calendar. [Enclosure 4.c.](#)
- d. Acceptance of President Parlange's appointments of Primary University Liaisons and University Liaisons to Committees pursuant to Section 5.7 of the Bylaws. [Enclosure 4.d.](#) (Governance Committee)
- e. Approval of amendments to the Governance Committee Charter and Calendar. [Enclosure 4.e.](#)
- f. Approval of amendments to the Institutional Risk and Compliance Committee Charter and Calendar. [Enclosure 4.f.](#)
- g. Approval of amendments to the Student Life and Athletics Committee Charter and Calendar. [Enclosure 4.g.](#)

- h. Approval of the Minutes of the April 21, 2023, Board Meeting, as presented. [Enclosure 4.h.](#)

Chair Cook introduced the new procedure of including some committee-related action items and approval of the past meeting's minutes in one omnibus vote to make the meetings more efficient. All committee-related action items listed in the omnibus vote have been reviewed and approved by the corresponding committees.

Before proceeding with an omnibus vote, Chair Cook asked if there were any action items listed below for which any member has any questions or would like to discuss, oppose or remove from the omnibus vote to be voted on individually.

Chair Cook pulled Agenda Item 4.a. from the omnibus vote, to be deferred to the next meeting. She called for an omnibus motion to approve agenda action items 4.b., 4.c., 4.d., 4.e., 4.f., 4.g., and 4.h. as recommended and presented.

On an omnibus motion duly made by Armand Sabitoni and seconded by Jay Placencia, it was

VOTED:	THAT	The URI Board of Trustees approve agenda action items 4.b., 4.c., 4.d., 4.e., 4.f., 4.g., and 4.h. as recommended and Presented.
	VOTE:	16 members voted in the affirmative and 0 members voted in the negative.
	YEAS:	Margo Cook, Maria Ducharme, Michael Fascitelli, Charles Fogarty, Joe Formicola, Monica Garnes, Neil Kerwin, Matthew Lenz, Roby Luna, Joseph Matthews, Cortney Nicolato, Vahid Ownjazayeri, Jay Placencia, Thomas Ryan, Armand Sabitoni, Robert Weygand
	NAYS:	0
	ABSTAINS:	0

5. ADDITIONAL ACTION ITEM

- a. Approval of a Resolution Delegating Authority Over User Agency Contracts to the Managerial Group at the University of Rhode Island. [Enclosure 5.a.](#)

Chair Cook noted that this is an administrative item where outgoing trustees are taken off the resolution, and new trustees are added. She called for a motion that the URI Board of Trustees approve the Resolution Delegating Authority Over User Agency Contracts to the Managerial Group at the University of Rhode Island, as set forth in Enclosure 5.a.

On a motion duly made by Jay Placencia and seconded by Roby Luna, it was

VOTED: THAT The URI Board of Trustees approve the Resolution Delegating Authority Over User Agency Contracts to the Managerial Group at the University of Rhode Island, as set forth in Enclosure 5.a.

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

YEAS: Margo Cook, Maria Ducharme, Michael Fascitelli, Joe Formicola, Monica Garnes, Neil Kerwin, Matthew Lenz, Roby Luna, Joseph Matthews, Cortney Nicolato, Vahid Ownjazayeri, Jay Placencia, Thomas Ryan, Armand Sabitoni, Robert Weygand

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 0

Charles Fogarty was not present for the vote.

The Board took a brief recess at 10:59 a.m.

At 11:11 a.m., the Board resumed its meeting. Chair Cook thanked members of the Board and local and state officials in supporting funding for the University of Rhode Island during this year's legislative session. She remarked about the recent Supreme Court ruling related to affirmative action in admissions and noted that at a subsequent meeting a discussion is called for on the context of the decision and how it impacts the University of Rhode Island.

6. REPORT OF THE PRESIDENT

a. Budget Update

President Parlange welcomed new Board members. He recapped staff changes at the University and highlighted community events and government relations activity since the last Board meeting. He shared a progress report on campaign fundraising to date. He thanked all friends and colleagues for their support of URI.

President Parlange presented his budget update report to the Board (the report can be found [here](#)). He noted that the efforts of many to communicate the needs of the University resulted in a highly successful funding package. He said it was a pleasure to work with the Governor, the Senate President, the Speaker of the House and all state leaders who recognize the importance of their support of the University. He feels personally that URI is turning a

corner, heading in a new direction that will raise the University as an academic leader, and to do the important things that we owe to the state and the region.

