

**University of Rhode Island
Faculty Senate**

**REPORT OF THE NOMINATING COMMITTEE
MAY 2009**

**NOMINATIONS FOR OFFICERS OF THE
2009-2010 FACULTY SENATE**

CHAIRPERSON:

Sandy Jean Hicks, Education

Celest Martin, Writing

Stephen Swallow, Environmental and Natural Resource Economics

VICE CHAIRPERSON:

William Ohley, Electrical, Computer, and Biomedical Engineering

Margaret Ordoñez, Textiles, Fashion Merchandising and Design

ONE 2-YEAR TERM ON THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE:

Nancy Eaton, Mathematics

Michael Honhart, History

ONE/TWO/THREE 1-YEAR TERMS ON THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Ann Danis, Music

Rachel DiCioccio, Communication Studies

Thomas Husband, Natural Resources Science

Amanda Izenstark, Public Services, University Libraries

Suren Malik, Physics

Bahram Nassersharif, Mechanical Engineering

Christian Wittwer, Theatre

If *either* Stephen Swallow *or* Margaret Ordoñez is elected Chairperson/Vice Chairperson, there will be two 1-year vacancies.

If *both* Stephen Swallow *and* Margaret Ordoñez are elected Chairperson/Vice Chairperson, there will be three 1-year vacancies.

Respectfully submitted:

Andrée Rathemacher, Technical Services, University Libraries

Graham Forrester, Natural Resources Science

John Leo, English

May 8, 2009

CANDIDATE STATEMENTS

CHAIRPERSON:

Sandy Jean Hicks, Associate Professor, School of Education

Stating the obvious, all areas of the University of Rhode Island are experiencing painful reductions in resources. It is all too easy to focus on the numerous negatives of such times. I believe that type of focus can be as defeating as the loss in resources. We do need to strengthen the role of faculty in shared governance. I would like to see a focus on active outreach to faculty beyond those involved in Senate and Committee work. This outreach should accomplish two things. First, increase the clarity of information folks receive on important pending issues in Faculty Senate. Second, diminished resources bring the need for a larger cross-section of faculty to problem-solve around issues of research, service and teaching keeping central the University's important Land, Sea and Urban Grant mission. We should make our voices heard when decisions made as a consequence of diminished resources erode the quality of the University's mission as the faculty conceive it. However, I would like to see us be more proactive in voicing our dissent as well as suggesting viable alternatives to proposals that will change the way we do our work. Consequently, it is important that the Faculty Senate and URI administration be direct and forthright in their communications with one another on how the mission of the University is reconceived (if at all) and how changes are implemented.

Change should be thoughtfully considered, incrementally implemented, and built around a consensus of stakeholders who feel that at the very least their voices and ideas have been thoughtfully considered. We have a relatively new Provost and a new President soon to be announced. It is important at this pivotal time in the University's history that we consider our role in the governance of the University. How would we like our role in shared governance to be perceived by our new leaders? I propose that we should "Think Big". The Faculty Senate should proactively and positively participate in change and be integral in decisions fundamental to the mission of the University. That might mean saying no to some proposals, and that needs to be said. But quite frankly my hope is to involve the Faculty Senate so centrally in the decision making process that we are vested in the outcome. Faculty are central to the success of the University of Rhode Island.

Celest Martin, Associate Professor, College Writing Program

After spending substantial time this year on the Presidential search, I would like the opportunity to work with whomever our next President may be. Although I am a faculty member who has been here for thirty years, I believe I have new ideas to offer. Five years' experience on the Faculty Senate Executive Committee has given me a critical understanding of the financial and curricular infrastructure of the university, and the ways in which we need to make connections between them, particularly in the area of retention. For every 100 students we lose after their first year at the University, we lose 100 million in revenue. For that reason I see the first of the following as one of the most critical issues facing URI; the others as additional areas of concern:

- How can we provide our first-year students with a better curricular experience?

- How do we maintain the quality of instruction while striving to be a top tier research university?
- How do we ensure that “matters of faculty concern,” a phrase that appeared on every agenda at every monthly meeting this year, find an even stronger voice on the Joint Strategic Planning Committee and become campus-wide initiatives that are acted upon within a calendar year?
- How can we help our faculty access all the research opportunities available to them?

While these are only a few of the issues that the Senate may choose to wrestle with in the coming year, I assure that I will give serving the University the time and energy it deserves, and do all in my power to acclimate our next President to shared governance as we would like to have it.

