

**Revised Charge of the Blue Ribbon Commission on Positioning the  
University of Rhode Island for the Future -- May 15, 2008**

***Joint Recommendation by the President & Faculty Senate Executive Committee  
updating the Original Faculty Senate Resolution (#05-06-3)***

**Statement of Purpose:**

An *ad hoc* "blue ribbon" Commission is to be formed to articulate a Common Vision of academic directions for the University in the next decade and beyond. The Common Vision shall be founded upon broad-based intramural and extramural input from experts and stakeholders; analysis of economic, educational and economic trends; institutional introspection; and an assessment of institutional strengths and weaknesses. Output of the Commission shall be a report to the President and to the Joint Strategic Planning Committee with an articulation of the Common Vision, description of trends and challenges the University will need to confront, and recommendations for positioning the University of Rhode Island for the future. The overall aim of the Commission would be to present the report to the President, the JSPC, the Faculty Senate, and Council of Deans during the early Fall of 2009 with the profound hope that **it will guide formation of the University of Rhode Island Strategic Plan beyond 2009.**

**Statement of Audiences:**

The primary audiences for the report are the following:

- The President
- The JSPC
- The entire University Community
- The Vice President for University Advancement (in explaining possible future directions of the University to potential donors.)

**Detailed Commission Composition:**

I. Upon ratification by the Faculty Senate and Approval By the President, an *ad hoc* "blue ribbon" commission is to be formed consisting of 10 Presidential appointees including the chairperson, and 10 additional Faculty Senate appointees with attention to membership of the entire committee membership being at least 50% from extramural constituencies, five each appointed by the President and the Faculty Senate.

II. The Commission chairperson shall be a recognized expert in long-range planning and university policy. The committee membership will be selected from a variety of intramural and extramural faculty and other professionals. This selection should consider diversity in the following areas:

- Age
- Gender
- Ethnicity
- Professional status
- Disciplinary background

All Commission members would be expected to bring to the Commission a wide 'interdisciplinary world vision' and expertise in one or more the following areas:

- Economics (including Environmental & Natural Resources Economics)
- Communications & Information Technology
- Biotechnology and Trends in Biomedical & Life Sciences
- Environmental Sciences
- Health Sciences
- Nanotechnology & Other Trends in Engineering
- Rhode Island and National Public Policy
- Trends in Education, Sciences & Humanities
- Sociology
- Arts & Humanities
- History & Role of URI in State & Nation
- Community Planning
- Transportation & Energy Technology & Policy
- Extension and Community Outreach
- Business and Commerce
- Other Areas

III. Charge of the Commission is as follows:

A. Develop a timetable for activities and develop a plan for intramural and extramural stakeholder input. Groups to be consulted include but are not limited to:

- The Faculty Senate
- The President & President's Advisory Council
- Council of Deans
- Office of Institutional Research
- Vice President for Business and Finance
- Vice President for Student Affairs
- URI Alumni
- URI Academic Departments
- Student Senate
- RI Board of Governors for Higher Education
- RI Economic Policy Council
- RI Office of the Governor
- RI General Assembly
- RI Cities and Towns
- NEASC
- Cultural Minority Community Groups
- Other Stakeholder Groups

B. Schedule interim reports to the President and Faculty Senate for consideration, comment and approval.

C. Review recent literature concerning trends in educational policy relevant to a Public Land Grant/Sea Grant/Urban Grant University, for example the Boyer Commission report (<http://naples.cc.sunysb.edu/Pres/boyer.nsf/>); Kellogg Commission on the Future of State and Land Grant Universities (1999). *Returning to Our Roots: The Engaged Institution*. Washington, DC: National Association of State Universities and Land Grant Colleges; Newman, F., L. Couturier, and J.

Scurry. (2004). *The Future of Higher Education: Rhetoric, Reality, and the Risks of the Market*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass; the National Leadership Council for Liberal Education and America's Promise (LEAP), (2007). *College Learning for the New Global Century*. Washington, D.C.: American Association of Colleges and Universities; and the Common Ground World Universities Form (2008) (<http://u09.cgpublisher.com/welcome.html>).