The President spoke about the University's Strategic Investment Initiative, a deliberate and thoughtful approach to advance URI in the face of serious budget challenges. The Initiative allows the University to invest in new and existing research and academic programs and administrative and financial services, with a focus on revenue generation and cost savings, and an investment of discretionary, one-time-only resources to support proposals in alignment with the Focus URI Strategic Plan. He spoke about the incentive-based budget model (IBB) that the University is working on and discussed next steps.

President Parlange discussed Focus URI and the Strategic Plan Key Performance Indicators dashboard, a detailed list of all indicators, their baselines, current value and 10-year targets, and their alignment with the four pillars of the Strategic Plan.

Chair Cook noted that it would be helpful to have some 3–5-year milestones, as this is a ten-year strategic plan, so we know we are headed in the right direction.

Board members noted the hard work and effort made by University leadership and support members to capture significant funding for the University. Recognizing the importance of keeping up the momentum, board members cautioned that it will be harder to achieve this year's accomplishments in years to come. Chair Cook noted the importance of expanding our funding options.

Vice President Matthew McDonald spoke about the Supreme Court's ruling today, which held that the race conscious admission programs at both Harvard and University of North Carolina violate the Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment. This is something that URI has been following for many weeks. A University statement will go out very shortly, acknowledging the Court's decision. In working with our enrollment experts, we have determined that the University does not use race as a deciding factor in admissions; we have included that information in our statement. The statement acknowledges that our legal experts are in the process of reviewing the decision to determine if it has any implications on any other existing University programs. The statement closes with what we think is a strong statement of our values that the University is committed to fostering an inclusive, people-centered culture and that we will continue to be an institution that values and advances equity, diversity, and inclusion, that celebrates the uniqueness of all members, and that cultivates a sense of community where all members find themselves included and their work valued.

Chair Cook said it would be nice to have a more fulsome discussion in terms of the University's programs, to contextualize this ruling with what URI currently does.

7. DISCUSSION ITEM

- a. 2023 URI Annual Diversity Report, pursuant to R.I.G.L. § 16-32-2.1, Diversity efforts and progress related to student, staff and faculty recruitment and retention at URI. [Enclosure](#)
- Dr. Sean Edmund Rogers, Dean, College of Business and former Chief Diversity Officer

Dr. Rogers provided a high-level overview of the diversity report. He said that the University of Rhode Island is one of the strongest drivers and engines of social and economic mobility in the state. Over thirty percent of first-year students identify as first in their family to attend college. Twenty-five percent of our students are racially or ethnically diverse. Three thousand URI students are Pell (grant) eligible. Fifty-eight percent of our student body are women. Over five hundred new students were identified to work with our disability, access, and inclusion office. Dr. Rogers celebrated the Talent Development Program, a great driver of change and opportunity in the state and nationally. He reported that twenty-five percent of faculty members identify as persons of color; an increase from sixteen percent ten years ago. Fifty-one percent of faculty are women; sixty-one percent of non-academic staff employees are women.

Board members discussed how the University measures its diversity levels and how it compares to its peers. Dr. Rogers noted that many of the Community, Equity, and Diversity outcomes are reflected in the KPIs of the Strategic Plan; metrics are on the dashboard.

Board members discussed the importance of educating the University's stakeholders and the public about the transfer portal and the articulation agreements in place between CCRI and URI that lay out a transfer plan between two program offerings. Advisors help students by ensuring that all completed class credits transfer and identify a clear pathway for continued advancement.

8. EXECUTIVE SESSION

The Board may seek to go into executive session to consider the following items:

- a. Discussion regarding completion of the annual performance review process for President Marc Parlange, pursuant to R.I.G.L. § 42-46-5(a)(1).
- b. Discussion regarding amendment of the employment contract with President Parlange, pursuant to R.I.G.L. § 42-46-5(a)(1).

No executive session was held. The Board took a brief recess for lunch at 11:56 a.m. During the lunch break, board members participated in a "get to know you" exercise. The Board resumed its meeting and annual retreat at 12:25 p.m.

9. BOARD RETREAT

- a. Opening Remarks
 - Margo Cook, Chair

Chair Cook thanked Governance Committee Chair Cortney Nicolato and the Governance Committee for their work preparing for this annual retreat. She welcomed the trustees' thoughtful comments and honest assessment of the Board's work in supporting the University of Rhode Island.

