

University of Rhode Island

Academic Plan

and

University Response to Board of Governors' Priorities

1999-2002

Response to Board Goals and Priorities for 1999-2002

Priority #1 -- Access and Affordability

As the State's only publicly supported research university, the University of Rhode Island is charged with providing an opportunity to state residents for undergraduate and graduate study at a land grant, research university. In order to offer a wide range of programs and bring additional diversity to the academic community, the University also enrolls a significant number of out of state students. Because of the University's mission, the admissions policy is "selective" in that only students judged prepared for university-level study are granted regular admissions. In response, however, to the charge of accessibility and affordability and recognizing the increasing educational diversity of potential students, the University maintains several programs for special populations and has started several new initiatives as well. In addition to its traditional menu of financial aid programs, the University has the following special programs aimed at increasing access and affordability.

The University has worked with the Office of Higher Education to keep its tuition and fee rates affordable and competitive. Increases have averaged just over 3% in the last five years compared with significantly higher increases in the eighties.

Key Initiatives (Ongoing)

- **Articulation Transfer Programs.** The University supports and participates in the Board of Governors' Articulation Transfer Program. In addition, the University has an agreement with the SUNY System in the area of the environment and life sciences, and continues to explore similar arrangements with other institutions.
- **Minority Recruiting.** The Office of Admissions has initiated numerous recruitment activities to increase minority enrollment. Activities include presentations at college fairs, participation in high school career days, phonathons, and targeted mailings. Admissions staff attended over 30 events in-state and out-of-state and visited 15 out-of-state high schools with significant minority populations.
- **Feinstein Scholars.** Income from an endowment provides support for undergraduates at the Alan Shawn Feinstein College of Continuing Education (ASFCCE). The urban setting of ASFCCE combined with its mission creates a student body that is unique in its diversity. The

student body is comprised of individuals who are significantly different from the more traditional students who make up the majority of the Kingston campus undergraduate student body. Scholarships targeted for ASFCCE serve single parents; GED and students whose primary language is not English; and non-traditional as well as academically challenged and returning students.

- **Guaranteed Admissions Program (GAP).** This program has been functioning for over ten years under the leadership of the University's Urban Field Center in Providence. Its purpose is to promote an early identification of middle school age children in the greater Providence schools who show academic promise but who could be potential school dropouts. These students receive special attention throughout junior high school to ensure that they follow a pre-college preparatory program of study. At the completion of the ninth grade, they are invited to participate in a summer component of the GAP program. During their sophomore year in high school they attend a contract signing program in their community where they join with their high school principals, their parent or guardian, and the University's Dean of Admissions and actually sign a contract that includes the following:

Students in the program must maintain a C+ average, attend workshops, participate in support programs and have a good attendance record. The parents must support the students in these activities. The University guarantees those students who fulfill these commitments a place in the freshman class. University representatives work with the students during their high school careers to ensure that they select the appropriate courses and learn about the University and its opportunities.

- **Academic Initiatives in Support of Diversity.** A Faculty Senate appointed subcommittee of the University College and General Education Committee (UCGE) developed a plan to address the formal inclusion of diversity in the General Education Program. That plan is currently being reviewed by the whole of UCGE Committee and a smaller task force is working on an implementation proposal with the goal of presenting it by the end of this academic year. The University appointed five new minority teaching staff members for the current academic year. In addition, a Distinguished Scholar-in-Residence was appointed as Director of the Center for Non-Violence and Peace Studies. Diversifying the faculty and supporting these faculty remain high priorities for the University.
- **Centennial Scholarship Program.** This program is an academic merit scholarship based upon a combination of high school class rank or cumulative quality point average (QPA) and standardized test scores. Applicants must have a completed application for admission in the Office of Admission by December 15, to be considered for an award. Awards pertain to tuition only and range from \$1000 to full tuition, guaranteed renewable each semester as long as the recipient maintains a cumulative quality point average of 3.0, and full time enrollment. Currently, more than 1550 Centennial Scholars are enrolled throughout the University. Approximately 23% of each new Freshmen Class consists of Centennial Scholars.
- **Learning Assistance Center.** This Center provides both individual and group study skills assistance including workshops (reading and memory, efficient notetaking, time management, strategies for success), individual tutoring, and group tutoring for identified high-risk courses. Approximately seven hundred students use the services each semester. They attend on a

voluntary basis, and students on probation are strongly encouraged to use the services which are designed specifically for them. A major emphasis of the workshops is to aid new students in making a successful transition from high school to college.

