

September 22, 2009

Colleagues,

This letter is both a welcome and a challenge. On behalf of the Faculty Senate Executive Committee, I hope you join us in looking forward to a year full of new opportunities to collaborate as full partners with our new President, David Dooley, and still new Provost, Donald DeHayes.

The new leadership is already working together with your FSEC, bringing the energy for well-considered new policies and programs to enhance URI's prominence as a national research university. Now it is time to widen the circle to the full Senate. We need the energy to sustain a full partnership of shared governance, and I anticipate that we are in for a busy year generating accomplishments. In May 2010, we may be exhausted, but I predict we will be proud of our deeds. This should be a Senate full of action, shaping, with our leadership partners, the direction(s) of this great institution.

With this full year ahead, I strongly encourage you to attend the receptions at the University Club following every Senate meeting. These receptions offer an extraordinary, informal time to talk with your Senate Leadership, our President, Provost, Deans and others.

Over the summer, your FSEC appears to have set a new record for hours of meetings (and possibly number of meetings as well), having already advanced a number of priorities.

- Stemming from the 2008-09 FSEC's partnership with the Provost, to conduct last January's Faculty Summit, Provost DeHayes has drawn from the extensive notes from over 165 Summit participants to draft an Academic Plan; this summer, the current FSEC worked with Provost DeHayes to assure the draft plan shows a substantial footprint from the Summit participants and insights from over 100 person-hours of our own input as well; we strongly encourage your comment to the email address for the plan (see <http://www.uri.edu/provost/>) and also during our Senate discussions.
- The FSEC attended Board of Governors meetings and, even as BOG requests various reviews, we have reconfirmed the process for changing academic programs properly begins with the faculty up through the Senate.
- The FSEC has held extensive discussions regarding our support of undergraduates, including enhancing the first year, developing and supporting mentorship, and integrating the priorities of a new academic plan (still in draft form) with the success of our General Education program. FSEC is convinced that success in improving first-year retention will substantially affect improvements to URI's financial health.
- FSEC joined with President Dooley and Provost DeHayes in drafting plans to improve the joint governance of URI's strategic planning process and linking strategic priorities to a transparent budget allocation process. We anticipate bringing you details by mid-semester.

This summer has led the FSEC to the following draft agenda for the year.

- First, with Provost DeHayes, and with your help, we hope to move the draft Academic Plan to final form and initiate a process involving task forces to implement various elements of the plan. To move URI farther faster, some of these task forces may start in anticipation of the new plan, and we will need faculty to join in to shape implementation adaptively as the plan evolves.
- Second, with President Dooley's and Provost DeHayes' leadership, we expect to cooperatively design and implement an enhanced process for strategic planning and budgeting.
- To support the preceding initiatives, we expect the Senate will cooperatively lead in developing means for program assessment, not only in response to NEASC's review, but also to facilitate strategic decision-making informed by an understanding of our successes and our needs for program investment.
- Third, FSEC is excited by URI's potential to sustain high standards of scholar-teachers, who expose our student body to the frontiers of our disciplines, often in interdisciplinary settings. We plan to pursue support of the research/scholarship mission, not only by following through on the Senate's resolution recognizing the critical need to invest in our Library, our campus's chief interdisciplinary resource, but also by joining with administrators to enhance and leverage graduate programs to complement the entire URI mission.
- Fourth, FSEC will be working with administrators and appropriate committees to bring to you viable approaches to enhance the first year experience, and stimulate higher retention of our freshman, including effort to integrate the (pending) Academic Plan with General Education, stimulating strategic investments that create new opportunities for freshman and faculty facing the 21st century.

You can help yourselves, FSEC and URI most by providing active input to these initiatives, starting immediately with the Academic Plan. As one of my colleagues observed, the Academic Plan has already been shaped, extensively by "the squeaky but well-reasoned wheel" of many faculty. Going forward, we expect faculty input to be requested and weighed thoughtfully. Please arrive for our meetings ready for active, substantive discussions leading to actions and to help the FSEC guide the direction of our institution.

The quality of URI's academic programs is vested in this Senate. We will need your active thinking and your volunteer work over this difficult, busy year to position URI for more outstanding contributions to our students, state, nation and world of the future.

Sincerely,



Stephen Swallow
Chairperson of the URI Faculty Senate
Professor, Environmental and Natural Resource Economics