- b. Board Self-Assessment and Feedback
 - Cortney Nicolato, Governance Committee Chair

Trustee Nicolato shared information compiled from the Board of Trustees annual self-assessment (presentation can be found [here](#)). She noted that Board members were asked to rate our effectiveness as a collective board and rate their effectiveness as individual board members. She highlighted some key points and identified opportunities for continued growth. The Board felt very strongly that it is supporting and advancing the educational mission of the organization, providing effective oversight for the University. Trustee Nicolato noted that philanthropy is listed in the Board's Statement of Expectations; areas of opportunity in philanthropy include participation in time, talent, and treasure.

Trustee Nicolato reported that Board members noted increased participation in reviewing and supporting the strategic direction of the University. Board members expressed that they are actively participating in Board meetings, acting as stewards to the institutional mission and values, and serving as ambassadors for the University.

Board members discussed areas of enhanced opportunities, including leveraging local trustees in more University events, and leaning more heavily into a committee review of materials with executive summaries of relevant materials presented in Board packets, leaving more time for discussion at the Board meetings, and time with students and faculty.

Trustee Nicolato suggested that the Board create a list of goals (growth opportunities) over the next year and define ways to measure those goals. Trustee Fascitelli suggested the Board highlight essential programs and faculty at each meeting, with focus on faculty that are supporting the Strategic Plan. Trustees encouraged student profiles at meetings and gatherings.

Chair Cook stated that the Board members will receive the URI Board of Trustees Statement of Expectations following this meeting and are asked to read and acknowledge receipt of the document. The Statement of Expectations talks about the trustees' duty of care and duty of loyalty, attendance, coming to meetings prepared, confidentiality, and essential aspects of your service to the University as trustees.

- c. Introduction of Michael Ledford, president, Lewis-Burke Associates, LLC
 - Lauren Burgess, director, Legislative and Government Relations

Director Lauren Burgess presented several slides which can be found [here](#) to provide an update on the University's federal relations strategy, short and long-term opportunities, and efforts to raise URI's profile at the national level. She provided an overview of the work ahead at the federal level, including the annual appropriations process, being involved in major pieces of legislation and increased engagement with the delegation. Director Burgess noted efforts to support the implementation of the Strategic Plan and position the University for success. She spoke about enhancing opportunities, making URI more competitive by utilizing the relationships it has, and mechanisms available to us through the legislative process.

Director Burgess introduced guest speaker, Michael Ledford, President of Lewis-Burke Associates, LLC, consultants hired by URI to provide strategic guidance, insights and information, to work with faculty, deans and the administration to shape the next big, long-term opportunities the University wants to capture.

- d. The Future of Higher Education
 - Michael Ledford, president, Lewis-Burke Associates, LLC

Michael Ledford presented a PowerPoint, which can be found [here](#). He identified the focus of Lewis-Burke Associates, Inc., a government relations firm focused on research, healthcare, and education, and the goal of their relationship with URI – to match the President's vision for additional resources and to increase the profile of the University at the federal level.

Mr. Ledford began his presentation with an overview of the federal government, the makeup of Congress, and its impact on higher education today (more scrutiny, reduced funding). He noted areas of agreement and areas for tremendous opportunities that may drive increased focus on research, which may present opportunities for research universities like URI. He noted numerous technical challenges where political bodies routinely turn to higher education for answers. Higher education serves as a partner to the federal government, where students are trained to solve some of the greatest challenges.

Mr. Ledford reviewed this year's increased Omnibus Appropriations to various federal agencies and noted the goal to maximize funding to URI as much as possible. He also identified special funds and initiatives available at the federal level, highly competitive opportunities for funding. The Fiscal Responsibility Act funding caps were reviewed. Mr. Ledford noted that while there may be funding constraints in some areas, we are in a priority area right now - this is a very auspicious time at the federal level.

Mr. Ledford discussed policy changes at the federal level and noted viable legislation that, if enacted, will have a positive impact on URI (Farm Bill, Defense Policy Bill, EDA Reauthorization around economic and workforce development), powerful tools to create opportunities for URI and for higher education more broadly.