- **Special Programs for Talent Development (SPTD).** SPTD encourages applications from socially, economically and culturally disadvantaged individuals from Rhode Island. To encourage applications from such applicants, the University has instituted recruiting and prematriculation programs. In addition, students admitted to SPTD with financial need are eligible for financial aid. This program not only provides assistance to identified individuals with academic promise, but also assists the University in meeting its goal of diversifying the student body. While some SPTD students are white, the majority are African American, Hispanic, Asian, Cape Verdean or Native American.

Indicators of Success for 1999-2000

The University is enjoying two major shifts as a result of efforts to increase accessibility and affordability: 1) the Centennial Scholars Program; and 2) the emphasis on diversity. For the past few years the Centennial Scholars academic profile has reflected an SAT average of 1240 and a top 13% high school class rank. Our Centennial Scholars have significantly influenced the academic culture in the classroom and on the campus. The percentage of minority students in incoming freshman classes has risen from 10.3% in 1995 to 11.4% in 1999. This increase in diversity is creating a richer cultural environment complementary to the enriched intellectual environment. These two factors frequently overlap in the activities and accomplishments of groups and individuals.

Priority #2 -- Fiscal Planning [To be included in President's Management Letter.]

Priority #3 -- K-12 and Teacher Preparation Reform

As part of our mission, we seek to integrate the strengths of the University with those of our partners in schools, communities, and others in the private and public sectors and to ensure that through teaching, research, policy analysis, and service, all children and families are fully prepared to succeed in school, be effective life-long learners, and participate in a democratic society, its institutions, and the economy. We prepare educators to serve diverse populations and communities. Further, through collaborative research and service, we seek to advance knowledge and understanding across our discipline to inform policy, improve practice and thereby strengthen schools, communities, and all levels of educational and related developmental programs and policy. To realize its mission and vision the University's School of Education has been engaged in reform and re-engineering of the unit's teaching, service, and research efforts. These efforts include:

Key Initiatives (1999-2002)

- **Transforming the Assessment and Teaching of Pre-service Teachers.** The redesign of teacher education programs focuses on key areas of the content and nature of the curriculum, both in campus-based instruction and student-teaching placements. This work reflects a shift from an "inputs-based" model, where student readiness is judged largely by the courses they have taken, to a "proficiency and performance-based" approach where students must both complete necessary educational experiences and also demonstrate that they have acquired and can apply to the teaching of pre-12 students, the skills, knowledge, and dispositions necessary to effectively, and at high levels, impact the learning of their students.
- **The University of Rhode Island/Holmes and Urban Partnership Network.** This partnership, involving schools throughout Rhode Island, has a particular focus on middle-level education but will include all levels of K-12 education when fully implemented. This effort seeks to provide for a network of "professional develop districts" as intensive placements for student teachers, and the enhancement and mentoring of young teachers.
- **"Preparing Tomorrow's Teachers to use Technology (PT3)."** This federally-funded initiative seeks to improve teaching and learning through the use of technology and targets not only pre-service students but also seeks to enhance the skills and collaboration of faculty from the School of Education, the College of Arts and Sciences, and classroom teachers to enhance their instruction and preparation of pre-service educators.
- **The URI/Rhode Island Federation of Teachers' Partnership.** This partnership focuses on enhancing the education of pre-service teachers, and providing ongoing mentoring, educational opportunities and experiences to teachers in their early years of teaching—as well as to assist veteran teachers—as they move toward National Board Certification. A second major core of this work is the development of literacy and reading instruction and skills for pre-service URI students. We hope to expand this work to include RI-National Education Association.
- **Focus on Transfer Articulation for Education Majors.** We are working in partnership with the Community College of Rhode Island and Rhode Island College to encourage students from diverse backgrounds to pursue a career in public education and to support their transfer to URI or RIC education programs.
- **Information Works! and School Accountability for Teaching and Learning (SALT) Survey.** The National Center on Public Education and Social Policy works in collaboration with the Rhode Island Department of Education to produce Information Works! and the SALT survey data, both part of Rhode Island's school information and accountability program. Information Works! is the annual report on the status and progress of K-12 education for the State as well as each district and school. SALT is the umbrella initiative of the Rhode Island Department of Education to enhance student achievement and performance for all students through improved instruction, learning conditions and accountability.
- **Teacher Preparation for Certification.** URI is a partner with the Rhode Island Department of Education (RIDE), the Rhode Island Foundation, Rhode Island College, the Rhode Island National Education Association and the Rhode Island Federation of Teachers to provide support to teachers preparing for certification by the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards.

