

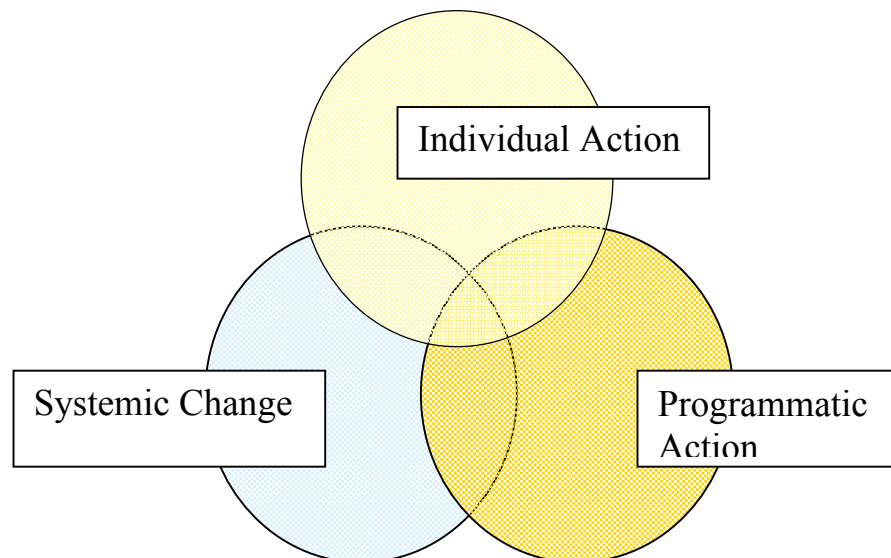
## Report to the JSPC on Faculty/Staff-Student Engagement, April 1, 2008

**Executive Summary:** The University of Rhode Island rates with or above our peer institutions on most measures of high-impact learning, according to recent data from the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE). The NSSE data also report that we receive comparatively poorer ratings than our peer institutions on student/faculty/staff relationships. Although our ratings on relationships improve over four years of college, they remain lower than those of our peers. Our committee examined various strategies to enhance day-to-day interactions among students, faculty, and staff, toward the broader goal of improving overall student satisfaction and engagement.

**Process:** This report is based on a review of NSSE data as well as other survey information, informal inquiries, established studies of student-faculty/staff engagement and the collective experience of eleven Committee members. Presented with disappointing information about student engagement at URI, we first attempted to understand what ideal engagement might be. Kuh and Witt describe institutions with positive student-faculty/staff engagement as involving colleges where there is an “absence of anonymity.” Student feedback indicates that good engagement occurs when faculty/staff and students are accessible and interested in each other intellectually and as people. In this report some general principles and specific examples of best practices are identified, as are barriers to good engagement.

We structure this review of student-faculty/staff engagement using three domains of interaction: Individual, Programmatic, and Systemic. The Individual level discusses interaction under personal control. The Programmatic level highlights activities under departmental and institutional control. The Systemic level explores the effect on engagement of institutional policies and structures. We use this three-part lens to address barriers, best practices and recommendations. While this committee acknowledges that the roots of the engagement problem may require systemic change, individuals can nevertheless make active choices that profoundly affect engagement. Further, the programmatic level in particular holds rich potential for positive change.

**Recommendation:** Expectations, incentives, evaluations, and rewards must clearly support engagement. Faculty and staff must have a shared understanding that URI values engagement with students. Students must have a shared understanding of what kind of engagement they should expect and seek at various points in their undergraduate careers.



**DOMAINS OF ENGAGEMENT**