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**The University of Rhode Island Board of Trustees  
Academic Affairs and Research Committee Meeting  
Wednesday, February 7, 2024 · 2:00 p.m. EST**

**The University of Rhode Island  
The Alumni Center – Beagle Board Room  
73 Upper College Road, Kingston, RI 02881**

**OFFICIAL MINUTES**

Committee Chair Neil Kerwin welcomed everyone to the February 7, 2024, meeting of the University of Rhode Island (URI) Board of Trustees Academic Affairs and Research Committee and noted that the meeting was being held in person with committee members participating remotely. Virtual access to the meeting was available via the YouTube video platform. A recording is available for viewing at <https://web.uri.edu/trustees/meetings/>.

Committee Chair Kerwin conducted a roll call attendance and determined that a quorum of members was present. He called the meeting to order at 2:04 p.m.

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

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

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

- Ms. Monica Garnes
- Mr. Richard Humphrey
- Dr. Melissa Sutherland

***“The University of Rhode Island occupies the traditional stomping ground of the Narragansett Nation and the Niantic People. We honor and respect the enduring and continuing relationship between the indigenous people and this land by teaching and learning more about their history and present-day communities, and by becoming stewards of the land we, too, inhabit.”***

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

URI President's Stewardship Council members in attendance:

- Ms. Abby Benson, Interim Vice President, Administration and Finance (remote)
- Ms. Chelsea Berry, Interim Senior Advisor to the President and Chief of Staff (remote)
- Dr. Matthew Bodah, Vice Provost for Academic Performance and Budget (remote)
- Ms. Alyssa Boss, General Counsel (remote)
- Ms. Jeanne Hruska, Senior Advisor to the Provost and Chief of Staff (remote)
- Dr. Bethany Jenkins, Interim Vice President for Research and Economic Development (remote)
- Dr. Kristin Johnson, Vice Provost for Global Initiatives (remote)
- Dr. Kerry LaPlante, Dean, College of Pharmacy (remote)
- Dr. Dean Libutti, Associate Vice President for Enrollment Management & Student Success (remote)
- Mr. John Poehlmann, Associate Vice President, Financial Planning & Strategy (remote)
- Mr. John Stringer, Executive Director, Institutional Research (remote)
- Dr. Anne Veeger, Vice Provost for Academic Faculty Initiatives (remote)
- Dr. Patrick Vivier, Dean, College of Health Sciences (remote)
- Dr. Danny Willis, Dean, College of Nursing (remote)
- Dr. Barbara Wolfe, Provost and Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs (remote)

URI staff members in attendance:

- Ms. Michelle Curreri, Secretary to the Board of Trustees (in person)
- Ms. Lynn Owens, Associate Secretary to the Board of Trustees (in person)
- Ms. Shawn Simmons, Executive Assistant in the Provost's Office (remote)

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

## 1. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES

### a. Minutes of the October 26, 2023, Academic Affairs and Research Committee Meeting [Enclosure 1.a.](#)

Committee Chair Kerwin called for a motion that the URI Board of Trustees Academic Affairs and Research Committee approve the minutes of the meeting held on October 26, 2023.

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

VOTED        THAT:        The Academic Affairs and Research Committee  
approve the minutes for the meeting held on October 26, 2023.

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

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

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 0

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

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

- a. Review progress of University academic performance metrics.**
- b. Review of academic efforts in support of student success, including academic advising, career development support, experiential learning, academic enhancement center, undergraduate research, and innovation projects.**
- c. Update of progress, metrics, and planned action steps of academic initiatives in the current University Strategic Plan.**

Provost Wolfe shared that URI hosted its first in-person Academic Summit since 2020 in January. The theme of the Summit was AI (artificial intelligence). The main speaker was Dr. Sid Dobrin; the event was highly successful. She then provided a detailed overview of URI's key performance metrics (KPIs), and provided student success updates, as mandated by the committee's yearly schedule of topics.

She touched on the successful Winter J Term, which just completed and had a 19 percent increase in student enrollment. She then announced to the committee that URI's newly hired dean of the College of Health Sciences, Dr. Patrick Vivier, the new dean of the College of Nursing, Dr. Danny Willis, and new dean of the College of Pharmacy, Dr. Kerry LaPlante, were present for this meeting. Provost Wolfe then provided updates on recent faculty awards and honors. The Provost's presentation is linked [here](#).