- **Rhode Island Teachers in Technology Initiative (RITTI).** Rhode Island Teachers in Technology Initiative (RITTI) is a partnership among the Rhode Island Foundation, the University of Rhode Island, and the Rhode Island Department of Education (RIDE) to provide laptop computers, training, and support to one-quarter of Rhode Island K-12 educators. This ongoing and very successful project has earned funding of about \$3 million from the U.S. Department of Education.
- **Gender Equity in Mathematics and Science (GEMS) Initiative.** This National Science Foundation funded initiative works with partners at RIC and RIDE to strengthen the skills and knowledge base of teachers in schools throughout Rhode Island in the teaching of mathematics and science with a particular concern on equity for all students. URI faculty involved are from the School of Education as well as science and mathematics related areas and programs throughout the campus. The National Science Foundation support to date is \$1.2 million.

Indicators of Success for 1999-2000

- All teacher education programs will implement portfolio assessments as part of both admissions and ongoing assessments of students.
- Faculty in Education, partner schools, and related courses will identify specific products and competencies to be demonstrated in each course/educational experience.
- A framework will be developed for the ways in which the College of Arts and Sciences and related core faculty will provide more fully integrated teacher preparation and ongoing professional development and support efforts.
- The middle-level program and at least four of its Holmes Partner sites will be fully operational and an initial state review visit will have been received.
- Joint offerings with field-based teacher to enhance the preparation of students in reading and literacy will be developed and implemented.
- A first and second round of Education, Arts and Sciences, and other faculty will participate in the PT3 initiative, and the program will be refined based on their feedback.
- Further reliability and validity work will occur on the assessments that are developed by the School of Education to consider student progress.
- University and the School of Education faculty will continue to collaborate with the Policy Consortium, the Higher Education Preparation Policy Group, and related RIDE and other statewide policy and professional entities.
- The National Center on Public Education and Social Policy (NCPE) and the School of Education will continue to refine and expand their work with State agencies, schools and districts.

- Students from diverse backgrounds will increasingly apply to and complete the Teacher Education Program.
- Like other Schools of Education in its sister New England Land-Grant and research institutions, URI will create and implement a development plan that provides for the resources necessary to confront the challenges of excellence in teacher education and land-grant partnerships and public service to the State of Rhode Island.
- Students in the teacher education programs will increasingly reflect competencies to teach special needs students and those from diverse and multi-lingual backgrounds.
- Initial institutes and joint professional development experiences in partnerships with districts and unions will be provided.

Priority #4 -- Technology

Due in large measure to the funding support provided by the 1998 Technology Bond Initiative, the University has undertaken a wide range of new and/or augmented initiatives to meet the technology needs of the University community. The ongoing costs to refresh the infrastructure and maintain it have yet to be addressed fully. With the bond funding slated to end in 2001, this challenge will have to be faced soon.