Stephen Swallow, Professor, Department of Environmental and Natural Resource Economics

The Faculty Senate’s authority, and duty, to establish and maintain academic standards demands an active, collegial Senate. We must function as an influential core of the University. Present economic and administrative transitions intensify our responsibilities. The Senate needs to be proactive, anticipating pressures for change and shaping responses that maintain and enhance quality throughout the academic enterprise. A public university, in pursuit of financial relief, cannot lose sight of its duty to serve the public good, to contribute to the quality of life for all.

We must respect the contributions from fields producing scientific knowledge, sometimes with commercially valuable innovations, while respecting liberal education as essential to engaged citizens, and the value of arts and humanities in understanding and sustaining the cultural and aesthetic qualities of livable communities. We cannot allow the commercially valued fields to crowd out the public good, nor can we let the public good hold our financial health hostage.

Whatever new directions our university pursues must be sought in collaboration with the faculty, through the Senate, with its standards for academic quality intact. The Chairperson’s and FSEC’s role is to reach across our heterogeneous collection of disciplines, to integrate perspectives, and assure the faculty’s strengths are understood and blended into evolving programs that fulfill the comprehensive mission of URI as a national research university, grounded in Rhode Island. I expect the Senate and the administration to view our roles as one of shared responsibility for URI’s future, so that the Senate’s voice will be persistently sought, presented and heard. Whether it is fostering cross-college collaboration as co-P.I.’s and co-teachers, or enhancing curriculum for an engaging freshman year, sustaining disciplinary competence in an increasingly interdisciplinary world, or identifying opportunities for which we are positioned, the Senate can and should be a catalyst for ideas and action. I’d like Senate sessions to dispatch business effectively and be workshops of solution-oriented discussion to inform the FSEC’s direction. I invite you and your colleagues to discussions, here or elsewhere, so we might better integrate the faculty’s ability with the developing vision and direction that our new administration will generate.

VICE CHAIRPERSON:

William Ohley, Professor, Department of Electrical, Computer, and Biomedical Engineering

The University is currently facing many new challenges. In recent years, the ability of the faculty to influence the University has been significantly eroded. Our Faculty, as a group, has many years of experience in higher education and also knows what makes for a great institution. The current economic climate is thus an opportunity for Faculty to step forward to help solve very pressing issues. For example we know that often cutting degree programs saves no money. I have had previous experience in working under the AAUP as President and as Chief Negotiator. Recently I have worked to re-establish my research program. Thus I am ready to accept the challenge of taking back our community. If elected I will use my energy to have the Faculty voice heard and applied for the benefit of all in the University community.

Margaret Ordoñez, Professor, Department of Textiles, Fashion Merchandising and Design

I expect that the 2009-2010 Faculty Senate will continue to respond to faculty concerns. We should provide the new President with a faculty perspective on a number of academic issues and work with the Provost to create opportunities for faculty-faculty and faculty-administration communication as we did this year. We must meet the challenge of maintaining the quality of offerings and instruction for all our students in times of financial need, with special emphasis this next year on general education courses.

TWO-YEAR TERM:

Nancy Eaton, Professor and Chairperson, Department of Mathematics

This is a time of many changes at the University of Rhode Island and, indeed, at most universities across the country. Decreases in funding have made it more crucial than ever before to have clear goals and priorities. Our university's administrators have to make decisions about reallocation of funds at the same time as they look for ways to increase revenue. Consolidation and focusing of undergraduate programs, support for new exciting interdisciplinary courses, reduction of tuition costs for graduate research assistants, and plans for a research park on the Kingston Campus are recent initiatives that will make our university stronger and more attractive to potential students. The University of Rhode Island Master Plan for new and renovated spaces on all of our campuses gives us a sense of security that, over time, improvements will be made to this major component of the value of a URI education and its research community. Members of the faculty care deeply about educational experiences of students, state of the art research, scholarship, the arts, and outreach to the community. I think the challenge for members of the Faculty Senate Executive Committee is to listen to faculty members across campuses to obtain an understanding of their many objectives and then represent their interests when considering matters that require establishing priorities. I am optimistic about the future of our institution. I

am confident that hard working faculty members will be able to work with our administrators to find creative solutions to the tasks and challenging problems that lie ahead.