In reviewing the strategic KPIs, Dr. Dean Libutti joined the discussion to provide answers to questions. Dr. Anne Veeger provided answers to questions regarding AI, with regard to students and faculty. President Parlange commented on the plan to ask for more funding from the state to improve our ratio of students to advisors.

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

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

- a. Updates on research landscape in terms of overall funding and distribution across colleges.**

- b. Updates on large grants submitted and highlights of new awards.**
- c. Updates on community building exercises for URI strategic plan- town hall events, staffing in accordance with President's goals to grow research including use of fund balance to support graduate student fellowships.**

Dr. Bethany Jenkins, Interim Vice President for Research for Economic Development made a [presentation](#) to the committee. Dr. Jenkins shared research award-to-date funds information, noting that URI continues on a healthy trajectory. She reported that the diversity of the University's research funding is very positive with opportunities to grow. The committee expressed strong support for the work of Dr. Jenkins and URI's research initiatives.

#### 4. ACTION ITEMS

- a. Review of the granting of tenure effective January 8, 2024, to incoming dean of the College of Health Sciences, Dr. Patrick Vivier, who has met the requirements for tenure at the University of Rhode Island, and recommendation to the URI Board of Trustees.**  
[Enclosure](#)

Committee Chair Kerwin called for a motion that the Academic Affairs and Research Committee recommend that the URI Board of Trustees approve the granting of tenure, effective January 8, 2024, to incoming dean of the College of Health Sciences, Dr. Patrick Vivier, who has met the requirements for tenure at the University of Rhode Island, as recommended and presented in the enclosure.

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 recommend that the URI Board of Trustees approve the granting of tenure, effective January 8, 2024, to incoming dean of the College of Health Sciences, Dr. Patrick Vivier, who has met the requirements for tenure at the University of Rhode Island, as recommended and presented in the enclosure.

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

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

NAYS:      0

ABSTAIN:      0

- b. Review of the granting of tenure effective April 1, 2024, to incoming faculty member Dr. Yoshitaka Ota, who has met the requirements for tenure at the University of Rhode Island, and recommendation to the URI Board of Trustees. [Enclosure](#)**

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

Committee Chair Kerwin called for a motion that the Academic Affairs and Research Committee recommend that the URI Board of Trustees approve the granting of tenure, effective April 1, 2024, to Dr. Yoshitaka Ota, who has met the requirements for tenure at the University of Rhode Island, as recommended and presented in the enclosure.

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

VOTED        THAT:        The Academic Affairs and Research Committee recommend that the URI Board of Trustees approve the granting of tenure, effective April 1, 2024, to Dr. Yoshitaka Ota, who has met the requirements for tenure at the University of Rhode Island, as recommended and presented in the enclosure.

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

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

NAYS:        0

ABSTAIN:    0

- c. Review and approve legislation from the Faculty Senate Curriculum & Standards Committee Report #2023-2024-04B, College of Arts & Sciences organizational change to create the Department of Journalism & Public Relations, which has been approved by the faculty and president of the University of Rhode Island, and recommendation for approval to the URI Board of Trustees. [Enclosure](#)**

Committee Chair Kerwin called for a motion that the Academic Affairs and Research Committee recommend that the URI Board of Trustees approve an organizational change of creating the Department of Journalism and Public Relations, as recommended and presented in the enclosure.

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 recommend that the URI Board of Trustees approve an organizational change of creating the Department of Journalism and Public Relations, as recommended and presented in the enclosure.

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

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

                  NAYS:        0

                  ABSTAIN:    0

**5. ADJOURN**

Committee Chair Kerwin called for a motion to adjourn the meeting of February 7, 2024.

On a motion duly made by Maria Ducharme and seconded by Joseph Matthews, it was

VOTED:        THAT:        The URI Board of Trustees Academic Affairs and Research Committee adjourn the meeting of February 7, 2024.

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

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

                  NAYS:        0

                  ABSTAIN:    0

The meeting adjourned at 2:56 p.m.

The next URI Board of Trustees Academic Affairs and Research Committee meeting is scheduled for April 10, 2024.