Key Initiatives (1999-2002)

- **Network Infrastructure Project.** The University will complete its campus network to the various outlying smaller campus buildings and upgrade the outdated cabling and network electronics in buildings that were networked prior to this networking bond funded initiative.
- **The Ocean State Higher Education, Economic Development and Administrative Network (OSHEAN).** OSHEAN is currently comprised of three founding partners: URI, Brown University, and RINet, the Rhode Island K-12 network. In the future, OSHEAN expects to add members from other Rhode Island colleges, universities, government agencies, and non-profit organizations. The long-term goal is to pool the resources, skills and purchasing power of member institutions to provide a cost-effective, state-wide network infrastructure that will nurture collaboration among the institutions and provide a foundation for economic development within the State of Rhode Island.
- **Expanding Networking Options.** The University will increase student, faculty and staff network access options through the strategic use of wireless mobile networking devices both on and off-campus. In addition, in order to ensure high-speed off-campus access, the University will seek ways to take greater advantage of the expansion of commercial digital services to the home such as Digital Subscriber Line (DSL) and Cox's digital cable service.
- **University Learning Spaces.** A task force comprised of members of Information and Instructional Technology Services (IITS) is developing an ongoing program that ensures that all classrooms are physically conducive to learning and are equipped with the technology needed

for flexible, interactive learning environments. In addition, we are developing the necessary maintenance and support processes to ensure that instructional equipment in our classrooms is reliable.

- **Distributed Learning Opportunities.** The University is developing plans for wider access to electronic media and instructional resources from statewide, regional and global constituencies.
- **Curriculum Re-design for More Student-Centered Learning.** The University is developing a pilot incentive program to provide faculty teams with the technology resources and logistical support for re-design of key areas of the curriculum.
- **Information Literacy.** The University Libraries are working to expand and enhance pilot programs in information and technology literacy throughout the curriculum to ensure that our students can take full advantage of new technologies and network services.
- **Teaching and Technology Fellows Program.** Information and Instructional Technology Services (IITS) and the Instructional Development Program (IDP) are expanding this program to ensure that all faculty have access to training and support in using new learning technologies. Funding for the inter-institutional program is from the Office of Higher Education Incentive Fund for Excellence in Technology.
- **Leveraging Our Resources and Knowledge.** The University is developing "collaboratories" to foster interdisciplinary research in technology applications.
- **Internet 2.** The Vice Provost for Information Services and other members of IITS are working to ensure URI's participation in Internet 2, the national high-speed networking research initiative.
- **Statistical Support.** The University is working to enhance statistical support and data access for researchers.
- **Political Papers Archives and Center.** The University Libraries are working to create a State Archives and University and Government Political Papers Archive Center which would in turn support an environment that encourages education, scholarship, research, and renewal of interest in government.
- **PeopleSoft.** The University is working to implement the PeopleSoft system that includes Student Administrative, Financial (including grant and research accounting), Alumni Development, and Human Resources Systems with University needs driving the re-engineering of our systems and processes.
- **World Wide Web.** The University is committed to expanding and enhancing applications and information available through the World Wide Web.
- **Electronic Resources.** The University is committed to expanding the availability of access to library material in digital form so that learning may more easily take place anytime and anywhere.
- **Library Collections.** The University is working to expand its library collections in both print and digital formats in support of the educational and research mission of the University.

- **Sustaining Our Technological Infrastructure (*Technology Asset Protection Plan*).** The University continues to work with the Office of Higher Education to develop the ongoing funding necessary to sustain our \$29 million in technology infrastructure investments established through the Technology Bond Initiative.

Indicators of Success for 1999-2000

- Faculty are increasing the use of technology in classes through WebCT and PictureTel offerings. The Technology Fellows Program has been very successful in assisting faculty with integrating technology as a means to enhance quality and increase the effectiveness of student learning.
- The enhancement of technology systems has made use of the Web, e-mail and numerous technology tools far more accessible to faculty, staff and students throughout the four campuses. The result is that URI can continue to work on the cutting edge in areas where this would no longer be possible without such resources.