Referencing the executive branch of the federal government and its creation of new agencies and once-in-a-lifetime funding mechanisms, Mr. Ledford stated that new agencies are greenfields for funding and encouraged URI to focus on the few things it can do incredibly well. He provided two examples where URI could access new funding opportunities, including the National Science Foundation's Directorate For Technology, Innovation and Partnerships (TIP) for the advancement of use-inspired and translational research in all fields of science and engineering, giving rise to new industries and engaging all Americans in the pursuit of new, high wage jobs in science, technology, engineering, and math. The ARPA-H(earth) Advanced Research Projects Agency is also a highly competitive funding opportunity for universities to tackle hard problems.

Mr. Ledford also spoke of other competitive funding opportunities, including the Inflation Reduction Act, the CHIPS and Science Act, and the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act. Accessing these funds will require partnerships, collaborative relationships, and extensive resources. He highlighted three areas where URI could take advantage of federal funding opportunities: the blue economy, national security, and healthcare workforce.

Institutional mapping was reviewed, comparing URI to the University of New Hampshire and University of Massachusetts Lowell in terms of capturing research and development funding opportunities with leading sources (HHS, NSF and NOAA). Mr. Ledford said the focus of the review was to explore how URI can access more funding than its peer schools.

Concluding his presentation, Mr. Ledford asserted that URI is well-positioned to advance as a leading research institution in the region. To get there, URI should build up research enterprise and funding streams over the long haul, focus on the fundamentals of new types of funding, and increasingly look at the components that make up successful research enterprises.

Chair Cook thanked Mr. Ledford for a great presentation. Board members discussed ways to support the research enterprise at URI, including filling critical positions and identifying where to put its strategic dollars. Dr. Jenkins noted that with this new money and different granting landscape, they are exploring ways to create an adaptive structure in the research office that will allow us to quickly facilitate the right expertise with the right support to go after some of these funding opportunities. Mr. Ledford added that we need to solicit industry partners, explore concepts like business development tasks utilized by big corporations, and educate on the opportunities available to URI. Trustee Kerwin asked about URI's capability at present to capture these funds, and if it is realistic to think we can reengineer the University's internal processes to be ready to compete for funding while it exists. How long will the funding be spent out and will anything quite like it follow this period? Mr. Ledford thinks it may take the government about five years to get the money out; and given the current state of U.S. China relations, further funding after this cycle of resources may be in order.

Board members discussed accessing federal grant opportunities, URI's position to capture the funds, and the need to increase resources to be in the right place to be competitive. Mr. Ledford stated URI is poised for much more than we are currently getting and should maximize available

opportunities. Mr. Ledford mapped out steps to identify grants to target, build concept teams, educate and promote opportunities to faculty, incentivize the work, and build partnerships.

Chair Cook thanked Mr. Ledford for his insightful presentation and stated that the Board will keep pressing on this enormous opportunity.

The Board took a brief recess at 1:50 p.m. before beginning the panel discussion at 2:00 p.m.

- e. Panel Discussion with Deans Marchese, Riley and Rogers
- Barbara Wolfe, Provost and Executive Vice President, Moderator

Provost Wolfe led a panel discussion with Dean Anthony Marchese, College of Engineering; Dean Jen Riley, College of Arts and Sciences; and Dean Sean Rogers, College of Business. The Provost posed questions about trends and challenges in higher education and how colleges and universities are evolving to address these trends and challenges to ensure long-term strategic viability. Hanover Research did a recent report on the landscape of higher education and identified the five top trends in higher education for 2023 and beyond, including financial considerations, enrollment, marketing, mental health, and equity. The Hanover Report concludes that considering these trends, institutions that evolve to meet these needs and the future needs are the ones that will be better positioned to survive and thrive. Deans Marchese, Riley and Rogers responded to questions posed by the Provost, focusing on how URI is responding to these challenges, how to build resilience now, and how to launch Focus URI to serve as a framework for us, and to guide us in our decision making.

Dean Riley addressed the question about how URI can attract those adults who have some college credits but no degree or credential. She reviewed the benefits of degree completion, including opportunities for more income, greater economic opportunity and social mobility. She discussed the types of programs that URI could offer to attract and benefit this group of students, including incremental credentialing (or stackable undergraduate certificates) where students pursue their degree while working. She noted challenges for this group of students, including the higher rate of dropping out and the lack of available financial aid. Dedicated support staff and professional advisors (success coaches) are needed to drive working students to degree completion. Other support opportunities include efficient curricular credits, lowering URI's credential standards to reflect national standards, creation of a skilled-based interdisciplinary studies degree, prior learning assessment, and online degree completion.