- D. Review the very recent work of the (2006-present) URI Branding Initiative (<http://www.uri.edu/uribrand/>) including the study reports of 'who we are' as a University.
- E. Consider the recommendations of the 1993 Joint Academic Steering Committee (JASC) Report in light of current needs:
- identify challenges and opportunities facing URI
  - explore options for meeting the challenges
  - suggest mechanisms for implementing the options
- F. Consider a futuring exercise as divided into periods, including a 5-year "short-term" (through 2014), a 10-year "intermediate-term" (through 2019), and a 25-year "long-term" (through 2033). Most of the futuring exercise would focus on short-term and intermediate-term, but a significant part should also look at long term, considering such questions as the following:
- What impacts will external economic, political & social forces have in RI?
  - Are there trends (economic or otherwise) indicating changes in how Rhode Islanders live and work over the next quarter century? For instance, will the next decade on the down slope of Hubbert's Peak have predictable consequences for Rhode Islanders? See: Deffeyes, K. S. 2004. *Hubbert's Peak: The Impending World Oil Shortage*. Princeton University Press.
  - Can URI position itself in a leadership role in transitions?
- G. Consider historical stages of RI (and URI) success
1. What can be learned from RI's successes in maximizing opportunities from a historical and geographic perspective? Examples include:
    - Rhode Island's capitalization on its good harbors and proximity to the sea to become a leader in sea trading in the 1700s and 1800s
    - Rhode Island's capitalization on its abundant water resources and human capital to become the cradle of the American Industrial Revolution in the 1700s & 1800s
    - Rhode Island's capitalization on its coastal resources and location to become an internationally known summer tourism and recreation center in the 1800s & 1900s
    - URI's national leadership in creating the first university-based agricultural extension program (1904)
    - URI's growth beyond its agricultural roots to become a major doctoral degree-granting university by offering the BA and PhD degrees (1948; 1951)
    - URI's capitalization on nearby pharmaceutical industry partners to develop a nationally recognized College of Pharmacy (1957)

- URI's capitalization on the its geographic imperative to become one of the world's internationally recognized "Ocean Universities" (1961)
  - URI's national leadership in creating the national Sea Grant College Program (1966)
2. What geographic imperative and emerging 21<sup>st</sup> Century opportunities should URI capitalize upon in the future to build the legacy?

H. Explore external influences: Impacts of globalization and the future of learning at URI

- Industrialization and outsourcing
- Science & Technology trends
- Political trends (nationally & locally)
- Demographics & social change
- Access & affordability to low income & middle class clientele
- Impacts of global "mega-universities" and on-line learning
- Others?

I. Engage in institutional introspection:

1. Consider a framework of knowledge
  - Production
  - Preservation
  - Dissemination
  - Translation to wealth – economic development
  
2. Prepare students for the future in sophisticated inquiry and critical thinking and problem solving:
  - Role of General Education
  - Role of Honors Program
  - Role of Individual Degree Programs
  - Non-traditional students & lifelong learning
  - Outreach & Extension Programs for Extramural Clientele
  - What students of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century will need to know, do, and stand for
  
3. Consider new or expanded research directions for the future (finding innovative niches to make most impact given likely university human and financial resources). This consideration should take into account findings of the URI Commission for Innovation and Research begun in 2007 and chaired by Justice Robert G. Flanders.
  - Leadership and Ethics?
  - Alternative energy production & conservation systems?
  - Food security?
  - Biosciences & Biopharmaceuticals?
  - Marine & Environmental Sciences?
  - Communication & Information Sciences?
  - Nanotechnology?
  - Arts and Humanities and new Urbanism?
  - Others?

4. Consider and recommend potential positioning for URI's financial sustainability in the future, which might include recommendations involving the following:
  - Restructuring and consolidating Academic Programs to best utilize faculty expertise while protecting faculty governance and prerogatives?
  - Expanding outreach partnerships with cities and towns as a soft form of educating Rhode Islanders about URI?
  - Increased involvement of the University in the state's economic development planning, research and outreach? Re-embracing our Land Grant philosophy campus-wide and state-wide?
  - Greater student recruiting from rapidly growing areas of the county and internationally?
  - Others?
  
5. Consider the role of University Information Systems (including the future role of the Library) in preservation & dissemination of knowledge.
  - Enhancing electronic archives?
  - Fiscal analysis of rarely used e-journal subscriptions vs. maintaining a fund for individual article purchase by library patrons?
  - Others?