Michael Honhart, Professor and Chairperson, Department of History

Shared governance requires that the Faculty Senate and its Executive Committee work effectively as partners with the university administration. Given the division of authority between the Faculty Senate and the AAUP, it is also important that the officers of these two organizations coordinate their efforts to represent the faculty. To support the work of the Faculty Senate and all of its committees, the Faculty Senate office must have sufficient clerical support during the coming year.

I hope that our next Executive Committee--whether or not I am a member--will be a group which brings diverse perspectives and experiences to the tasks which they confront. I have served recently as a department chair, a graduate director, a University College advisor, a Faculty Senator, a member of the Curricular Affairs Committee, and as the chair of the University College and General Education Committee. From these activities one might guess which functions of the University interest me the most and which ones I know the most about.

ONE-YEAR TERM:

Ann Danis, Associate Professor, Department of Music

I feel as though I could contribute to this committee as a member of the Fine Arts faculty and as someone who has been at URI for many years. My understanding of the campus in general and of the fine arts in particular might be of assistance to the committee when assessing various programs and projects. I could certainly lend my expertise in music and also my interest and desire to look at creative ways to integrate some of the areas of learning concerning general education classes. I would love to explore better ways to serve our students and make their learning more valuable to their future lives. If this goal seems worthy of the executive committee, please consider my nomination. Thank you.

Rachel DiCioccio, Assistant Professor, Department of Communication Studies

I believe that times of institutional adversity and change require forward thinking and a willingness to explore innovative academic ventures while at the same time maintaining tradition. By building on an already strong foundation of success, we must strive to adapt to current social, economic, and academic trends. I believe self governance is about action – it is our responsibility and privilege. I take seriously the task and am open to the challenge of working with others to secure for all of us – faculty, students, and administration, an advantageous future.

Amanda Izenstark, Assistant Professor, Department of Public Services, University Libraries

I see change as an opportunity, not as something to be feared, and I feel the months and years ahead present many opportunities. The difficult economic times present us a challenge that we can certainly rise to, given our experience with the support the University has received from the state. As a faculty member who serves as a librarian and as a professor, I understand the challenges and multiple demands we face, such as balancing good pedagogy with new trends, and finding time to accomplish academic goals while encouraging the academic growth of students, all under the (now larger than usual) specter of decreased funding. While "working smarter" may be part of the equation, another part is adequate support for what departments have promised to deliver.

I believe the faculty at URI have the experience needed to collaborate with a new administration to move the University toward the future, whether the topic is the curriculum, library and technological resources, or raising our position in relation to our peer institutions. I also believe in openness and communication. I feel we should build on the foundation already established by the Faculty Senate and its web site. Using tools we have at hand -- such as online survey tools and the collaborative features of Sakai, as well as those to come -- we can elicit and highlight the faculty voice as we face the future.

Suren Malik, Professor, Department of Physics

This is a very important juncture for the faculty senate to establish its rightful role in the spirit of shared governance. We have quite a number of substantial issues the senate needs to address. Please permit me to mention the ones I consider essential, if we are serious about research.

- 1: an adequate size of permanent faculty for a given department.
- 2: control of the selection process, following the due processes, should reside with the department.
- 3: Bureaucratic intervention needs to be seriously reduced if the departments are expected to function efficiently, and are able to use their dedicated resources.
- 4: University manual in the present administration has been very marginally followed. This must change.

I believe next year will set the tone how we work and to what end.

Bahram Nassersharif, Distinguished University Professor, Department of Mechanical Engineering

I believe the faculty senate must become more relevant in the future of the University of Rhode Island. This is particularly important in light of the expected arrival of a new president. The Faculty Senate Executive Committee (FSEC) plays a critical role in interfacing between the Senate and the Administration of the University. I believe the FSEC must become more transparent by engaging the tremendous intellectual resources and experience of the Senate

members in guiding the University's strategic directions. The meeting agenda for FSEC meetings should be released to the Senate before each meeting so that input from Senators can be solicited and provided before each meeting with the Administration. URI is facing many difficult challenges in the next several years including finances, staffing, support for research, quality of students, and substandard facility and classroom conditions, to mention a few. The FSEC should play a strong leadership role in addressing issues important to the faculty with the administration.

I have twenty-seven years of experience at four different universities as researcher, professor, research center director, department head, dean, and most importantly as a faculty member. I have been at URI for six years (four years as Dean of Engineering) and know this organization extremely well including its strengths and weaknesses. I am interested in working with each and every member of the faculty and staff to make URI a better place to work, learn, teach, create, and discover.