Given that the cost of higher education is a challenge for many, Provost Wolfe asked Dean Marchese how he is increasing engagement with prospective students to find practical and cost-effective pathways for student engagement. Dean Marchese noted that URI should excel at providing an affordable education and should create a value proposition where the student sees a return on their investment. The College of Engineering is visiting schools throughout Rhode Island to share the University's story, telling folks about the great engineering programs at URI. Dean Marchese spoke to affordability and areas where URI should do better, including raising funds for scholarships to compete for the best and the brightest students. He noted that in terms of yield (the percent of students who choose to enroll in a particular college or university after

having been offered admission), fifty percent of Rhode Island students in the highest-grade point average bracket that apply to URI are enrolled. The College of Engineering continues to spread the word about the value proposition that URI offers, making students aware of the great programs and encouraging them to apply to URI.

Provost Wolfe asked Dean Rogers to address reworking financial models and revenue streams, and to speak about an alternative approach to long-term fiscal sustainability. What are the unique strengths or opportunities in the colleges that can be leveraged to pursue increased federal funding? Dean Rogers discussed the dynamic and competitive operating environment in higher education today to which URI must respond proactively. He encouraged URI to align itself properly, to leverage its strengths and advance entrepreneurship, innovation, and workforce development. He stressed the importance of building strong partnerships and offering programs that employers need their workers (our graduates) to have to generate value for our partners and the state. Dean Rogers spoke about raising the profile of the business school, bringing attention to its expertise and its potential value-added programs to employers, collaborating with stakeholders to identify and imagine the end goal needs of the state and the economy, and building strong partnerships with industry and employers. He remarked that the URI College of Business must clearly and convincingly articulate how it is generating value to become an indispensable resource partner in statewide innovation and economic development.

Provost Wolfe and the panelists considered the challenge of new or evolving stressors on students. Dean Riley spoke of the lack of psycho-social maturity of today's students and the need to create support services within the University community to meet the mental health challenges that today's students and faculty face.

The panel spoke about competitive and strategic marketing and ways to measure outcomes. How does URI tell its story with limited resources and competing needs? How important is it to implement a measurement mentality to inform strategic decisions regarding enrollment management and other strategies and ensure that new marketing isn't poorly perceived as wasteful or a distraction from the key University priorities? Dean Rogers said a measurement mentality is very important - how are we doing relative to many of the outcomes we have our eye on? He noted the need to be strategic in terms of competing priorities at URI and encouraged real time adjustment and continuous assessment and improvement.

Board members discussed with the panelists the tactical aspects of attracting students with partial credits and transfer articulation programs. Trustee Nicolato suggested that the new board members see the transfer portal presentation made to the Board at a previous meeting. She spoke about the value of prior learning assessments, wraparound services in support of student success, and the RI Reconnect Program, which is trying to break the barriers to completion of certificate programs. Trustee Fogarty spoke of the disturbing trend that people value higher education less than a generation ago, and the challenge of higher education to balance the tasks of educating and developing thinking people, and training experts needed in society.

Provost Wolfe thanked the deans for participating in the Board retreat. She said it is important that we are aware of the landscape trends so we can be nimble, agile, and ahead of the curve so that it informs our sustainability going forward.

10. CLOSING REMARKS

Chair Cook thanked all participants for the fantastic discussion and retreat. She noted that Governor McKee may address the Board at an upcoming meeting.

11. ADJOURN

Chair Cook called for a motion to adjourn the meeting.

On a motion duly made by Charles Fogarty and seconded by Jay Placencia, it was

VOTED: THAT The URI Board of Trustees adjourn the June 29, 2023, meeting.

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

YEAS: Margo Cook, Maria Ducharme, Michael Fascitelli, Charles Fogarty, Joe Formicola, Monica Garnes, Neil Kerwin, Matthew Lenz, Roby Luna, Joseph Matthews, Cortney Nicolato, Vahid Ownjazayeri, Jay Placencia, Armand Sabitoni, Robert Weygand

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 0

Trustee Ryan left the meeting prior to adjournment.

At 3:05 p.m., this meeting ended.

The next URI Board of Trustees Meeting is scheduled for September 22, 2023.