Priority #5 -- Quality Assurance and Outcomes Assessment

In continuing our work on quality assurance and outcomes assessment, the University has redesigned its program review process now called Program Quality Review. Sixteen programs are currently being reviewed. This review will complement the Program Contribution Analysis which analyses the relative cost of programs. Results of these reviews will include recommendations and a plan for their implementation.

Working toward a University-wide assessment program, the Office of the Provost has sponsored a series of mini-grants in the development of assessment models.

Key Initiatives (1999-2002)

- **Sample List of Assessment Mini-Grant Recipients.**

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| Department of Physical Therapy | "Incorporating Portfolios into Physical Therapy Clinical Education" |
| College of the Environment and Life Sciences and the Graduate School of Oceanography | "Assessment of Educational Outcomes Associated with Problem-Based Teams" |

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| School of Education | "Development of a Web-Based Portfolio System" |
| Department of Biological Sciences | "Grade Tracking of Former BIO 113 Students" |
| College of Human Science and Services | "Outcomes Assessment in Human Services" |
| College of Engineering | "Objectives and Outcomes in an Assessment Process" (Accreditation related) |

- Learning-centered Curriculum Development.** The College of the Environment and Life Sciences is currently exploring ways to expand the innovative learning-centered curriculum initiated by the Department of Natural Resources Science. This curriculum places strategic emphasis on the creation of a learner-centered environment in which students and faculty engage in an ongoing process of assessment through a variety of feedback mechanisms. The expansion of the model within the College will then serve as a model for other colleges. A member of the University's professional staff, Deborah Grossman-Garber, is serving as URI's representative on the New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC) study group on assessment. Ms. Garber is the Director of the Coastal Fellows Program, an integrated learning/research component of the Partnership for the Coastal Environment.

Indicators of Success for 1999-2000

The challenge of quality assurance and assessment is multifold. In addition to the University-wide accreditation by the New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC), the University undergoes rigorous external evaluation from a number of specialized discipline specific accrediting groups such as the Accreditation Board for Engineering and Technology (ABET). The challenge is to develop models which speak to the unique goals and methodologies of individual disciplines. The promising aspect of these challenges is that there is a proliferation of assessment model development apparent at the department, college, focus area and university level.

In accordance with the suggestions from the NEASC Accreditation Team, the University continues to develop and institute outcomes placed assessment instruments for programs.

Program Projections

The University continues to strive for excellence in all programs, to align activities with resources, and to view programs in terms of focus areas:

- 1) "Marine and Environmental" offerings; 2) Offerings related to "Enterprise and Advanced Technology;" 3) programs addressing issues related to "Children, Families and Communities;" 4) "Health and Health Promotion" programs; and 5) the "Liberal Arts Core."

Note: This section of the report contains those items which will require Board of Governors' formal approval. Readers of earlier plans will notice that the list presented here is shorter than ones presented in earlier plans. That results from internal review and the revisiting of program proposals as they come forward. As indicated in our earlier plans, such documents must remain dynamic and provide for taking advantage of unforeseen opportunities as well as for reassessing information presented in earlier iterations. This section does not include information usually forwarded under the category of "Notices of Change." Proposed changes of department names, for example, are not included in the following list. Also not included are curricular changes within programs (minor changes in degree requirements within a given program or incremental changes in the General Education Program) since such changes are part of the ongoing dynamic nature of an institution of higher learning and usually do not require Board approval.

A. Proposed Stage

- B.S. in Financial Services proposed by the College of Business Administration
- Approval of a generic model for certificate programs at the Alan Shawn Feinstein College of Continuing Education (ASFCCE)
- Feinstein Center for a Hunger-Free America, a focal point for experiential opportunities and an academic minor
- Reorganization of the College of Business Administration

B. Planning Stage

- M.S. in Software Engineering, a joint program proposed by the Colleges of Engineering and Arts and Sciences
- Post-Baccalaureate Certificate in Thanatology proposed by the College of Nursing
- B.A. in Computer Science proposed by the College of Arts and Sciences
- Interdisciplinary Master's in Information Resources Management proposed by the College of Arts and Sciences

