

# Coalition Corner

## Profile: Dr. Thomas Dougan, URI Vice President of Student Affairs



During his five years as co-chair of the Narragansett-URI Coalition, UNIVERSITY of Rhode Island (URI) Vice President Thomas Dougan has been struck by the “tremendously positive” relationships URI students often form with their Narragansett neighbors.

Among many examples, Dr. Dougan describes students having dinner with their neighbors and shoveling snow from their neighbors’ driveways. “It’s unfortunate,” Dr. Dougan notes, “that people typically hear about the bad situations and not the positive ones.”

Thomas Dougan is URI’s Vice President of Student Affairs and Co-Chair of the Narragansett-URI Coalition, along with Narragansett Police Chief J. David Smith. Dr. Dougan and Chief Smith also co-chair the Coalition Steering Committee, with representatives from the Narragansett Neighborhood Associations, URI students, Narragansett police, Narragansett Town Council, Narragansett Town Manager, URI officials, and liquor store owners.

While most URI students living in Narragansett are good neighbors, Dr. Dougan explains, new URI policies have been needed to address the problems created by the few students who are not. He points to a significant change resulting from the Coalition’s work: the extension of URI’s disciplinary system to hold students responsible for their off-campus behavior.

Putting this university policy in place required approval by both the faculty senate and President Carothers. Now URI can take action against students who violate the university’s conduct policies even if they do so off-campus. Dr. Dougan believes this new policy will be a successful deterrent to inappropriate student conduct.

As one of URI’s leading administrators, Dr. Dougan has devoted over 30 years to Student Affairs Administration. Since coming to URI 21 years ago, he has filled several roles, including Dean of Students, Assistant Vice President of Student Affairs, and his current position as Vice President of Student Affairs. Prior to joining the URI community, Dr. Dougan was the Assistant Dean of Students for eight years at the University of Florida.

In his present role Dr. Dougan is responsible for all student services outside of the traditional academic classroom. He oversees multiple departments, including Housing and Residential Life, Health Services, and the Office of Student Life, to name a few.

Dr. Dougan explains that the Narragansett—URI Coalition was founded in 2000 due to increased student misconduct in Narragansett. At the time, the Narragansett Town Council and neighborhood associations were increasingly critical of URI’s lack of direct involvement in responding to student misbehavior in Narragansett.

In response, the URI Student Senate requested a meeting with representatives from Narragansett and URI. According to Dr. Dougan, “The meeting was very successful and attendees gained a basic understanding regarding what the University could or could not do regarding the conduct of their students.”

The Narragansett-URI Coalition was established to address issues cooperatively, and Dr. Dougan was named Chairperson. He expresses enthusiasm over the significant improvement in communication between everyone involved in the Coalition. “All of us really see a value in solving the problems. While we haven’t resolved all of them, we have had a lot of success.”

In addition to the change in URI’s disciplinary policy, Dr. Dougan cited the substantial decrease in the number of calls made to the police about student misbehavior. Students are getting the message that they have a duty to be considerate of their neighbors, just the same as anyone else living in the community.

Importantly, there has also been a significant increase in student participation at Coalition meetings this past semester. Looking to the future, Dr. Dougan hopes that the Coalition will continue to work with these students to prevent substance abuse and neighborhood disturbances caused by house parties.

**For more information about the Narragansett-URI Coalition, please e-mail or call Jim Hurton, Communications Subcommittee Chairperson at [jhurton@narragansettri.com](mailto:jhurton@narragansettri.com), 783-7121 or Paula Santos, Coalition Coordinator at [pmsantos@uri.edu](mailto:pmsantos@uri.edu), 874-2583.**

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