C. Concept Stage

- Interdisciplinary Master's in the Humanities proposed by the College of Arts and Sciences
- Student-designed B.A. proposed by the College of Arts and Sciences

- B.A. in Hemispheric Studies proposed by the College of Arts and Sciences
 - Baccalaureate in Film Studies proposed by the College of Arts and Sciences and under discussion with Rhode Island College
 - While the Master of Public Health (MPH) has been approved by the Board of Governors for Higher Education, it cannot be implemented until new funding sources have been identified. This remains an open agenda item for the University, the Board of Governors and the State Legislature.
 - M.S./M.A. in Transportation under discussion by the University's Transportation Center.
 - This URI Partnership Forensic Science includes scientists in Chemistry and related fields and participants from the State's Crime Lab. While this is currently a series of funded research projects, an academic major or minor may result.
 - While the concept of Paidia (π α ι δ ι α) has been presented to the Board's Facilities Committee because it involves a building, there may also be academic programs related to Greek language and culture which develop over time.
 - Programs in Sustainable Communities which would be interdisciplinary and involve departments and colleges University-wide.
- **Suspensions or Deletions**
 - Department of Dental Hygiene
 - B.S. in Consumer Affairs
 - B.S. in Food Science

Addressing Other Institutional-Based Priorities and Possibilities

The University continues to work to maintain and enhance our high-quality academic programs and provide strong support for our researchers. The following remain among the institutional priorities. Some of these broad initiatives may result in programs which will require Board approval. Others are designed to support existing activities and respond to a projected increase in enrollment.

- **Environmental Biotechnology Initiative.** This interdisciplinary will involve departments and colleges university-wide in the study of life forms as they relate to the environment. The University's facility plan is being adjusted to include the construction of the second floor of the Biological Sciences Building. Initial funding for the Environmental Biotechnology Center has been approved by the Economic Development Commission and Environmental Policy

Committee.

- **Urban Initiative.** Emanating primarily from the Providence campus, this initiative may include service learning experiences for students, a Public Policy Institute, and applied research in urban issues (education, hunger, race, immigration, housing, crime, environmental health, mass transit, urban design, planning and economics). Urban areas throughout the State will partner with URI to design courses, internships, consulting and joint funding proposals to attack a broad range of urban problems. Such partnerships may yield credit and non-credit course offerings that could lead to a certificate or a concentration in one of our degree programs.
- **New Faculty Appointments.** In the fall of 1998, the number of tenure-track and tenured faculty was at an all time low. In order to maintain the quality of our academic offerings, meet the demands of accrediting agencies and fulfill our responsibilities to the growing number of students, it is now necessary to increase the number of faculty. Toward this end we have been submitting budget requests seeking funding to appoint an additional five tenure-track faculty beyond the number that would be hired to replace those lost through retirement or resignation.
- **Graduate Assistant Stipends.** In order to sustain the most productive graduate student contributions, it is critical that we attract graduate students who are well-prepared, highly motivated and who show strong scholarly and professional promise. The competition for such students is keen and is increasing. Current stipend levels at URI place the University at a severe competitive disadvantage in attracting these students and, this in turn, threatens the strength of our programs. Data show that stipends for University of Rhode Island graduate students fall below those at other peer universities. For example, the stipend paid to the most advanced URI assistants is lower than the stipend paid to beginning students at all New England Land-Grant universities except one. Additional funding has been sought to move stipend levels to competitive levels. Because of the magnitude of the increases necessary, a two year correction is envisioned.
- **Library Capital.** The ability of the University Libraries to meet the information needs of its faculty and students and the state's citizenry and to play a leadership role in developing innovative solutions to information access issues has been limited severely by the increasing costs of acquisitions and our inability to make necessary increases in its capital budget for materials. To stem the tide of further deterioration in the libraries' collections and to avoid the significant detrimental impacts this would have statewide, additional budget funding has been sought to augment the budgets for serials/journals, monographs, and electronic resources. The objective of these requests has been to bring the University's capital budget for its libraries to a level with those at peer institutions.

Office of the Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs

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